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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, December 8, 2021

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

ETOBICOKE NORTH

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank the wonderful people of Etobicoke North for putting their trust in me to serve them, to be there for them on the hard days, to celebrate with them, to fight for their issues and to be their voice in Ottawa.

I hear from our youth, women, men, families and seniors. They are clear that they want to get through the COVID-19 pandemic, and they are doing their part to get through it because we are a caring community. We lift each other up, we are here for one another and we fight for one another.

I am so grateful to the people of Etobicoke North for all that we have shared over the last 13 years, from anniversaries to graduations, and new jobs to remembrance. Our community and people matter.

I look forward to the moments we will share and the future we will build together.

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[*Translation*]

EXCEPTIONAL WOMEN IN PORTNEUF—JACQUES-CARTIER

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an outstanding project has come to fruition thanks to the perseverance of an inspiring woman: Danielle Du Sablon.

She has produced a book immortalizing 40 equally inspiring, active women from one of the 18 municipalities of the Portneuf RCM. Allow me to name these exceptional women: Ysabel, Marian and Allyson Jacob, Christine Genest, Carmelle Matte, Johannie-Kym Cavanagh, Mélanie Lajeunesse, Madeleine Genest Bouillé, Nadine Beaudet, Sophie Perreault, Josée-Anne Fiset, Doris Julien, Nellie Juneau, Caroline Morin, Laurence Petitclerc, Julie Fournier Nicole Provence, Louiselle Soulard, Anette Julien Gignac, Chantal Blais, Linda de la Chevrotière, Sophie Denis, Martine Labrie, Jocelyne Pichette and Josée Petitclerc. That list also includes two women's groups in Rivière-à-Pierre and Sainte-Christine-d'Auvergne.

Ladies, you will be an inspiration to future generations of women in Portneuf. Thank you for bringing prestige to Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier. I am an ally of yours.

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• (1405)

[*English*]

BURNABY NORTH—SEYMOUR

Mr. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with tremendous pleasure that I rise today to address my constituents at home and my colleagues in this place.

I must start by thanking the people of Burnaby and North Vancouver for putting their trust in me for a third term. I also want to give a big thanks to my entire campaign team and to my campaign manager Tyler Norman, in particular. He not only ran a great campaign, he actually got married during the election.

I am also happy to share that Ravi and I welcomed our second daughter, Solar, to the world just 10 months ago, and her presence has renewed my commitment to use my time in this place to build a better Canada, especially for future generations.

Finally, I want to thank my colleagues. I am still in awe of this historic place and I still believe in our ability to improve the lives of those people we represent, especially when we work together. Our work during COVID was a demonstration of this.

After all, it does not matter whether we are Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, NDP, Green or independent, at the end of the day, we are all on team Canada.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]***GILLES DUCEPPE**

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, under the rules of the House, a member may not be identified by anything other than the name of their riding. You even grace us by referring to members as “honourable”.

However, today we have with us one of the most honourable of all, a member who made all of Quebec his riding, to the point of wanting to make it a country. At first feeling intimidated—and God knows that he was intimidating—I called him Mr. Duceppe. More recently, often eager for his advice, and now—I dare believe it and flatter myself—a friend of Mr. Duceppe, I have taken to calling him Gilles, and that is a privilege.

As I have gone from admirer to appreciative friend, I must also extend my heartfelt thanks to Gilles. He managed to pass on his diligence and passion, as well as a lot of his charisma, to the member for Lac-Saint-Jean. In that respect, he will have to share at least half the credit with Yolande. In sharing their son, they also gave me the chance to make a dear friend.

For Quebec, for the country, and for friendship, thank you, very honourable Gilles.

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*[English]***GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride and humility that I undertake my second mandate as MP for the riding of Saint-Leonard—Saint-Michel. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my constituents, volunteers, friends and family members for their continuous support and confidence in me.

I am ready to serve my constituents and Canadians with dedication and determination as we face challenging issues, such as a marathon pandemic, the rise in cost of living, pressing environmental concerns and the increase in gun violence in our neighbourhoods, just to name a few.

I am proud to be part of a government that in the first 100 days of its mandate has kept its promise by introducing a bill that will allow 10 days of paid sick leave for all federally regulated workers. This new measure will ensure that none of them will have to choose between staying home when they are sick or having to pay their bills.

[Translation]

As we move forward together, I, along with my colleagues, will continue to focus my energy on finding and implementing solutions that will lead to a stronger economy, a greener environment and safer neighbourhoods for Canadians.

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*[English]***RACISM**

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to speak about an unfortunate inci-

dent that occurred in Barrie last week. A well-known community advocate and entrepreneur, Shanicka Edwards, also known as Shak, was verbally harassed and physically assaulted.

Ms. Edwards founded Shak's World, which addresses the issues of addiction, homelessness and mental health challenges for youth in downtown Barrie.

While the verbal harassment and physical abuse Shak experienced were despicable acts on their own, what made this incident even more heinous was that it was racially motivated. Ms. Edwards was sought out, berated and assaulted because she was a young Black woman. She was told to go back to where she came from. Shak was born and raised in Canada, in Simcoe County.

No person should ever be subject to such racist and derogatory statements and acts. I would encourage Shak to keep doing her great work. I and the people of Barrie are behind her every step of the way.

I would also like to thank the Barrie Police Service for making a speedy arrest in this despicable incident.

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● (1410)

THE CARR FAMILY

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the incredible generosity of a family in Kitchener—Conestoga and its contribution to our local arts sector.

During the pandemic, every stage across Canada went dark. As we move forward, theatres are slowly opening. In Kitchener—Conestoga over the years, countless supporters have attended the St. Jacob's Country Playhouse. The landmark theatre still stands, but with a new name.

Brad Carr and Susan Wagler of West Montrose have made a \$500,000 donation to Drayton Entertainment, one of Canada's most successful professional theatre companies. The funding will go toward a new youth academy training facility to help support programming and operations.

As audiences return to in-person attendance, they will notice, as a show of gratitude, the St. Jacob's Country Playhouse will now be named the Carr Family Auditorium.

On behalf of the community, I want to thank Brad and Susan for their generosity, and in Kitchener—Conestoga we are looking forward to live entertainment at our newly named Carr Family Auditorium.

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*[Translation]***ARTS AND CULTURE IN SHERBROOKE**

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members of Sherbrooke's arts and culture industry, including Suzanne-Marie Landry of Théâtre Granada and Mario Trépanier of the Centre culturel de l'Université de Sherbrooke, have tapped into their enthusiasm and creativity to successfully renew themselves and serve up an impressive cultural lineup.

For the first time ever, Théâtre Granada will host the Grand Réveillon de Sherbrooke on December 30 and 31. A number of well-known artists are on the roster, such as Bleu Jeans Bleu, Les Trois Accords, Loud and Sherbrooke's own Qualité Motel. They are sure to wow the crowds with standout performances.

I recently had the privilege of announcing nearly \$100,000 in financial support to help organizers offer this event free of charge.

I therefore invite Sherbrooke residents to come one, come all to the Sherbrooke Station Market and celebrate the new year together, with the hope it will bring happiness and joy.

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150TH ANNIVERSARY OF SAINT-NARCISSE-DE-BEAURIVAGE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to recognize the 150th anniversary of my hometown of Saint-Narcisse-de-Beaurivage, which will take place in 2022. The people there are friendly, hardworking and always willing to lend others a helping hand.

They are proud of their roots and plan to pay tribute to the legacy passed on by previous generations in their own way. There will be folk music, outdoor winter activities, a “blast from the past” weekend, a founders' day, the traditional parade and much more. These events will give people an opportunity to reconnect with family and friends and to try a craft beer bearing the picture of Saint-Narcisse called 1872.

As the member for Lévis—Lotbinière and a resident of Saint-Narcisse-de-Beaurivage, I am pleased to invite you to take part in any or all of the activities being held as part of Saint-Narcisse-de-Beaurivage's 150th anniversary celebrations.

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[English]

WHITBY ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks, we have seen extreme weather events happening on both coasts of our great country. My heart goes out to the people of British Columbia, and Newfoundland and Labrador, as we watch the destruction occurring in their communities and the devastation it has caused for people.

There is no longer a debate on whether climate change is real, or at least not on this side of the House. Canadians know we must act quickly and in a meaningful way to ensure a healthy planet for our children, and that means working closely with all our partners, including municipalities.

That is why I am so proud of the town of Whitby, which is showing leadership in the fight against climate change. From the town's green development standard, to its ambitious plan to achieve net zero by 2045, to local projects such as building a geothermal district energy grid and a new sports complex that will be the first municipally owned zero-carbon sports facility in Canada, to companies such as GH Power, which has developed unique green hydrogen technology, the town of Whitby is blazing a trail and demonstrating what is possible when we work together.

Statements by Members

I want to thank the mayor, town council and local innovators for working so closely with the federal government to build a sustainable future for generations to come.

* * *

● (1415)

BRITISH COLUMBIA FLOODING

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, British Columbia has been devastated by unprecedented flooding, landslides, the washing out of highways, evacuation of whole communities and tragic losses of life.

In my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country, we continue to do our part to assist those who have come seeking help and support. We have opened our doors to people and animals, and offered food, clothing and shelter to those in need. Many faith organizations, companies and not-for-profits have initiated donation campaigns. This shows that the spirit of Kelowna—Lake Country continues to shine brightly, just as it did during the COVID-19 pandemic and summer wildfires.

We must continue to do all we can for those most in need as we move forward from this tragedy. The rebuilding and reopening of our province will not be swift, and all levels of government must come together to ensure a robust recovery and to protect our communities from future weather events and help them to adapt.

My heart goes out to all those affected. I thank all who are doing their part to help.

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AFGHANISTAN REFUGEES

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Omar, a 37-year-old Afghan, was contracted by coalition forces and deployed in his home country for three years as an interpreter, working with Canada through often deadly and dangerous missions. When the Taliban took over Afghanistan, Omar feared for his life and family. He fled alone, leaving his family behind to find refuge. He walked for seven days to Iran, became shipwrecked on his way to Greece and landed in refugee camps across eastern Europe.

Corporal Justin Bronzan, who is a former infantryman with the Royal Canadian Regiment and a Bay of Quinte citizen, took Omar in and reunited his family in Canada in mid-October. It was because of Corporal Bronzan and his family that Omar and his family found refuge in Canada to avoid the terror that is the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Please join me in congratulating them.

*Statements by Members***GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Friday marks the end of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. It is an opportunity to come together to call out, speak up and renew our commitment to end gender-based violence. The dangers women and trans people still face are all too real.

In my riding of York Centre, the North York Women's Shelter does essential work empowering women and trans people to move forward into lives free from violence. As an anti-violence centre and shelter, for over 35 years it has provided safety and support for over 11,000 women and children, and recently it opened a brand new facility.

The fact that we need even more of these services to protect women and trans people, especially during the pandemic, is unacceptable. Regardless of one's gender, as MPs and Canadians, we can and must do more, do better, stand up, speak out and take action in putting an end to gender-based violence.

* * *

POVERTY

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, food bank use in Canada climbed 20% with the pandemic and topped 1.3 million monthly visits. It is the largest increase since the 2008 recession.

With the clawback of the GIS and the Canada child benefit, and the elimination of COVID emergency benefits, food banks face further increases in demand. Food banks alone do not solve hunger. They are a symptom of the root problem of poverty.

Who are the faces of poverty? They are families, women, seniors, people with disabilities and low-wage earners. They are our friends and our neighbours. Fixed income earners' buying power has been decimated and we can do something about it.

Former NDP leader Ed Broadbent received unanimous support for his motion in 1989 to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000. That was more than three decades ago. The Liberal government has a chance to address the affordability crisis with the fiscal update. A guaranteed livable basic income is the path forward.

Better is possible.

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[*Translation*]

JEAN AND GILLES DUCEPPE

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 31 years ago, Quebec lost one of its greatest cultural ambassadors, my grandfather, Jean Duceppe. A proud sovereignist, he shared with our people the desire to gain independence and decide our own destiny. His legacy and his passion for Quebec still flow through my veins and those of my father, Gilles Duceppe.

For over 20 years, Gilles made his mark as an MP, official opposition leader and leader of the Bloc Québécois. Many members here, including the Prime Minister and you, Mr. Speaker, worked with him. Members may have noticed him in the gallery. He is here with my daughter and my mother.

I want to reassure my hon. colleagues that I will be the only Duceppe working here today. This evening, the Bloc Québécois will celebrate my father's commitment to defending Quebec's interests in this Parliament by naming a room after him. It is a humble but well-deserved tribute for a man who made such an impression on the political psyche of Quebec and Canada. We will continue to carry his dream forward all the way through to nationhood.

I love you, Dad.

* * *

• (1420)

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Fort McMurray is a lot of different things to a lot of different people. To many Canadians, Fort McMurray represented a beacon of hope, prosperity and a fresh start. To the world's leading oil producers, we are a tough competitor who refuses to lie down. To many elected officials, we are simply a cash cow. To the fringe eco-activists, we are the enemy.

However, to me, Fort McMurray has been and always will be home. It is where I was born and raised, and Conservatives of every stripe have always had our back. They understand that when Fort McMurray works, Alberta works. When Alberta works, Canada works. Only Conservatives are fighting for pipelines and energy corridors to secure the long-term viability of northeastern Alberta, and to get Alberta energy to the world.

I will not back down from politicians in this chamber, such as the Prime Minister and the Minister of Environment, who seek to land-lock and firewall our oil sands, leaving our workers without jobs. Canada and the world need Alberta energy.

* * *

FLOODING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the extraordinary community spirit of local media organizations in Surrey-Newton, and the extraordinary generosity demonstrated by the people of British Columbia.

In response to the recent flooding across British Columbia, Red FM initiated an emergency fundraising drive that raised \$1.1 million for Canadian Red Cross flood relief efforts.

Similarly, Connect FM and Sanjha TV raised \$1.4 million for the PICS Guru Nanak Diversity Village, a facility for South Asian seniors in need of culturally sensitive long-term care.

I want to thank all the donors who stepped up to help. I ask all members to join me in thanking Red FM, Connect FM and Sanjha TV for their dedication and service to our community.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand all announced that Huawei would have no place in their 5G infrastructure years ago. Our Prime Minister has still not made a decision. The Five Eyes all came out with a diplomatic boycott of the Olympics, and the Prime Minister was the last one to sign on.

When it comes to the international stage, why is the current Prime Minister always the last one to show up?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our approach has always been to stand up strongly for Canadians, for Canadian interests and for Canadian values, and to do that every step of the way alongside our allies in the world. We have done that and will continue to do that as we express deep concerns about the situation around human rights in China, and as we continue to ensure protection for security while we look at competitiveness for our domestic markets. These are things we take seriously and will always do the right way for Canadians.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more than a quarter of Canadians have mortgages with a variable rate. The number of high-leverage uninsured mortgages is more than 25% according to the Bank of Canada. The bank suggested today that it would raise interest rates soon. Some experts predict five interest rate increases next year.

How many thousands of families are at risk of losing their homes because the Prime Minister has ignored the inflation crisis?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are extremely concerned with the rising cost of living faced by Canadians. This is why we have a concrete plan to take action on that, whether through investing in child care, investing in more supports for Canadians or putting forward the most ambitious plan on housing this country has ever seen, which includes \$4 billion for municipalities to help build more supply. The Conservatives only offered tax breaks for Canada's wealthiest landlords in the last election campaign. Canadians need solutions. That is what we are delivering, not the Conservatives.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, higher inflation means higher prices for families. Prices

Oral Questions

are 21% higher for apples, 22% higher for bacon and 33% higher for a house. The Prime Minister said he has a concrete plan, but the government has not committed to keeping the 2% inflation target as part of the bank's new mandate. Keeping the 2% inflation target is the bare minimum the Prime Minister could do to fight the cost of living crisis.

He talks about a plan and being there for Canadians. My question is simple. Will the government mandate the Bank of Canada to maintain its 2% target, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even though the Conservatives are offering the bare minimum, we are interested in offering much more to Canadians. Yes, we will renew the mandate of the Bank of Canada, but we will also continue to step up with record investments in housing and with things such as the rent-to-own program, a municipal accelerator that is going to put more housing across the country, and more supports for rural Canadians with respect to housing. We have a concrete plan to invest in housing. The Conservatives only offered massive tax breaks to wealthy landlords as their solution to the housing crisis. That is not what Canadians need.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians should be worried when the Prime Minister and the finance minister will not answer a simple question about fighting inflation by keeping the 2% target. What are they going to do for Canadians who are struggling? The Prime Minister does not think about monetary policy. He does not think about interest rates. He thinks budgets will balance themselves.

How bad does the cost of living crisis have to get before the Prime Minister gets a grip?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservative Party flails around and offers personal insults, we are focused on Canadians. We are focused on investing tangibly to counter the housing crisis. Whether it is \$4 billion for municipalities, investment in \$10-a-day child care right across the country or support for seniors or young families, we are there. We will continue to be there for Canadians while the Conservatives play political games and throw mud.

[Translation]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, inflation has never been as bad as it is now.

Inflation means that everything goes up, especially the cost of fruit, meat, housing and gas. The list is long, and Canadians are worried.

This government has not yet given the Bank of Canada a mandate to maintain the 2% inflation target.

Oral Questions

Will the government maintain the 2% target, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition leader is well aware that we will be making an announcement about that soon.

The fact is that we are focusing on the challenges facing Canadians. That is why we are making massive investments in housing by helping municipalities build more units. We are investing in more child care spaces across the country and in helping seniors and youth. We are there to help Canadians.

All the Conservatives had to offer on the housing file was tax credits for the wealthiest Canadians so they could sell their buildings. That is not what Canadians need. We will continue to be there for Canadians.

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HEALTH

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the new travel rules are different for everyone, depending on whether one travels by land or by air, in Europe, in the U.S. or, worse, in designated countries in Africa, and on whether one is entering or leaving the U.S.

Upon their return, travellers are facing public health restrictions that are reminiscent of “the place that sends you mad”, which even Asterix had trouble navigating.

Why will Canada not introduce procedures and rules that are reassuring, clear and reciprocal to those imposed by the United States?

● (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 crisis requires adjustments that are based on science and respond to different situations. Canadians are well aware of that.

They also know full well that our government will be there with the necessary measures to support them, whatever the situation. There are new rules in place, and I realize that it can be confusing for people who can and want to travel, but the vast majority of Canadians need us to do whatever is necessary to keep them safe.

That is what we have been doing since the beginning of the pandemic, and we are not about to stop now.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we will clarify by imagining an example.

Let us say the Prime Minister travels to Egypt. On his way back, he goes through Paris to say hi to his pal Macron. He then hops over to Burlington before returning to Canada by road, ideally not by Roxham Road.

What with quarantines, tests at the airport, trips lasting more than 72 hours and subcontractors making house calls, can the Prime Minister tell us what rules he will be subject to, what tests he will have to take, what restrictions he will have to follow and when?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, anyone who has to travel or decides to travel will have to con-

sult public health authorities to see what rules apply to their situation.

I do not think it is so hard to understand that every person who travels is going to have to take appropriate steps, and we have all the information to share.

The reality is that yes, it can be complicated. However, we have to be there to protect Canadians from the omicron variant and COVID-19. We are going to make choices accordingly, to protect the vast majority of Canadians who are staying home and who want to finish the fight against COVID-19.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a recent analysis found that the price of homes in Montreal has increased by 21% in the past year. It is impossible for people to find affordable housing.

The Liberals say that there is nothing they can do about it. We disagree. The Liberal government has the tools to address this crisis. Why is the Prime Minister not doing anything to help people?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. leader of the NDP was not listening when we said that we do indeed have solutions. We can do things, and we are in the process of doing things to deal with the housing crisis.

We are investing billions of dollars with municipalities to speed up access to housing. We are launching rapid housing initiatives, creating various programs and expanding several others because we know how much we need to be there for people. We will continue to be there for people. That is what the government is doing.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister’s actions come up short in the face of this crisis.

The problem is also that the Liberal government prefers to favour the ultrarich instead of helping people. Here is a clear example. The Peel basin is federal land in Montreal. Instead of using that land to build affordable housing, this Liberal government wants to hand it over to its friend and billionaire developer, Mr. Bronfman. Why does the government favour the ultrarich instead of helping people?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have come to expect personal attacks from the Conservatives, but it is a bit disappointing when it comes from the NDP.

The reality is that we are here to work with municipalities to invest in housing. We are here to work on creating more programs for affordable housing. We are here to partner with Montreal, with Quebec City, and with investors who want to build housing for everyone.

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition summed up the situation very well. Inflation is hitting Canadians hard, and the Liberal government can no longer deny it.

One of the Bank of Canada's mandates is to keep inflation to 2%. Inflation is currently almost 5%, and everyone is affected. If the Prime Minister does not maintain the 2% target, Canadian consumers will once again pay for his mismanagement.

The question is very simple: Will the government maintain the 2% target, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives know very well that the Bank of Canada's current mandate is 2%. There will be an announcement shortly about the renewal of this mandate.

In the meantime, I can reassure all Canadians that we will be there to help them. We will be there to help them access home ownership, to help them access \$10-a-day child care, and to invest in youth and seniors. We will be there to help Canadians as we have been from the beginning.

• (1435)

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's answer is in no way reassuring. The cost of everything is going up, and Canadians are seeing their purchasing power go down. Just talk to food banks, mothers and seniors to get a sense of how bad things are right now.

Will the Prime Minister guarantee that the Bank of Canada will maintain inflation at 2%? A yes or no will do.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member should know that the Bank of Canada is independent and that it must remain free from political interference.

Yes, we will continue to work with the Bank of Canada, within our jurisdiction, to ensure that Canadians are well served. That is why we are investing in housing, child care spaces, and help for seniors, young people and workers. We promised to be there for Canadians, even though the Conservatives wanted us to invest less in Canadians during this pandemic. We will always be there to help Canadians with what they need.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, runaway inflation is driving up prices. Canadians are feeling the pinch. Many are struggling to pay for groceries, while others are giving up on their dream of buying a home because prices have gone up 33%. The Liberal government's attitude feels like a frontal assault.

Can the Liberal government have a heart and see how fed up Canadian consumers are? It is a simple question.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find that a little surprising coming from a member whose election campaign was founded on a Conservative Party housing promise to give massive tax credits to landlords.

That was not going to help families become homeowners. In contrast, the Liberal Party had and still has a concrete plan to invest

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with municipalities in order to build housing, ensure affordable access to home ownership and assist first-time buyers.

We are here to help Canadians every step of the way. The Conservatives want us to do less. We will not do less, we will do more.

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[English]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what did the Prime Minister's Office say when Bud the Spud from the bright red mud rolled into Ottawa looking for help? They sent him to city hall. It was the Conservatives who brought the spuds back to Parliament Hill so they could not be ignored. However, potato growers in Prince Edward Island are frustrated that they are hearing nothing from their Liberal MPs. Three hundred million pounds of potatoes sit idle, hundreds of jobs have been lost and dozens of family farms are at risk.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing? Will he end his self-imposed export ban on P.E.I. potatoes before Christmas, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am certain that I am not hearing right. I do not think I am hearing the Conservatives propose that we allow the Americans to impose a ban on P.E.I. potatoes, because that is what they are proposing right now.

We moved forward to make sure that we kept control over the situation. I had a meeting with Premier King the same week that I had a meeting with President Biden to highlight the issues we have right now. We will continue to be there to support P.E.I. and indeed the potato industry across this country. We will continue to be there to support Prince Edward Island potatoes in every way we can, as we have continued to support Canadians throughout these difficult years.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has just admitted that the government self-inflicted a wound before the United States did anything. He has admitted that this decision was based on politics, not science. In fact, the agriculture minister has said the same thing. The Liberal member for Cardigan said that absolutely there is no doubt politics is involved in this dispute with the United States.

Will the Prime Minister end his half-baked ban? Will he expend some political capital and political will and end this dispute before Christmas?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I highly recommend that the Conservatives actually engage substantively on this issue, because we should all be using a team Canada approach and should recognize that with the U.S. threatening to impose a ban on table potatoes from Prince Edward Island, we needed to act.

We are continuing to work with the United States and to put pressure on the United States so that we can move forward in a way that is safe for everyone and supports Islanders. The Conservatives are busy throwing mud and do not actually understand the issue. The member talks about rich red mud. He should respect that rich red mud and get the facts straight.

• (1440)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish the Prime Minister would show that kind of fight with the United States when some of our commodities are at risk. He has failed when it comes to our trade relationship with the United States. He has failed on energy. He has failed on softwood lumber. He has failed on dairy and potatoes. Now the United States is threatening to instigate mandatory country-of-origin labelling, which will devastate our livestock industry. The WTO has already said that COOL violates international law.

Will Canada's beef and pork industry be protected, or will the Prime Minister continue to outsource our trade agenda to the United States?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we saw over the past number of years was the Conservatives recommending that we cave on standing up to the United States. We did exactly the opposite. We stood up for steel. We stood up for aluminum workers. We stood up for people across the country—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I will have to stop the Prime Minister. I am having a hard time hearing his answer and I am sure everybody wants to hear what he has to say. I want to ask everyone to just calm down.

The Prime Minister can start from the beginning and answer the whole thing.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, time and time again, we have heard the Conservatives recommend that we cave on standing up to the Americans. That was their approach. When we brought in retaliatory tariffs to stand up for our steelworkers and our aluminum workers, the Conservative leader called that “dumb”.

Every step of the way, whether it was in renegotiating NAFTA, standing up for steel and aluminum workers, standing up for our auto workers or standing up for agricultural workers, this government has been there. The Conservatives have been playing politics and losing the plot.

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with greater Montreal reeling from a wave of shootings and tragedies, the Prime Minister should be doing everything he can to fight illegal guns.

However, that is not what he is doing with Bill C-5. His bill eliminates minimum penalties for importing firearms and for using them to commit crimes. The Prime Minister is even eliminating these penalties for repeat offenders convicted of illegal firearms possession.

The Prime Minister will have to explain how Bill C-5 will help curb gun violence in Montreal.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that firearms pose a huge challenge in Montreal and across the country.

That is why we are taking this issue seriously by investing \$125 million to create a cross-border task force to stop gun smuggling, \$250 million to support community-based anti-gang programs, \$327 million to give police the resources they need to detect and prevent crime more effectively, and at least \$1 billion to help the provinces and territories, like Quebec, ban handguns.

We will be there and will continue to be there to fight gun violence.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to counter the violence in the greater Montreal area, the mayor of Montreal and the Government of Quebec are calling on the federal government to take action against illegal guns.

The first tangible action this government has taken on illegal guns since Parliament resumed has been the introduction of Bill C-5, which would repeal certain related minimum penalties.

Quebec's public safety minister said the federal government needs to send the message that it is taking this seriously. Does the Prime Minister think that introducing Bill C-5 in the middle of a wave of shootings sends the message that he is taking this seriously?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are taking meaningful action to help stem gun-related violence. Many measures need to be taken, and Bill C-5 is one of them.

We have also invested \$125 million to create a cross-border task force to stop smuggling, \$250 million to support community-based anti-gang programs, and \$327 million to give police the resources they need to detect and prevent crime more effectively. We are also investing \$1 billion to help Quebec and other provinces ban handguns.

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada is supposed to be focused solely on reducing the rising cost of living, but some people are saying that it should be focusing on all sorts of other things outside of that, particularly policy, which is the sole responsibility of elected representatives.

Right now, people are struggling with maxed-out credit cards, and they are trying to figure out how to buy Christmas presents. The Prime Minister has not answered the basic question, and so I will ask him something very simple. Does he agree that the Bank of Canada should only be focused on reducing inflation and keeping it at 2%?

• (1445)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite well knows that the current mandate for the Bank of Canada is to keep the 2% target for inflation. We will be renewing the mandate in the coming days or weeks, and we will demonstrate that we are squarely focused on the preoccupations that Canadians have once we make that announcement.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why can he not just make that announcement right now? His lack of policy on this has created a lot of instability, and what that translates to the average Canadian is that they cannot buy Christmas presents. They are struggling with maxed-out credit cards.

What we have here is a Prime Minister who does not understand that it is his responsibility to set this policy. The Bank of Canada should be solely focused on keeping life affordable for Canadians. Will the Prime Minister announce today that he intends to renew this exact mandate?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members of this House well know, monetary policy and the work of the bank is independent of the work that politicians do. There are very clear rules around how we create those mandates, how we renew those mandates. Those rules on this side of the House will be followed. I can reassure Canadians that the current mandate does have the target of 2%, and we will be renewing the mandate in the coming days.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, except the Canadian economy has seen inflation blow way past that target, and the average Canadian knows that.

The average Canadian right now cannot buy Christmas presents. I know that the Prime Minister might not understand what it is like to be struggling with a maxed-out credit card, but most Canadians do. That means understanding that he should be telling the Bank of Canada to focus on keeping life affordable, not making economic or fiscal policy. That is his job and the job of this place. So, will he today, very basic and very simple, say that he will keep that target at 2% through the mandate?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will be making an announcement in the coming days and weeks.

Oral Questions

The reality is that Conservatives have been misrepresenting this inflation crisis for the past many weeks. It is a result of the disruption around COVID-19. It is a result of disrupted supply chains.

We are continuing to be there to support Canadians, whether it is with \$10-a-day child care, whether it is historic investments in countering the housing crisis, whether it is supports for seniors and supports for young Canadians. We have made a promise that we would have Canadians' backs. Despite some Conservatives complaining that we have done that too much, we will continue to have people's backs.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "misrepresenting this inflation crisis", tell that to someone in Kelowna today who is paying \$1.67 a litre for gas. Tell that to the single mom who is trying to fill up her tank with gas, or the person who is trying to buy her spouse a hockey jersey that is costing \$100 more this year or is paying \$600 a month in interest on a credit card.

The Prime Minister has misrepresented to Canadians his ability to manage a basic economic crisis. What he could do today to reassure Canadians is tell them that he understands this, he is going to quell this crazy talk about the Bank of Canada wading into policy that he has responsibility for, and is keeping inflation at 2%.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past weeks, what have we seen from the Conservatives? They tell Canadians about the problems they are facing with decreased affordability, increased prices on everything, difficulty buying gas, difficulty buying computers, and they shrug and say, "Oh, it's just inflation". Well, it is not just inflation; it is the focus that we have to have to continue to invest in Canadians.

They play board games. We are focused on delivering on housing, child care and support that Canadians need, while the Conservatives play cheap political games.

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HOUSING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a recent survey of young Canadians between 18 and 24 across major cities in Canada has found that the vast majority of them do not believe they will ever be able to own their own homes. Rent—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to ask the hon. member for Burnaby South to pause for a second.

I am having a hard time hearing him. Everybody wants to hear the question.

The hon. member for Burnaby South from the top, please.

Oral Questions

● (1450)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, a recent survey of young Canadians between 18 and 24 years of age across major urban centres in Canada has found that the vast majority of them believe that they will never be able to own their own places. Rent is going up, it is expensive to find a place to call home and the Prime Minister is not responding to this crisis with the urgency it requires.

What does the Prime Minister have to say to young people who have given up on ever being able to own their own homes, who are worried if they can ever find a place that is in their budget? What does he have to say to them?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. That is why in 2017 we brought in the national housing strategy that has supported the creation of nearly 100,000 new units, repaired over 300,000 more across all housing programs and helped families get the housing they need. We have had a particular focus on first-time homebuyers and young homebuyers with things like the first-time homebuyers incentive, the rapid housing initiative, the Canada housing benefit and reducing the fees for purchasing a new home.

These are things we have taken specifically to help young people buy a home. We are going to continue to do those things.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister can continue all he wants. He has been in power for six years and in those six years, housing prices have gone up. It is more unaffordable. It is harder to find a place to call one's own after six years of the Liberal government being in power. The government asks what it can do. It can do a lot. There are some concrete steps it can take. It can end blind bidding, it can tackle house flipping and it can put a tax on foreign buyers. It can do that, and do it immediately.

Why will the Prime Minister not use the fiscal update to put in place these measures to stop the housing prices from continuing to skyrocket?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to admit, I am always open to hearing suggestions from the members opposite on how we can work together in this Parliament to deliver things. I was sort of pleased, though, to hear that the three initiatives he said were all three initiatives we proposed in our platform just a few months ago.

We will continue to work with them and with all parliamentarians to deliver concrete solutions for homebuyers. We will deliver aid to Canadians to help them through this housing crisis, because we need Canadians to be able to afford their new homes, to be able to get into safe, secure housing, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

* * *

COVID-19 ECONOMIC MEASURES

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has had the backs of small businesses throughout the pandemic by helping them stay open and keep employees on the payroll. People and businesses in my riding of Newmarket—

Aurora are concerned about the health and the economic impacts that the omicron variant might bring.

Can the Prime Minister please tell this House what this government is doing to support Canadian business through the COVID pandemic?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora for his tireless advocacy for the people in his riding.

We introduced legislation to provide targeted support to those who are financially affected by the pandemic, including caregivers and those with COVID-19, and ensure no one is left behind at this critical moment. The measures in this bill are essential in finishing the fight against COVID-19, making sure the hardest-hit sectors are part of the recovery and creating jobs.

I urge all members in this House to support its speedy passage.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's response was just incredible. He said even after house prices increased by a third, he did not think about monetary policy; even after gas prices hit \$1.60 in some places, he did not think about monetary policy; even as CPI hit a two-decade high, he did not think much about monetary policy, because he only thinks about himself.

Will he not admit that what it took for him to start thinking about inflation is when we put his name in the word?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning we have been focused on having Canadians' backs. Whether it was back in 2015 when we were elected on a promise to support the middle class and people working hard to join it after 10 years of Conservative mismanagement, we have actually delivered for Canadians. Whether it is on the housing strategy, whether it is on support for seniors, whether it is on support for families, through this COVID pandemic, we have been there for them. Even though the member for Carleton kept saying we were doing too much for Canadians, we continued to step up and have their backs. That is exactly what we are going to continue to do because Canadians deserve our support. They do not deserve Conservative games.

• (1455)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on October 28, 2020, the finance minister promised Canadians they would have deflation. For the Prime Minister's benefit, that means prices go down. Today the Bank of Canada confirmed that we have inflation. Again, for those who do not think about monetary policy, that means prices go up. Everything the Liberals said would go down is going up and everything they said would go up is now going down.

Now that the Prime Minister has himself spinning in circles and saying his own name here on the floor of the House of Commons, will he finally admit that what we have in this country is just—

The Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have seen over the past many weeks Conservatives simply try to play attacks, fling mud, label and distract, when the reality is Canadians deserve support. Canadians deserve a government like ours that continues to invest to support them with historic investments in infrastructure and housing, with supports for families and seniors.

The Conservatives continue to complain that we were investing too much through the beginning of this pandemic to support Canadians. What we have seen is our economic recovery is actually better than most of our peers because we were there for Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister got confused when he was asked about this famous middle class he is always talking about. It turned out he said it is those people who live off their income instead of their assets, except that inflation hits folks who live off income the hardest because their paycheque is worth less, while helping those people, like him, who live off ancestral assets. Their assets appreciate and inflate in value.

Maybe the reason he does not think about inflation is because he benefits from it. For example, could the Prime Minister tell us how much his mansion in the Laurentians has inflated in price since he took office?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again we see the Conservatives choosing to focus on me when they should be focused, like we are, on Canadians. We will continue to be there to invest in countering the housing crisis with real investments for municipalities as opposed to the member for Carleton's suggestion that we give tax breaks to wealthy landlords to help them sell their buildings. That is not what is going to help Canadians afford their first homes or retire in safety. That is the kind of thing the Conservatives proposed when we proposed concrete investments in helping Canadians through.

We promised to have their backs and, despite what the Conservatives say, we will continue to have their backs.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, speaking of wealthy landlords, I have here the financial stability report from the Bank of Canada, which shows that since the Prime Minister started pumping \$400 billion into the financial system, wealthy landlords have seen a 100% increase in mortgage lending they have been able to acquire. Cheap debt for the wealthy investor class, high inflation for the working class. More dollars chasing fewer goods means higher prices. Does the Prime Minister realize that ev-

Oral Questions

ery time he takes a trip to the central bank, Canadians have to go over to the food bank?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a question like that from the Conservatives might have a shred of credibility, had it not been for the fact that their entire plan on fighting the housing crisis in the last election was about giving a half-billion dollar tax break to wealthy landlords to help them sell their buildings. That is the kind of approach the Conservatives take while they are trying to attack the Liberal government. We will stay focused on Canadians while they stay focused on us. We will be there to have Canadians' backs as we are every single day with investments in housing, child care and families.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for weeks now, everyone in Quebec has been calling on the federal government to take its responsibility for gun control seriously. People have been waiting weeks for the government to take any kind of concrete action.

The government did not start by tightening border controls to thwart illegal arms trafficking. The government did not start by taking leadership on joint efforts by police forces. The government did not start by investing in border crossings. No, the government started by introducing Bill C-5 to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for illegal weapons.

Does the Prime Minister think the streets of Montreal will be safer once Bill C-5 is passed?

• (1500)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we introduced Bill C-5 because we know it will help curb violence and enable the police to stop criminals. It will also tackle the systemic discrimination that the Liberal Party acknowledges is a reality. The Bloc still seems a bit noncommittal on that.

We will also continue to invest hundreds of millions of dollars to help tackle gun trafficking at the border and to support our police forces so they can do their job. We will also invest \$1 million to help Quebec ban handguns altogether.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister is completely out of touch. The priority right now is to address violence in Montreal.

His priority should be to stop the flow of illegal weapons across our borders. His priority should be to keep guns off our streets. His priority should be to crack down on organized criminal gangs.

Oral Questions

Once he has fulfilled his responsibilities in the areas under his jurisdiction, once he has done all that, then we can have a conversation about minimum sentences.

Will the Prime Minister get his act together and put people's safety first—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our priority has been to invest \$125 million to create a cross-border task force to stop gun smuggling, \$250 million to support community-based anti-gang programs, \$327 million to ensure that police have the resources they need to better detect and prevent crime, and \$1 billion to help Quebec and other willing provinces ban handguns entirely.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a historic admission in the House of Commons today. The Prime Minister put aside his talking points about having people's backs and admitted that the rising cost of gas, food and essentials is just inflation.

With that admission out of the way, now knowing that inflation is gripping this country and the rising cost of living is worrying families and seniors on fixed incomes, will he take the next step and today tell Canadians that he will mandate the Bank of Canada to get inflation back down to 2%?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the Conservatives who have been saying that over the past many weeks. That is not the reality Canadians are facing. Canadians need concrete support now, which is why we are investing billions of dollars so municipalities can create more supply. We are investing to support families and seniors, even though the Conservatives said we were doing far too much.

On the Bank of Canada, the member opposite should well know that the mandate of the Bank of Canada is to keep inflation at 2%.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have seen, just in the last few years, houses go up 33%. Rents in Victoria, B.C., in one year alone are up 20%. Families with children are using food banks more than ever before. Families are worried and they have a Prime Minister who said he does not think about monetary policy, a Prime Minister who does not seem to know about the rising cost of living, and a Prime Minister who said famously that “budgets balance themselves”.

Will the Prime Minister stand up in this House, say he will fight for Canadians and get inflation back down?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one can always tell the Conservatives are getting desperate when they trot out every old attack line they have ever tried against me and against the Liberals instead of focusing on what actually needs to happen.

Canadians need a government like ours that continues to focus on them, not on petty political games. That is why we are stepping

up with a real national housing strategy to counter the housing crisis. That is why we are delivering \$10-a-day child care, which the member opposite opposes, right across the country. That is why we continue to be there for Canadians while Conservatives propose tax breaks for the wealthiest.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue. This is not about the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition. He suggests we are getting desperate. Canadian families are getting desperate.

There are single parents worried about Christmas gifts this year. There are seniors on fixed income who cannot afford to fill up their car. There are people worried about transient employment and driving Uber to save for a car over 15 years. He has a time to not say “I have their backs”. He has a time to say he will ask the Bank of Canada to get inflation back down to 2%.

• (1505)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the Leader of the Opposition that the Bank of Canada actually has a mandate to keep inflation at 2% right now, as we speak.

We are focused on making sure Canadians get the support they need. That is why we have invested in them and invested historic amounts to help them through this pandemic, to help small businesses, to help seniors and to help workers.

All the while, Conservatives kept saying we were spending too much, too fast. Well, our investments have had the Canadian economy rebound faster than most of our peer countries because of what we did, despite the complaints of the Conservatives. We will continue to have Canadians' backs.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, cutting greenhouse gas emissions and fighting climate change are important priorities for our government. Clean technologies are key to growing a sustainable economy.

Can the Prime Minister update the House on our government's investments in the clean technology sector?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle for her question and her hard work.

Our government has always been there to support and invest in innovative and clean growth projects. For example, we are making zero-emissions vehicles more affordable for Canadians, we are supporting the development and production of carbon-free aluminum in Quebec, and we are investing in cleaner, more sustainable electricity grids in the Atlantic provinces. We will continue to invest in clean technologies in order to grow a sustainable economy.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how the heck could the Prime Minister let his government repeat the mistakes of the past? Canadians went through hell in the quarantine hotels, and the ordeal is still going on, with no cleaning services, no milk for infants, mothers unable to get diapers for their children, and horrible meals.

Is this ringing any bells for the Prime Minister? How can he allow Canadians to be treated so badly?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will always be there to help Canadians in difficult situations and to ensure that the border rules are understood. However, our priority must be to keep Canadians safe. We must implement measures, even though they may be difficult or complex, to ensure that the vast majority of Canadians who remain in Canada are protected against COVID-19. That is what we have done from the outset, and we encourage everyone to follow public health rules. That is why we are encouraging Conservatives to get vaccinated.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I remember the beginning of the pandemic. The Liberals were slow to close the borders and bring in vaccines, and the N95 masks in the national stockpile were expired. All of that contributed to the first wave of closures and to the severe health measures we all faced. On top of that, there were the instances of sexual violence in the quarantine hotels.

The Prime Minister has learned absolutely nothing. He is repeating the same mistakes, except that this time, the ministers are announcing the failures in advance.

Why is the Prime Minister failing Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians remember is that the government has been there to support them during this pandemic. Our country was at the top of the list in terms of vaccination. We are here for Canadians. We have been helping businesses and families, and we have been covering missing paycheques for workers. We have been there to support them every step of the way, and we will continue to do so. We are all worried about the omicron variant, which is why we are taking the necessary precautions. We will be there for Canadians who travel, but especially for Canadians who remain here.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister has learned anything, then he should quickly bring his ministers together to send a clear message to Canadians. What is happening right now is that the Minister of Health is announcing measures that the Minister of Public Safety says he is unable to implement. Meanwhile, the Minister of Transport is already announcing changes. There seems to be a lot of confusion and im-

Oral Questions

provision going on, and Canadians are the ones paying the price. ArriveCAN, testing at airports, mandatory quarantines: None of it is working.

When will the Prime Minister call his ministers to order and work for Canadians instead of making things harder for them?

• (1510)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rather concerned that the member opposite is saying that nothing is working. The reality is that we are protecting Canadians across the country with one of the best systems in the world, as far as COVID-19 is concerned.

We are taking the necessary steps to rely on science and listen to the experts. Yes, that means adjustments will have to be made because of the omicron variant, and yes, adjustments will have to be made because the number of cases of COVID-19 continues to rise.

However, we will be there to ensure that every effort is being made to protect Canadians across the country.

* * *

[English]

SENIORS

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, seniors built the Canada we know and love today. Their retirement should be secure, and they should have the financial supports they need. GIS recipients are the most financially vulnerable seniors. Can the Prime Minister please update the House on what we are doing to help seniors make ends meet?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Sudbury for this important question and all her hard work.

One of the very first things we did when we came into office in 2015 was increase the GIS for seniors by 10% for the most vulnerable, those who have more challenges making ends meet in their retirement years. Ever since, we have continued to be there to help the seniors who need it most, especially through the challenging times of this pandemic. We will continue to be there for seniors, and they know the Liberal government can always be counted on.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have laid out how the housing crisis is impacting people, how inflation is driving up the cost of housing, and how the current government can take concrete steps to tackle it. We have laid out how it can tackle speculation by putting in specific measures to stop blind bidding, to stop property flipping and to discourage foreign buyers.

Business of Supply

It also needs to respond to the urgency of this crisis by building homes people can afford. We have called for massive and bold investments to build half a million new homes. Will the Prime Minister respond to the housing crisis with the urgency that it demands?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree. That is why we are working together on delivering massive investments to counter the housing challenges that Canadians are facing across the country. Whether it is by cracking down on speculative or predatory practices that take advantage of homebuyers, by limiting the impact of foreign buyers in our housing market or by investing \$4 billion for municipalities to accelerate the construction of affordable homes, these are the kinds of things we are doing. We look forward to working with all partners in the House to get it done.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, from coast to coast to coast, Canadians outside urban areas lack even the most basic public ground transportation. While the inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls called for such basic services and while our climate goals clearly require low-carbon bus and rail service, coach bus lines from Wilson's Transportation on the west coast to Maritime Bus await financial security and funding support.

A recent B.C. court decision called on the government, in the interests of reconciliation, to fund Vancouver Island rail. Will the Prime Minister commit to a national network of low-carbon, convenient and reliable rail and bus service?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of this government's first mandate in 2015, we put forward historic amounts of money to invest in public transit across the country and support the provinces and municipalities in moving forward on investments in transit that are going to keep people safe and reduce carbon emissions. That is what we have consistently done, including now with a permanent ongoing public transit fund that is going to support municipalities large and small across the country with investing for the future. We know there is much more to do and we look forward to continuing to work with all members in this House, including the hon. member, to get that done.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AFGHANISTAN

The House resumed from December 7 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

The Speaker: It being 3:15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion of the hon. member for Durham relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1535)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 6)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Aboultaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Aldag |
| Alghabra | Ali |
| Allison | Anand |
| Anandasangaree | Angus |
| Arnold | Arseneault |
| Arya | Ashton |
| Atwin | Bachrach |
| Badawey | Bains |
| Baker | Baldinelli |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Barron | Barsalou-Duval |
| Battiste | Beaulieu |
| Beech | Bendayan |
| Bennett | Benzen |
| Bergen | Bergeron |
| Berthold | Bérubé |
| Bezan | Bibeau |
| Bittle | Blaikie |
| Blair | Blanchet |
| Blanchette-Joncas | Blaney |
| Bloch | Blois |
| Boissonnault | Boulerice |
| Bradford | Bragdon |
| Brassard | Brière |
| Brock | Brunelle-Duceppe |
| Calkins | Cannings |
| Caputo | Carr |
| Carrie | Casey |
| Chabot | Chagger |
| Chahal | Chambers |
| Champagne | Champoux |
| Chatel | Chen |
| Chiang | Chong |
| Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek) | Collins (Victoria) |
| Cooper | Cormier |
| Coteau | Dabrusin |
| Dalton | Damoff |
| Dancho | Davidson |
| Davies | DeBellefeuille |
| Deltell | d'Entremont |
| Desbiens | Desilets |
| Desjarlais | Dhaliwal |
| Dhillon | Diab |
| Doherty | Dong |
| Dowdall | Dreeshen |
| Drouin | Dubourg |
| Duclos | Duguid |
| Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Duncan (Etobicoke North) |
| Dzerowicz | Ehsassi |
| El-Khoury | Ellis |
| Epp | Erskine-Smith |
| Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) | Falk (Provencher) |
| Fast | Fergus |
| Ferreri | Fillmore |
| Findlay | Fisher |
| Fonseca | Fortier |
| Fortin | Fragiskatos |
| Fraser | Freeland |
| Gaheer | Gallant |
| Garneau | Garon |
| Garrison | Gaudreau |

Business of Supply

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---|
| Gazan | Généreux | Seeback | Serré |
| Genuis | Gerretsen | Sgro | Shanahan |
| Gill | Gladu | Sheehan | Shields |
| Godin | Goodridge | ShIPLEY | Sidhu (Brampton East) |
| Gould | Gourde | Sidhu (Brampton South) | Simard |
| Gray | Guilbeault | Sinclair-Desgagné | Singh |
| Hajdu | Hallan | Small | Sorbara |
| Hanley | Hardie | Soroka | Spengemann |
| Hepfner | Hoback | Steinley | Ste-Marie |
| Holland | Housefather | Stewart | St-Onge |
| Hughes | Hussen | Strahl | Stubbs |
| Hutchings | Iacono | Sudds | Tassi |
| Idlout | Ien | Taylor Roy | Thériault |
| Jaczek | Jeneroux | Therrien | Thomas |
| Johns | Joly | Thompson | Tochor |
| Jones | Jowhari | Tolmie | Trudeau |
| Julian | Kayabaga | Trudel | Turnbull |
| Kelloway | Kelly | Uppal | Valdez |
| Khalid | Khera | Van Bynen | van Koeverden |
| Kitchen | Kmiec | Van Popta | Vandal |
| Koutrakis | Kram | Vandenbeld | Vecchio |
| Kramp-Neuman | Kurek | Vidal | Vien |
| Kusie | Kusmierczyk | Viersen | Vignola |
| Kwan | Lake | Villemure | Virani |
| Lalonde | Lambropoulos | Vis | Vuong |
| Lametti | Lamoureux | Wagantall | Warkentin |
| Lantsman | Lapointe | Waugh | Webber |
| Larouche | Lattanzio | Weiler | Wilkinson |
| Lauzon | Lawrence | Williams | Williamson |
| LeBlanc | Lebouthillier | Yip | Zahid |
| Lehoux | Lemire | Zarrillo | Zimmer |
| Lewis (Essex) | Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Zuberi— 333 | |
| Liepert | Lightbound | | |
| Lloyd | Lobb | | NAYS |
| Long | Longfield | | |
| Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) | MacAulay (Cardigan) | Nil | |
| MacDonald (Malpeque) | MacGregor | | PAIRED |
| MacKenzie | MacKinnon (Gatineau) | | |
| Maguire | Maloney | Nil | |
| Martel | Martinez Ferrada | | The Speaker: I declare the amendment carried. |
| Mathysen | May (Cambridge) | | [<i>English</i>] |
| May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) | Mazier | | The next question is on the main motion, as amended. |
| McCauley (Edmonton West) | McDonald (Avalon) | | ● (1555) |
| McGuinty | McKay | | (The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:) |
| McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) | McLean | | (<i>Division No. 7</i>) |
| McLeod | McPherson | | YEAS |
| Melillo | Mendès | | Members |
| Mendicino | Miao | | |
| Michaud | Miller | | |
| Moore | Morantz | | |
| Morrice | Morrison | | |
| Morrissey | Motz | | |
| Murray | Muys | | |
| Naqvi | Nater | | |
| Ng | Noormohamed | Aboultaif | Aitchison |
| Normandin | O'Connell | Albas | Allison |
| Oliphant | O'Regan | Angus | Arnold |
| O'Toole | Patzer | Ashton | Bachrach |
| Paul-Hus | Pauzé | Baldinelli | Barlow |
| Perkins | Perron | Barrett | Barron |
| Petitpas Taylor | Plamondon | Barsalou-Duval | Beaulieu |
| Powlowski | Qualtrough | Benzen | Bergen |
| Rayes | Redekopp | Bergeron | Berthold |
| Reid | Rempel Garner | Bérubé | Bezan |
| Richards | Roberts | Blaikie | Blanchet |
| Robillard | Rodriguez | Blanchette-Joncas | Blaney |
| Rogers | Romanado | Block | Boulerice |
| Rood | Ruff | Bragdon | Brassard |
| Sahota | Sajjan | Brock | Brunelle-Duceppe |
| Saks | Samson | Calkins | Cannings |
| Sarai | Savard-Tremblay | Caputo | Carrie |
| Scarpaleggia | Scheer | Chabot | Chambers |
| Schieffe | Schmale | Champoux | Chong |

Business of Supply

| | | | |
|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Collins (Victoria) | Cooper | | |
| Dalton | Dancho | | |
| Davidson | Davies | | |
| DeBellefeuille | Deltell | Aldag | Alghabra |
| d'Entremont | Desbiens | Ali | Anand |
| Desilets | Desjarlais | Anandasangaree | Arseneault |
| Doherty | Dowdall | Arya | Atwin |
| Dreeschen | Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Badawey | Bains |
| Ellis | Epp | Baker | Battiste |
| Erskine-Smith | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) | Beech | Bendayan |
| Falk (Provencher) | Fast | Bennett | Bibeau |
| Ferreri | Findlay | Bittle | Blair |
| Fortin | Gallant | Blois | Boissonnault |
| Garon | Garrison | Bradford | Brière |
| Gaudreau | Gazan | Carr | Casey |
| Généreux | Genuis | Chagger | Chahal |
| Gill | Gladu | Champagne | Chatel |
| Godin | Goodridge | Chen | Chiang |
| Gourde | Gray | Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek) | Cormier |
| Hallan | Hoback | Coteau | Dabrusin |
| Hughes | Idlout | Damoff | Dhaliwal |
| Jeneroux | Johns | Dhillon | Diab |
| Julian | Kelly | Dong | Drouin |
| Kitchen | Kmiec | Dubourg | Duclos |
| Kram | Kramp-Neuman | Duguid | Duncan (Etobicoke North) |
| Kurek | Kusie | Dzerowicz | Ehsassi |
| Kwan | Lake | El-Khoury | Fergus |
| Lantsman | Larouche | Fillmore | Fisher |
| Lawrence | Lehoux | Fonseca | Fortier |
| Lemire | Lewis (Essex) | Fragiskatos | Fraser |
| Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Liepert | Freeland | Fry |
| Lloyd | Lobb | Gaheer | Garneau |
| MacGregor | MacKenzie | Gerretsen | Gould |
| Maguire | Martel | Guilbeault | Hajdu |
| Masse | Mathysen | Hanley | Hardie |
| May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) | Mazier | Hepfner | Holland |
| McCauley (Edmonton West) | McLean | Housefather | Hussen |
| McPherson | Melillo | Hutchings | Iacono |
| Michaud | Moore | Ien | Jaczek |
| Morantz | Morrice | Joly | Jones |
| Morrison | Motz | Jowhari | Kayabaga |
| Muys | Nater | Kelloway | Khalid |
| Normandin | O'Toole | Khera | Koutrakis |
| Patzer | Paul-Hus | Kusmierczyk | Lalonde |
| Pauzé | Perkins | Lambropoulos | Lametti |
| Perron | Plamondon | Lamoureux | Lapointe |
| Poilievre | Powlowski | Lattanzio | Lauzon |
| Rayes | Redekopp | LeBlanc | Lebouthillier |
| Reid | Rempel Garner | Lightbound | Long |
| Richards | Roberts | Longfield | Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) |
| Rood | Ruff | MacAulay (Cardigan) | MacDonald (Malpeque) |
| Savard-Tremblay | Scheer | MacKinnon (Gatineau) | Maloney |
| Schmale | Seeback | Martinez Ferrada | May (Cambridge) |
| Shields | Shipley | McDonald (Avalon) | McGuinty |
| Simard | Sinclair-Desgagné | McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) | McLeod |
| Singh | Small | Mendès | Mendicino |
| Soroka | Steinley | Miao | Miller |
| Ste-Marie | Stewart | Morrissey | Murray |
| Strahl | Stubbs | Naqvi | Ng |
| Thériault | Therrien | Noormohamed | O'Connell |
| Thomas | Tochor | Oliphant | O'Regan |
| Tolmie | Trudel | Petitpas Taylor | Qualtrough |
| Uppal | Van Popta | Robillard | Rodriguez |
| Vecchio | Vidal | Rogers | Romanado |
| Vien | Viersen | Sahota | Sajjan |
| Vignola | Villemure | Saks | Samson |
| Vis | Wagantall | Sarai | Scarpaleggia |
| Warkentin | Waugh | Schieffe | Serré |
| Webber | Williams | Sgro | Shanahan |
| Williamson | Zarrillo | Sheehan | Sidhu (Brampton East) |
| Zimmer—179 | | Sidhu (Brampton South) | Sorbara |
| | | Spengemann | St-Onge |
| | | Sudds | Tassi |

NAYS

Members

Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Vuong
Wilkinson
Zahid

Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Weiler
Yip
Zuberi — 156

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion, as amended, carried.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED NON-COMPLIANCE WITH AN ORDER OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today in response to the intervention of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, who was responding to the question of privilege we raised a few days ago in relation to the production of documents by the Public Health Agency of Canada in the infamous matter of the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg.

We have carefully read the government's response—

The Speaker: I must interrupt the hon. member for a moment.

[*English*]

Order. The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent is presenting a question of privilege. We want to make sure we all hear it, so I want to ask everyone who is speaking to please take it to the lobby so we can hear the hon. member.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your intervention.

We have carefully read the text tabled by the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, and we have noticed that efforts are being made. However, these efforts to find an appropriate solution are many months late.

Let us recall that there were two positive votes at the former Special Committee on Canada-China Relations, as well as two votes here, in the House, in favour of our proposal to order the production of documents.

The will of Parliament is therefore clear and, aside from a few details, the September election did not change the seat map to such an extent that one could expect a different result if, by any chance, there were a fifth vote on this request.

[*English*]

My counterpart cited the handling of Afghan detainee documents as an example that we could follow, so allow me to add a bit of context.

An ad hoc committee of parliamentarians was created as a solution forged by necessity given that a 2009 Liberal opposition mo-

Privilege

tion recklessly ordered the public release of some 40,000 pages in their original and uncensored form, despite the fact that this could have prejudiced the interests of Canada and its NATO allies where our troops were at risk on the ground.

In his widely celebrated April 27, 2010, ruling, Speaker Miliken, recognizing that there was support across the House to address the Liberal motion's shortcomings and ensure sensitive information was protected, invited senior figures in the House to find an "interest-based solution to this thorny question" of reconciling the House's role as grand inquest of the nation and the executive's role as defender of realm, before he would turn the matter over to the House for its adjudication. Those discussions yielded the ad hoc committee, whose processes built upon the good-faith efforts of the government of the day, begun well ahead of any Speaker's rulings, to have a trusted, independent review, at arm's length from the government, determine what information could safely be placed in the public domain.

● (1600)

[*Translation*]

Unlike the situation in 2009–10, the motions adopted by the Special Committee on Canada–China Relations and the House included mechanisms to strike a balance between parliamentary accountability and protecting sensitive information in the 546 pages in question, which represent only about 1.4% of the volume of the Afghan detainee documents, and foster ongoing dialogue on the issue, as the Speaker acknowledged in his ruling on June 16, 2021.

The very basis of the government's argument against our point of privilege is that when the Conservatives were in power, they applied the solution that the Liberal government now wishes to apply to the situation at the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg. However, this is like comparing apples and oranges.

The situation in 2009–10 involved the production of 40,000 pages of unredacted documents to be released to the public. We are proposing that 546 pages be released. That is not the same thing at all. In addition, we would like the documents to be analyzed by table officers to prevent any sensitive information that could compromise public safety from being released. Evidently, it is apples and oranges.

It is also important to remember, with respect to the Afghan documents of 2009–10, that our country was involved in a military operation on enemy territory. Soldiers from our army, Canadians in uniform, were fighting the Taliban enemy in Afghanistan. Their health, their safety, and their lives were at risk, whereas with regard to the Winnipeg issue, what we are talking about is analyzing the work of public servants to see what they did with respect to other public servants. This involves a few people, a few individuals. These are two completely different things.

I wish to remind the House that it is also important to keep in mind that the majority of the House voted to have the law clerk and parliamentary counsel conduct a reliable, independent review at arm's length from the government.

Privilege

To that end, Mr. Speaker, in your June 2021 ruling, you stated the following: “It is, however, not up to the Chair to judge the extent of the measures taken, but to note that they were considered. There is thus no reason to allow an additional delay.”

[*English*]

Regrettably, delay was the name of the game for the government. Its approach this spring was not to accept the reasonable compromise set out in the motions, nor to negotiate workable amendments to those arrangements. Instead, its approach was to deny, then to deflect and then to finally litigate, in an entirely shocking and unprecedented court application against the House of Commons. Members will recall I argued last month that that also constitutes contempt against the House.

[*Translation*]

We must unfortunately note that this is, to our knowledge, the only time in Canadian history and in Commonwealth parliamentary history that the government has gone to Federal Court to challenge the voted will of the House of Commons. The executive branch used the judicial branch to prevent the legislative branch from doing its job. The government is knocking on the Federal Court's door to prevent the House of Commons from doing its job. This has never happened in Canadian history, nor, as far as we know, has it ever happened in Commonwealth parliamentary history.

The only event that comes to mind happened in June, July and August 1974 at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., when the President of the United States went to the Supreme Court to prevent the release of documents as requested by the U.S. Congress. The executive branch knocked on the door of the judicial branch to prevent the legislative branch from doing its job. That was the Watergate scandal. Need I remind the House that the government or executive branch at the time, meaning the President, resigned a few days after the Supreme Court decision?

[*English*]

Surely, members can appreciate that Conservatives are worried about the government's sudden 180° turn. Indeed, the official opposition has serious concerns, to say the least, that the government's proposal represents an actual change in any way, shape or form to the government's approach, given the Liberal's pattern of behaviour concerning parliamentary accountability over the past few years.

Furthermore, I must also take note of the government House leader's words on the floor of the Commons last week, which were not in the letter that was shared with journalists, on how his proposition was conditional, when he stated, “If the matter is revived again in this new Parliament by way of substantive motion”.

Therefore, if I am to understand his position correctly, it is not actually an effort to address my question of privilege, which is currently before the Chair, but rather, I would say, distract from it. It will follow that, for the House to achieve any forward progress in obtaining the documents, which have already been ordered four times to be produced, you must deliver your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

The government House leader's parliamentary secretary recently rose in the House to distract us from the principle that a Parliament may punish the contempts committed against its predecessor by

discussing imprisonment in the Tower of London five centuries ago. I would remind you of the recent citations of several Canadian speakers' statements on that matter, all from our own lifetime, and all delivered by the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, who is also the deputy House leader of the official opposition.

● (1605)

[*Translation*]

Nevertheless, in the interests of finding an adequate solution that addresses the concerns of all the parties, I think that the response could actually be found in the June 21 letter and in the speech given in the House by the former government House leader, the member for Honoré-Mercier, who said, and I quote:

While the government accepts that the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel has the appropriate security clearance to review the information, we do not believe he has the necessary training or expertise in national security-related information to make the necessary assessment.

He continued:

The government is open to providing the unredacted documents to the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel if the House of Commons agrees that national security specialists can assist him in this process and that other appropriate safeguards be put in place.

This offer is consistent with the open-door policy that the law clerk talked about during the March 31 meeting of the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations. He said, and I quote:

In terms of national security and other grounds, my office acts essentially as the department of justice for the legislative branch and we provide legal services and legal advice to committees on all of their areas of law, including all of those potential grounds for confidentiality that committees and/or the House may decide to accept or not accept. We are prepared and able to provide that legal advice in the interpretation of those concepts, including national security, commercial sensitivity and so on.

That said, there may well be some factual information and knowledge that the government or other entities have that we don't have, because it's their information and their concerns, and they may be well placed to share that with us with regard to proposed redactions or proposed areas of concern. That's certainly something the committee can consider, namely, to have my office provide you with advice on the scope and application of those grounds, but not preventing the government or any witness from proposing and raising a concern—albeit, with this committee, and ultimately the House, still having the last word on accepting or not that interpretation.

[*English*]

Therefore, I would propose that the government deposit the documents with the law clerk, as previously ordered, and together, along with other representatives of the acting national security and intelligence adviser to the Prime Minister and/or the director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, to suggest what, in their professional opinions, ought to be redacted and why, in order to assist the law clerk in discharging his duty.

As for the other unspecified “appropriate safeguards” the former government House leader referred to, I believe these should be simple, incontrovertible matters, such as ensuring that in camera discussion of the documents does not take place on Zoom or allowing the meeting to take place at a secure facility away from Parliament Hill. These could be easily negotiated in a unanimous consent motion to supplement the existing sound and responsible measures already adopted by the House.

That is what Conservatives believe to be a reasonable resolution to the situation. It would allow the government's concerns to be addressed while vindicating the authority of Parliament to order the production of documents. Hopefully, the Liberal government will voluntarily table the documents, so we can get on with the redaction process.

Otherwise, you will have to make a ruling to allow the process to move forward, and if you find a prima facie case of contempt, I remain prepared to move an appropriate motion.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent. I will take these matters under advisement and come back to the House with my ruling as soon as possible.

* * *

[*English*]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

(On the Order: Introduction of Bills)

S-2 — December 7, 2021 — The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons — An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts.

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of the House to the presence on the order paper of Bill S-2, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, which the Senate adopted on December 7 and submitted to our attention the same day.

[*Translation*]

The Chair is not in the habit of expressing its concerns on procedural matters in the House unless a point of order has been raised, except in very specific and particularly important cases.

I thus wish to advise the House that, at first glance, Bill S-2 seems to infringe upon the financial prerogative of the Crown and, since it originates in the Senate, it could also infringe upon the privileges of the House with respect to the appropriation of public funds.

The provisions set out in the bill are extremely complex, and the Chair wishes to hear members' observations on the matter.

[*English*]

I thus encourage members who wish to comment on the issue to do so as soon as possible. In the meantime, I will not allow the motion for first reading to be moved.

I thank hon. members for their attention.

Routine Proceedings

ROYAL ASSENT

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

December 8, 2021

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 8th day of December, 2021, at 10:49 a.m.

Yours sincerely,

Ian McCowan

Secretary to the Governor General and Herald Chancellor

The schedule indicates the bill assented to was Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy).

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND PRIVACY

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act, I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, two copies of the 2021 access to information and privacy reports for the following: the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces; Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces; Military Grievances External Review Committee; Military Police Complaints Commission; Communications Security Establishment and Non-Public Property; and Staff of the Non-Public Funds, Canadian Forces.

While I am on my feet, I move:

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

• (1615)

The Speaker: 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 so indicate to the Chair.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1705)

During the taking of the vote:

The Speaker: The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon did not hear the question, but we need unanimous consent to allow him to vote. Do we have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1710)

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

*Routine Proceedings**(Division No. 8)*

YEAS

Members

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Aldag | Alghabra |
| Ali | Anand |
| Anandasangaree | Angus |
| Arseneault | Arya |
| Ashton | Atwin |
| Bachrach | Badawey |
| Bains | Baker |
| Barron | Battiste |
| Beech | Bendayan |
| Bennett | Bibeau |
| Bittle | Blaikie |
| Blair | Blaney |
| Blois | Boissonnault |
| Boulerice | Bradford |
| Brière | Cannings |
| Carr | Casey |
| Chagger | Chahal |
| Champagne | Chatel |
| Chiang | Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek) |
| Collins (Victoria) | Cormier |
| Coteau | Dabrusin |
| Damoff | Davies |
| Desjarlais | Dhaliwal |
| Dhillon | Diab |
| Dong | Drouin |
| Dubourg | Duclos |
| Duguid | Duncan (Etobicoke North) |
| Dzerowicz | Ehsassi |
| El-Khoury | Erskine-Smith |
| Fergus | Fillmore |
| Fisher | Fonseca |
| Fortier | Fragiskatos |
| Fraser | Freeland |
| Fry | Gaheer |
| Garneau | Garrison |
| Gazan | Gerretsen |
| Gould | Guilbeault |
| Hajdu | Hanley |
| Hardie | Hepfner |
| Holland | Housefather |
| Hughes | Hussen |
| Hutchings | Iacono |
| Idlout | Ien |
| Jaczek | Johns |
| Joly | Jones |
| Jowhari | Julian |
| Kayabaga | Kelloway |
| Khalid | Khera |
| Koutrakis | Kusmierczyk |
| Kwan | Lalonde |
| Lambropoulos | Lametti |
| Lamoureux | Lapointe |
| Lattanzio | Lauzon |
| LeBlanc | Lebouthillier |
| Lightbound | Long |
| Longfield | Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) |
| MacAulay (Cardigan) | MacDonald (Malpeque) |
| MacGregor | MacKinnon (Gatineau) |
| Maloney | Martinez Ferrada |
| Mathysen | May (Cambridge) |
| McDonald (Avalon) | McGuinty |
| McKay | McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) |
| McLeod | McPherson |
| Mendès | Mendicino |
| Miao | Miller |
| Morrice | Morrissey |
| Murray | Naqvi |
| Ng | Noormohamed |

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| O'Connell | Oliphant |
| O'Regan | Petipas Taylor |
| Powlowski | Qualtrough |
| Robillard | Rodriguez |
| Rogers | Romanado |
| Sahota | Sajjan |
| Saks | Samson |
| Sarai | Scarpaleggia |
| Schiefke | Serré |
| Sgro | Shanahan |
| Sheehan | Sidhu (Brampton East) |
| Sidhu (Brampton South) | Singh |
| Sorbara | Spengemann |
| St-Onge | Sudds |
| Tassi | Taylor Roy |
| Thompson | Turnbull |
| Valdez | Van Bynen |
| van Koevorden | Vandal |
| Vandenbeld | Virani |
| Vuong | Weiler |
| Wilkinson | Yip |
| Zahid | Zarrillo |
| Zuberi — 181 | |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Aboultaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Allison |
| Arnold | Baldinelli |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Barsalou-Duval | Beaulieu |
| Benzen | Bergen |
| Bergeron | Berthold |
| Bérubé | Bezan |
| Blanchette-Joncas | Block |
| Bragdon | Brassard |
| Brock | Brunelle-Duceppe |
| Calkins | Caputo |
| Carrie | Chabot |
| Chambers | Champoux |
| Chong | Cooper |
| Dalton | Dancho |
| Davidson | DeBellefeuille |
| Deltell | d'Entremont |
| Desbiens | Desilets |
| Dowdall | Dreeshen |
| Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Ellis |
| Epp | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) |
| Falk (Provencher) | Fast |
| Ferreri | Findlay |
| Fortin | Gallant |
| Garon | Gaudreau |
| Généreux | Genuis |
| Gill | Gladu |
| Godin | Goodridge |
| Gourde | Gray |
| Hallan | Hoback |
| Jeneroux | Kelly |
| Kitchen | Kram |
| Kramp-Neuman | Kurek |
| Kusie | Lake |
| Lantsman | Larouche |
| Lawrence | Lehoux |
| Lemire | Lewis (Essex) |
| Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Liepert |
| Lloyd | Lobb |
| MacKenzie | Maguire |
| Martel | May (Saatch—Gulf Islands) |
| Mazier | McCaughey (Edmonton West) |
| McLean | Melillo |
| Michaud | Moore |
| Morantz | Morrison |

Motz
Nater
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
Simard
Small
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Therrien
Tolmie
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Muys
Normandin
Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Seeback
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Thériault
Thomas
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer— 148

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL C-3—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canada Labour Code, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the bill; and

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

• (1715)

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

[Translation]

I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places or to use the “raise hand” function so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been only 12 days since Parliament was recalled and the 338 parliamentarians in the House were called to debate legislation. This is the second time in just 12 days that the government has imposed time allocation on a bill.

Government Orders

This is an important bill that deserves careful attention and serious parliamentary work. Unfortunately, the government is shutting down debate for the second time, saying that this is an emergency situation and that we need to proceed quickly because of the upcoming holiday season.

The only reason we are in a hurry to pass bills is that the government decided to call an unnecessary election that Canadians did not want and that cost taxpayers \$620 million. All this to end up with a Parliament that looks very much like it did last June. Today we are in a hurry because the government dragged its feet for more than 60 days between election day and our return to the House. The government has only itself to blame for the fact that we are in a hurry.

Why shut down debate in Canada's Parliament for the second time when we have been back in the House for just 12 days?

[English]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think it is absolutely imperative that we move as quickly as we can on this because the COVID virus, the coronavirus, waits for nobody. It is important that we allow an opportunity for our health care workers to feel safe. It is important too that we ensure our frontline workers, and workers as a whole, feel safe and know that they no longer have to choose between the groceries they buy or the rent they pay and their ability to stay home if they do not feel well.

This is one of the many things we have learned from the pandemic, which we are still not through. We are still fighting our way out of it. It is important that we move quickly, that we learn from our past lessons and perhaps errors, in some cases, so we know and understand what we need to do next. This is important.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government forced us into an election. I will repeat the remarks of my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent, who quite rightly said that this election, which cost \$600 million, was unnecessary.

We waited two months before coming back to the House. Everything was going well. The situation was under control. The government was in no hurry. Now, all of a sudden, it is an emergency.

We had very little time to debate this bill. Some Bloc Québécois members still wanted to speak. We do not understand what the rush is. I have not seen anyone in Quebec starting fights on buses to get this bill passed more quickly. I do not understand what is so urgent. I know that the minister just answered this question, but he has not convinced anyone here that the situation is all that urgent. The House still needs to be respected. We can appreciate the need to bring in time allocation when there is an urgent need to act, but right now, there is no emergency.

Why proceed so quickly without leaving time for discussion?

Government Orders

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, the pandemic has shown us that many workers do not have paid sick leave. We are proposing amendments to the Canada Labour Code to provide all federally regulated private sector workers with 10 days of paid sick leave. We will work with the provinces, territories and other interested stakeholders to come up with an action plan to legislate sick leave across the country.

[English]

Let me add that time is indeed of the essence, and that regardless of what differences we may have in the House, we all know and understand that the virus and its variations wait for no one, including ourselves.

Mr. Peter Julian (House leader of the New Democratic Party, NDP): Madam Speaker, a week ago today we saw a moment in the House that I think all of us, and all Canadians, were proud of. All 338 members of Parliament came together to pass at all stages the ban on conversion therapy. That was an important moment in the House.

Now we have other important legislation that is before us. Of course, the member for Burnaby South has been the foremost proponent of this, raising it dozens of times in the House. The NDP caucus has strongly pushed the government to put in place 10 days of paid sick leave. During the pandemic, all members of Parliament have become aware of how important it is to have these provisions for paid sick leave put into place. No worker should have to choose between going to work sick and putting food on the table. The provisions of this bill achieve that.

My question to my hon. colleague is this. Why are some members of Parliament trying to hold up this bill rather than get it through so that it will be in place and workers can benefit from it?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, many of us in the House can reflect on that moment. We were able to make some significant changes and ban conversion therapy in this country. What we showed was that on some matters that may divide us, when the imperative was there and we needed to see progress and justice, we were able to move in the House.

We are saying now that because of the virus, its ability to mutate and the variations that exist, we know and understand that workers need 10 paid sick days because that is the time it takes for a lockdown.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I see what is happening today as a very strong signal of the government's priority. I applaud my New Democrat friends for recognizing that by allowing us to move to orders of the day.

Whether the government is supporting our businesses or individuals, the pandemic is still there, as the minister has referred to. We need to have the backs of Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and this particular legislation is going to support them in a tangible way. We are talking about disposable income and saving jobs, and this is really important to all of us.

Given the relatively short time span and the importance of passing this legislation, would the minister not agree that pushing it through in this manner will provide peace of mind? That is what I

want: peace of mind for Canadians so they know the House of Commons is still there to support them through this difficult time.

• (1725)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, the impassioned rhetoric of the hon. member inspires me, as it has inspired many in the House.

I would say to the hon. member that the virus waits for nobody. The sooner we can get through whatever the next wave may be, and the sooner workers do not hesitate to stay home if they feel sick, the better. Let there be no hesitation in workers feeling comfortable staying home, and knowing that they will be able to pay rent and pay for groceries. Fifty-eight per cent of workers in this country do not have any paid sick leave. This is a good start.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, what concerns me about trying to close down debate on this issue is that it is an issue where we have had fairly general and broad support across the House. It is a shame that we are being pushed to end this debate, because it is not just about a debate. Often, this chamber is a place for members to sing the praises of people on the front lines, for example, of health care in their communities. This bill provides an opportunity to do that.

We have also been working on a couple of amendments to this bill, particularly the labour parts of the bill, to make it more effective and to do more with it. I worry that we are going to rush it through and miss the opportunity to make the bill better.

When we all try to work together, agree on something and make it better, why rush? It seems unfair to the process.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for what I think has been a very collaborative effort to make sure that we seek common solutions, adjustments and compromises where we can in order to make sure not only that this legislation passes as quickly as it can, but that it is as effective as it should be. For that, I agree with the hon. member that we need to make sure it is heard. It will be heard in the time. I realize and understand that it is not the length of time that many members would want, but it is imperative that we do this as quickly as possible. The sooner it is done, the safer our workers will be. The safer our workers are, the safer everybody in the country is.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to reflect on the unanimous consent that the House granted just last week, and the ability of parliamentarians to work together to challenge the issues that are present to workers.

Ten days of paid sick leave can go a tremendous way toward helping racialized communities across the country. We have seen the discrepancy that has been occurring recently, and as many as 20 months ago, in racialized communities, and in particular in my community in Alberta. We have seen at places like Cargill, for example, racialized workers being hit the hardest. The importance of a requirement for 10 days of sick leave is something they have been fighting for, for a long time.

Would the government agree that this bill is long overdue and we must do this now? Workers cannot wait any longer.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, a tremendous number of Canadians remain vulnerable. They remain in a position where, if they feel they are sick, they are not entirely sure if they can afford to stay home. While I understand with all humility that the federally regulated jurisdiction only occupies about 6% of the workforce, it is a big place to start. It occupies some of the biggest companies in this country, many of which have already shown tremendous leadership in providing paid sick days for their employees, but there are many that have not, and this is a good place to start.

After that, we will begin our consultations with provinces and territories that have the vast majority of the workplaces and govern those workplaces, but this is a good place to start.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, on addressing the other point from the paid sick days on this particular piece of legislation, the minister is talking about the protection of individuals who are trying to access hospitals. In my riding of Kingston and the Islands, we saw protests, harassing comments and things being thrown at people going to and from a cancer clinic at Kingston General Hospital, of all places.

Could the minister comment on how important it is that this legislation get through as quickly as possible? Then people would not have to worry about this form of intimidation when they were trying to access a hospital, for example.

• (1730)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that very important point and for the opportunity to speak on behalf of not just the constituents of St. John's South—Mount Pearl, but on behalf of millions of Canadians who were utterly disgusted by what they saw on the news. It was night after night of people intimidating and obstructing our health care workers and patients as they tried to receive the health care they desperately needed, and while our workers tried to do the work we counted on them to do in a pandemic.

What we hope will come of this legislation is an increase in the fines and, more importantly, very exact and precise instruction to law enforcement so that they do not hesitate in making sure there is no obstruction or intimidation of health care workers or patients as they enter medical facilities. I think that is very important, but more important than any of it is a clear show of support and solidarity for health care workers in this country.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a little disheartening, I am sure, for Canadians to see that the coalition is alive once again between the Liberals and the NDP.

Government Orders

When I see time allocation moved on an important bill, I think of the tremendous work that my colleague, the member of Parliament for Cariboo—Prince George, did on Bill C-211, an act to amend the Criminal Code, assaults against health care professionals and first responders. There is a time for debate and discussion on these things, and the government is cutting that short. In our own platform, we spoke about critical infrastructure protection: protecting Canadians and protecting infrastructure. The minister is cutting off that type of debate.

We will take no lessons from the Liberals when I hear them say that “COVID waits for no one.” It is a government that called a COVID election.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, I would simply say that if we look at just about any country in the world, we have acted tremendously. We have acted quickly, effectively and thoroughly.

In this instance, we recognize that, as we head into the winter months and as more people spend more time inside, it is imperative that we act quickly so that workers know immediately, or as quickly as we can offer them that assurance, that they are able to stay home when sick. When they are able to stay home, they are not entering the workplace perhaps with symptoms or perhaps with the virus. This is something that, while I hear the hon. member, is the circumstance. This is a pandemic that we are still in the middle of. I will repeat again in the House: Time is of the essence.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the minister, respectfully, a question about process.

We have a piece of legislation in front us, and I am a bit confused as to why it groups together two very different issues. It groups together a question of benefits for people who are sick, and a question of Criminal Code amendments with respect to harassment and intimidation. I am concerned that the government, it seems, is unwilling to have individual proposals debated on their own and is therefore trying to group together multiple, unrelated items to avoid scrutiny and debate. Both of these items are things that I think we have shown we are supportive of, but it seems like an abuse of process for the government to not only be moving closure but, prior to that, lumping together unrelated items.

I remind the minister that, in 2015, the government promised not to bring in omnibus bills, yet we see this routine lumping together to minimize parliamentary scrutiny. It is part of a dangerous trend.

Can the minister comment on why his government is continuing to undermine, really, its respect for Parliament with these kinds of tactics?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, I hardly think this is a lumping together of two very polarized or disparate ideas. They are welded together quite firmly by two overriding concerns. One is the spread of the virus, first and foremost, and the other is concern for workers. In both of these affairs, that is what we are dealing with.

Government Orders

On the one hand, we want to make sure workers feel safe and secure, knowing they can go home if they do not feel well, that they will be cared for and looked after as best as we can, and that they will be assured of paid leave.

On the other hand, specifically for health care workers, we want them to know they can go about their duty. They can go to work doing the good work they do in a pandemic to protect all of us, remembering that one of the overriding imperatives of lockdowns and moving as quickly as we have, as almost every member here can agree, is making sure our health care system is not overcome and that the health care workers themselves remain safe.

This is extraordinarily important in terms of making sure the virus does not spread any further and workers, in both cases, are protected.

• (1735)

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about inspiring rhetoric for a second. The minister himself, in his announcement, actually pointed out that the vast majority of federally regulated private sector workers already have more generous paid sick leave programs, and this may not have that massive an impact on those positions in the private sector.

I wonder if, in fact, we are rushing this because the Liberals felt they should have gotten it done before the unnecessary election. They had lots of time to start this process then. I do not understand why we cannot get a little more work done on this now to make sure we can make the amendments we want in order to make it more substantive and so the minister can start his negotiations with the provinces. If it is such a crushing thing, it should have been done before this unnecessary election. I do not understand why we cannot just take a few more days here.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, I would simply say that it is not 10 days. While there are some people within federally regulated industries and within the jurisdiction who have some paid sick leave, they do not have 10 days. The reason 10 days is so important is that it is roughly two weeks. We all know what two weeks is. It is the time it takes to lock down and make sure people are safe. We know that if they have to quarantine, it is the amount of time that will inhibit the spread of the virus.

If we are looking at two weeks, it is roughly 10 working days, which is why we landed on 10 days. Six days is not enough. Seven days is not enough. Ten is the magic number and it is a number we need to start moving on now. The sooner we do that, the better. We start with those in federal jurisdiction and we move on to talking to the provinces and territories again on an accelerated basis.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, during the pandemic we have seen many health care workers being harassed just trying to do their jobs, and we certainly have seen that for decades and decades for women who are trying to access safe abortions.

How is this legislation being put forward going to protect, for example, not only health care workers providing vaccinations but also health care workers who provide proper reproductive health care for women?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, we cannot allow the intimidation or obstruction of duty of health care workers we have asked to simply do their jobs. This is something so many of us saw on the news night after night: health care workers who were intimidated and obstructed.

My officials worked hand in glove with officials in the justice department, first to make sure this would in no way infringe upon their ability to strike or express themselves, and we are assured of that. This would give clarity and purpose to law enforcement, who know now without question that this is something they need to act upon if indeed they see the obstruction and intimidation of health care workers as they go about their duties and functions in the jobs we have asked them to do.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a couple of questions for the minister that I have asked a number of times but not received a clear answer on. I am hoping he can clarify a couple of things.

First, this bill deals with two very distinct issues. I was hopeful, and remain hopeful, that it could possibly be split up to be studied in the two separate committees where it would best fit. Question number one is whether he would be willing to proceed in that manner and take leadership on that.

Second, specifically regarding the paid sick leave, I have asked a number of times exactly how many workers this would affect. Are we talking about thousands? Many workers within federally regulated sectors already have extensive sick leave provisions, either under union contracts or whatever the case may be. How many workers would this actually affect and to what extent would it affect them? Would it affect the contractor who is contracted to work for a sector that may be federally regulated?

There are a lot of questions surrounding this that I have not received answers for yet, and I am hoping the minister can clarify some of those things.

• (1740)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, I will get the hon. member the exact number of how many federal workers it affects. I will say that it is in the hundreds of thousands. It is quite sizable. That is why I insist that this is a good place to start.

I will disagree humbly with the hon. member, just to say that while I understand we are looking at two issues contained within this bill, what they very much have in common is, first of all, our fight against this pandemic. While that may seem fairly broad, it is not broad when we talk about our imperative to move quickly on it and our ability to act fast and assure workers in this country that they can stay home, should stay home and must stay home if there is any suspicion or question that they may have it.

Government Orders

Secondly, particularly for health care workers in this country, they too need to know that they can go to work, knowing they have the support of this House and Canadians in doing the duties we need them to perform as we continue to fight this pandemic through this winter.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as some in this House may know, I have a spouse who works in health care, and I know many members in this House have family and friends who work in the health care system. We have seen how the pandemic has really pushed our health care system to the point of breaking many times, and it is relying right now on the moral fibre and goodwill of those working within the system. We have also seen paramedics, who really are at a breaking point.

I would like to hear from the minister about why there is urgency on this bill, as far as protecting the workplaces and getting people in to work to provide health care services during this ongoing pandemic in the waves we are seeing, as well as ensuring access to medical facilities by patients. I would appreciate it if the minister could comment on that.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, I think almost every member of this House in some way can relate to somebody who they know, like a member of their family or a friend, who is either a health care worker themselves, like a nurse, doctor, orderly or paramedic, or somebody who was possibly treated by them. We have a great deal of sympathy and appreciation for the good work they do.

I remember doing initial interviews for this and being told that people feel this way. It is very important that we also make the statement to health care workers in this country that we support them and that we support them in a tangible way. We will ensure, as best we can, that they will not be intimidated and obstructed in the duties we ask them to perform. While they have always been on the front line of health care, right now they remain stalwart in their fight on the front lines against a pandemic in this country, and it is important that we give them every bit of ammunition we can.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the citizens of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

My questions for the hon. minister are twofold. First, did the hon. minister implore the Prime Minister to bring back Parliament earlier than two months after the election, given the necessity, in his view and in his mind, to bring this legislation forward as quickly as possible? Second, does the hon. minister know of three employers who specifically do not offer two weeks of paid sick leave and are federally regulated?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, I will provide those names to the member. There are some companies that have yet to provide the full two weeks. In fact, about 63% of employees in federally regulated industries do not receive the full two weeks, so the vast majority do not. Again, and I cannot say this often enough, the two weeks is what is important here. The 10 days is what is important. We all know that, because it is the amount of time it takes to quarantine safely, if someone has been affected by the virus.

It is important that we reach that number, and it is important that we do that as soon as possible as we enter the winter months. We

know that when more people are staying inside, their ability to contract the virus increases exponentially. We need to make sure those numbers remain down. Canadians, time and again, have stood up. They have become vaccinated. They want to make sure we are all doing the right thing, because bit by bit, we are getting there and defeating this virus, but we need to get over this hump.

• (1745)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have heard the hon. minister speak about this, and the only argument he has actually made to justify the 10 days of paid sick leave is that of COVID, so my question for him is this: Why is there no sunset clause in the bill, so that once COVID is over, the 10 days are reversed and we let the private sector take care of it, as it has done all along?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, we also believe that this is not only a permanent change, but a good change that will be in the interest of public health, not only for this pandemic but, unfortunately, possibly for the next one. We want to make sure we are equipped to handle not just the one we are going through, but quite possibly some that may follow. This is one of many things we have learned. There are many who would argue quite the opposite and ask why we did not do this on a permanent basis much sooner. I would simply say this: Here we are. We are here together debating it and I believe we will do it.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question for the hon. minister is twofold. The first part is on the issue of urgency. Can he identify, given that we all recognize the horrors that happened during the election regarding the protests and the intimidation, that since the election this has been an ongoing trend? I would like to know about that, because I have not heard about it.

The second part is on the issue of statutory interpretation. How does the issue of minor disturbances, which appear to be allowed under these amendments, assist the health care workers?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, I would simply say it is extremely important that obstruction and intimidation are dealt with, and we believe they are dealt with effectively in this bill.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 40 minutes.

[*English*]

It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

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

The hon. member for Banff—Airdrie.

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded division.

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
Call in the members.

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 9*)

YEAS

Members

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| Aldag | Alghabra |
| Ali | Anand |
| Anandasangaree | Angus |
| Arseneault | Arya |
| Ashton | Atwin |
| Bachrach | Badawey |
| Bains | Baker |
| Barron | Battiste |
| Beech | Bendayan |
| Bennett | Bibeau |
| Bittle | Blaikie |
| Blair | Blaney |
| Blois | Boissonnault |
| Boulerice | Brière |
| Cannings | Carr |
| Casey | Chagger |
| Chahal | Champagne |
| Chatel | Chen |
| Chiang | Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek) |
| Collins (Victoria) | Cormier |
| Coteau | Dabrusin |
| Damoff | Davies |
| Desjarlais | Dhaliwal |
| Dhillon | Diab |
| Dong | Drouin |
| Dubourg | Duguid |
| Duncan (Etobicoke North) | Dzerowicz |
| Ehsassi | El-Khoury |
| Erskine-Smith | Fergus |
| Fillmore | Fisher |
| Fonseca | Fortier |
| Fragiskatos | Fraser |
| Freeland | Fry |
| Gaheer | Garneau |
| Garrison | Gazan |
| Gerretsen | Gould |
| Guilbeault | Hajdu |
| Hanley | Hardie |
| Hepfner | Holland |
| Housefather | Hughes |
| Hussen | Hutchings |
| Iacono | Idlout |
| Ien | Jaczek |
| Johns | Joly |
| Jones | Jowhari |
| Julian | Kayabaga |
| Kelloway | Khalid |
| Khera | Koutrakis |
| Kusmierczyk | Kwan |
| Lalonde | Lambropoulos |
| Lametti | Lamoureux |
| Lapointe | Lattanzio |
| Lauzon | LeBlanc |
| Lebouthillier | Lightbound |
| Long | Longfield |
| Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) | MacAulay (Cardigan) |
| MacDonald (Malpeque) | MacGregor |
| MacKinnon (Gatineau) | Maloney |
| Martinez Ferrada | Masse |

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| Mathysen | May (Cambridge) |
| May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) | McDonald (Avalon) |
| McGuinty | McKay |
| McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) | McLeod |
| McPherson | Mendès |
| Medicino | Miao |
| Miller | Morrice |
| Morrissey | Murray |
| Naqvi | Ng |
| Noormohamed | O'Connell |
| Oliphant | O'Regan |
| Petitpas Taylor | Qualtrough |
| Robillard | Rodriguez |
| Rogers | Romanado |
| Sahota | Sajjan |
| Saks | Samson |
| Sarai | Scarpaleggia |
| Schiefke | Serré |
| Sgro | Shanahan |
| Sheehan | Sidhu (Brampton East) |
| Sidhu (Brampton South) | Sorbara |
| Spengemann | St-Onge |
| Sudds | Tassi |
| Taylor Roy | Thompson |
| Turnbull | Valdez |
| Van Bynen | van Koeverden |
| Vandal | Vandenbeld |
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Members

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| Bergeron | Berthold |
| Bérubé | Bezan |
| Blanchette-Joncas | Block |
| Bragdon | Brassard |
| Brock | Brunelle-Duceppe |
| Calkins | Caputo |
| Carrie | Chabot |
| Chambers | Champoux |
| Chong | Cooper |
| Dalton | Dancho |
| Davidson | DeBellefeuille |
| Deltell | d'Entremont |
| Desbiens | Desilets |
| Dowdall | Dreeshen |
| Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Ellis |
| Epp | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) |
| Falk (Provencher) | Fast |
| Ferreri | Findlay |
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| Garon | Gaudreau |
| Généreux | Genuis |
| Gill | Gladu |
| Godin | Goodridge |
| Gourde | Gray |
| Hallan | Hoback |
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| Lantsman | Larouche |
| Lawrence | Lehoux |
| Lemire | Lewis (Essex) |
| Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Liepert |

Lloyd
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McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Redekopp
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Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
Simard
Small
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Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Seeback
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Thériault
Thomas
Tolmie
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

I wish to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, Government Orders will be further extended by 30 minutes.

SECOND READING

The House resumed from December 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canada Labour Code, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-3 would protect health care workers, Canadians seeking health services and Canadians who work in federally regulated sectors deciding between their well-being and paying bills. Delivering protections for health care workers and 10 days of paid sick leave were top priorities for our government. It is why I stand here today, just weeks into the 44th Parliament speaking in favour of Bill C-3, so we can ensure Canadians receive the protections they deserve as quickly as possible.

Throughout this pandemic, we have commended our health care workers through efforts such as the nightly banging of pots and honking—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. Could we have some order in the House, please. A member is giving a speech.

Government Orders

The hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City.

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, we have commended our health care workers through efforts such as the nightly banging of pots and honking of horns at 7 p.m. Health care workers have been true heroes working on the front lines tirelessly.

Calling health care workers heroes and commending their bravery, while entirely deserved, is not enough. We need to provide real protections for them.

The amendments to the Criminal Code in this bill would afford health care workers security against obstruction from accessing their workplaces safely. Unfortunately, we have seen terrible incidents where doctors, nurses and other health care practitioners have been intimidated, threatened and in some cases spat on or threatened with violence, all because they are saving the lives of COVID-19 patients.

I would like to take a moment to give my very personal perspective on this bill.

My wife is a doctor at a hospital that was declared a COVID hospital at the outset of the pandemic. During the first week of the pandemic, we updated our wills, not knowing what dangers we faced. We slept on different floors and took extra precautions to sanitize, when we could actually find disinfectant materials.

Some doctors moved out of their private homes to protect their families and moved into private accommodations. Many extra precautions were taken to launder clothes to make sure the virus did not come into our personal homes. Challenges continued wave after wave. Then throw in a heat dome and another wave, and we have a health care crisis and a system stretched to the breaking point relying on the goodwill and moral fibre of the people who work in the system.

I would like to thank my wife and her colleagues at Surrey Memorial Hospital and other hospitals across the country, the specialists and technicians, the nurses and the aides, the cleaning staff, food services and everyone else in patient care who all worked to keep the rest of us safe.

Now protesters are trying to threaten these workers and to prevent them from accessing their places of work. I feel especially for the emergency room doctors but also the paramedics, who are understaffed, underfunded and need to shepherd their patients past rabid anti-vaxxxer protesters.

Our health care workers are facing moral distress. No one should feel unsafe at their workplace. This legislation would provide health care workers the confidence and legal protections needed to safely access their workplaces.

Government Orders

We know intimidation can also manifest through online forums as well, not just in person. We would be protecting health care workers here as well. In the age of social media and digital technology, we know online threats can be just as real and devastating as those faced in front of a workplace. No individual should be able to use fear to stop health care workers or those who assist them from performing their duties.

Our legislation would not only protect health care workers but those accessing health care as well. In many cases, those accessing health care are the most vulnerable, particularly during this pandemic. This summer, an individual went to Toronto from Prince Edward Island to wait for a lung transplant. They were leaving the hospital after a physiotherapy session. They had to be escorted by police to protect them from an unmasked group blocking access to and from the hospital. We have heard story after story of this kind of behaviour across the country. We cannot accept this behaviour, which is placing our most vulnerable at risk.

This legislation would clearly ensure Canadians have the freedom to voice their concerns and protest in a safe and peaceful manner. It would also ensure workers' freedom to take labour action, including picketing. These would be respected by these proposed changes to Canada's criminal law.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted a number of issues facing Canadians in their workplaces. Too many health care workers, those who assist them and Canadians seeking medical care have experienced or feared intimidation while attempting to provide or access health services.

In normal times this type of harassment and intimidation is disagreeable, but during a worldwide pandemic, this type of behaviour is abhorrent, which is why legislation is needed.

I will now shift my focus to another aspect of this bill.

Too many Canadians have been forced to choose between staying home when they are sick or being able to afford rent or groceries. This legislation's other change, which is the provision of 10 days of paid sick leave, would protect the well-being of Canadians, support them economically and avoid pressures on our health care system. While this would only apply to federally regulated workers numbering almost one million workers at this point, it would contribute to a wider discussion about paid sick leave across the country.

• (1845)

The pandemic has demonstrated the effect that illness can have on our economy and the cost for individuals and families. With isolations and quarantines lasting up to two weeks, workers need to know that if they contract COVID-19, they can take the necessary time off work without risking a loss to their income and without exposing others to the risks of COVID. Not only will this ensure that workers do not need to choose between their income and their well-being, but it will also avoid spreading COVID-19 or other contagious illnesses in the workplace. There have been too many stories of outbreaks in workplaces that happened because individuals felt they had to come into work because they could not afford to take unpaid time off. This often results in negative economic effects for companies as well.

Not only will this legislation help workers, but it will be a preventive measure for our health care system. We have all experienced lockdowns throughout the last 20 months to help our hospitals avoid being overwhelmed by COVID-19 cases. This is another measure to prevent the outbreaks in workplaces from driving up case numbers and putting our health care system at risk now and in the future.

For Canadians not employed in a federally regulated industry, our government will be engaging in consultations with federally regulated employers and workers on the implementation of this legislation. Additionally, the government will convene the provinces and territories and other interested stakeholders to develop a national action plan to legislate paid sick leave across the country, while respecting provincial and territorial jurisdiction and clearly recognizing the unique needs of small business owners. Ten days of paid sick leave is another tool in creating a more resilient economy as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

For all the reasons I have outlined in my speech today, I will be supporting this bill. I welcome any questions from my colleagues.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, banning demonstrations aimed at intimidating health care workers or hindering the smooth running of hospitals is a good thing.

However, does my colleague not think that there is a risk that this will backfire on workers who want to demonstrate, on the right of unions to demonstrate?

What could we do to clarify that aspect?

[*English*]

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, a very important right we need to maintain is the ability to have legal protests within a workplace to stand against employers and stand up for the rights of workers. This legislation does address that. It respects the constitutional rights of workers to defend their rights and negotiate with their employers. It also makes sure that workplaces will remain accessible despite protests, so it is about free passage to obtain necessary health care. I believe the bill strikes the right balance, and that is why I am supporting it.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask a simple question of the member. This legislation deals with changes to the Canada Labour Code and changes to the Criminal Code, two very separate pieces of legislation. I believe, as many members would agree, the bill should go through different committees.

Government Orders

Would the member agree that both aspects of the legislation should be examined separately rather than lumped together as they are right now in Bill C-3?

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, the minister, in his response to a similar question, spoke to that, and I think there is a benefit to putting these two pieces together.

We are in a pandemic, and it is so important that we have timely resolutions to the issues we see. We want to make sure that health care workers and patients are protected, but also that as a result of the pandemic, federally regulated workers have 10 days of paid sick leave. Because the pandemic is the common item that ties these two issues together, it makes sense for them to go through the House as Bill C-3, to be reviewed by a committee that can comment on both aspects of it.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my question is about urgency and being in a pandemic. The member mentioned that this needs to happen very quickly because we are in a pandemic, so he will not be surprised when I ask him why he feels it has taken the government 18 months to move forward with these 10 days of sick leave. The government has known since the very beginning, of course, that the New Democratic Party would be very supportive of allowing these 10 days. We have been calling for that, really, since the beginning of the pandemic.

If this is urgent, why are we in a situation where we have to push the bill through quickly right now? If the government wanted to bring this forward sooner, and could have, why did it not?

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I was not here in the last Parliament and could not weigh in on the urgency of this based on the personal experience I was seeing with my family, as my wife is a health care practitioner, a physician, and the pressures it was putting on my community. That is why I am so delighted, now that I am back in the House of Commons representing my community, that our government has acted so quickly. This is a priority piece of legislation within the first hundred days, and we are acting on it. We are moving quickly. That is the kind of response I want to see when I am fighting for the needs of my community.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have the honour to inform the House that messages have been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bills, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: S-202, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (Parliamentary Visual Artist Laureate); and Bill S-206, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (disclosure of information by jurors).

* * *

● (1855)

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canada Labour Code, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-3.

I must admit that this bill is a little strange because it deals with two completely different topics. It would amend the Canada Labour Code and would also amend the Criminal Code. The bill's scope goes in two completely different directions.

First, the bill would amend the Criminal Code to increase penalties on people who intimidate health care workers or patients or who obstruct access to a hospital or clinic in order to impede people from obtaining health services, such as vaccination. It is hard to argue against virtue, so it is relatively easy to support this part of the bill.

Second, the bill would force federally regulated employers to grant up to 10 days of paid sick leave to their employees. As I just said, it is hard to argue against virtue, so we will support this bill.

I would like to raise an important point about the part involving protests outside health care facilities. We are being told the bill is not intended to infringe on the right to peaceful protest and is therefore not intended to affect workers' rights, but that is not made perfectly clear in the wording.

This will require clarification. As usual, the Bloc Québécois will be thorough in asking questions, checking the facts, seeking confirmation and possibly proposing any amendments needed to protect this basic right.

The Bloc Québécois always stands up for workers' rights. Of course, we defend collective rights, but defending workers' rights is one of our core values. It is of the utmost importance to us.

In Quebec, workers' rights during a dispute are particularly well protected compared to the rest of Canada. Think, for example, of the anti-scab legislation in effect in Quebec. It is important that close attention be paid to this part of the legislation.

Furthermore, paid sick leave is a step forward for federally regulated Quebec workers, even though there are not that many of them. It is a step forward for them.

As history has shown, progress for one group of workers is always progress for all workers. A rising tide lifts all boats, and measures like this create momentum, which is always positive even if it is just for a small group of people. The Bloc Québécois will definitely support this measure.

Government Orders

I want to comment on the prohibition of protests. The bill would give prosecutors added powers to charge people who impede others in the performance of health care duties and interfere with access to a clinic or hospital.

Under the present circumstances, because of the election campaign and anti-vax protests, people have been thinking about access to health care facilities a lot. It is these events, in large part, that led to the creation of this bill.

Over the years, we have also seen protests by people preventing access to abortion clinics. Recognizing that every woman has the right to do what she wants with her own body and that nobody can interfere with that is one of our core values. In that respect, this measure is good because it goes some way toward ensuring that people will not be hassled while accessing health care.

This part of the law is important because it distinguishes between “freedom of expression” and “aggression”. Unfortunately, in our society, some individuals or groups often confuse the two concepts. Some think that because they have the right to express themselves, they have the right to prevent others from doing something. This is not at all the case, and such behaviour should never be tolerated. This is a fundamental and very important point.

As parliamentarians, we have a duty to protect people from all forms of aggression. This is what we started to do in the last Parliament before the unnecessary election that everyone knows about. We were working on Bill C-205, which concerned the agricultural sector and would have prevented vegan activists from trespassing on livestock farms and other farms.

● (1900)

Assaulting someone or coming onto their property to express a political opinion or a point of view is unacceptable. This is a democratic country, and democracy is expressed in a peaceful and respectful way. There are public spaces for demonstrating. Once people start to be bullied, it becomes very important to intervene.

This also deals with intimidation, and that is important. When people head out to a certain place and find a threatening group there, they may turn back. The example of vaccine-hesitant folks comes to mind. This is not a judgment of someone's opinion. I am not saying that one group is more right than another. However, in order for us to get out of this miserable crisis, our duty as parliamentarians is to encourage people to get vaccinated. That means that any demonstration that might interfere with that goal obviously must be prevented without stopping people from expressing themselves. Once again, “expression” does not mean “aggression”. This is a very important point.

In my former life as a high school teacher, I fought against bullying and intimidation for many years. It was a fundamental issue that was very important to me. I will continue that fight as a parliamentarian, because our civil society must not accept that kind of behaviour.

Bill C-3 is quite severe, providing for prison sentences of up to 10 years, depending on how the offender is charged. They could get 10 years or two years less a day. This could be a good way to make people think twice about assaulting others.

As for the rest, the bill also contains other clauses, such as release orders for people charged under the amended law, potentially with conditions. That is fairly standard.

However, I would like to highlight one very important point for my colleagues. Under Bill C-3, any criminal offence committed against a health professional in the performance of their duties would now be considered an aggravating factor. I think this is a great approach, because it confirms the almost sacred nature of health care work. It also protects access to care for the general public, which I think is a very good sign.

The last part deals with paid sick leave, and it is positive, as I said earlier. However, the majority of federally regulated private sector workers already have access to 10 or more days of sick leave. We are talking about roughly 63% of those workers. Getting that number up to 100%, or in other words, giving everyone access to those sick days is great, but there is one aspect of Bill C-3 that could prove to be problematic, and it needs to be addressed. I am referring to the fact that the employer can require a medical certificate within 15 days of the employee's return to work. I wonder about that.

Consider the example of someone who has been sick for two days and returns to work, then after another five or six days is asked by their employer to provide a medical certificate. I think it would be hard to prove one's illness by that point. The right questions need to be asked, and I am counting on my esteemed colleague, who is the critic on this issue, to dig into the matter, but I think it is important to clarify that aspect.

As I have been saying from the start, we cannot be against this bill, despite the fact that it changes very little. It feels like the Liberals are trying to prove that they are with the times and following the trends. We are being asked to vote on this bill after we were forced to urgently vote on a time allocation motion. As a colleague from another party said earlier, however, this was brought up a long time ago.

Why was this not done at the beginning of the crisis when many people may have needed it?

Why wait 62 days to recall members to work and then shove bills down their throat?

Many areas need our swift action, such as the cuts to the guaranteed income supplement for seniors, which is a major injustice. When will we see some movement on that? I am being told that Bill C-3 is urgent, that it needs to happen by tomorrow morning, but we sounded the alarm about the cuts to the GIS before the election campaign.

● (1905)

Does the government not want to introduce a bill to address that situation? It is a matter of social justice. Yesterday, we discussed Afghanistan; it is the same thing.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the things we recognize is that Canadians afforded the House of Commons a minority government. This means that the government does work, has worked and will continue to work with opposition parties as best as it can to speed up legislation, as legislation does require the support of another party to pass. In the past, we have been sometimes supported by New Democrats, and sometimes by members of the Bloc. We have even had support from the Conservatives.

The majority of members of Parliament are saying we should proceed quickly on a piece of legislation for whatever reasons, just as, I trust, the Bloc will identify an important piece of legislation. Based on that, would the member not agree that this says a lot about the urgency to get this bill through for our health care workers and for workers because it is in the best interests of both?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and openness. That is exactly why we are here.

My colleague noted that Canadians re-elected a minority government. I would point out to him that combining the Liberal and Bloc members results in a majority. The Bloc Québécois proposes initiatives every day in the House because we are an intelligent and constructive opposition.

I talked about the guaranteed income supplement. We also made suggestions about Afghanistan, and the motion was adopted this afternoon. I hope that we will be able to move quickly to bring people over and to provide humanitarian aid to that country. Furthermore, for two years, we have been making proposals with respect to temporary foreign workers. We have been promised that reforms are in the works. These reforms must be implemented, and we will be there to support them.

There is much work to be done, and the Bloc Québécois is here for the people, but always with the same principle in mind: It has to be good for Quebec.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to come back to something my colleague mentioned in his speech. I have already had the opportunity to ask questions about Bill C-3. Obviously, nobody can be against sick days and apple pie.

My colleague gave two examples related to the right to protest that are of particular interest to me. The first example, specifically protests in front of abortion clinics, is of particular interest to me as the critic for status of women. Indeed, those protesters can sometimes do more harm than good, since the women who need to attend those clinics are often going through an already difficult and intensely private experience.

My hon. colleague also drew a parallel with a previous bill, Bill C-205. As a member representing a rural riding, I have heard a lot about the harm protesters have caused to animals.

Can my colleague talk about the need to balance the right to protest with the fact that these protests sometimes do far more harm than good?

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague and favourite seatmate for her fundamental question. I thank her for giving me the opportunity to emphasize this point.

Just last week, I had discussions with people who were at a crossroads. Take the vaccine, for example. Imagine someone is afraid to get vaccinated, but then thinks about it and finally decides to go ahead. If that person arrives at the health care facility and protesters are blocking their way, that person might turn right around.

The same thing might happen to a young woman who has been sexually assaulted or who has been fretting for days about an unplanned, unwanted pregnancy. She too might turn back.

Access to health care must be respected, because it is essential. Our job is to protect these people.

• (1910)

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, during the pandemic, I have been absolutely appalled at the level of harassment I have seen toward health care workers, who are trying to do their part to fight the pandemic. Does my hon. colleague agree that it is absolutely critical for health care providers to be provided with immediate protection?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I agree, it is absolutely critical. I will take this opportunity to come back to the urgent need to pass this bill. Earlier today, debate was shut down on the pretext that it was urgent to pass the bill. However, someone pointed out earlier that the 10 days of paid leave were proposed a long time ago.

The COVID-19 crisis began a long time ago, so why did the government not act sooner?

I would like to remind the House that Quebec did not wait for Canada to act. In Quebec, we have already passed legislation and introduced very severe fines. Quebec is often ahead of the game when it comes to legislation. Rather than judging it—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mend s): Order. Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Kenora.

[English]

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to join the debate on Bill C-3. Although this is not my first opportunity to rise in the 44th Parliament to give a speech, this is my first opportunity, not just in this Parliament, but since I was elected in 2019, to deliver a speech with my fianc e, Danaka, watching live.

Government Orders

I wanted to acknowledge that and acknowledge Danaka for her continued love and support, especially through the turbulent times of election season. I have to say that going through two elections in two years is more than enough for an MP, but it is also important that we recognize the impact it has on our loved ones, so I thank Danaka for her continued support.

There are two very important aspects of the bill. It really is two bills in one, with amendments to the Criminal Code and to the Labour Code. It is very important that we talk about both of these things separately, considering how different they are. I will, time permitting, have the opportunity to touch on both of those aspects, but I also want to acknowledge the tremendous work of our shadow ministers on this file. The member for Fundy Royal has done a great job representing our position and working with our colleagues to move forward on this. As well, the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka on the labour side ensured that our party was well represented.

When it comes to the Criminal Code, of course Bill C-3 would make it an offence to intimidate health care providers or impede individuals from obtaining health services, and this is something I do not think anyone in this chamber would take issue with. I think we would all support that and the idea behind that.

We know health care workers face incredible hardships at the best of times, especially in northwestern Ontario, where they have limited staff, limited resources and policies that do not adequately account for our unique needs in rural and remote northern Ontario. These are challenges I have heard of first-hand from constituents across the riding.

Of course, this has all been exacerbated by COVID-19 and the pandemic we are continuing to fight through. Hopefully we are at the tail end of. We have seen more clearly than ever before how important our frontline workers are. They are our doctors, our nurses and those who went to work every day, risking their own safety, to ensure that all Canadians would remain safe and have the service they need. That is why so many people in the Kenora riding, across northern Ontario and across this great country were outraged by the news when they saw these protests and the harassment of health care workers throughout the course of the pandemic.

I wish I could sit here and name everybody, but there are a couple of health care workers in particular I would like to make note of, one of whom is Dr. Sean Moore at the Lake of the Woods District Hospital in Kenora. Dr. Moore has been a champion for our region throughout the course of the pandemic. He helped organize and arrange all of the COVID protocols and the COVID response at the Lake of the Woods District Hospital. With many concerns around the availability of beds and shortages of PPE, he remained steadfast in his commitment to ensuring everyone had the support they needed.

He continued to also keep me up to date on what was happening on the ground and offered advice to me to pass on to the government and my colleagues on how to best move forward through the pandemic. I would say as well that his consistent public advocacy for best practices in ways to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe has just been incredibly beneficial for everyone across our region, which is something he continues to do.

• (1915)

I want to make a quick mention of a health care provider who is very important to me, my mother Charlene. My mother is a nurse at the Lake of the Woods District Hospital and I know first-hand from her the challenges during the best of times at the hospital in delivering health care services in the Kenora riding. Having to deal with the additional protocols and challenges that COVID-19 brought on was difficult for her and her colleagues. Not once did any of the health care workers in my riding, or across the country, hesitate. They were always there to continue to serve and work for everyone's safety. I am happy to share that today.

There is another side to this. It is not just the health care providers. It is not just the doctors and nurses. It has also been a very difficult time to be a patient. I know many people who have had to bring their children to a hospital and only parent has been able to be with them or their loved ones. It has been incredibly difficult for families to deal with challenges to their health given the COVID restrictions.

I know the thought of any of these individuals being harassed or targeted in a protest that could be happening outside of a hospital would not sit well with anybody in the chamber. We need to look at that important aspect of the legislation as well.

As I said, apart from the Criminal Code side, there is also the labour side of the bill, which is very important as well, with the proposed 10-day medical leave in federally regulated sectors. Frankly, many companies are already going above and beyond that, as many members of the House have noted.

I believe the Minister of Labour has noted that the change he believes the bill would make would be minimal. It is important to note that, in many ways, this could be seen symbolically, but it is an important floor to work toward. However, we cannot take away from the great work that so many companies are undertaking already.

Although it is viewed as a minimal change, I do not think we should accept that without proper scrutiny. We all know there are huge labour shortages across the country. We see that in my riding at the Lake of the Woods Brewing Company, for example. It has not been able to stay open all days of the week. Many restaurants have been forced to close or are only open for short periods because they cannot find staff.

When we are talking about changes to the Labour Code, it is also very important that we have a wholesome examination of it, so we can understand all the potential impacts the legislation could have. That is why I want to see the bill get to committee. I want to see both sections of it get to appropriate committees, because they are quite different, the Criminal Code side versus the Labour Code side.

Government Orders

I hope we will see that from the government, that these sections will be examined separately and thoroughly. That is part of the concern I have with the time allocation motion. We have two very important sections in the legislation that need to be discussed and examined, and the government has unfortunately decided that it would rather not have those discussions.

I look forward to any question or comments my colleagues may have, but I appreciate the opportunity to share some thoughts on Bill C-3 this evening. I want to reiterate that there are two very important sections to the legislation. We need to examine them. Let us get them to committee.

• (1920)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the feedback I have received on the legislation has been very encouraging, such as health care stakeholders recognizing that Ottawa parliamentarians see and understand what they have had to go through with the protests. During the debate, I found out that the Province of British Columbia was also bringing forward paid sick leave. I believe it is for five days. The federal legislation covers a much smaller percentage of the workforce.

Would the member agree that by the national government providing action on sick leave, we could see provincial jurisdictions following suit and, to that end, workers across Canada would benefit? Could he just provide his thoughts on the leadership role that Ottawa can play on progressive legislation such as this?

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, we all appreciate the thoughtfulness and willingness of the member for Winnipeg North to engage so often in this chamber and share his thoughts on a number of topics. He definitely has a great respect for this institution.

That is a good question, but it is a bit hypothetical. I suppose the quick answer would be yes. It definitely could be something that the provinces could look to and be encouraged by it. The point is that many sectors are already above and beyond this. From a federal point of view, the 10 sick days could be looked at as a floor rather than a ceiling.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what I appreciated about the speech by the colleague who just spoke is the great compassion and empathy he expressed for health care professionals and social services workers.

In the name of wanting to protect them, all of a sudden it is urgent that Criminal Code be amended.

If we are looking to support and protect health care workers, does the member not agree that it would be more urgent to provide federal health transfers to Quebec and the provinces so that they can organize their health care systems in such a way as to ensure that they have workers, that they are able to offer good working conditions and that workers do not experience burnout?

[English]

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, we called for and continue to call for increased health transfers to the provinces. Again, as I mentioned, in northern Ontario, and I am sure in north-

ern and rural Quebec it is a similar situation, there is underfunding. There are not the appropriate resources considering the distances that people have to travel and considering the unique situations that northern and rural regions have. Having more supports available to the provinces will certainly help fix that situation.

• (1925)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It being 7:25 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

[Translation]

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

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded division.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, the recorded division stands deferred until Thursday, December 9, 2021, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I may have been misinformed about there being an opportunity for a speaking slot at this point for me, on behalf of the Green Party, to speak to Bill C-3.

The Deputy Speaker: We ran out of time on Bill C-3, and I interrupted so we could move on to the next order of business.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 7:40 p.m. so we can begin committee of the whole.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made Thursday, November 25, the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole to study all votes in the supplementary estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

*Business of Supply***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (B), 2021-22

(Consideration resumed from December 7 in committee of the whole of all votes in the supplementary estimates (B), Mr. Chris d'Entremont in the chair)

The Chair: Today's debate is a general one on all votes tabled before the House on Friday, November 26. Pursuant to order made Thursday, November 25, the committee will now resume the debate.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, each member will be allocated 15 minutes at a time, which may be used both for debate and for posing questions. Members wishing to use this time to make a speech have a maximum of 10 minutes, which leaves at least five minutes for questions to the minister. When a member is recognized, he or she should indicate to the Chair how the 15-minute period will be used, meaning how much time will be spent on the speech and how much time will be used for questions and answers.

Also, pursuant to order made Tuesday, December 7, members who wish to share their time with another member shall indicate this to the Chair. When the time is to be used for questions and comments, the Chair will expect the minister's response to reflect approximately the time taken by the question, since this time will be counted in the time originally allotted to the members.

● (1930)

[*English*]

Pursuant to order made Tuesday, December 7, the time provided for the debate tonight may be extended beyond four hours, as needed, to include a minimum of 16 periods of 15 minutes each, and no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be entertained.

I also wish to indicate that in committee of the whole, comments should be addressed to the Chair. I ask for everyone's co-operation in upholding all established standards of decorum, parliamentary language and behaviour.

We will now begin tonight's session.

The House in committee of the whole, pursuant to order made Thursday, November 25, consideration in committee of the whole of all votes in the supplementary estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

The hon. member for Alfred-Pellan.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Chair, today I am pleased to talk about the supplementary estimates (B) for 2021-22. I want to start by saying that I am a big believer in the principle of transparency.

Canadians and the parliamentarians who represent them have the right to know how the government intends to spend public funds and to hold the government accountable for its actions. Our government takes that responsibility very seriously. That is why this con-

versation about the estimates is so important, especially as we are emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today I am happy to have the opportunity to talk to the committee of the whole about the supplementary estimates (B) for 2021-22. As hon. members know, every year the government tables up to three supplementary estimates detailing proposed spending in addition to the main estimates.

On November 26, the President of the Treasury Board of Canada tabled the supplementary estimates (B) in the House of Commons. The budget includes a summary of the government's incremental funding requirements and an overview of the major funding requests and horizontal initiatives.

These supplementary estimates seek a total of \$8.7 billion in voted budgetary expenditures. For information purposes, these estimates also include \$4.7 billion in budgetary statutory expenditures, mainly due to the extension of the Canada recovery benefit and the forecasted requirements for the Canada recovery caregiving benefit and the Canada recovery sickness benefit.

That said, I would like to provide my hon. colleagues with a breakdown of some of the more significant expenditures. Over the past year, many Canadians have had to deal with the hard truth of our country's historical treatment of indigenous peoples. This has been a year of listening and soul-searching. It has also been a year in which indigenous voices have been louder than ever, and our government is listening to them.

That is why these supplementary estimates (B) provide a total of \$1 billion for the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs and \$2.1 billion for the Department of Indigenous Services. This includes \$725.2 million for critical infrastructure such as housing, schools, health facilities, water and waste water. This funding will also support the transfer of infrastructure to indigenous-led organizations and fund the operation and maintenance of indigenous-owned infrastructure. This amount also includes \$412.2 million for the specific claims settlement fund. As my colleagues know, these are claims by a first nation against the federal government which relate to the administration of land or other first nation assets and to the fulfillment of historic treaties or other agreements. The settlement fund is used to provide compensation to first nations in accordance with negotiated agreements. Finally, we have allocated \$361.3 million for prevention and protection services to support the safety and well-being of first nations children and families living on reserve.

The COVID-19 recession is the steepest and fastest economic contraction Canada has seen since the Great Depression, and it has had major repercussions on Canadians across the country. Nevertheless, we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. More than 85% of Canadians age 12 and up are now fully vaccinated. Businesses are reopening and travel has resumed across the country. What is more, we have now started to vaccinate children between the ages of five and 11.

• (1935)

Important programs like the Canada emergency response benefit, which helped millions of Canadians during the toughest days of the pandemic, were only possible because of the hard work and dedication of our public servants.

The government appreciates its public servants and has the greatest respect for its obligations to them. That is why these supplementary estimates include \$1.5 billion for the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat for the salary adjustments included in the recently negotiated collective agreements, as well as for changes to the terms and conditions of employment.

Among the other funds set out in these supplementary estimates, I would like to mention the \$375 million for the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development for COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and diagnostic products for developing countries; the \$327.7 million for the Department of National Defence to fund the pay increases in the Canadian Armed Forces; and the \$253.4 million for the Department of National Defence and the Department of Veterans Affairs for the Heyder and Beattie class action settlements.

These estimates reflect our government's continuing commitment to get better results for all Canadians, including those who live in indigenous communities, and to continue to contribute to the global COVID-19 pandemic response effort.

I want to be clear. The estimates process is guided by the principles of transparency, openness and accountability.

We have taken several measures to ensure transparency. For example, departments regularly account for their expenditures through quarterly financial reports, and the Department of Finance provides monthly financial updates on the government in the "Fiscal Monitor".

Furthermore, in light of the extraordinary circumstances and the extent of pandemic-related spending, the government provides additional reports. This includes the spending authorities associated with the government's response to the global COVID-19 pandemic in the supplementary estimates, as well as the spending authorities and expenses for each of the COVID-19 pandemic measures, through the Government of Canada's InfoBase and open government portal.

These reporting tools make it easy for Canadians to see the spending authorized by Parliament and the money spent by the government on its pandemic response.

We also release a reconciliation between these two estimates documents to provide greater clarity on the relationship between the figures therein.

Business of Supply

Hon. colleagues, these supplementary estimates provide for essential investments to build an economy that works for everyone, fight climate change, continue on the road to reconciliation, and ensure that our communities are safe, healthy and inclusive.

• (1940)

[*English*]

The Chair: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Alfred-Pellan.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Chair, it is a privilege to rise today to participate in this committee of the whole. I want to start by thanking the hon. ministers for being here this evening, and for outlining some of steps that our government has taken to protect the health and safety of Canadians as well as to support our critical industries.

My questions this evening will be for the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance. I would like to ask him a question about tourism businesses in my riding of Alfred-Pellan.

Tourism businesses in my riding, just as in many others, have suffered greatly from the pandemic. Fairs, carnivals, music festivals and community events have all been cancelled due to COVID-19. As we can all agree, COVID-19 has been incredibly difficult for tourism businesses and especially for their workers.

Can the minister expand on how our government intends to continue to support the tourism businesses that have been greatly impacted? What is the recovery plan?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I think we should note that the recovery is under way. It is strong, but, as my colleague from Alfred-Pellan knows, it is uneven.

As he mentioned, I am referring specifically to people in the cultural industry: technicians, actors, comedians, camera operators, musicians, directors and all those behind the scenes who reflect the best of who we are as human beings.

As a government, we must be there for the workers and businesses in the cultural sector. During the election campaign, we clearly indicated that we would be there for them, and that is exactly what we will do.

[*English*]

Just to be clear about the work done and the commitment we have to the cultural sector coming out of this pandemic, we made sure that \$200 million was provided to festivals, \$300 million was provided in a recovery fund for culture, sports and the arts, another \$200 million was provided for large festivals, and a \$500 million emergency fund was established for the cultural sector. There is more to come.

Business of Supply

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Chair, the CEWS has supported hundreds of businesses in my riding and in many others. I heard the Minister of Health referring to vaccines. These are of such critical importance to ending the pandemic and allowing the tourism sector to get back to work.

I am double vaccinated and I am proud of it. Today, at five o'clock, my eight-year-old son received his first vaccine shot. Hello Gabriel.

I carry around my proof of vaccination to show all the businesses in Alfred—Pellan, and here in Ottawa, that I have indeed done my part. I know not everyone in this place is able or willing to do the same, and I will take this moment to say how disappointing that is.

I would like to give the minister an opportunity to expand on his point about vaccination, and what our government is doing to help businesses, as well as provincial and territorial partners delivering vaccines. Can he provide Canadians with the assurance that they are safe to visit local attractions?

• (1945)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Chair, first, I would like to congratulate the son of the member for Alfred-Pellan. I am very proud of him, and I am certain that he was very good about it and that he set an example for many others in Canada, perhaps even here in the House of Commons.

Let us talk about Canada: 80% of the population has received at least one dose, 76% has received two doses. There are probably people in the House who have not yet received one of the 62 million vaccine doses administered since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Chair, every year on November 8 we pay tribute to indigenous veterans who served in missions across Canada and around the world, in times of war, conflict and peace.

I would like to ask the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations what measures are in place to commemorate their sacrifices. How does this government ensure that indigenous veterans have access to culturally appropriate support?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the answer is all the more important because the indigenous people who served our country were not served by our country when they returned.

November 8 is a special date to honour the sacrifices they made. This date is twinned with November 11. Any support for indigenous peoples obviously requires culturally appropriate support, which we provide.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Chair, my question is for the minister of middle class prosperity, who is a member of Parliament here in Ottawa.

What is the average cost of a home in the city of Ottawa?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, my title is Minister of

Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance. I am sure my hon. colleague across the way knows that.

Let me say 156,000 jobs.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, maybe the President of the Treasury Board can help by telling us the average cost of a house in the nation's capital.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I want to say 106% of jobs have been recovered since the lowest point of the pandemic.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, what is the average increase in house prices since the government took office in 2015?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, Canada's economy contracted by 17% between February and April 2020, the largest and most sudden contraction in real GDP since the Great Depression, and we are already back.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, I asked for just the average house price.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, 5.5 million Canadians lost their jobs and they are all back.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, what would they pay for the average house?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, in 2020, the unemployment rate more than doubled from a pre-pandemic level of 5.7% to a record of 13.7%. It is 6% now.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, I think there is a problem with the audio in the chamber. The question was, what is the average cost of a house in Canada today?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, our government has made historic investments in housing affordability and we will continue to do so.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, how affordable are such houses?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, our government has made historic investments in housing. We will continue to do so, so that housing is affordable for all Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, if so, how much have house prices increased since the government took office?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, let us talk about how it is possible for people to afford their houses with good employment. That is why employment income fell by an unprecedented \$28 billion during the pandemic.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, I will ask one last time. In dollars, how much have house prices risen since the government took office?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, consumer confidence is back. People are back to work and 106% of the jobs have been recovered since the lowest point in the pandemic.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, how much?

Business of Supply

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, from a steep decline in profits, we are back 66% since the bottom of the pandemic.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, how much?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the economy is recovering.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, does the minister have any idea what it costs for the average person to buy a house in Canada? Does he have any idea, or does he even care?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the rent subsidy helped more than 213,000 businesses stay afloat.

• (1950)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, I think that the average Canadian can see how much the government knows and cares about the cost of buying a home in this country. The government members' level of care is zero. I am going to give the member one last chance.

Can he tell us what it costs the average Canadian to buy the average house in Canada today?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the CERB helped nearly nine million Canadians who lost their jobs when COVID hit, making housing affordable for them. We will continue to do so.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, how much new debt per Canadian has the government added?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, in April 2020, labour force participation of Canadians aged 15 to 64 fell to a three-decade low.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, how much debt per man, woman and child has the government added?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, as of the third quarter of 2021, the income that fell across the country rebounded to—

The Chair: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: How much?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, 106% of jobs recovered.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, how much new debt per man, woman and child?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, we took the steps necessary to protect Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, how much new debt per person?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, there were 154,000 jobs announced just last week.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: How much debt?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, 106% of jobs recovered.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, 106% increase in debt?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, there were 106% of jobs recovered since the lowest point in the—

The Chair: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the question was about debt. How big is Canada's national debt today?

[Translation]

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, 154,000 jobs have been recovered.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, is there a minister involved in finance who can answer questions?

[Translation]

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, we have recovered 106% of jobs lost since the lowest point in the pandemic.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, do they provide briefing notes?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, with the wage subsidy, 450,000 employers were supported.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, does the Finance Department brief associate ministers on matters related to finance?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the economy is in full recovery. The Conservatives do not like it. We are happy that Canadians are back to work.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the member bragged about the CERB. According to the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, reporting entities indicated that clients have applied for and received CERB despite not living in Canada and appeared to be residing in a jurisdiction of concern.

How many people not living in Canada got the CERB?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I am happy that my hon. colleague wants to talk about something of substance, and so let us talk about the CEBA, which helped over 898,000 small businesses survive. Think of the families, think of the people that helped to afford housing and to make ends meet.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, I am glad to know that the minister does not think housing or debt are matters of substance.

Back to the CERB fraud. How many people not in Canada got the CERB?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the wage subsidy helped over 450,000 employers keep more than 5.3 million employees on the payroll. That is our track record.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the question was about the CERB, not the wage subsidy. How many people not in Canada got the CERB?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I am not sure the hon. member heard me say that, when we are talking about substance, we are talking about Canadians who were supported in a timely manner through the CERB.

Business of Supply

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, I think the problem is he is not hearing me. The question was about the CERB. FINTRAC says that people who do not even live in Canada were getting the CERB. How many of them got it?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the data that I have shows very clearly that nine million Canadians who lost their jobs were supported by the CERB when COVID hit.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, did the minister just say nine million people not living in Canada got the CERB?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I did not say that.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, how many?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, nine million Canadians living in Canada were supported by the CERB. Think about that. It is transformative.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, who will pay for the fraudulent CERB recipients?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the rent subsidy helped more than 230,000 businesses survive.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, fraudulent CERB recipients was the question. How many?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, nine million Canadians were supported by the CERB.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, so the only number we are getting is nine million when I ask how many people took the CERB who did not live in Canada. If nine million is not the right number, which number is?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, maybe the hon. member would like to know about the CEBA, which helped over 898,000 small businesses survive.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, why is the minister hiding the true number of people not living in Canada who got the CERB?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, following a steep decline of 27% in the first half of 2020, corporate profits rebounded 61% above pre-pandemic levels.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, could we replace the minister with a cassette tape that we could just hit “play” on?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I am sure there are all kinds of technological advancements available, but I can tell the member that the wage subsidy helped over 450,000 employers—

• (1955)

The Chair: The member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, is there a technological advance that might help the minister answer the question?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the rent subsidy helped more than 213,000 businesses stay afloat. That is good for all Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, can the officials who are here today hand the minister a new script? He seems to be reading one unrelated to the questions.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, all right, I will talk about consumer confidence that went to an all-time low. It is back. That is good for business and that is good for Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, one last time, FINTRAC, which is responsible for monitoring monies that are misappropriated, organized crime and money laundering, indicated that many people have received the CERB even though they do not even live in Canada. I am going to ask one last time: How many was that?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the hon. member knows that FINTRAC is independent.

What we know is that consumer confidence is back, and people are able to pay their bills, thanks to our historic investments in their lives and in their livelihoods.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, what is the inflation rate for the price of land in the last year?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I am glad to talk about inflation, because we know that it is a global phenomenon.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, land prices are a global phenomenon. Does the minister realize that the land we have here does not come from the rest of the globe? It is already here.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I think members can read Hansard, as the hon. colleague can. I said very clearly that inflation is a global phenomenon.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, “land-flation”. How much?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, our inflation is in line with peer countries around the world. In fact, we are doing much better than the United States, Mexico and countries in the eurozone.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the question was about land price inflation. How much have land prices inflated in the last year?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, land price is part of the basket of goods in inflation. Our inflation is in line with peer countries.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, he is allowed to say that he does not know.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, we are focused on affordability, and that is what matters.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, there is no affordability to focus on. How much have house prices risen in the last year?

Business of Supply

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, let me say that the unemployment rate had more than doubled in May 2020, from a pre-pandemic level of 5%.

We are now at 6%.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the question was this. How much have house prices inflated in the last year?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I think it is important for the hon. member across the way to understand that our government helped nine million Canadians who lost their job through the CERB.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the Liberals hand the minister a speech that a bureaucrat wrote for him and he stays glued to it. Why do we not just elect a robot to read off these speeches that are written by bureaucrats in the finance department? That robot at least would stick more tightly to the script than he has. If he does not actually have any answers to the factual questions, is it possible that he could be replaced with a robot?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, it is unfortunate the member opposite does not like the answers I am providing, but I know Canadians do. The net worth of Canadian households fell by 3.6% in the first quarter of 2020, one of the largest declines on record, and this metric is now up 22% from its pre-crisis level. Consumer confidence is back on the rise, with 156,000 jobs announced last week and 106% of jobs that are back.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the question was not how much poorer Canadians are; it was how much more expensive their housing has become.

Can the member tell us this? What is the average house price right across Canada today?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I think labour force participation is a good metric to help answer the member's question. It has reached a new high of 79.6%. That shows a strong sign of confidence with respect to job prospects. That is how people—

The Chair: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, can the average Canadian afford the average house?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I am not entirely sure what the question was, but I can say that 106%—

The Chair: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the question was this. Can the average Canadian afford the average house?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, we are there to support housing affordability and will continue to do so.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, maybe more specifically, what share of the average Canadians' take-home pay would they have to spend on mortgages and other housing costs in order to live in the average house?

• (2000)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, housing is a right. That is why this House has declared it as such. We made historic investments in housing stock, housing affordability and affordable housing, and will continue to do so.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, what would it cost the average person to buy the average house in Canada today?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I think it is important to say that the economic contraction of the Canadian economy was 17%—

The Chair: The member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, we know the economy collapsed, but somehow real estate prices went up. The question is how much would it cost the average family to afford the average house today?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, GDP has rebounded to almost 99% of its pre-pandemic level, 106% of jobs have been recovered and 156,000 jobs were announced just last week.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, what is the average rental cost for the average Canadian today?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, over the first half of 2020, employment income fell by an unprecedented \$28 billion, and now it is back.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, how many barrels of oil does Canada import from foreign producers every year?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, we support the energy sector and will continue to do so.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, how many from Saudi Arabia?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, our government has been committed to getting TMX built.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, how many from the United States?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I am a proponent of TMX and will continue to be.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, will TMX take oil from the member's province to the Saint John refinery?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, TMX will bring oil to the west coast.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, will oil tankers still be coming from the Middle East to the Saint John refinery?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, we will support the energy sector in this country as we always have.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the answer is, no, we will keep importing foreign oil.

Business of Supply

Did the minister support the Prime Minister's veto of the northern gateway pipeline, yes or no?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I think it is important for the hon. member to know that business confidence is back, 106% of jobs have been recovered—

The Chair: The member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, did the member support vetoing northern gateway, yes or no?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, following a steep decline of 27% in the first half of 2020, corporate profits have rebounded to 61% above pre-pandemic levels.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Yes or no?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, nine million people were helped on CERB.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank you for allowing me to participate in this session of the committee of the whole of the House of Commons.

[*English*]

In the recent federal election, Canadians made it clear: Housing affordability is one of their top issues.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted and worsened Canada's serious housing challenges. Far too many Canadians cannot afford an adequate and affordable place to call home. This puts at risk the well-being of Canadian families, our communities and also our economic recovery.

It is why our government continues to strengthen and extend the national housing strategy, our 10-year, \$72-billion plan to give more Canadians a place to call their home.

Today I am pleased to have the opportunity to demonstrate how investments in two important programs under the national housing strategy will benefit Canadians. I will discuss these programs and how, with additional funding, they will ensure that more Canadians have an affordable home where they can safely get through this pandemic and plan for a better future.

One program provides much-needed rental housing for middle-income Canadians in cities with some of the most expensive rents. We all know them. The other serves more vulnerable Canadians, ensuring they have safe, well-maintained housing with subsidies, to help them make ends meet at the end of every month.

Let us start with the rental construction financing initiative. This program has seen incredible uptake since it was launched five years ago, and it is making a real difference for middle-income Canadians and people in my riding of Hull—Aylmer.

It is a well-known fact that there is a shortage of purpose-built rental supply in Canada. Many of our cities have extremely low vacancy rates. This has driven up prices to the point where the very people who make our cities run, like nurses, shopkeepers and teachers, can no longer afford to live in them. We just cannot keep push-

ing the middle class to the suburbs if we want vibrant, inclusive and inspiring cities that meet our climate goals.

One of the barriers to more rental supply is that many developers feel there are too many financial risks and obstacles to building rental projects. Simply put, they have told us these types of projects are not economically feasible.

The rental construction financing initiative, delivered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, addresses this problem. It gives developers low-cost loans during the most risky phases of construction. This helps developers to better predict costs, and they are more incentivized to build rental projects, all while meeting important criteria in terms of affordability, accessibility and energy efficiency.

I had the privilege of taking part in two announcements in Hull—Aylmer, one at the Zibi island development and the other in the village of Aylmer with the British Square, where precisely we are looking to incentivize builders to build affordable rental housing as part of their larger rental stock.

From the beginning, the program generated great interest from the housing sector. To meet growing demand, we increased our investments to \$13.75 billion. Already, as of just the end of September of this year, over \$12 billion has been committed to create more than 34,000 rental homes. This will make a huge difference for so many Canadian families.

As uptake of the program continued, we saw a need to make further investments in it. We committed an additional \$12 billion over seven years, and we will use \$300 million specifically to help the conversion of vacant commercial property into housing. The funding requested this year represents the first part of this new commitment.

It is estimated that when the rental construction financing initiative comes to an end in 2028, the \$26 billion invested will have created more than 71,000 new rental housing units across the country. In other words, 71,000 more middle-income families will be able to find housing they can afford in the cities in which they live.

This is a win-win-win for Canadian families, and it is a win for our cities. It makes them more inclusive, cuts down on transportation-related costs and emissions, and attracts more employers.

Business of Supply

• (2005)

[*Translation*]

I would now like to draw the committee's attention to the second program that I want to address during this discussion, the federal community housing initiative. While the previous program I mentioned focused on the needs of middle-income Canadians, this one supports some of our most vulnerable populations. Currently, thousands of low-income Canadians across the country live in federally administered community housing. They receive rent subsidies to help them make ends meet at the end of the month.

When our government began its first term, many of the subsidy agreements were about to expire, which would have been disastrous for the families affected. That is why, in 2017, we launched the federal community housing initiative, a program that provides \$500 million over 10 years to protect tenants and stabilize the operations of more than 55,000 units of federally administered community housing projects.

During phase one of the initiative, we gave community housing providers a two-year funding extension so that they could continue to provide much-needed subsidies to their tenants. This phase, which ended in September 2020, supported over 26,700 households with a total investment of over \$42 million.

We are now in phase two of the program, which makes rental assistance available to community housing providers for their tenants. By September 2021, we had already provided over \$29 million in rental assistance to nearly 6,000 low-income households for over 27,000 units across the country.

The additional funding requested for 2021 started with a top-up of \$105 million over seven years proposed in budget 2021. This top-up will help community housing providers offer an additional 2,700 units to low-income households. Again, this has a big impact for Canadians.

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly had a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable families. I should mention that some of those families belong to minority communities across Canada. They are the most vulnerable when we take an intersectional approach. Now more than ever, they need access to affordable housing. That is how they will get through this pandemic safely, and it is essential if they are to be part of an economic recovery that gives everyone in Canada the chance to thrive and prosper.

At the same time, with the skyrocketing cost of home ownership, we also need to provide low-income Canadians with affordable rental options. Instead of building apartments only in the outer suburbs, we need to ensure that people are able to live close to work, school and the centre where they spend their time. This will keep our cities resilient and better able to recover from the pandemic.

Canadians have sent us a message that could not be any clearer. They care deeply about housing affordability. They want us to work together to provide them with affordable options, no matter what their housing status is.

• (2010)

Since I am almost out of time, I would like to conclude with the issue of affordability and the other forms of financial support we

have provided to Canadians, such as the Canada emergency response benefit and the Canada emergency wage subsidy.

The rental construction financing initiative and the federal community housing initiative are proven, safe and reliable programs, programs that are consistent, programs that have helped Canadians, especially the most vulnerable. They are delivering results. They have made a real difference and will continue to do so. With additional investments, they can benefit even more families across this great country of Canada.

Before I ask our Minister of Tourism a question, I think it is very important to say that the range of support measures that were put in place to help Canadians get through the pandemic was extraordinary. As the minister mentioned in his last exchange with a member of the opposition, Canadians have been counting a lot on their government, which reflects the Canadian population.

The government is a reflection of the people. We know that Canada is a northern country, a country where the strongest, richest person cannot survive alone with our long, hard winters. We have to work together. This attitude has been part of the Canadian spirit for centuries. It certainly began with indigenous people welcoming the Europeans who came to Canada. They clearly demonstrated the importance of working together to survive our long winters. Generation after generation of immigrants to Canada have learned the same lesson.

That is why it was only natural for the Canadian government to come up with support programs when we were backed into a corner when the pandemic first emerged in March 2020.

Mr. Chair, could you let me know if I can ask the minister my question now?

• (2015)

The Chair: There is about one minute and 20 seconds left. If you want to ask your question, please do it as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: I think it is important in my riding of Hull—Aylmer. It was very clear that we needed to make sure that businesses were able to keep their doors open and that the government had their back. We said we would do anything necessary to do that.

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Opposition members have said they would not have supported Canadians through this pandemic. I find that very troubling, because programs like the CRB, the CERB and the CEWS were life-lines for millions of Canadians, and certainly to businesses and individuals in my riding.

Could the minister expand on why it is so important for our government and why the government was so insistent on providing support to Canadian workers and businesses during the pandemic?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Chair, first, the hon. member for Hull-Aylmer is my member of Parliament, and I really like him. Second, he was a page, like me, many years ago, and third, he is an excellent speaker.

[*English*]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Chair, we did not get much in the way of finance, so I will ask the Minister of Tourism a question.

The U.S. has tightened travel restriction rules for foreign nationals, including Canadians, further complicating travel and holidays for Canadians going there. That means they need a different type of test and they follow a different type of testing time frame.

Does this concern the minister at all?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Chair, obviously we are all very concerned with all of what is happening with the new variant, omicron. That is why we work with our partners outside of Canada and do the right thing inside Canada.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, did the minister speak to the U.S. at all or anyone in the travel industry?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, we obviously speak to everyone involved in and affected by the travel restrictions on both sides of the border.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, does the minister think the federal government should take further action to promote increased use of antigen tests, just like the U.S.?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, that is a great question, but there is too little time to answer. There is a big difference between rapid antigen tests and molecular tests.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, does the minister plan on harmonizing with the U.S. on antigen tests?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, antigen tests are tests that are typically quite rapid but not as effective and precise as the molecular tests.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, I forgot to tell you that I am splitting my time with the member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Can the member commit to heading to harmonization with the U.S. on antigen tests?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, if the member would like to have a briefing, as this is all a bit complicated, she can ask for one and I will provide it to her through my officials.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, the travel restrictions are confusing at best, and the government is adamant about hotel quarantines as an effective measure against COVID-19. Does it concern

the minister that there are ever-changing travel restrictions, with the impact they are having on the tourism sector?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, the answer is yes. We are obviously very mindful of the impact this is having on all Canadians, including the people in the travel industry. We do this to protect the safety and health of Canadians.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, is the minister concerned about the continuation of quarantine hotels in attracting tourism or anyone to this country?

● (2020)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, Canadians have learned through the history of COVID-19 that the situation evolves, and they expect the government also to change its measures to protect their health and safety.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, I will just tell the minister that the CBSA identified 46,000 people from April to June of this year who landed in a U.S. border airport and immediately crossed the border into Canada by land.

First, is the minister aware that there are two different rules for entry?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, with some regret, but with respect, I will say that this is something we know, yet the members on the other side asked just a few days ago that we remove all tests and all quarantine measures. That would not have been the right thing to do.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, with all due respect, we asked the minister if he was going to harmonize the tests with the U.S. I just did that right now.

Is there a plan on harmonizing tests with the U.S.?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, our first priority is to protect the health and safety of Canadians. That is why we are taking those measures. If I have more time later, I will explain why those measures are the right ones for Canadians.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, I will try to talk about the independent Canadian travel advisers, 12,000 of them. Most of them are women and some are in the LGBT community.

Has the Minister of Tourism heard from them at all?

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Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we went to the wall for independent travel agents during the pandemic, and we will continue to represent their interests.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, is the minister aware that they have not been captured under any of the government's programs over the last 20 months?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I am in discussion with members of the independent travel agency. We have heard their concerns and we are working on them.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, will he commit to correcting this tonight at committee?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, officials are working on this matter. We are in constant contact with members of the independent travel agency, and we will work on this matter.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, he has an opportunity to correct this at committee. Will he correct this tonight, yes or no?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, we will work on this matter, as I have said.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, the independent Canadian travel advisers have come to the government. They have been quite vocal. They are not included in any of the programs that the government has put forward for Canadians. Will he commit to correcting that tonight, yes or no?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, we worked with independent travel agents in the negotiations with the airlines in the LEEFF funding. We are in constant conversation with this sector of the economy. We will continue to work with these very important entrepreneurs.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, is the Minister of Tourism concerned about the ever-changing travel restrictions and the impact they are having on the industry in Canada?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: I have already answered that question, Mr. Chair. What I did not say, however, is that we are going to do the right things for Canadians, as we have done for the last 20 months. This is absolutely important. There are no risks to take when it comes to protecting the safety and health of Canadians.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, in typical fashion, Canadians will know that the government hastily held a press conference on November 30 to announce mandatory arrivals testing.

I will start with a simple question. When will 100% of arrivals be tested in Canada?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, as I have said repeatedly over the last few days, this is ramping up quickly. Just last Friday, we increased the testing capacity by 60% and we will soon reach the 100% target that we have announced.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, we are starting to understand more about this from the industry and the media that are getting used to the Liberals not knowing what they are doing on this file.

Can the minister confirm to the House that if take-home tests were used for fully vaccinated arrivals and not from the 10 countries, we might be over the 70% today?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, indeed the member is correct. We are using a range of either home tests or on-site testing as the facilities permit.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, take-home tests have been used throughout COVID. It is the same test whether one takes it at home or at a facility.

Why is the government slowing the pace of 100% testing when the solutions are right in front of it?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, there are different types of take-home tests. There is the molecular type, which is the most precise one that travellers into Canada need to take, and there are the rapid test home kits that people can also use.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, I am going to cede my time to the member for—

The Chair: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be questioning the President of the Treasury Board.

Can the minister tell us the percentage increase in payroll taxes over the time period 2020 to 2022 which small businesses are facing?

• (2025)

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would love to answer her after I have had a chance to speak with my officials as I do not have that data with me this evening.

Ms. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, I will give the minister the answer. It is 18% and it is right on the government's website.

What is the maximum dollar value increase from this year to next year a business will have to pay in CPP employer contributions?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, as we know, we are currently doing a regulatory review and we will continue to make sure businesses do not have too much of a burden on their—

The Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Ms. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, I was referring to CPP increases. What is the dollar value that businesses will pay for the CPP maximum employer contributions per employee?

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Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the CPP increase is there to make sure that the system is in place for future generations. It is an agreed-upon framework over the next 10 years.

Ms. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, on Friday when I asked the government about CPP premium increases that businesses are facing in 2022, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry said, “this is not an increase.” Can the minister confirm today that the CPP premiums are not going up for businesses in 2022?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Chair, because of this historic change in the CPP that we made quickly in 2016, there is going to be a decrease of 25% in poverty among seniors over the next years.

Ms. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, the question was about how much businesses are paying. Once again, the Minister of Innovation made this comment on Friday.

To gain clarification for Canadian businesses, is this an increase or is there no increase in 2022?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, there was an incremental increase that was agreed on in the framework set in place in 2016. This is to make sure that CPP is in place and able to do as my colleague said, reduce poverty but secure retirement for Canadians for generations to come.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, now we have clarity from the comments that the other minister made on Friday.

Could the minister tell us the average amount of debt individual small businesses have taken on over the course of the pandemic?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, businesses were supported, nine million businesses, by CEBA. That is the metric that we are following.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, what is the average amount of debt? Surely the government should know this answer.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, our government is here to support Canadian businesses. What we did during the pandemic is what we will continue to do as we come through this.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, does the minister acknowledge that some small businesses will likely have to go more into debt to afford the upcoming payroll tax increases?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, confidence is back and 106% of the jobs are recovered. Businesses are recovering. Businesses can afford the increases.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, the finance minister often likes to quote people, so here is the quote from the CFIB: “Pausing the rise in CPP premiums for small businesses is one of the top priorities for CFIB.” Does the minister agree?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, pre-pandemic business confidence was high during the pandemic and it is back to pre-pandemic levels. Businesses have already included the CPP increases in their forecasts. They can afford this.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, I am a little in shock with that answer considering how much small businesses have been through over the last two years.

How many small businesses has the government consulted regarding the 2022 payroll tax increases?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the CEBA helped over 898,000 small businesses survive. We will continue to support small businesses.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, I was not referring to the CEBA. I was talking about CPP payroll tax increases. How many business groups has the government consulted on these increases?

[Translation]

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the Canada pension plan, or CPP, addresses significant challenges facing young Canadians who are saving for retirement.

• (2030)

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, will the minister commit to freezing the payroll tax hikes for 2022?

[Translation]

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the CPP strengthens one of our government's most successful social programs.

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, this is an unprecedented difficult time for entrepreneurs. Will the government freeze payroll tax hikes for 2022?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, we have invested billions of dollars in small businesses and we will continue to see them through the end of this pandemic.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, being in this House most of today listening to a lot of debate, there were a lot of comments from the government side about the fact that we are still in a pandemic and it is a really difficult time. Based on that, will the government commit now to not increasing the payroll taxes for 2022?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the Conservatives continue to undermine the CPP. They try to block the progress our government has made. What is it that they have against future generations having a good retirement and making sure that—

The Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, the finance minister's office said they will review EI contribution rates. When is this review going to be completed?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, that is a reasonable question and the EI rate is under review.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, back to the minister, when does he expect the review to be completed?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, in due course.

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Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, does that mean January, February, March, April, three years from now, 10 years from now? Give us an estimate.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, it means in due course.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, that is not overly reassuring.

How many small businesses has the government consulted so far regarding the review of the EI contribution rates?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the government consults with businesses on a full range of matters and I am happy to get that number for my hon. colleague from officials.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, how many people were on CRB in September?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the CRB helped nine million Canadians who lost their jobs. I am happy to get the September numbers.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, I have actually got them here, but obviously the minister does not know. Approximately how many job vacancies were there in September?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, let me reiterate the CRB helped nearly nine million Canadians who lost their jobs when COVID hit.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, it is really amazing that we have five ministers here and apparently the minister who knows the most is answering the question and we have had no answers here.

This is my last question for the minister. Can the minister list the top three ways the government is addressing the labour crisis?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the government is working with the sector and our colleagues across government to ensure that we have plenty of workers to meet the demand of businesses from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is wonderful to see you, a fellow Nova Scotian, up there in the chair tonight. I am thankful for the opportunity to speak before this committee of the whole.

Last night, the Government of Canada outlined some of the many measures the health portfolio has been leading to protect Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures are a critical part of our response to the pandemic, and while we all wish we could put the pandemic behind us, we know that it is not quite over yet. Maybe we see a light at the end of the tunnel, but it is not over. With the omicron variant now circulating in Canada and other countries, we must continue to be vigilant.

As we have seen, the parameters of the pandemic can change quickly. We have to be ready to respond with measures that are both effective and appropriate. The budgetary needs reflect, in my opinion, a flexible approach.

Last night, the Government of Canada provided us with a financial overview for 2021-22. Through the supplementary estimates (B), the Government of Canada is seeking \$185.7 million on behalf of the health portfolio, which includes Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. This increase over the 2021-22 main estimates and the supplementary estimates (A) will complement work already under way

in a number of important ways, and it will address gaps in our health care system.

Even as the response to COVID-19 has dominated the work of the health portfolio over the past 22 months, Health Canada has also continued to perform its core mission to protect and promote the health of Canadians. We are seeing how the ongoing management of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the coping capacity of Canada's health care systems. It has exposed a number of long-standing gaps that need to be addressed, including strained public health and health care systems, a long-term care system in need of reform, social and economic inequalities and, of course, increasing rates of mental illness and substance use.

As difficult as it has been, the pandemic has served as a catalyst in finding solutions to many of these pre-existing challenges. For example, the Government of Canada has made progress toward providing accessible digital tools and virtual health care to people across Canada. Through bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories worth approximately \$150 million, the Government of Canada is providing support to expand virtual health care services across the country. This has been especially beneficial for Canadians in northern, rural and remote communities.

In addition, our government has committed up to \$1 billion through the safe long-term care fund to help the provinces and territories improve infection, prevention and control in long-term care. Through this fund, the provinces and territories can receive support to hire additional staff and top up their wages. They can also invest in new or renovated infrastructure, including ventilation and readiness assessments.

Early in the pandemic, the Government of Canada recognized that enormous mental health needs were going unmet. Last year, Health Canada launched a new online portal for mental health and substance use support. Wellness Together Canada provides free 24-7 services and resources to people in need across Canada, including one-on-one counselling. As of November 29, more than 1.9 million people have accessed this portal. This means that on a weekly basis, anywhere between 20,000 and 30,000 people in Canada turn to Wellness Together Canada for mental health and substance use support.

The pandemic has also had an impact on the opioid overdose crisis, which continues to devastate families and communities across the country. We are focusing on providing communities with the support they need to save lives and improve the quality of life for people who use drugs.

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● (2035)

Last summer, Health Canada invested an additional \$116 million through the substance use and addictions program to build up successful community-based programs that prevent, treat or reduce the harms associated with substance use. The government is also working with experts and the provinces and territories on developing national standards for access to mental health and substance use services so that Canadians can get the support they need.

Just this fall, we appointed Canada's very first federal Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. The creation of this new role shows how committed our government is to giving mental health and substance use the attention they deserve. These ongoing health care issues continue to be a priority as we finish the fight against COVID-19.

The supplementary estimates (B) will see the Public Health Agency of Canada transfer \$12.4 million to the Canada Border Services Agency for the ArriveCAN digital service. The agency is also transferring \$7 million to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to expand research into understanding the nature of immunity following COVID-19 infection and vaccination.

For the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Government of Canada is requesting a total of \$23.7 million in voted appropriations and \$495,000 in statutory appropriations. Of the voted appropriations, \$17.8 million will help establish the Centre for Research on Pandemic Preparedness and Health Emergencies.

Finally, the government is seeking an additional \$181 million in funding for Health Canada. This will increase the department's voted spending authorities by close to \$180 million and its statutory spending by just over \$1 million. In addition to addressing pressures associated with Canada's response to COVID-19, this funding will go toward some of the ongoing health care crisis issues discussed today, including improving mental health supports and services, addressing the opioid crisis and problematic substance use, and supporting access to sexual and reproductive health care information and services.

In recent days, we have experienced some of the turbulence we were told to expect as we enter our second winter of the pandemic. As daily case counts creep up and we learn more about the omicron variant, we must continue to be both cautious and vigilant. As usual, our best line of defence is to take individual public health precautions, such as wearing a mask and getting vaccinated.

I believe the supplementary estimates (B) that the Government of Canada has presented reflect the balance between addressing the challenges of today and planning for a brighter future. Even as we continue to take the necessary precautions to stay safe in the present, we must also consider the future. If we look ahead with optimism, we can start building the future we want to see.

I had the distinct honour of being the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health in the last Parliament, and I saw first-hand what our amazing public servants did day in and day out to keep Canadians safe. I would ask the Minister of Health to please, on behalf of the constituents of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and me, pass along my thanks to the public servants, health care professionals and people who have worked day and night to keep us safe.

As to my first question for the Minister of Health, how are we continuing to monitor possible new variants so that we can continue to keep Canadians safe from what is potentially lying ahead?

● (2040)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I will not have the pleasure of working with the member as parliamentary secretary, but I have heard extremely good things about him and his extremely important work over the last while. He wants me to thank public servants. Yes, I will do that. I think we have done that many times over the last 20 months. They have far exceeded the expectations and needs of Canadians in most respects. He also suggested thanking health care workers, and this is extremely valuable.

I would like to thank him personally for what he did, and all members of the House as well. I think we have met the expectations and needs of Canadians in these difficult times. There is more to do, as the member reminds us. The omicron variant is here, and we have to rebuild our health care system and build it for the long term.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Chair, from top-notch services to incredible retail stores to the restaurants that provide us with our favourite meal, small businesses make our communities vibrant. These are the entrepreneurs who sponsor our local sports teams and help keep people employed.

Throughout the pandemic, I have been listening to the feedback from the businesses across Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. Not a business out there has not commented that the supports our government has provided through COVID-19 have helped them keep people employed and helped them keep the lights on.

I would ask the Minister of Tourism how we are going to continue to look after these very important businesses, and how we are going to continue, in the face of possible new variants, to take care of them?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is nice to see you in the chair again.

In the member's area, represented by the ACOA, a regional development agency, the regional relief and recovery fund provided more than \$225 million to businesses in Atlantic Canada going through difficult times. It helped protect more than 16,000 jobs and supported close to 2,500 businesses. Our message to small businesses, including in the tourism sector, is clear: We are here for them now and we will work with them to help relaunch the economy.

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The Canadian economy will not fully recover until the tourism sector has recovered. As my hon. colleague knows, and as we are encouraging all members in the House to recognize, we need support for Bill C-2. It is what operators in the tourism sector are asking us for. Bill C-2 would help hotels, motels, cottages, B & Bs, youth hostels, restaurants, food trucks, caterers, cafés, tour operators, theatres, music halls, charter buses, dinner cruises, holiday horse carriages, museums, heritage sites, zoos, botanical gardens, gyms, sports centres, ski resorts, leisure boat docks, amusement parks, dance halls, kids camps, hunting camps, fishing camps, cinemas, drive-in theatres and much more.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Chair, I often hear the Conservatives say that we have invested too much in taking care of Canadians. I think about that cost versus the cost of inaction. I wonder if the minister could talk about what this scenario might have been like if we had not invested in Canadians and Canadian businesses.

• (2045)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, during the course of the pandemic, it was clear that the Conservatives wanted to embrace a policy of austerity, and they really believed that the COVID lockdowns were a time for cutting back. They thought that in this time of crisis, the government should have told Canadians to just stick it out on their own. Well, that is not our approach, and it is not the approach we took. We chose a process of investment and an approach of compassion, and that is why we have had one of the fastest recovered recessions in Canadian history, with 106% of jobs recovered since the base of the pandemic.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Chair, I might be a little biased, but Nova Scotia is the most beautiful part of the country. There is so much to see. We need to make sure that tour operators, for instance, have what they need to get through these challenging times. Perhaps my hon. colleague could highlight the government's latest support measures to help keep this particular type of business afloat.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, I would like to highlight for my hon. colleague our \$500-million tourism relief fund, which started in July. We are encouraging members from all parties of the House to get people to apply for grants of up to \$100,000, with 50% matching, or for repayable loans of up to \$500,000, representing 75% of a project, to make their tourism asset more attractive.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Chair, our government has moved at lightning speed throughout this pandemic to get support to people, organizations and businesses that needed it the most. We have listened to the incredible feedback that our constituents provide to us on a regular basis to make sure that we close the gaps and do our very best to make sure that no businesses are left behind. Businesses that are struggling the most must have the support they need.

I would ask the hon. minister to please explain more about how our government's support measures moving forward will help businesses make it through this challenging time and keep—

The Deputy Chair: I am going to allow the hon. minister to respond.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, I would like to thank the great staff at ACOA for the work they are doing to help people in the hon. member's part of the country. The regional development

agencies from coast to coast to coast will continue to be there for businesses.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Madam Chair, it is a pleasure to be here, and I will let the House know that I am splitting my time with the member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

To the minister, how does the government intend to increase housing supply in Canada?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I will first mention that the national housing strategy is the first-ever housing strategy in Canada. We implemented it in 2017, and it led to other measures.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, does the minister know we have been told that 1.8 million houses are needed in Canada. How does the minister intend to increase supply in Canada?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, one million is the number of Canadians who have been helped since the introduction of the national housing strategy in 2017.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, let me help the minister out a little. His plan says they are going to create 100,000 houses. When are they going to do that? They will do it in four years.

How is the minister going to get 1.7 million more houses in the next 12 months?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I think the member may have misunderstood. I spoke about one million Canadians who have been helped with paying their rent since the introduction of the national housing strategy.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, so we are still 1.7 million short.

The Conservatives had a plan using federal infrastructure dollars to create more housing and off-load 15% of government assets. What do the Liberals think of that plan?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I am sorry to say, and I say it with some respect and regret, that what the Conservatives were proposing in the campaign would have helped rich landlords sell their stock of housing.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, Canada owns 41 million hectares. I am trying to draw the connection here for the minister. How exactly will the Liberal minister create more housing supply?

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• (2050)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, an example is the \$4-billion accelerator fund, which we are going to invest in municipalities and provinces, because we know that to partner with them is key to solving the housing crisis.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, the accelerator fund he speaks of creates 100,000 homes in four years. We went through that already. With 1.3 million empty homes in Canada, how do we solve this issue of getting more housing supply for Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, another example is the rental housing construction initiative, a \$26-billion investment in support of housing builders in Canada. That is going to create tens of thousands of new homes.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, again, there are 1.3 million empty homes. The Liberals' solution to that is a 1% tax. Wow, that is really going to scare a lot of home landlords.

Will the minister commit to never introducing a capital gains tax on the sale of a primary residence?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, we said that just recently, and we have repeated it. What I could add now is that a new Canada housing benefit has been in place for a year, and it has helped 300,000 Canadians pay their rent.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, 1.8 million new homes are needed in this country. The 100,000 and 30,000 numbers he is talking about solve a symptom, but they do not solve the real problem. Housing supply is the lowest in the G7 and housing prices are the highest in the G7. There is a 5.2% drop in home builds and a 20% rise in house prices.

Does the minister not see that his plan is not working?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, another number to add to all of the other numbers I mentioned earlier is 530,000 Canadians being lifted out of housing needs because of investments in the national housing strategy.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, does the minister know the average home price in Canada today?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, another number to add to all the numbers I mentioned is 300,000. This is the number of homes being renovated—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, that one I feel was a puff-ball. The average home price in Canada is \$717,000. The average home price last year was \$606,000.

Does the minister not see there is a problem with getting more homes on the market for Canadian families?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, one program I have not mentioned yet is the one dealing with innovative systems and programs in building housing. There are 125,000 homes being constructed because of this particular program.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, let us go back to where we started. We need 1.8 million more homes built. That is what the experts are saying.

The Liberals' plan is committing to 100,000 more homes in four years, so 1.7 million more homes need to be created in the next 12 months. How does the minister plan to do that?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, one more initiative we have announced recently is the rapid housing construction initiative, which is going to lead to the construction of tens of thousands of new homes in just a year.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, this is tens of thousands of new homes. We are talking about needing 1.8 million to be created. I will give the minister credit for the 100,000 homes he has brought up, but after that we need 1.7 million more, so tens of thousands more homes does nothing.

How is the minister going to generate more housing supply in Canada?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, time is short, so let me repeat the numbers. They are 1,000,000, 300,000, 125,000, 71,000, 530,000, 9,200, plus a \$4 billion acceleration fund to work with the provinces, territories and municipalities.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, I would ask the minister this: What is the average house price in Canada?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, that is interesting. We had those questions from the member for Carleton. My colleague said—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, that was a test. It was \$717,000 this year. Last year it was \$606,000, an 18.2% increase. Something needs to be done. The minister just received his binder from the back room, so hopefully it will help him. We need to create more housing supply in Canada.

Does the minister not see that we need to create 1.7 million more homes in Canada?

• (2055)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, indeed I have a binder because I am being told that I forget many other measures that are going to create many more homes.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, I would like to hear from the health minister regarding the Public Health Agency of Canada spending a billion dollars on the funding for border and travel measures, and isolation. How much was spent on providing nutritious meals to Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, the member is correct to mention that we have had to look after Canadians, both those who remained inside the country and others when they came back to Canada. We followed the important health and safety measures we put into place.

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Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, I ask because we are seeing a lot of significant events happening at quarantine hotels. A celiac woman from Edmonton went 40 hours without food. Does the minister believe the money was well spent on this nutritious food for those with extreme dietary needs?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, the member is correct. The people who come to these places need to be treated with respect and care. That is what the Public Health Agency has to do in collaboration with the providers of the service.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, can the minister say how much was spent on providing Canadians with clothing, since they did not have their luggage?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I am sorry to say I do not know the exact number. What I do know is that we need to look after all those people who come into Canada and treat them—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, I am asking because Andrew from Ottawa, who was on the news, spent five days in quarantine and did not have a change of clothes. He also had three negative COVID tests. Is that acceptable?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, that is not acceptable. What is also not acceptable is to follow the proposal of the Conservative MPs. Just a few days ago, they asked for the removal of all tests and quarantine measures.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, the minister is incorrect. The Conservatives have long supported expert advice on our borders.

We were also interested to see the expert advisory panel of the government say that the guiding principles of all health decisions should be to minimize unintended harm. Does the minister feel he has fulfilled that with quarantine hotels?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, that is right. To minimize harm is exactly what we should be doing. That is what we have done throughout the crisis by putting strict measures in place at the borders to protect everyone, including those inside Canada.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, I would beg to differ. Dr. Gooderham is a physician and vaccine advocate in Peterborough. She has a wait list of over one year for critical medical appointments. She has been stuck in quarantine and is having to reschedule so many appointments for patients in critical need. Does the minister believe that unintended consequences in this regard are not important?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I am going to smile because she mentioned a vaccine advocate. I think there should be more vaccine advocates on the other side of the House, and they should let us know how many Conservative MPs have not yet received one dose out of the 62 million doses administered to Canadians.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, Dr. Gooderham is a dermatologist. Skin care and skin cancer diagnoses cannot wait. She is very concerned that a number of her patients cannot wait, yet they have to because the minister has kept her in a quarantine hotel, despite having a negative COVID test for three days. Could the minister explain why this is acceptable?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I will say it again. Strict measures have been put in place at the border since the start of the pandemic, and they were the right measures to put in place to protect the health and safety of everyone.

[*English*]

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, how is the minister protecting public safety when he is not allowing a pro-vaccine advocate into her community, an important doctor in her community, to access patients who have been waiting a year?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I do not understand exactly what the objective of this is. If the objective is to suggest that we should not have measures for quarantine and testing procedures at the border, then maybe the member should say so.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, I have read what the doctor wrote to me. She has been waiting three days. She has a negative COVID test from the government, and she is still waiting three days to be released. She said that she is stuck there despite her negative test. She also says that it is inhumane, forcing her against her will, given that she is no risk to Canada.

Why is the doctor being held hostage by the government?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, is the suggestion to take no measures whatsoever and to remove all testing and quarantine? If that is the intent, maybe we should hear that more clearly.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, I think our intent is to ensure that Canadians are treated with dignity and respect. Does the minister think he is doing a good job of that?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, again I have not heard the answer yet. Is the intent to ask the government to remove all testing and quarantine measures, as has been suggested by this—

• (2100)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, I think my question is about the fact that the taxpayer has spent \$1 billion.

We know with the government that the sky is the limit with spending, yet we are seeing an unbelievable amount of mistreatment: Canadians going without food; Canadians going without diapers and milk for their babies; people with celiac going without food they can safely eat; doctors having to put off critical patient appointments. However, all of these people have had negative tests and are just waiting for a bureaucratic stamp of approval for days.

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It cost \$1 billion, and this is what the Canadian taxpayer has received. I just do not find it acceptable. The minister himself has said he does not believe this is acceptable. I will ask him again for the record: Does the minister think it is acceptable to treat Canadians this way?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, what would be acceptable would be to hear the views of the opposition members of Parliament. Do they really believe we should take away all measures at the frontiers, including quarantine and testing measures?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, does the minister think it has been \$1 billion well spent?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, \$1 billion spent to protect the health and safety of Canadians, I think, is a good idea.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, does the minister believe he has been protecting the health and safety of the woman who has celiac disease who went 40 hours without food?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, again, we do not know what the alternative is. Are they proposing that we should remove all testing and quarantine measures?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, the government should be treating Canadians with dignity and respect. If they have a negative COVID test, they should be released from quarantine, particularly the doctor who has not been able to see her patients, particularly the woman with celiac who has not eaten, particularly the man who has not changed his underwear for five days, all of whom have had negative COVID tests.

That is unacceptable behaviour from the government. I am not appreciating that there is absolutely no dignity and respect coming from a minister of the government, the health minister, who clearly does not care that people have been treated without dignity and respect for days with negative COVID tests.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I think having respect here would be for the member to tell the House clearly what measures she proposes should be in place.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, I very much look forward to the time when Conservatives are in government. I cannot answer his question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Chair, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway.

I would like to start with a simple little question. Has the minister received his mandate letter?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, there are a lot of ministers, and I am not sure who the member is addressing. I have not yet received my mandate letter. I hope it will be made public soon.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Chair, I want to inform the minister that I am my party's health critic.

It is 79 days after the election and 43 days since he was appointed, but the minister has not yet received the statement of priorities of his mandate. How does he explain that?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I assure my colleague that I am well aware of the priorities of my mandate. The first is to help our country definitively recover from the COVID-19 crisis.

The second is to repair the damage this crisis has caused to our health care system. The third is to build our health care system for the long term.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Chair, the election was supposedly necessary and urgent. For those people watching us who do not know, I want to make it clear that it is the Prime Minister who sets out the new ministers' priorities in their mandate letters.

The Minister of Health claims to know what the Prime Minister expects of him, so it would be great if he could table his mandate letter in the House soon after he receives it so that we, too, can find out what his priorities are.

Having said that, has the minister seen the Standing Committee on Health's work on the pandemic?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, the first part of my colleague's question is about mandate letters. In 2015, the Liberal government was the first government in history to make mandate letters public.

To answer the second part of his question, I invite my colleague to look at the Liberal Party's election platform from the last campaign. He will see that health care was a huge part of it.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Chair, the throne speech was so empty we had a hard time understanding anything about the government's priorities other than its plan to interfere in areas under provincial jurisdiction.

Since the minister avoided answering my question, I have to assume he is not aware of the work of the Standing Committee on Health. If he were, he would have known that all the experts confirmed that chronic underfunding, thanks to his government and its predecessors, made the health system so fragile that, when the pandemic hit, all the weak links snapped.

Dr. Champagne from Quebec's association of hematologists and oncologists said, "we really need to be concerned about these [diagnostic] delays, because patients and society will pay the price. For 13 of the 17 cancers that were studied, a four-week delay in diagnosis increased the risk of mortality by 6% to 8%".

The pandemic has created two types of victims: COVID-19 patients and other patients. The latter are collateral victims. Why is the minister failing to see the urgent need to increase health transfers from 22% to 35%?

● (2105)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I am very grateful to my colleague for the question.

I will quickly share two numbers with him. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Canadian government invested \$55 billion in addition to the \$43 billion under the Canada health transfer, not to mention part of the \$11 billion that has been invested since 2017.

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That is a lot of resources invested in a short amount of time, without waiting for an agreement. If the member consults our election platform, he will see that it talks about an additional \$25 billion to repair the health care system not in the long term, but in the very short term.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Chair, the minister says he wants the pandemic to end as soon as possible, but does he know that at the end of the third wave the lack of cancer screening meant that 10,000 people went undiagnosed? Does he know how many patients were waiting in the middle of the third wave according to the Fédération des médecins spécialistes du Québec, the FMSQ? I would like to note that we have reached the fifth wave.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I commend my colleague on all his contributions and I would remind him of another number. The number of surgeries that were delayed these past months because of the COVID-19 pandemic is estimated at 780,000. The extraordinary partnership we saw between the governments during the pandemic can be just as important in the short term for cleaning up that mess.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Chair, once again the minister is sidestepping the question.

The minister wants to impose standards, but he does not have the answers to questions about what is happening on the ground in Quebec. There are 200,000 patients waiting, and some are past the recommended wait time.

The good Dr. Legault, of the FMSQ, said that it will take at least 10 years to clear the backlog. He stated, “The federal government quickly allocated significant funds to cushion the impact of the health crisis on the economy and on the public. We hope that the federal government will be able to provide additional funding to the provinces” to “address the needs of the health care system”, whose sustainability he believes is at risk. He added that “this crisis will not go away in one year or two. It will persist for a long time.”

Does the minister realize that the longer his government waits to invest and transfer money to health care, by which I mean the \$28 billion that everyone has agreed is necessary, the more health care costs will skyrocket and the more patients will suffer?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I congratulate my colleague once again.

I will add another statistic. In Quebec alone, approximately 1.5 million people do not have access to a family doctor.

I will now add two more figures. We did not wait, and I believe the member is fully aware of that. We immediately invested the very significant amount of \$55 billion during COVID-19. We should not forget that \$25 billion was invested very quickly after the commitment made by the Liberal Party during the campaign. All that is substantial.

We could talk about all the other commitments that the government has made over the past few years and that will continue to contribute to this very important collaborative effort, whose value we came to appreciate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Federalism and the Canadian federation are a source of great solidarity, especially during a crisis when there are such significant challenges to be overcome.

● (2110)

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Chair, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague on his appointment. I look forward to working with him to build health care for all Canadians.

In the 2019 throne speech, the Liberal government pledged to “introduce and implement national pharmacare so that Canadians have the drug coverage they need.” The 2020 throne speech noted that the government “remains committed to a national universal pharmacare program” and would “accelerate steps to achieve this system”.

The 2021 throne speech contained no reference to pharmacare whatsoever. Does this omission reflect his government's abandonment of universal pharmacare?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for his hard work and his good words.

No, we have not abandoned this. In fact, it is all in progress because of the important advances that we have seen in the past six years. I look forward to describing them in a moment in greater detail as more questions come in.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, the Liberal-appointed Hoskins advisory council called on the federal government to launch national pharmacare by offering universal coverage for essential medicines by January 1, 2022.

Will the federal government meet this deadline?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, in a brief summary of what we are doing and what we have done, first, we are extremely active on the regulatory innovation to make sure that medicine research and development and production come quickly—

The Deputy Chair: Sorry. The hon. member.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, it was a simple question: Will the federal government meet the deadline of January 1, 2022, which is less than a month from now? I guess the answer to that is no, it will not.

Can the minister confirm when national universal pharmacare will be in place for Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, if I may continue, we have announced and already made significant investments in biomedical fabrication and development in Canada, leading to some serious advances in the production of and access to medicines—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, again, I guess Canadians have no answer from the Liberals about when they might get universal pharmacare.

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Canada had the highest proportion of COVID deaths in long-term care of any country in the OECD. Will the minister confirm when national standards for long-term care will be in place?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I have two things on this.

First, it is being developed now, and we started many months ago in collaboration with the provinces and territories and experts. Second, we have announced in the platform an investment of \$9 billion to support investments in long-term care.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, does the minister agree that we should end the for-profit delivery of long-term care to our seniors across Canada?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I understand the concern and share it very much. In my own province, if we add up all those people who died in long-term care centres, we—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, during the last election, the Liberal Party promised to “work towards a national school nutritious meal program with a \$1 billion investment over five years.”

Can the minister confirm this investment will be put in place during the fall economic statement?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I am glad that the member has an eye on the fall economic statement. Our colleague, the Minister of Finance, is going to produce and share a great statement.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care issues important guidelines to health professionals across Canada, yet the task force lacks members with subject matter expertise. This can and has resulted in questionable, inaccurate and dangerous guidelines being issued, for example using outdated studies and ignoring relevant data to recommend against life-saving breast screening for Canadian women in their 40s. Multiple other specialties are similarly affected, such as urology, psychiatry and gastroenterology.

During the election, the Liberal Party committed to reviewing the task force. When will this happen?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, that is a great example of something that is extremely important. We look forward to doing this as quickly as possible, and we know that we can count on the member's input to make that possible.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, the government has allowed PHAC to use the Pacific Gateway Hotel in British Columbia as a federal quarantine hotel since March 2020. Over 140 workers, mostly women, with decades on the job were terminated by that employer using the pandemic as a cover. Workers have now been on strike for seven months.

This week, it was reported that travellers are finding “wretched conditions” at Pacific Gateway and other quarantine hotels run by PHAC. Will this government commit to move out of the Pacific Gateway Hotel and cancel its arrangement with it?

• (2115)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, obviously caring for people in such facilities is absolutely essential. These people re-

quire appropriate treatment, and we expect all of these service providers to meet and abide by all appropriate labour and health laws.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, in May 2021, the City of Vancouver submitted its final proposal to Health Canada requesting an exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to decriminalize the simple possession of illicit drugs. It is now half a year later, and the federal government has yet to render a decision.

Given that the catastrophic death toll from Canada's drug poisoning crisis is growing every single day, does the minister believe that this is an acceptable delay?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, my colleague is pretty well informed and mindful of the important challenges to deal with.

Section 56 exemptions are being considered in that particular context. We are working, obviously, very closely with the City of Vancouver and the Government of B.C. in that regard.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, Canada's premiers are calling for the federal share of health care spending to rise from the current 22% of total costs to 35%.

Given that the federal government initially agreed to cover half the cost of medicare when it was first established, does the minister agree that 22% is an unreasonable share for the federal government to assume?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, there are four key statistics here: first, the \$41-billion-plus Canada health transfer; second, the \$11-billion investment that we put into place in 2017 on home care and mental health care; third, the \$55-billion investment we made during COVID-19; and fourth, the \$25-billion promise we made—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, every year, six and a half million Canadians avoid going to the dentist because they cannot afford it, and one in three Canadians lacks dental insurance. The Liberal government's 2019 throne speech called universal dental care an idea worth exploring.

Can the minister outline what steps the government has taken to address this major public health deficiency?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, that is indeed an important area to consider, along with home care, mental health care, long-term care, virtual care, primary care and many other sorts of care that Canadians not only need but deserve.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Chair, my first question is for the Minister of Tourism. He has not spoken for a while, so I wanted to give him an opportunity to do so.

What amount is proposed in the bill to support the tourism industry?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, we have made it clear that our bill will help Canadians and the tourism sector. We encourage the members opposite to vote in favour of Bill C-3.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Chair, I repeat my question. What is the amount?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, we have clearly indicated that we have put \$500 million into—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Chair, I asked a very simple question. How much has the Minister of Tourism and his government decided to invest to help the tourism and hospitality sectors in Canada?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, I was very clear. Some \$500 million is going to the tourism relief fund.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Chair, what I saw in the bill was \$7 billion. I will ask another minister, one who has not said much yet this evening, the President of the Treasury Board, to tell us where the \$7 billion is coming from to help everyone in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, it is very clear in our bill. We are here to help all the tourism sectors, the hotel industry, restaurants, all the sectors hit hardest by the pandemic. We encourage members on the other side to support the bill.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Chair, I do not want to insist, but I must. The bill talks about \$7 billion. The Minister of Tourism cannot say what the amount is, and the President of the Treasury Board cannot say where the money will come from.

My colleague from Carleton asked the Standing Committee on Finance some questions and asked where the money would come from. We were told what it might be spent on, but no one told us where the money would come from.

• (2120)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, the bill is intended to support hotels, motels, cottages, bed and breakfasts, youth hostels, restaurants, food trucks, tour operators, theatres and music venues.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Chair, I forgot to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

I will ask my question again. The government introduces bills to get them passed, but we are not told where the money will come

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from. I want to know if it is borrowed money or money in the bank. It is a very simple question.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, that is why we are introducing bills. That will help gyms, sports centres, ski resorts, entertainment centres, youth summer camps and fishing camps. We are going to help people in those industries.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Chair, I will try to be even more clear when I ask my question. The government is planning to spend \$7 billion to help people in the tourism industry, all those the minister just listed. The President of the Treasury Board is unable to tell us where the money will come from.

Where will that \$7 billion for all those sectors come from?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Chair, since the 2021 budget was tabled, we have made a number of investments and we continue to invest in the sectors that are hardest hit, including tourism. We will continue to support the tourism industry.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Chair, I am glad the President of the Treasury Board rose to answer me, but unfortunately she did not answer my question.

My question is very simple: Where will the money come from?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, I have a question for the members opposite: Are they going to support the tourism industry or do they want to see it die before the end of the pandemic?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Chair, I am going to ask the minister a new question: Does he plan to split the bill in two to help the tourism sector as quickly as possible? This is a catch-all bill with all sorts of things thrown in, some of which the members on this side of the House see as necessary.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, it is very clear. We presented a list of all of the sectors we will support by investing billions of dollars because these sectors asked us for help.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Chair, I have a question for the Minister of Health, since he and I are almost seniors. I do not want to impute motive on him, but here we are.

During the election campaign, the government promised to increase old age security. Can the minister tell us by what percentage the benefit will increase in 2022?

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Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I am very happy to answer that question. I do not know exactly how old my colleague is, but he seems very young and in good shape. I wish him a long life filled with happiness and good health, although not necessarily with the Conservatives. He would be even happier if he were to come over to the Liberals. That is up to him.

As for his question about seniors, there was a 25% reduction in poverty—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member has the floor.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Chair, he did not answer my question. I do not get it. Every time I ask a question, no one can give me an answer, even when my questions are simple. I asked the minister by what percentage old age security benefits would increase in 2022. It is not a complicated question.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I doubt my colleague is getting the benefit since he is not old enough yet, but if he were old enough, he would have already received \$500—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Chair, no, I am not quite there yet, but I will be soon.

Once again, the minister is not answering the question. I was not talking about the \$500 that the government gave out before the election, I was talking about the increase in old age security that the government promised during the election campaign.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I know my colleague is looking forward to getting that increase, but I am telling him he must be a little older to become eligible for it. One day, when he is old enough, he will get the 10% increase that we promised for those 75 and older.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Chair, you cannot imagine how much I look forward to being on the other side so I can give completely ridiculous answers like the ones I was just given.

I point out to my colleague that I am not 65 and that I will be turning 60 next year.

I am asking a very simple question: What is the percentage increase in old age security? I will also ask a second question: What is the inflation rate as we speak?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I see that my colleague is getting ready for his golden years.

There are two types of increases or indexation. The first is the increase that has been happening for 50 years, the cost-of-living increase. The second is the extra one we promised during the election campaign.

• (2125)

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Chair, does that mean the increase will be at least 4.7%?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, it means the increase is tied to an increase in the cost of living.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Madam Chair, I am happy to be here asking questions about the budget.

Perhaps the Treasury Board minister could answer my first question. Is she aware that Canada is in a housing bubble right now, yes or no?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I will not ask my colleague how old he is because I can see he is reluctant to share that sensitive information. However, what I can tell him is that, in Canada, since 2019—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, I will repeat my question. It is very straightforward. Is the government aware that Canada is in a real estate bubble right now, yes or no?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, Canada has been facing a housing crisis for years. That is why, in 2017, we implemented the first—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, is the government aware that inflation is raging and the cost of living has gone up for everyone, including seniors, families and the less fortunate, yes or no?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, inflation is a global phenomenon. The inflation rate is 4.7% in Canada and 6.2% in the United States.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, my next question will be for the Minister of Tourism because he tried to give me an answer that had to do with inflation.

What is the government going to do to address the inflation that everyone is dealing with right now?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, inflation is at 6.2% in Mexico this year. If the opposition party really wants to claim that our government is causing inflation, he should explain how we caused it—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, I have a simple question. I want to know what the government is going to do to help families combat inflation and the rising cost of living. I do not want to know what is happening in Mexico. I am asking what the government is going to do to help Canadian families.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, we have committed to investing \$30 billion in child care to make life more affordable for people. That is what we are going to do.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, I invite the minister to come to Quebec. It has taken 25 years to put the child care system in place, put up the buildings and train the staff. However, families need help today.

Business of Supply

I will repeat my question for the minister: What is he going to do to lower the cost of living for Quebec and Canadian families?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I will quickly provide two examples.

The first is the Canada child benefit, which continues to be increased in line with the cost of living and lifts nearly 400,000 children out of poverty every month.

The second is the increase to the old age security pension. I know that he is less interested in that than his other colleague, but it is one—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, I would like to ask the following question on behalf of the families, seniors and the poor who are grappling with an increase in the cost of gas and groceries, the likes of which we have not often seen in the past 30 years in Canada, an increase that for the most part stems from the government's decisions.

What will be different in the upcoming budget, in the \$17.4 billion that the government has put on the table, that will ensure that the rise in the cost of living for families decreases and will bring it back down to 2%, which would be reasonable?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, we can take the following example. A single mother with two children will receive \$13,600 from the Canada child benefit. The average family in Saskatchewan will almost \$1,000 from the carbon price rebate.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, those measures were already in place before. At this time, we are grappling with the skyrocketing cost of living, which was created by all of this government's spending.

What will the government do today to change the situation and improve the cost of living for all Canadians?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, we are committed to making life more affordable, and that is what we will do.

Seniors received an extra \$500 this summer. A student will save \$3,000 through our plan to eliminate interest on federal student loans.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, are the seniors listening to us right now to understand that the cheque they received before the election was to buy their vote, that all their problems have now been solved, and that the cost of living is no longer an issue, yes or no?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, we obviously value seniors. We increased the guaranteed income supplement and sent them a cheque for \$500. We will continue to support seniors.

• (2130)

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, I have a very simple question for the Minister of Seniors, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, the Minister of Tourism or the President of the Treasury Board.

As of what age is someone considered a senior?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, that is a great question. I have a colleague who already considers himself a senior at the age of 60. I think he is still in good shape, at least physically—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, I repeat, as of what age does the government consider a person to be a senior who is eligible for tax measures?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, all seniors are entitled to the measures I mentioned earlier. The indexation based on the increase in the cost of living applies to all seniors. It is for old age security—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, how old did someone have to be to get the \$500 you sent to seniors just before the election?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I am happy to hear a mention of the election, since I did not see anything in the Conservatives' platform on—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, I repeat my question. How old did Canadians need to be to receive the \$500?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, in our platform, the age is 65 for the increase in the guaranteed income supplement—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, everyone aged 65 and over received \$500. Is that what the minister is telling me?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, it is a little more complicated, because our platform included numerous measures for seniors. It is obviously a little more straightforward if we look at—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, I repeat my question. At what age are Canadians considered seniors and eligible for government assistance? Is it from the age of 60, 65 or 70?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, my colleague said earlier that people are already seniors at age 60. It is more a state of mind. I do not think—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, I repeat my question. The cost of living has skyrocketed for Canadians. What concrete action will the government take to change this situation and help them?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, we will continue to invest in Canadians by reducing child care costs. With the Canada child benefit, we will make—

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, the government is spending \$7.4 billion and is unable to tell me what, exactly, will be done to help seniors, families and the poor. I will repeat my question one last time because I just have a few seconds.

Business of Supply

Can you tell me what concrete action you will take to improve quality of life and lower costs for all Canadians?

The Deputy Chair: I would ask the member to address his comments through the Chair.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, we have already gone over this many times in earlier answers. I obviously do not have enough time to repeat what has been said. We spoke about the Canada child benefit, the guaranteed income supplement, old age security, the increases that are already in place and the ones that were announced during the election campaign.

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Chair, before I begin, I would like to say it is wonderful to see you back in the chair again. I want to acknowledge that I am speaking from the unceded territory of the Algonquin people. I will be speaking on the topic of residential schools.

Many indigenous people in this country either went to or had family attend a residential school. It is essential to listen to indigenous people's experiences from all over the country. We must move away from paternalistic and discriminatory practices. With the knowledge and wisdom of elders, families and indigenous leaders across the country advising and guiding us, my hope is that we are on the right path. The recognition of the duty to honour indigenous rights will keep steadily flowing through Canada, bringing out a more fair and equitable society for us all.

The schools' legacy haunts the present. It has affected indigenous communities over the long term, leading to significant gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous people. We continue to work with partners on addressing these gaps and putting an end to the ongoing negative impacts of colonialism. The location of unmarked graves at former residential school sites across Canada are tragic reminders of the mistreatment of indigenous children. Our thoughts are with those indigenous children who are missing and who never returned home, and with the survivors, families and communities as they mourn and heal.

I would like to take this opportunity to give some background on the history of residential schools and their ongoing impacts. Canada had a system of residential schools, starting from the 1830s until the last school closed in 1998. The aim of the schools was to assimilate indigenous children and erase their indigenous identities. These schools caused intergenerational trauma, which has long-term, negative impacts for indigenous people and communities.

Survivors of the system organized a class action lawsuit in the 2000s. The lawsuit, as well the research from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, brought even more attention to the issue of abuse in the residential school system. In 2006, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement was signed. It established a multi-billion-dollar fund to assist former students and their families on their healing journey. As part of this agreement, the government also launched a national Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I visited the Mohawk residential school located near me in Brantford. The students there referred to it as the "mush hole" because of the mush they were served to eat. It operated from 1831 to 1970. This former residential school, now known as the Woodland Cultural Centre, received federal funding from the investing in Canada infrastructure program in the amount of \$7.6 million in July of this year. I was pleased to attend the announcement, which completed phase three of the centre's fundraising and moved it one step closer to its goal of becoming a cultural heritage site.

This past summer I joined the "Walk for Joe" on its journey from the Mohawk Institute to Pikwakanagan First Nation. Joe and Rocky Commanda were removed from their home in the mid-1960s and taken to the Mohawk Institute. The brothers ran away twice in an attempt to get home. On their second attempt, they got separated. On September 13, 1968, Joe, only 13 at the time, was struck and killed by a train in Oakville, Ontario. Rocky, who joined the walk this summer, was a year older and was apprehended by police and put in a Toronto jail. This story of Joe and Rocky is sadly not unique.

In its final report, the commission laid out an important question: Now that we know about residential schools and their legacy, what do we do about it? The commission provided a way to reconcile with the hard truths of the past. In its summary report, it provided 94 calls to action urging various governments and key players to repair the harms caused by residential schools. These calls to action have given us a foundation guiding our government and partners as we work to address the injustices of colonialism and advance reconciliation.

With a better understanding of the harm and the ramifications of the residential schools for indigenous communities today, we must move forward with action to drive change, led by indigenous people. One of the most concrete tools that we have to address the past and positively affect the present and the future is by fully implementing the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There are 94 calls to action, which ask all levels of government, educational and religious institutions, civil society groups and Canadians to take action toward reconciliation.

● (2135)

They are comprehensive and require effort from a variety of stakeholders to work with indigenous partners on a new type of relationship: one that is based on respect and recognition of rights. Issues that the calls to action address include child welfare, education, language and culture, commemoration, health, missing children and burial information, justice and many others.

Business of Supply

Our government committed to fully implementing the changes recommended by the calls to action. We have made progress, but we recognize there is much more work required. Of the 76 calls to action that are the responsibility, or shared responsibility, of the federal government, 80% have been completed or are well under way.

We have made great strides in areas such as education, where we codeveloped improved funding models and supported full-day kindergarten programs in first nations schools. On language, we have funded language preservation and appointed a commissioner of indigenous languages. On commemoration, we have legislated the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and provided funding for a national monument commemorating the legacy of residential schools. I was pleased to work with Commissioner Marie on that monument.

There are many other things we have done, but I have questions for the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

This year was the sixth anniversary of the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, which called on government, educational and religious institutions, civil society and all Canadians to take action on the 94 calls to action laid out in the truth and reconciliation report.

In September, on Orange Shirt Day, many Canadians made personal commitments to the calls to action. In the six years since the release of the final report, what progress has the federal government made on the calls to action that fall under the purview of the Government of Canada?

Could the minister please provide an update on the status of the government's actions to date to implement the truth and reconciliation calls to action?

● (2140)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to take the opportunity to thank the member for the incredible work she has done as my parliamentary secretary and wish her all the best in her new role as the Parliamentary Secretary for Public Safety.

Most notable, in light of what we have all seen over the last four months with the devastating discoveries and rediscoveries of unmarked graves and with more to come, is the sobering realization about the pace of this progress. As a part of that reaction, our government has committed \$320 million to accelerate the pace, particularly with calls to action 72 through 76, which are about getting to the truth of this and continuing to get to the truth of this, because it does come before reconciliation. We are working with communities to support them in their quest for truth at their pace and on their conditions.

With those sums, I am happy to report that over a couple of dozen projects have been funded, with many more to come. In that light, Canadians need to brace themselves for the discovery of more findings and more reckoning, with the triggering and traumatization that has had a ripple effect on all indigenous communities. However, it is something for which we have to walk with communities, in respect and at their pace.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Chair, since the springtime discovery of the remains of 215 children on the grounds of the Kamloops Indian Residential School and then several other discoveries, including at Cowessess First Nation, we have heard about the emotional reaction of residential school survivors and how discoveries and searches across the country have been deeply traumatic for survivors, their families and indigenous communities. Many communities across the country have expressed a desire to also search for and commemorate lost children.

How will the government support this? Furthermore, how will the government support the mental health and well-being of communities during the process?

Hon. Marc Miller: Mr. Chair, building on my previous answer, I had the opportunity over the course of the summer and the last few weeks to visit over half a dozen sites, each with its own unique, devastating story. However, throughout that, we have heard the cry from indigenous communities, from survivors and those who are courageously speaking out, but also from those who are courageously still suffering in silence, regarding the mental health supports in communities. It has had a ripple effect in every single community in Canada. The \$320 million that was announced by the Prime Minister in June comprises a portion of about \$100 million for mental health supports in communities.

We will continue to be there with communities again, at their pace, to support them through this difficult time.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Chair, this week is the midpoint for the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, and it concludes on Friday, December 10, International Human Rights Day.

I am thinking today about the crisis of violence against indigenous women and girls in Canada and the underlying social, economic, cultural and colonial causes of the crisis. Could the minister please update the House on the national action plan and federal pathway on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls to take action, reduce violence and increase safety for indigenous women and girls?

Business of Supply

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, earlier today, I had a chance to have a partner meeting with the Minister for Women and Gender Equality that focused largely on indigenous issues, particularly the federal pathway and the response that all partners must have, including provincial and territorial partners, in eradicating the threat to women, particularly indigenous women and girls. As part of the federal pathway that was announced in June, we also announced \$2.2 billion to continue to work on this as indigenous women are disproportionately affected by this, and even more so by the pandemic. This is a difficult path, but we will walk with partners—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Chair, in January 2020, an Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families came into effect in order to affirm the jurisdiction of indigenous communities over child and family services in order to support the well-being of indigenous children and families and provide culturally relevant care to children. I had the great privilege of working with the minister when I was his parliamentary secretary to start to establish this act in communities. So far, there has only been one community that has completed an agreement, Cowessess First Nation.

Could the minister provide an update on the implementation of the act? Are there more communities developing coordination agreements and moving towards this new system, and is there funding to support communities through this process?

• (2145)

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, the answer is yes, absolutely.

It is important to remember how this piece of legislation, which was passed just before the election prior to this past one, is built on a spirit of self-determination, lifting up first nations laws, and doing what we all take for granted, which is ensuring that first nations have control and custody over their own and immersed in their own culture. The law itself provides a one-year period where communities put forth their set of laws, which then will take precedence over every other law in Canada.

This is a difficult process with coordination with provinces so that children do not fall through the cracks. Obviously, Cowessess First Nation was the first to adopt it, and there have been many others. We are in the process of establishing coordination agreements with provinces. I am very hopeful, but it will be an extended process. Obviously, we want to have the children at the heart of this. The most important feature of that law is ensuring that there are minimum standards, and those came into effect last year on January 1.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Chair, this past year has highlighted the horrific reality of the systemic racism that remains in our institutions. As we know, tragedies like the experience Joyce Echaquan endured are not isolated incidents. Indigenous peoples across the country experience apprehension and reluctance to seek health care due to the fear of facing, at times, fatal discrimination.

The minister has been outspoken on the need for change. Can the minister please elaborate on the work our government is doing to tackle systemic racism in health care, and how this government will

ensure that indigenous peoples, particularly indigenous women, have equitable access to care?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, one of the sobering reflections that we heard and, particularly, I have heard directly from Joyce Echaquan's husband on the devastating loss of Joyce Echaquan, is that this was not her only negative interaction with the health care system, she also had that when she was giving birth to her seven children. There is a very poignant article that Mr. Dubé has published in the CBC and APTN about his own experience raising his children as a single father.

We have invested \$130 million specifically in eradicating systemic racism in the health care system. It really involves the provinces and territories, and everyone has to be committed to it. We cannot have a system that treats indigenous people as third-class citizens. They are at their most vulnerable when they are either interacting with police forces or in a health care scenario where they should be getting what we should be giving to them, which is first-class health services. This is an all-of-government approach—

The Deputy Chair: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Manicouagan.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Chair, as the indigenous affairs critic for the Bloc Québécois, I do not have the luxury of being able to split the minister across the way into three so I will address him on different topics.

First, I would like to talk about housing. In its budget statement, the government allocated \$6 billion over five years to be invested across Quebec and Canada. After the announcement, the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador, or AFNQL, indicated that this was a step in the right direction but that it was not enough to build, repair and maintain housing in indigenous communities.

In 2018, the AFNQL determined that Quebec alone needed \$3.9 billion for five years. Not to speak for the first nations, they are saying so themselves, but the Bloc Québécois used the AFNQL projection and determined that a \$4.3-billion investment over five years was needed for Quebec communities alone, including \$400 million for Inuit communities.

With inflation and the growing problems resulting from the housing shortage, which we saw in indigenous communities during the COVID-19 crisis, we can expect that estimate will need to be even higher.

Does the minister agree with me and the AFNQL that \$6 billion is not enough to meet the housing needs of first nations in Quebec?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Absolutely, Madam Chair. The problem is that we have not yet measured the housing gap in indigenous communities. That is what the Minister of Indigenous Services will be focusing on for the next year. We have included funding in our budgets to figure that out. I totally agree with my colleague.

I know this was not her intention, but I would add that separating the departments was not a luxury. It was strongly advised by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

● (2150)

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I completely agree with the minister. That would be a luxury for me; I cannot split myself in three. There are just not as many of us, as my colleagues know, so we always have to do more.

In fact, as the minister said—and this is just an aside before my next question—the AFNQL has figured it out already and has been aware of these needs for decades now. I invite the minister, his staff and all the teams of people who could work together to address those needs to get in touch with the associations. They already know the details, so I am sure they would be delighted to collaborate.

Everyone agrees that there is a major gap and that it cannot just be closed. There is no plan for after those five years are up. We need a long-term plan. Five years is not a long time. It is very likely one Parliament given that this is a minority government. How is the government planning to close the resulting gaps?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, I would add that the AFNQL and its chief, Chief Picard, would say loud and clear that they themselves do not hold the rights. The communities must be consulted to determine what the best measure is, and that is what the Minister of Indigenous Services plans to do. We do not know what that number will be. It could be a lot more, but it needs to be measured and the shortfall needs to be filled.

We are talking about the government's commitment, which has been stated loud and clear, to close this gap by 2030. Obviously, this will not happen in the next three to five years, especially in remote communities, even though they may have the greatest needs because of their remote location. The construction season is a lot shorter because of the weather. This is a calling that will need to be maintained and worked on relentlessly.

Several departments are involved, not necessarily just the Minister of Indigenous Services and me, but also the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities. Up to five departments could be involved in addressing this need.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I agree that it can be complex. That is why we separatists like it when things are simpler, when there are fewer levels of government and fewer parties involved.

Overall, the AFNQL is representative. It represents its members and knows what is going on. It has an excellent view of what is happening in communities, and it knows what they need.

Business of Supply

Is the government not concerned that by under-investing, it is deferring expenditures that will become even more significant in future? We spoke about northern communities. Construction is an issue in the north, whether it is on the territory of the Naskapi in Quebec or in Cree and Inuit communities.

At the same time, the reality is that indigenous communities are very young. There are many families and many children, and we are unable to house them. It is not necessarily about geography, but about demographics. With money, I would hope that we can do it. We are not fighting the climate but a dire lack of funding.

There is already a shortfall. In the minister's view, if we fail to make sufficient investments now, will we be further postponing investments of even greater amounts in housing for indigenous communities?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, my colleague is absolutely right. If there is one lesson we must learn from the pandemic right now, it is that housing means more than just a roof over one's head. Health is a big issue too, because we know that overcrowded housing leads to outbreaks of diseases such as tuberculosis and COVID-19. That is a constant worry.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I am very glad to hear the minister talk about the pandemic, which might have exposed and exacerbated needs and challenges in various sectors.

I would like to remind that minister that the Viens commission report said the housing problem had “emerged as the epicentre of many of the issues faced by the First Nations and Inuit”. According to the indigenous leaders I speak to in their capacity as community representatives, one of the biggest problems they have to tackle is housing, which is the root cause of many other problems, difficulties and even tragedies.

I would like to know if housing is a priority for the government, if not its top priority, as it is for band councils and chiefs.

● (2155)

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, it is a top priority, so much so that I would like to thank the former Treasury Board president for approving the substantial sum of \$6 billion right before the general election so we could get that money out the door quickly. That funding will help close the existing gap over the next three to five years.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I would remind the minister that I am glad that \$6 billion has been invested, but that amount was for all of Canada. Quebec alone needs more than \$4 billion over the next five years, as I mentioned earlier. The amount of federal funding is \$6 billion, yes, but so far only \$2.8 billion has gone out the door for all of Canada.

Business of Supply

Quebec therefore has a \$4-billion shortfall. We must also consider what this could mean for Canada and remember that the \$6 billion covers only the next five years. Nothing is planned for after that, which means we will have another shortfall. That amount is simply not enough, and I wanted to point that out.

People will correct me if I am wrong, but according to everyone I have spoken with, housing is a cornerstone of first nations development and well-being. Nevertheless, I would like to raise some other issues.

I would like to talk about residential schools, which were mentioned earlier. This matter came up five days before the election.

The Prime Minister announced an investment that the minister said earlier was in the tens of thousands of dollars, but it is more like \$320 million over three years to fund searches for unmarked graves, as well as the demolition or rehabilitation of former residential school sites.

That \$320 million was announced five days before the federal election was called. After the election, some time went by before Parliament opened, and we see that we have not made much headway. I would like to know where we are today on this file that essentially amounts to an election promise.

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, I do not want to dispute what the member is saying in the House, but I believe that the announcement was made much more than five days before the election was called.

As of today, and I will verify this in case I am mistaken, 28 projects have been approved and many more have been submitted. There is overlap since some communities saw children taken from their families and sent to the same institution.

I would like to disburse these funds as quickly as possible because there are needs to fill, but I will follow the pace and needs of the communities. We certainly need to provide some investments in Quebec, perhaps even in the member's riding. We will be there with the communities, on an as-needed basis.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, actually, it's Uashat mak Mani-utenam.

Going back to the date, it may have been a few days before. I am not going to argue about the dates, but we can agree that the announcement was made before the election was called. However, whenever we are in an election period, nothing happens; nothing gets done.

I understand, of course, that there are a number of projects, and \$320 million was mentioned. I would like to know where the approved projects are at and where we are in terms of the budget. What amounts have been allocated to the projects that have been selected so far? I realize that there are others that are still being analyzed.

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, I would like some clarification. Is the member asking how much of the \$320 million has been allocated, or is she talking about a supplementary budget?

The budget itself is spread across a few departments, specifically, my own, Indigenous Services Canada, particularly for mental

health support and assistance, Canadian Heritage and Infrastructure Canada, for the demolition or repair of buildings, as needed.

That would have to be sorted out. If I am not mistaken, the amount is at least \$50 million or \$60 million, but it could be much more. I will ask my deputy minister to confirm this quickly.

• (2200)

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, can the minister tell me the amount of funding requested by the government in the supplementary estimates (B) for the same cause?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, that funding is not reflected in the supplementary estimates (B). I would have to look and sort that out. The funds were approved and distributed by Treasury Board.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I would like to thank the minister and ask him to provide an answer in writing.

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, I will certainly do that.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I would like to talk about another subject: the comprehensive land claims policy.

On February 14, 2018, the Liberal government announced a recognition and implementation of indigenous rights framework to replace the policy at the time, the comprehensive land claims policy. Three years on, we are still waiting for that framework, and in the meantime, we passed Bill C-15 to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I would like to know where we are at on the policy.

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, to answer that question, I would have to go into a lot more detail than my time here permits. It is a long-term process to get rid of past policies that are clearly both racist and colonial. The framework is there, but there has to be recognition of rights based on the paradigm and the community's needs. Progress is happening across the country, and we are respecting communities' priorities. That is what we will keep doing.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, the minister is talking about colonialism as a thing of the past, but colonialism still exists today. What I heard was not a clear answer on where things stand. The minister talked about progress, but what meaningful action has been taken since 2018 with regard to reviewing the comprehensive land claims policy?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, indigenous communities are telling us loud and clear that this must not be handled by people in Ottawa only. The policies need to be changed, and this overhaul needs to be done. However, some clauses are no longer being used, including extinguishment clauses, and they need to be removed.

This uncertainty is a good thing because it is the indigenous communities who are setting the pace on this file.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Chair, it is an honour for me to rise to speak to the estimates and then ask some questions about them.

Business of Supply

I will speak for about four or five minutes. Then I will have some questions, in particular, for the Minister of Health and the President of the Treasury Board. The topics I want to bring up with them today specifically relate to health and our public service.

On health, I really want to understand where we are with vaccines in the country right now, but, most important, what we are doing to fight some of the misinformation on vaccines. Unfortunately, a lot of people are vaccine hesitant because of a lot of misinformation. We saw this start well before vaccines were even introduced and brought into the country, and were widely available. This has continued. This is misinformation does not just come from fringe groups, but also from some people who, in my opinion, we would not expect to hear that kind of rhetoric.

One of the key roles the government has to play in the fight against COVID is to inform people about the safety of the vaccines as well as how to treat a lot of that misinformation. The questions I have today for the Minister of Health, when I get to them, really focus on what we are doing about this and what recommendations have come forward from public health with respect to fighting the misinformation on vaccination.

I also want to talk specifically about the people in our public service and the incredible work they have done. Our public service has stepped up. Quite often, these people are in the background, doing the work that has been set out through the direction of the government and this Parliament on behalf of Canadians. We saw the way they stepped up at the beginning of the pandemic.

I really hope we take the opportunity to reflect back on March 2020, when there were so many unknowns out there. We did not know how the pandemic spread. We did not know what tools or resources would be needed time to fight it. However, the people in our public service went above and beyond at the time to ensure that they did everything they possibly could to support Canadians throughout the pandemic, both from the various financial programs that were put into place and made available, but also through the reassurances that the government had the backs of Canadians, that the government would be here to ensure that vaccines were available despite some of the misinformation that was spread by the other side of the House.

I think back to when the member for Calgary Nose Hill said that we would not have vaccines until 2030. I cannot imagine how that would make any Canadian feel good when a person in a position of leadership stands up and makes those kinds of comments. Back then, we were really looking for a team Canada approach, of everybody coming together to help fight this pandemic, along with the requirement and the need for everybody to work together, to have information like that.

My first question is for the Minister of Health. Could he elaborate on what we have been doing as a government to help fight and combat the false information that is out there that vaccines are not safe and that people should not be taking them?

● (2205)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I visited the member's beautiful riding of Kingston and the

Islands some time ago and was able to taste the beauty of the riding's landscape, its people and their hospitality.

The member is right. Canadians have been informed, but also misinformed over the crisis, informed by the incredible input of experts and scientists. Many of them were little known prior to the crisis. Now, not only do we know them, but we appreciate their work and their guidance.

Unfortunately, there has been some misinformation as well that has, as the member said, led to a lack of confidence not only in our execution, but in our ability to protect each other. This was a minor thing, however. For many months now, Canada has been at the very top of the vaccination league in the world. This has been the case for many months. We are still leading the world and showing it the way forward.

If I have time later, I might indeed come back to some statements made by our colleagues on the other side, including our colleague from Calgary Nose Hill.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, could the minister inform the House how many Canadians, in terms of percentage perhaps, have been vaccinated?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, these are great percentages. Talking about everyone of all ages in Canada, approximately 80% of the population has received at least one dose and 76% of the population has received two doses, making us again a leader in the world when it comes to vaccination.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, I can only imagine that it is extremely important, as we encourage people to get vaccinated, that leadership is taken from those who are in a position to do that. When there are groups trying to promote misinformation and trying to suggest that it is against our civil liberties to encourage people to be vaccinated, such as the liberty caucus that has been formed on the other side of the House, how do those groups that aim to question science and question the validity of the health professionals contribute to the misinformation and to the overall objective of trying to get people to get vaccinated?

● (2210)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I was not aware of the term "liberty caucus", but I find that to be a strange caucus and a strange way of thinking about liberty. The liberty to transmit the virus to others and to infect a community is an unusual definition of liberty and I would take the liberty to signal that yes, the member for Calgary Nose Hill has a right to her views, but she did say not long ago that Canadians would be the last people on earth to be vaccinated and that it would not be before 2030.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, on the same topic, I am curious if the minister, his predecessor or anybody in the Public Health Agency ever actually thought that it would not be until 2030 that people were vaccinated.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, that is indeed quite a funny story, because we have been leading the world concerning vaccination for many, many months. I am sorry to say that I have heard that perhaps the last to be vaccinated in Canada, and perhaps not before 2030, would be some of our Conservative MP friends.

Business of Supply

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, I was going to ask the minister if he knew the percentage of Conservatives who were vaccinated, but I did not want to get overly rhetorical in my discussion today, so I sidestepped that one despite the fact that I had written it down.

I will shift to the public service now and to the President of the Treasury Board. As I said in my preamble, our public service has really stepped up, not just in taking care of Canadians, but in showing leadership themselves by being vaccinated. I am wondering if the President of the Treasury Board can expand and let us know how many of our public servants have been vaccinated, as well as perhaps a broader update on the mandatory vaccination of our public service.

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Chair, as we know, vaccines are the best way to bring this pandemic to an end, and the public servants have stepped up. Over 95% of our public servants have received both doses and over 98% have received their first dose. This is an incredible gesture to demonstrate how important it is to keep Canadians safe and secure. We will continue to encourage public servants and those in other organizations across the country to continue to get vaccinated.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, I am wondering if the minister can further expand on how important it is for members of the House to be vaccinated in terms of showing our public service that we are willing to lead by example, not just to be vaccinated but to actually proudly stand and say that we believe in the health and science information; we believe that it is important to be vaccinated, and we are going to show that through leadership by doing it ourselves.

My question is specifically around our public service, which we expect to take direction from us. How important is it for us to be out front, leading and showing them as members of Parliament that we are willing to be vaccinated, and that we do it and display it so that everybody knows?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, we know that having a fully vaccinated workforce means that not only are work sites safer, but so too are the communities where this large population lives and works. As I said earlier, public servants have stepped up. We will continue to encourage public servants, as well as organizations and businesses across the nation, to continue to say, and to encourage their employees and their workers, that vaccines are the safest way for us to get out of this pandemic.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, to that end, as we talk about our vaccination efforts, and as we move forward, could the minister perhaps expand a bit on what it is we are expecting from this point, moving forward, and on how the reception has been from our public servants? How are they responding to mandatory vaccination more generally?

• (2215)

Hon. Mona Fortier: Again, Madam Chair, I am very proud to say that public servants, as I said, have stepped up. As we continue to encourage our workforce to get vaccinated, the public servants will continue to attest that they are. We know that having a requirement about public health is working. This requirement is really working. It will help us get this pandemic over with if we all continue to get vaccinated.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, that is all the questions I have.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Chair, I am sharing my time with the member for Calgary Midnapore.

For the Associate Minister of Finance, how high must the Bank of Canada increase interest rates in 2022 to return inflation to its target rate?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank the hon. member for his question because it allows me to speak about the renewal of the Bank of Canada mandate, which happens every five years and is a very serious event indeed.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, how high will the Bank of Canada have to increase interest rates in order to return to its inflation target?

[Translation]

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, the Bank of Canada has undertaken a very extensive review of this decision, and good discussions have been held between the government and the bank.

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, what would the effect of half a percentage point increase in the Bank of Canada's rate be on the cost to service the national debt?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, monetary policy and decisions about interest rates and the money supply are the province of the Bank of Canada, which, of course, is independent.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, that was actually a question about fiscal policy.

If the interest rate increases, what would the effect be on the cost to service the national debt?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, the process to determine the mandate for the Bank of Canada is under way and announcements will be made on that in the coming days and weeks.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, what would the effect of half a percentage point increase in interest rates be on to service the national debt?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, this allows me to talk about the fact that the Canadian economy is in great recovery, with 106% of the jobs recovered. This figure is 83% in the United States.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, what would half a percentage point increase do to the cost of servicing the national debt?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, if the Conservatives want to help Canadians get through this pandemic and have an affordable future, they can support Bill C-2 to get people back on their feet.

Business of Supply

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, if this member would like to help Canadians, he could do his job by answering questions. This is committee of the whole, not question period. There is a fine contingent of public servants here with binders and briefcases. I am sure they could help this member answer this question: What would the effect of an increase of half a percentage point be on the cost to service the national debt?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, there is partisan posturing taking place here. Let us have the facts. Moody's and S&P reaffirmed Canada's AAA credit rating, and that is something we can hang our hats on.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, what about a 1% rate increase? What would that do to the cost of servicing the national debt?

[Translation]

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, according to the S&P, the major support measures provided directly by the federal government to individuals and businesses affected by the pandemic cushioned the economic blow and will facilitate the recovery of the labour market.

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, if there were an increase of half a percentage point in interest rates, what would that do to the cost of consumer debt?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, I will quote Moody's once again: "Canada's sovereign...[debt] profile is supported by its very high economic and institutional strength, which underpins its resilience to economic shocks."

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, what would a 1% rate increase do to Canadian households that are suffering under the inflation tax and the likelihood of a rate increase to come?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, our government is taking steps every day to make life more affordable, including the Canada child benefit and our \$30-billion investment in child care from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, on what date will the budget be balanced?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, again Moody's says it expects Canada's credit profile to be resilient over the medium term for growth. We are going to continue to reduce spending as an anchor of debt-to-GDP ratio.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, would the minister like to check with officials and answer the question?

• (2220)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, I was clear, as has been the finance minister, that we are going to reduce spending as an anchor of debt-to-GDP ratio, and we will continue to bring that ratio down.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, how much credibility does the government expect to have on this when it has blown through every single marker of debt-to-GDP, and every other measurement of public debt, since it has come to office?

[Translation]

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, Moody's expects Canada's credit rating to be resilient over the medium term for growth.

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, how many applications under the first-time homebuyer initiative have been funded in 2021?

[Translation]

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, we will continue to invest in Canadians and in the Canada child benefit, and we will inject \$30 billion in child care from coast to coast to coast.

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, the Prime Minister, several times in the last two weeks, has touted that program as part of the government's housing solution.

In July 2021, the government had only funded 9,000 out of the 100,000 expected. Could he give us an update on that program, and how many mortgages have been funded under the first-time homebuyer initiative?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am very pleased that I am asked a question about housing. There is too little time to describe the loads of measures that we have put into place that have helped, in many respects, one million Canadians since the start of the national housing strategy in 2017.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, does he think that 9,000 out of a 100,000 target is an acceptable metric, or an acceptable mark of success, for a program that the Liberals described as "transformational" on the eve of the 2019 election?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I mentioned a million Canadians. There were 530,000 Canadians lifted out of housing need because of the measures that we put into place. There are 300,000 homes being renovated and 150,000 new homes to be constructed with just one of those programs, and there are many more things to come.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, what is the median price of a single detached home in the city of Edmonton?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, the party opposite ran on a platform proposing a debt and spending \$168 billion. That is way more than we ever put on the paper.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, is it possible that the minister does not know the answer to that question? I referred to his own city.

Perhaps he knows the answer to the question: What is the median house price in the city of Edmonton?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, the example of Edmonton is a very good one. It gives me the opportunity to talk about the \$4-billion housing accelerator fund. These are dollars that we look forward to investing with municipalities to help them build new homes.

Business of Supply

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, how much federal land has the government released for residential development?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, our government is committed to making housing affordable from coast to coast to coast. There are tens of billions of dollars invested in that and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, do these estimates contemplate carbon pricing on energy imports?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, my question to the member opposite is this: Does he believe in climate change?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Yes, Madam Chair, and the minister will have a chance to ask questions when he gets over to this side of the House, although I doubt he would make it.

The question was this: What would the price of carbon have to be on imports to be equivalent to—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The time has expired. I will allow a few seconds for an answer.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, we are going to continue to head to a net-zero future and make sure that Albertans are supported in that process.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Chair, salaries are rising at a rate of 2.5%, yet the consumer price index is rising at 4.1%. That is a delta of 1.6%.

What is the government doing so that wages are keeping pace with inflation?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am pleased to answer this question on child care investments and the Canada child benefit. It is very important support to families. Through the housing investments—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, year-over-year increases of the CPI are approaching 5% annually. It is supposed to be a target of 2% annually.

Again, what is the government doing so that wages are keeping pace with inflation?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I just spoke about families. I am going to speak briefly about seniors and the increases in the OAS and the GIS, along with the indexation of those pensions and benefits—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, in a tight labour market, where we are statistically at full employment but where employers are struggling to find employees, what is the government doing to avoid wage inflation?

• (2225)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, through 150,000 jobs created just a few days ago, we are now at 106% of jobs back to our country following COVID-19.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, the jobless rate plunged from 6.7% to 6% in November, putting us in a labour shortage crisis.

What is the government doing to end the labour shortage crisis?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, the answer is a \$30-billion investment in day care. This is great for gender equality. This is great for job creation. This is great for child development. This is great for poverty reduction.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, the government is proposing solutions such as formal hiring processes and holistic packages, but this is only shifting the players on the board. We need new workers.

What is the government doing to find new workers to end the labour shortage?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, an example from my province is a \$6-billion transfer to Quebec, which has had a great day care system. It is not perfect, but it is going to lead to an additional 38,000 spaces for our children and therefore 38,000 more parents available for jobs.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, I will give the government an easier question: It is also proposing automation, which I actually think is a good idea.

What is the government doing to promote automation in industry, again, to end the labour shortage here in Canada?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, we have a \$1.4-billion digitalization program coming through innovation, science and economic development. I encourage the member opposite to have people in her riding apply for the fund.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, employers are experiencing delays of up to a year in receiving their labour market impact assessments.

What is the government doing to expedite the LMIA process in an effort to address the labour shortage?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, that is an excellent point. We also need to have more people come into our great country. We need to have more support for those who want to retrain themselves and get the skills they need for the new economy. We need more women in the workforce and greater access to child care.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, up to 55% of entrepreneurs cannot find enough workers. This is limiting growth, which we need desperately at this time, and it is forcing businesses to delay or refuse new orders.

What is the government doing to help these small and medium-sized businesses find employees?

Business of Supply

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, I just want to remind my colleague opposite that Bill C-2 would extend the Canada recovery hiring program until May 7, 2022, and that would allow employers to hire people back at a discounted rate of 50%. That is one of the solutions to help the labour shortage.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, I hope that the government can answer this question. Industries such as hospitality and tourism have been among the hardest hit in the pandemic, but are now struggling to come back because they cannot find enough workers.

Again, what is the government doing to help these industries, which are struggling the most, to find employees?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, the best thing that the House can do to address labour shortages for the hardest-hit sectors, including tourism, is vote for Bill C-2, pass it and help these businesses to get back on their feet and get the workers they need.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, data shows that 8.9 million Canadians claimed CERB cheques, yet the actual number of new unemployed peaked at 1.5 million in May 2020. Clearly, there was some type of fraud going on.

What is the government doing to hold these fraudsters to account and get that money back into the public purse?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, it is true: Nine million Canadians received CERB during the crisis. That is close to 20,000 people in her riding who were able to pay for food for their children and themselves.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, as the House examines Bill C-2, which is in front of the finance committee currently, we are looking at spending another \$8 billion.

What is the government doing to ensure that fraud does not occur in the future?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, we are hopefully going to pass Bill C-2 and see supports for hotels, tourism operators and the entire tourism sector. We will monitor the program carefully. That is what our officials do.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, as reported today in the Toronto Sun, the benefits are actually going to organized crime, including human trafficking, prostitution and illegal firearms. How can this possibly be? This includes a Montreal street gang called STL and gangs across the GTA.

I asked it in the Toronto Sun, and I am going to ask it here: Was the government aware that this was taking place?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I think we are all mindful of the tremendous difficulties that families, seniors and workers went through during the COVID-19 crisis. I am sorry to say that the solution the member for Carleton proposed at the start of the pandemic was to cut taxes for the richest individuals in Canada.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, if the government was aware, why did it not act sooner?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, not only did we act very quickly, but we did not do what the member for Carleton suggested, which was to cut taxes for the wealthiest Canadians.

• (2230)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, when will these be investigated?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, had we followed the advice of the member for Carleton, we would have ended up not in a recession but in a depression.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, when will those implicated be prosecuted?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, therefore, we would not have ended up where we are now with more jobs than we had prior to COVID-19 and with more jobs relative to many other countries, including our southern neighbour.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, for thousands of low-income seniors the guaranteed income supplement significantly declined because they received the Canada emergency response benefit. What is the minister going to do to actively fix this issue for affected Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I know the member is really well-intentioned and I commend her for her goodwill and concern. That being said, the advice we got from her colleague, the member for Carleton, was very different from what we followed when it came to helping seniors during the COVID-19 crisis.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, the government is also turning its back on Canadians with disabilities. Those eligible for CERB and CRB had to make \$5,000 or more in the year prior. This could be from various sources, including provincial EI programs. However, the government chose not to consider the CPP—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I have to give the minister an opportunity for a brief answer. The hon. minister.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, the member is right. There were very important supports for Canadians with disabilities. We know they were adversely affected by the crisis.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am pleased to rise in committee of the whole. This evening, I will speak to Global Affairs' international assistance and the estimates as they relate to the international development portfolio before asking questions.

The international development landscape has evolved significantly in the last two years. The pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated inequalities and reversed decades of development gains. Meanwhile, the global community also faces serious conflicts and humanitarian crises in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Haiti and elsewhere. These crises demand our immediate attention.

Business of Supply

At the same time, climate change is having alarming impacts on the least developed countries and small island developing states. We are seeing increases in drought, flooding, heat waves, crop failure and biodiversity loss. As we near the pandemic's two-year mark, we must keep these challenges in mind and look ahead to shaping a more sustainable, green and prosperous recovery.

Globally, there have now been more than 260 million cases of COVID-19 and five million deaths. New and worrying variants continue to emerge. The pandemic has had many wide-ranging socio-economic impacts, greater social inequality, disproportionate economic vulnerabilities and burdens, and strained health systems. Many of these impacts are expected to be long-lasting worldwide, but especially in developing countries.

While 76% of Canadians are now fully vaccinated against COVID-19, vaccination rates in lower-income countries are severely lagging. Across the African continent, only 7.5% of the population is fully vaccinated. We are already seeing how vaccine inequality increases overall inequalities. It is reversing development gains, particularly for women, girls and marginalized populations.

After five million deaths worldwide, there is growing recognition that a stronger preparedness and response is critical to countering future pandemics. This calls for the highest level of political engagement, with a strong focus on accountability, transparency and equity. Canada is acting on the findings and recommendations of COVID-19 review bodies. We are part of multisectoral and multi-stakeholder discussions on how to strengthen the global health ecosystem.

Even before the pandemic, humanitarian needs had been increasing. Driven by protracted conflict and the effects of climate change, the number of forcibly displaced people had reached over 82 million worldwide by the end of 2020. It is a number that has not been seen since World War II.

The world also saw the single largest increase in global hunger ever recorded, with an estimated 41 million people on the brink of famine. In recent years, we have seen a widespread rollback in respect for human rights and democratic freedoms. This poses a serious obstacle to sustainable development. The pandemic has laid bare long-standing governance challenges in all regions of the world, but particularly in developing countries that lack the public sector capacity to deliver services sustainably and equitably.

Canada is committed to improving the effectiveness of its international assistance to address these challenges. We will work with a diverse range of partners to take a whole-of-society approach that leaves no one behind.

Since February 2020, Canada has committed more than \$2.6 billion in international assistance in response to COVID-19. More than \$1.3 billion of these funds went to the access to COVID-19 tools accelerator, more commonly known as the ACT accelerator, to facilitate equitable access to COVID-19 medical countermeasures. We are strongly committed to the ACT accelerator and its pillars, including the COVAX facility and its advanced market commitment. Canada will donate the equivalent of at least 200 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to the COVAX facility by the end of 2022.

Canada supports global efforts to stabilize developing economies and to bring about pandemic recovery. Through the Prime Minister's collaboration with the Prime Minister of Jamaica and the Secretary General of the United Nations, Canada is working with the international community to develop practical responses to the pandemic's socio-economic and financial impacts. This work builds on Canadian leadership in financing the sustainable development goals over the last decade.

Canada has also committed to doubling its global climate finance contribution to \$5.3 billion over the next five years. We will continue to explore ways to use these funds to mobilize additional financial resources to tackle the climate crisis.

● (2235)

Canada recognizes the pandemic's disproportionate impact on women. We are leading the call for greater attention to the matter of paid and unpaid care work. Canada recently announced \$100 million to develop programs to address this issue in low- and middle-income countries. Throughout the pandemic, Canada's feminist international assistance policy has proven to be a robust strategic framework focused on supporting the poorest and the most vulnerable populations.

In parallel to our COVID response, we have continued to implement our pre-COVID core international assistance commitments to achieve results and impacts. For example, our women's voice and leadership initiative supports more than 400 women's rights organizations in over 30 countries and regions. Many of these organizations received fast responsive funding to help them adjust to the pandemic's impacts. We will continue to support this important work, including by doubling funding to women's rights organizations. We are also funding Canadian organizations that work in partnership with local organizations through the small and medium organizations for impact and innovation initiative.

These and other initiatives are reinforcing the resilience of local communities and supporting our wider sustainable development efforts. We are committed to implementing the feminist international assistance policy and to increasing our international assistance annually toward 2030.

Before I conclude, I would like to turn to the supplementary estimates.

Business of Supply

In the 2021-22 supplementary estimates (B), Global Affairs Canada is seeking an increase of \$683 million, bringing our total authorities to \$7.6 billion. This includes investments announced in budget 2021, such as \$375 million to continue supporting Canada's international COVID-19 responses, \$165 million for international humanitarian assistance and \$68.8 million for Canada's response to the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Also included in the supplementary estimates is \$75 million for the strategic priorities fund, which has enabled investments for unpaid and paid care work of \$10 million; \$50 million for the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust; and \$15 million allocated to the COVAX Manufacturing Task Force to support the establishment of the South Africa technology transfer hub. With the recent spread of new variants of concern, these strategic initiatives will help build capacity to enable development and production of mRNA vaccines and technologies in the region.

In addition to the investments already mentioned, Global Affairs Canada has allocated \$59.9 million in support for the Venezuela migrant crisis and pledged \$300 million for the Global Partnership for Education. Through these efforts, we are achieving results and generating positive impacts, helping to build a more peaceful, inclusive and prosperous world for all.

NACI has recently released some guidance on booster COVID-19 vaccine doses in Canada. Could the Minister of Health please tell us more about these new recommendations?

• (2240)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would like to thank the member for Surrey Centre for his advocacy and his strong mastery of the file. He is an incredibly engaged and informed person. I would like to tell everyone listening that NACI did provide some strong recommendations around boosters, that people 50 years of age and older should receive a booster dose and that those who are between the ages of 18 and 50 should be invited to receive one when that is possible.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Chair, could the Minister of Health tell this House how our government has supported vaccinations throughout the country and what we are doing to increase vaccination rates?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, there are two key answers, which the member knows really well. First, there is the ACT, the access to COVID-19 tools, that we have invested in from the very start of COVID-19 and a \$2.5-billion increase in our international development assistance because of COVID-19. Second, the member also mentioned the 200-million dose commitment we made to the rest of the world. That is five times the number of Canadians, so that is five doses per Canadian that we have promised to send to the rest of the world.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Chair, over the last few weeks, we have seen the emergence of the omicron variant. Could the Minister of Health please tell this House what actions we have implemented to stop the spread of this variant in Canada?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, there are three things. First, we have reminded Canadians of the importance of being vaccinated. Second, we remind Canadians that we also need to keep following the public health advice, of which we are very knowl-

edgeable now. The third thing is that we put into place some quick measures at our borders to limit the import of the variant from outside of Canada.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Chair, could the Minister of Health please tell this House how the government has been there to support provinces and territories during COVID-19?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, that is an outstanding question, and it gives me the opportunity to let Canadians know that this was a collaborative effort. There was \$25 billion direct to provinces and territories, and another \$30 billion of in-kind investment in vaccines, testing, PPE and other tools. Finally, obviously, there was the incredible collaboration on the economic side in order to protect the economic health of our citizens.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Chair, could the Minister of Health please tell this House the importance of protecting sexual and reproductive health rights here in Canada?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I thank the member for the important question.

We have said in the campaign platform that we will be putting into place a legal change to make clear to all of our partners that these rights are important in 2021 in order to protect the rights of everyone, including, obviously, those of women.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Chair, could the Minister of Health tell us what the government has done directly to support the mental health of Canadians during COVID-19?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, that was part of our \$65-billion support for the health needs of Canadians, including long-term care, home care, digital care, primary care and, as the member mentioned, mental health care. Mental health has been severely affected by the crisis, and we have to look after the mental health of Canadians.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Chair, the omicron variant has shown us that having a fast and coordinated genetic sequencing capacity across Canada is essential, and to make sure that we can keep Canadians safe and aware of new COVID-19 variants circulating in our communities. What has the federal government done to support building up Canada's capacity to detect new variants of concern?

Business of Supply

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, we have an immensely great centre called the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg. I am not from Winnipeg, but I know how proud people from Manitoba and all Canadians are of that particular lab. It has been extremely forthcoming and often ahead of other nations when it comes to designing tests and procedures to protect Canadians from COVID-19. We can be very proud of the work it did with many other scientists across Canada.

• (2245)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Chair, thank you. That is all.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Nunavut.

I will be asking questions of the minister without preamble.

Will the minister waive the refugee determination requirements for Afghan refugees as the government has done for the Syrian refugee initiative?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would ask my hon. colleague to repeat her question as I missed the fundamentals of it.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, I hope that does not take away from my time allocation.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I will start the member's time over.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, will the minister waive the refugee determination requirements for Afghan refugees as the government has done for the Syrian refugee initiative?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, as members know, our government is committed to bring the 40,000 refugees to our country, as we campaigned and as we are determined. The officials and the government are working very hard to bring these 40,000—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, that was not the question. It was about refugee determination. I know that the minister did not answer the question. Either she does not know the answer or she is refusing to answer it.

My next question is this. If they are not able to obtain a refugee determination from the UNHCR, they will not be able to seek refugee status from Canada. How can they then get to safety?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, again, we are committed to bringing the Afghan refugees and different communities here to Canada. We will continue to work hard to bring the refugees to Canada.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, again, the minister did not answer the question. Many Afghan interpreters and their families, human rights activists, women and girls are in a dire situation as they are not able to secure visas, or renew passports or other travel documents.

Will the Canadian government provide temporary travel documents to these individuals including a TRP?

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, in August 2021, the Taliban took control of Afghanistan. Canada is extremely concerned about the deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation in Afghanistan. We will continue to evacuate the 40,000 Afghans we want to bring to the country. So far—

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, the minister is refusing to answer or even touch on any of the issues that I am asking of her.

Has the cabinet approved the 40,000 Afghan refugee target announced by the Prime Minister?

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, since the beginning of this crisis, our government has been working very hard to coordinate efforts to ensure that the 40,000 Afghans we promised to bring to Canada will be able to come here safely. So far, more than 3,800 members of the Afghan community have arrived in Canada, and we will continue—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, that is not even one-tenth of what the government said it would bring in.

Have the cabinet approved the 40,000 target that has been announced?

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, once again, we are working very hard to meet our objective. As the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship announced yesterday, two planes transporting more than 500 Afghans arrived in Canada today.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, have any of the caps on refugee admissions been met this year?

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, our objectives are very clear, and we will continue to do what is necessary to meet them.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, these are fairly straight-up questions for the minister. I do not know why she is avoiding answering any of them.

Can the minister tell us if the current immigration levels can accommodate the 40,000 Afghan refugee target?

• (2250)

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, as I already said, we have an objective. We have been able to bring in more than 3,800 Afghans, 500 of whom arrived in the past 24 hours. We are concerned about people's health and safety and are working with our partners and allies to continue these efforts—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, the minister is not answering any of my questions. She keeps on reciting the message box, but not answering any of the questions.

Canadians are extremely generous even during these difficult times. Many want to privately sponsor refugees to Canada, so will the government increase the number of sponsorship agreement holders?

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, we must thank those Canadians who are helping with the effort to bring Afghans to Canada. As I mentioned, we will continue to do our best to ensure we get them to Canada as quickly as possible.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, will the government increase the number of sponsorship agreement holders?

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, we continue to look for different ways to bring the 40,000 Afghans to Canada as we promised in our election campaign, and we confirmed it again during—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, November is usually when the new immigration levels plan is released. This year, no immigration levels plan has been made public. When will the immigration levels plan be made available?

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, the 2021-23 immigration levels plan was tabled in October 2020. We will continue to follow this plan that we established. The immigration minister will obviously revise—

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, as the minister knows, normally a new immigration level plan is tabled every November and there is not one this year. There is a huge backlog in the immigration system with every stream.

When does the minister anticipate we will get back to pre-pandemic levels?

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, we know that the pandemic has put a lot of pressure on us to continue our efforts to receive immigrants and refugees in Canada. The minister responsible has told the House that we will propose targets—

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, families are waiting two to three years for their application to be processed. At the rate in which things are going, it is going to take three years to process and get us back to pre-pandemic levels to clear the backlog.

A number of caregivers have passed Canadian nursing exams and have met all licensing requirements to practise, but are unable to do so because of employer-specific work permits. This is a waste of talent, especially at a time when we have a nursing shortage.

Will the minister expedite their PR applications or provide them with a bridging open work permit so they are able to work in the health care system?

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, once again, I am very pleased to answer my hon. colleague's questions. It is important and one of our government's priorities to welcome skilled immigrants to help us with the labour shortage in several areas, including health care.

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Iksivauta*, I have appreciated the ministers' responses and their willingness to work together. I will be asking my questions for the Indigenous Services Minister. I understand and acknowledge that they have been willing to work together.

In my line of questioning, I will ask responses to be provided with timelines and amounts.

My first question is regarding housing in Nunavut. Could the minister please advise how the federal government is investing in new housing for Nunavut in this fiscal year?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Chair, there are two timelines that are important to bear in mind for people.

One, the \$500 million in infrastructure that we committed has gone through the Treasury Board. That is intended for shovel-ready projects in Inuit Nunangat over the next three to five years, conscious of the construction season as well.

We announced, during our campaign, a commitment to a specific Inuit amount in housing of \$300 million. We want to get that out as quickly as possible. Obviously we will work with partners, including ITK and the territorial government.

Business of Supply

● (2255)

Ms. Lori Idlout: Madam Chair, does the minister have data related to how many units are needed in Nunavut for first nations, Métis and Inuit communities?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, we have a rough understanding of the massive underfunding that exists across Canada. In Inuit Nunangat, there was a very good report produced by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami through Ernst & Young. It is very detailed. We appreciate the co-operation that we have ITK. This is a double work that we have with the territorial governments as well as ITK. We do have an appreciation, but we need to refine it throughout the next couple of years as we close the gap for 2030 to which committed.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Madam Chair, is the minister aware of the cost of building a house in Nunavut?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, not as well as the member opposite. My understanding is that it ranges in and around \$400,000.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Madam Chair, does the minister have data related to how much more it costs to build a house in the north as compared to building a house in the south?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, we know well that a dollar in the north is much more than the dollar in the south. Those are rough understandings, but it obviously varies from community to community, but much more clearly, particularly given the shorter construction season.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Madam Chair, housing was a main campaign issue in this last election. The Liberal government promised four years ago to deliver an urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy.

Could the minister provide a timeline of when this work will begin?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, the platform commitment of this government was \$300 million. That supplements the various initiatives we have throughout four to five ministries within this government. We are committed to committing that distinctions-based investment in short order. Obviously, the timelines are within the next three years to five years, as we deploy this capital.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Madam Chair, has the minister reached out to first nations, Métis and Inuit to initiate the dialogue toward the development of the strategy?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, again, that is the purview largely of the Minister of Indigenous Services.

It is my responsibility with respect to self-governing nations as well as the Inuit, with the territorial government. We have begun that process. It is a process that needs to be done in detail over a span, to the best of my recollection, of the next 18 months, to quantify that gap we all lament in Canada.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Madam Chair, other than COVID-19, what has been the delay in starting the drafting of the strategy, which was promised two years before the COVID pandemic started?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, one, there is no excuse. Two, it has largely been due to COVID.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Madam Chair, by how much will the minister increase short- and long-term federal investments in housing in Nunavut and indigenous communities now and in the future?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, as I said previously, there are those amounts that have been announced for Inuit Nunangat, of \$500 million and \$300 million respectively. Within Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations, there is a sum of \$6 billion that has been earmarked for infrastructure writ large. Again, this investment does span across departments, including the ministry of housing. There have been rapid housing initiatives, but this is a whole-of-government approach, including Infrastructure and other departments, as well as territorial and provincial governments.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Madam Chair, still related to housing but more focused on seniors, what investments will be included for long-term care homes in Nunavut, first nations, Métis and Inuit communities in Canada?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, clearly we have heard that need. One of the biggest concerns we heard, particularly as we saw seniors being heavily affected, especially in my riding, was the concern in indigenous communities. We heard a need for more long-term care homes. One of the initiatives we faced was to reach out to them directly to make sure everyone was safe, but what we heard as well was that there is a need to have more people, and seniors in particular, able to age in their own communities. That is something we are working on.

● (2300)

Ms. Lori Idlout: Madam Chair, the minister did not answer my question, but I will move to the next question.

What investments will be made to ensure that first nations, Métis, Inuit and Nunavut communities can take care of their own elders in their own home communities?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, in addition to the capital requirements and investments that we will be working with communities to effect, we want to be in a position to empower communities to ensure their own are able to age in their own communities. That work is ongoing and needs to continue.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Madam Chair, will these investments be made?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, again, these are investments that need to be worked with in the priorities expressed by the communities we serve. Clearly, we have heard that need, and it is something we are working to fulfill.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Madam Chair, I am going to turn now to the next set of questions, regarding energy.

All 25 of the communities in my riding run on diesel. The Qulliq Energy Corporation is eager to explore renewable energy production across Nunavut. In the 2019 election, Prime Minister Trudeau committed to moving all Inuit communities off diesel power to clean energy by 2030.

Nunavut has yet to see any significant investments toward this goal to date. Iqaluit has plans on the shelf for a hydroelectric dam.

My first question is: When will these investments begin?

The Assistant Deputy Chair: This will be the hon. member for Nunavut's last question, because we are out of time.

Also, I will just remind the member that we cannot use the names of current members in the chamber.

The hon. minister has the floor.

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Chair, I cannot commit to a current timeline. These are projects that we want to prioritize, but they have to be done in partnership with the communities. Obviously, that commitment of the Prime Minister was to get the communities off diesel. It is extremely difficult in the north, but we believe it is a challenge we can face together.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am pleased to participate in tonight's debate on the supplementary estimates (B).

[*English*]

Tonight's debate comes at a key moment for Canada and its recovery. Bit by bit, businesses are safely reopening. Employment has recovered to prerecession levels.

[*Translation*]

All of the 3 million jobs lost when the crisis was at its peak were recovered faster than in any previous recession. Canada's economic recovery is on the right path, and the pandemic's impact on our economy is fading away.

[*English*]

This has been possible because our government was there to support Canadians and Canadian businesses through the worst of this pandemic. Programs such as the Canada emergency response benefit, the Canada emergency wage subsidy, the Canada emergency rent subsidy, lockdown supports and the Canada emergency business account kept businesses from closing their doors and kept Canadians from losing their jobs.

[*Translation*]

At its height in the spring of 2020, the Canada emergency wage subsidy supported 27.6% of all employees. Our performance was better than almost every other country's.

Thanks to our solid policy and support, we recovered all the jobs. We recovered the 3 million jobs lost during the crisis. Just last week, we got great news: 154,000 jobs were created in November.

According to the OECD, Canada was one of the first countries to recover all of its hours worked by March 2021.

Business of Supply

[*English*]

As good as all this news has been, we know there is more work to be done. We know that not all sectors have fully recovered, and we know that risks remain from new variants of this disease.

Before the House are two key matters to help get us through the end of this pandemic. The first is tonight's supplementary estimates and the second is Bill C-2.

Through the supplementary estimates, the government is seeking parliamentary approval for \$8.7 billion in new voted spending. Approximately \$1.2 billion of the proposed voted spending in the supplementary estimates (B) is for the government's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

• (2305)

[*Translation*]

This is so we can continue the work we have been doing since the start of the pandemic.

[*English*]

Federal support also included significant financing for the provinces and territories through top-ups to the Canada health transfer as well as through the safe restart agreement, the safe return to class fund and the essential workers support fund. All told, more than eight dollars of every \$10 spent to fight COVID-19 and support Canadians has come from the federal government.

As outlined by the Minister of Health last night, in the supplementary estimates (B), the Public Health Agency of Canada is transferring \$12.4 million to the Canada Border Services Agency for the ongoing development of the ArriveCAN app. This service helps travellers crossing the border comply with COVID-19 public health measures before, during or after crossing the border by storing proof of vaccination, for example.

[*Translation*]

In addition, the Public Health Agency of Canada is transferring \$7 million to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research so it can support additional research to better understand the nature of immunity after an infection and a COVID-19 vaccine.

[*English*]

Finally, for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, there is approximately \$23.7 million in voted items and \$495,000 in statutory credits in the supplementary estimates (B).

Business of Supply

[Translation]

As I pointed out earlier, the economic recovery is uneven, and public health measures, although essential to our health and safety, continue to restrict some economic activities.

[English]

In budget 2021, the government promised that if additional flexibility was required based on public health considerations later in the year, it would continue to do whatever it takes to be there for Canadians. That is why in October we announced the Canada worker lockdown benefit, which I would like to spend some time on in my remarks.

This proposed new measure was first announced on October 21 and is part of the legislation we are debating today. To ensure that workers continue to have support and that no one is left behind, this benefit will provide \$300 a week in income support to eligible workers should they be unable to work due to a regional lockdown until May 7, 2022, with retroactive application to October 24, 2021 if required. It will continue to offer support to those who still need it if the pandemic requires further public health lockdowns in any part of the country, including workers who are both eligible and ineligible for employment insurance.

[Translation]

Assistance would be available in all regions of Canada designated by the government for the duration of the lockdown. This measure could be obtained quickly to support affected workers in the event of a lockdown in the region where they work.

[English]

Temporary lockdowns are still a possibility in the months to come. While the government hopes it will not be needed, the Canada worker lockdown benefit offers peace of mind and some economic certainty in these uncertain times.

[Translation]

With children aged 5 to 11 now eligible to get vaccinated, we know that this increased immunization coverage brings us one step closer to a situation where restrictions and closures will no longer be necessary.

[English]

Further down the road, we are also looking forward to loosened restrictions on hospitality, travel and tourism, and arts and culture. This new measure and the other targeted supports, such as the tourism and hospitality recovery program and the hardest-hit business recovery program proposed in the bill we debated today, will help bridge Canadians to full recovery in hard-hit sectors.

• (2310)

[Translation]

Canada is now well on its way to economic recovery. Thanks to one of the most successful vaccination campaigns in the world, many businesses are safely reopening. Employment in November was higher than it was in February 2020, prior to COVID-19.

In the coming months, Canada's economic recovery will continue, because our vaccine successes and the safe reopening will allow

Canadians to return to what they have been missing most for almost two years.

However, we must remain vigilant, especially with the arrival of the omicron variant, which we continue to monitor.

I am therefore asking everyone to help the government in this fight. Canadians across the country expect no less.

I would now like to ask a question.

Prescription drugs are not always affordable for Canadian families, especially those affected by rare diseases. Can the Minister of Health inform the House of the work that is being done to help these families and their loved ones?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for the question. I appreciate her.

This is part of the national pharmacare challenge, to find a way to reduce the cost of and increase access to drugs, for rare diseases in particular.

In this context, we have announced that we will develop a strategy to combat rare diseases with an annual investment of \$500 million in the coming years.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for his answer.

Our frontline workers and first responders are the real heroes in this crisis. While they help Canadians stay healthy or regain their health, what is our government doing to ensure that these health workers are getting the help they need when they need it?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I did not mention it, but I am very pleased that my colleague is now the parliamentary secretary to my colleague, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Taking care of our health care workers helps them take care of us and those who need it. With the \$55 billion in investments that the Canadian government has made in the context of COVID-19, we have been able to support these workers, whether they provide long-term care, work in a medical setting, or are working on the ground administering vaccinations, performing tests or enforcing health measures. It is very important to do this, and I thank my colleague for giving me the chance to remind everyone of that.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Chair, this past year, the awful reality of the systemic racism that still pervades our institutions was brought to light.

Business of Supply

As we know, tragedies such as the experience of Joyce Echaquan are not isolated incidents. Indigenous people across the country are fearful and reluctant to seek health services because they are afraid of encountering discrimination that can sometimes turn deadly.

The minister was frank about the need for change. Could he tell us more about the work that the government is doing to address systemic racism in health care? How is the government ensuring that indigenous people, in particular indigenous women, have equitable access to health care?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Chair, as we know, with the tragic death of Joyce Echaquan, indigenous peoples dread having to use health care services across the country.

We know that the federal government has a moral duty to outline the state of affairs. Systemic racism exists right across the country, from British Columbia to Quebec. It is everywhere. I am forced to acknowledge it so we can make the necessary investments to ensure that people get the first-class service they deserve.

In the 2020-21 budget, our government invested \$133 million to provide funding for indigenous people to bring along an advocate to ensure they receive high-quality care. The federal government's role is to approach provincial governments and to work with the territories to ensure that this serious problem is eradicated once and for all.

• (2315)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Chair, while COVID-19 was raging, another pandemic was occurring across Canada. Although it was somewhat overshadowed, it was just as significant. The opioid crisis has affected the entire country, especially the province of British Columbia.

What is our government doing to help key organizations that are working on the ground during this crisis that is occurring at the same time as COVID-19?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, my colleague is right to bring it up.

For some time now, an average of about 20 people a day have died due to the opioid crisis across the country. That is almost the same number of people who are dying from COVID-19 at present. The crisis has been growing for years.

Fortunately, there are ways to deal with this crisis and to treat people, including through supervised injection sites. Approximately 700,000 people use these sites every year. Thus, thousands of Canadians are protected.

Naturally, there are protocols in place to ensure that the drugs that these people temporarily need are provided in a safe, regulated manner, and to ensure that appropriate services are provided in safe facilities. Community services are offered so they can have the best possible life and make a complete recovery.

[English]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Chair, I congratulate my colleague on her appointment as President of the Treasury Board

Six hundred billion dollars was spent, with little or no oversight from the government. The Public Accounts should have been released in October, but still nothing from the government. When will the Public Accounts be tabled?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to thank my hon. colleague and my critic for his great words. I have said that our government has been committed to financial transparency, including for COVID-19 spending response—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, have the comptroller general, deputy receiver general and the Auditor General signed off on the public accounts yet?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, as we have short answers tonight, I will say that our annual audited financial statements in the public accounts will be tabled this month within normal legislated timelines.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, have the public accounts been signed off yet by the comptroller general, deputy receiver general and the Auditor General?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, again, as members know, the process is for the government to table the annual public accounts, and it will be done this month within normal legislated timelines.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, is it true that the government has reopened the public accounts to make changes to them for political gain?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, accountability, transparency and openness are the values that I and our government work towards.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, this is a very straightforward question and can be answered very simply with a yes or no. Is it true that the government has reopened the public accounts to make changes to them for political gain?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, as I said, our annual public financial reports will be tabled this month within normal legislated timelines.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, is it true that the public accounts were signed off on by the comptroller general, deputy receiver general and the Auditor General in the fall and then reopened to backload costs in order to make next year's budget numbers show a smaller deficit and a reduced debt-to-GDP ratio?

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, we must follow the budget process and, as I said, the monthly financial results are reported throughout the year and the "Fiscal Monitor" will be issued as planned this month.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, this is frightening. There is \$600 billion in spending and the Liberals will not answer the simple question if the public accounts have been signed off on.

Have the public accounts been reopened to have more money put in by this government?

• (2320)

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, we are following the budget process and the annual cycle. As I have repeated in response to several questions, our annual audited financial statements will be tabled in the Public Accounts of Canada this month—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Edmonton West.

[English]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, will the President of the Treasury Board resign her position if it turns out she has misled the House on this issue of whether the government has reopened the public accounts to add in more costs for political gain?

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, as I already said, we are following the budget process and the financial statements will be tabled this month.

[English]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the public accounts are normally tabled in this House in October. It is now mid-December. What is the government hiding? Why has it not tabled the public accounts yet?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, I have said that we will be tabling them this month within normal legislated timelines. The public accounts will be tabled this month.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the timeline is in October.

I have an email from the executive assistant, Treasury Board Secretariat. It is a call letter telling the departments that the departmental results reports are due October 13 to Treasury Board with a date to publish and table in the House November 2. I know that the information has been loaded into the government's database and so it is ready to publish.

Why is the government hiding these reports from Canadians?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, it is the same process as under the previous government, the same high accounting standards, and we will table the public accounts this month.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the question is about the departmental results reports. The TBS website states that the departmental results reports “inform parliamentarians and Canadians of the results achieved by government organizations for Canadians.”

We have an internal email that the departmental results were finalized and submitted to government on November 2, but the government has not tabled them yet. Why is it hiding this information from Canadians? Why is there a lack of transparency?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, again, monthly financial results are reported throughout the year in the “Fiscal Monitor”, and departments provide quarterly financial reporting. We will also table the departmental results reports when they are ready.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the departmental results reports are ready. From the government's own internal emails, they were ready November 2 and sent to the Treasury Board. The Information Commissioner, Caroline Maynard, has blamed the government's failure regarding the access to information system on the “culture of secrecy” that exists.

What is the average number of days for completing an ATIP?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, as we know, we are reviewing the information. The ATIP review is happening right now and we will present a report shortly.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the minister has staff here right in front of her. I am sure they can look at that information and get back to us, and I will ask the question again.

What is the legislated number of days allowed for answering an ATIP?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, the government remains committed to maintaining the openness and transparency of government during this challenging time. In budget 2021, we committed significant new funding to improve and review—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the legislation says 30 days. That is the law. The minister should know that.

How many ATIPs are past the 30 days allowed by the legislation?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, I will continue to say that we are currently doing a review to make sure we can—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the minister's own departmental plan shows that the goal is to violate ATIP legislation 10% of the time for ATIP requests.

Why is the government setting a goal for the legislation to be ignored for one out of every 10 ATIPs?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, I will repeat that the government remains committed to maintaining the openness and transparency of government during this challenging time. The ATIP program is very important and we will—

• (2325)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the Information Commissioner has stated that the disastrous ATIP mess long preceded COVID, so it is not an excuse.

Will the minister commit to zero tolerance for not delivering on what is in the legislation regarding ATIPs?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, ATIPs must meet the expectations of Canadians in terms of making information accessible, timely and reliable, while reflecting today's digital world. We have conducted a full review of the Access to Information Act that was launched in June 2020.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the minister's own departmental plan, signed by the previous Treasury Board minister, sets a percentage for public service employees who indicate they have been a victim of harassment. The goal is to have 12%. The goal is one out of every eight people.

Why is the goal not zero tolerance for harassment?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, when it comes to harassment, our objective is zero harassment. We will continue to implement plans in all departments to ensure we meet this objective.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, if we wish to avoid harassment, we do not set a goal that 12% of staff can be harassed. We set a goal for zero tolerance.

How much is in the estimates to settle class action suits against the government from its employees for harassment issues?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, we have a zero tolerance policy on harassment and we continue to work towards the goal of completely eliminating harassment in the workplace.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, I have read the estimates. There is a quarter of a billion dollars just for DND. Also, the government has not set zero tolerance as a goal. It has set 12% as a goal.

Last night in her speech on the estimates, the Treasury Board president read right from the estimates documents that the estimates are seeking Parliament's approval for spending, yet the estimates contained \$7.1 million for a book fair in Frankfurt that has already happened.

Why is the government ignoring Treasury Board rules and asking for this money to be approved after the fact?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, today we presented the supplementary estimates (B). We have reviewed all of the expenditures

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over the past two days. Canadians can visit the website, where they will find all kinds of tools to help them understand the information we presented today. I hope we will be able to deal with it as planned.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the estimates process is for Parliament to approve money before spending it, yet there is \$7 million for an event that has already happened.

Does the President of the Treasury Board approve of the process of bypassing Parliament to spend money before being approved?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, the supplementary estimates I tabled on November 26 provide details on government spending to parliamentarians and Canadians. They also represent a reconciliation of all the planned spending to date for this fiscal year and of the spending outlook provided with budget 2021.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the homeless rate in Edmonton is up 60% since the Liberals took over, yet Edmonton received just \$15 million for the rapid housing initiative. How does it in any way make sense that Edmonton's homeless would get \$15 million, but the government has \$7 million for a book fair in Frankfurt?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, that is a very timely question, because, as the member should know, we implemented a national housing strategy in 2017 with the goal, and the intended result, of ending homelessness across Canada by—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, my colleague would know that I do know this, and the government is giving only twice as much for 2,800 homeless people in Edmonton as it did for a book fair in Frankfurt.

We have seen the government claw back GIS benefits from seniors who received COVID support. How much has been clawed back from the tens of billions given to profitable multinationals and hedge funds for the wage subsidies?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, 15 million Canadians have been helped through the crisis, either through the wage subsidy, CERB or other tools, including helping seniors directly, so 15 million Canadians were able to make ends meet.

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• (2330)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, it is remarkable that the former Treasury Board president fails to answer that because in committee he told us that the tens of billions of dollars for the wage subsidies did not even go through the Treasury Board process before the money went out the door, which is how we saw it go to hedge funds and multinationals.

They are going after seniors by clawing back the GIS. How much is getting clawed back from these multinationals and hedge funds?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, the new President of the Treasury Board is fortunate to have a very well-informed and experienced critique, and the member knows there are two types of votes, legislative votes and these votes we are talking about now. The legislative votes were the votes needed to have the wage subsidy.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, significant new spending has to go through the Treasury Board process. In the Treasury Board estimates there is \$82 million for a COVID policy for public service. TBS officials told us it was for rapid testing purchases and distribution. The Treasury Board website shows there are 3,400 unvaccinated employees seeking accommodation. That works out to about \$24,000 per employee for rapid testing.

How does the government justify this?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, health and safety of our public servants is our number one priority, and continuing to focus on the health and safety of our people is what we need to do to fight this pandemic.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, at \$24,000 per employee, who is providing these rapid tests? Is it SNC-Lavalin?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I should remind the member that a molecular test is not a rapid test, and a rapid test is not the same as being vaccinated.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: It being 11:32, pursuant to order made Thursday, November 25, all votes are deemed reported. The committee will now rise.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 11:33 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, November 25, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:33 p.m.)

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