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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, December 16, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

OFFICE OF THE TAXPAYERS' OMBUDSPERSON

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2020-21 annual report of the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsperson, entitled "Adapting and Delivering in Unprecedented Times".

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[*English*]

JUDGES ACT

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Judges Act.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, entitled "The Road Ahead: Encouraging the production and purchase of zero-emission vehicles in Canada".

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

• (1005)

[*English*]

NATIONAL FRESHWATER STRATEGY ACT

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-217, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy in relation to fresh water.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to reintroduce this bill from the 43rd Parliament and from an incredible member who first introduced it in the 42nd Parliament. I am also grateful to the member for Edmonton Strathcona for seconding this bill.

I have worked and consulted over the years with local environmentalists, conservation authorities and members from the Oneida Nation of the Thames on this bill. It calls on the government to commit to a national freshwater strategy.

The Thames River runs through my riding of London—Fanshawe, and we are also fortunate to have several wetlands and environmentally significant areas in my riding. These areas are home to an incredible number of birds, wildlife and vegetation. Of course, we are also influenced by the beauty of the Great Lakes which provide all of our communities with environmental benefits that deserve targeted protections and sustainable planning.

It has been well over 20 years since the government established a policy on fresh water, and environmental conditions certainly have changed over that time. While Canada has seemingly abundant fresh water, very little of it is actually renewable. We need a modernized national freshwater strategy. Protection of our fresh water is vital.

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

* * *

EXCISE TAX ACT

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-218, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (psychotherapy services).

She said: Mr. Speaker, today I also have the honour to introduce a private member's bill that would amend the Excise Tax Act to exempt psychotherapeutic services delivered by psychotherapists from the goods and services tax.

Routine Proceedings

I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni who is the NDP critic for mental health, for seconding this bill today. I would also like to thank Stephanie Woo Dearden, a registered psychotherapist from the city of London, who asked me to take action on this issue.

This bill works to ensure that psychotherapists are treated the same as their fellow practitioners in other health care fields are, who do the same kind of work and who are exempt from the excise tax. I urge the government to get behind this very simple but very necessary bill to rectify this blatant tax inequality. The government says that Canadians' mental health is a priority, and this is an opportunity to do something good for Canadians' mental health and for tax fairness in Canada as well.

We all know the impact COVID-19 has had on people's mental health. It was a crisis before the pandemic, and we are certainly seeing the consequences on people now. This is a small but good first step to help people. I am grateful to the people who are working on this issue and who have been calling for tax fairness for psychotherapists for a very long time.

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

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CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-219, An Act to enact the Canadian Environmental Bill of Rights and to make related amendments to other Acts.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to table this bill today. I would especially like to thank Linda Duncan, the former member for Edmonton Strathcona, for championing the bill over 11 years in four Parliaments. I thank the present member for Edmonton Strathcona for seconding the bill today.

The bill would amend the Canadian Bill of Rights to add the right to live in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment. It enshrines that right in a new Canadian environmental bill of rights that would also provide, among other things, the right to access information about the environment and the right to public participation and decision-making regarding the environment. It brings Canada into line with more than 100 countries around the world that have rights to a healthy environment enshrined in their legal systems.

A healthy environment is an integral part of what makes Canadians proud of our country, and this bill would ensure that all of us have the right to live in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment.

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

* * *

● (1010)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-220, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (assault against a health care worker).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to introduce an important bill to Parliament with thanks to the hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for seconding it. This legislation would amend the Criminal Code to require a court to consider the fact that the victim of an assault is a health care worker as an aggravating circumstance for the purposes of sentencing. Violence against health care workers has become a pervasive and growing problem within the Canadian health care system.

Over the last decade, violence-related lost time claims for front-line health care workers have increased by 66%: That is three times the rate for police and correctional officers combined. This is absolutely unacceptable. Health care workers take care of us when we are at our most vulnerable, and we have a responsibility to protect them in return. This legislation would send a strong message that those who provide such critical services must be treated with respect and security. I call on all parliamentarians to support this vital and overdue initiative.

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

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SURVIVOR PENSION BENEFITS ACT

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-221, An Act to amend certain Acts in relation to survivor pension benefits.

She said: Mr. Speaker, today in Canada we still have the “gold-digger” clause that means spouses of veterans who marry after the age of 60 are not entitled to the automatic survivor pension under the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act. This clause is archaic, it is sexist and it must be eliminated. It was created in the early 1900s. It was sexist then, and it is ridiculous that it is in place today. That is why I am tabling the bill today, an act to amend certain acts in relation to survivor pension benefits. This bill would eliminate the marriage after 60 clause so that veterans, RCMP veterans and federal public servants who are punished for finding love later in life no longer have that happen to them. The reality is that this is still happening today.

My office worked with a constituent who is a veteran and was planning to get married. The pandemic came and he could not get married until months later. The problem was he was trying to get married when he was 59, but now he has to get married when he is 60. That means his spouse will be unable to access any support. Canada should not be punishing veterans for finding love later in life by pushing them into poverty before they die.

I want to thank the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for seconding the bill and for his advocacy for the health and well-being of the members of the Canadian military. I hope that the government will consider adopting the bill quickly, and finally eliminate this clause as the Prime Minister himself mandated the minister to do six years ago.

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

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INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-222, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (travel expenses deduction for tradespersons).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to carry forward the work of the always honourable Scott Duvall and table a bill entitled, “an act to amend the Income Tax Act for travel expenses deduction for tradespersons”.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for seconding the motion. This bill would allow for qualified tradespersons and indentured apprentices to deduct travel expenses when they travel to job sites more than 80 kilometres away from their ordinary places of residence.

I would like to extend sincere thanks and congratulations to Pat Dillon, the recently retired business manager and secretary treasurer of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, who has been a lifelong leader and advocate for the building trades. I would also like to extend my thanks to my dear friend Mark Ellerker of the Hamilton—Brantford Building and Construction Trades Council who continues to push this issue forward. Last, I want to give a special thanks to Stuart McLellan of IBEW local 105, who has already made it very clear to me that while these types of tax deductions already exist for white-collar workers, it is well past time to ensure that similar financial supports are extended to the hard-working people in the building trades.

During the last election, both the Liberals and the Conservatives committed to support for tradespersons, so I believe this bill is one that we can find support on.

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

● (1015)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, you specifically asked that members be as succinct as possible. When members are full-on introducing how various political parties have taken positions on issues, I am pretty sure they have gone beyond the scope of succinctly introducing the bill. Perhaps you could encourage it to move along a little quicker.

The Speaker: I just want to point out that I encouraged members to be succinct at the beginning and that is what the rules say. I will rely on the judgment of the members to be succinct, and I am sure they will do an excellent job of describing the bills that they are putting forward in as short a time as possible, unlike the explanation I just gave.

Points of Order

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR A GUARANTEED LIVABLE BASIC INCOME ACT

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-223, An Act to develop a national framework for a guaranteed livable basic income.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to introduce the national framework for a guaranteed livable basic income act.

I would like to start by thanking the member of Parliament for Elmwood—Transcona for seconding my bill, my riding of Winnipeg Centre, the Basic Income Canada Network, Basic Income Manitoba, Coalition Canada, the Basic Income Canada Youth Network, Senator Kim Pate, former Senator Hugh Segal and so many other anti-poverty activists across the country who contributed to the development of this bill.

As we continue to find ways to make it through the pandemic, we know that those who were already left behind are even further behind. This bill is in response to calls to implement a guaranteed livable basic income from indigenous, territorial, provincial and municipal jurisdictions that clearly recognize the need to modernize our social safety net. A GLBI is not a panacea, but a way forward to modernize our social safety net in addition to current and future government programs and supports. It would ensure that all people have the necessary supports and resources to live with dignity, security, respect and human rights as affirmed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I once again would like to thank my constituents and the basic income movement for their support. This is a people's movement.

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

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POINTS OF ORDER

INTRODUCTION OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I thought my colleague from Kingston and the Islands had an interesting point, although I did not agree with him entirely. He said that we ought to be succinct when introducing private members' bills, and he then cited something he thought was inappropriate in a succinct comment. I do think it is reasonable for members to give an explanation of the content of the bill. I noticed with the last bill, and I have no objection to the bill itself, the member did start by giving a long list of thanks. That would seem to fall outside of succinct.

Routine Proceedings

However, I want to request from you, if you are willing to do it, to perhaps get back to us at some point with a more fulsome description of what you think succinct ought to be. The most precious commodity in the House is time. We do not want to deprive those who are introducing private members' bills of the ability to explain their bills, but I do worry we may see a sort of great inflation and expansion of the time going to each bill, which would ultimately result in less time for other business.

● (1020)

The Speaker: I will take that under advisement and return to the House with an explanation.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC) moved that Bill S-223, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (trafficking in human organs), be read the first time.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is a piece of legislation that has now passed the Senate unanimously three times. It is a bill that would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without consent. It also would create a mechanism by which a person could be deemed inadmissible to Canada if they are involved in forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

This is a common-sense piece of legislation that I know has wide support across the House. I want to thank the member for Lac-Saint-Louis for working with me on this, as well as the member for Edmonton Strathcona, the member for Ottawa West—Nepean, the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard and many members of my own caucus.

I know many people are hopeful, after multiple attempts over 15 years to get this legislation passed, that the present Parliament will finally be the Parliament that gets this bill done. I hope in particular the government will be supportive of allowing debate to collapse on this bill after the first hour, so we can move it forward to committee as quickly as possible.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

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PETITIONS**HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING**

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to succinctly present a petition in support of Bill S-223, which seeks to combat forced organ harvesting. This is something that has been worked on in Parliament for well over 13 years, and petitioners hope the current Parliament is the one that finally gets it done.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was great to hear Bill S-223 introduced, regarding organ harvesting. Bill S-223 seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. It would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without the consent of the person giving the organ. Bill S-223 has passed the Senate unanimously three times, and MPs from multiple parties have been putting forward a form of this bill for over 13 years. This bill passed unani-

mously in the House of Commons in 2019 and is in exactly that same form.

Petitioners hope the current Parliament is the one that finally gets it done.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am incredibly proud to be here to present a petition that was delivered to my office in the riding. This is an important one that talks about the climate emergency we are all facing. The petitioners ask that we see a government that will actually commit to reducing emissions by at least 60% below the 2005 levels, that winds down the fossil fuel industry and ends fossil fuel subsidies, creates good green jobs, and drives for an inclusive workforce that is led by the affected workers and the communities.

This really talks about expanding the social safety net and paying for the transition by increasing the taxes on the wealthiest corporations and through financing from the public national bank.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my great honour today to table a petition that is asking the Government of Canada to enact legislation to provide just transition.

Recognizing that we are in a climate emergency and a climate crisis, the petitioners ask that we address the crisis to reduce emissions in Canada and in the global south, that we commit to a jobs plan to help people transition to new jobs in a new economy, that we expand the social safety net and that we tax the ultrawealthy and corporations to help pay for that just transition.

● (1025)

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on August 15, Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan, fell to the Taliban. The Government of Canada was completely unprepared to evacuate its own citizens as well as the thousands of Afghan allies and their families who supported our nation's military and humanitarian efforts, leaving them in country and at risk of Taliban retribution. The Veterans Transition Network, non-profit organizations and private supporters have stepped in where the federal government has failed.

The petitioners of my riding of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon call upon the government to partner with the Veterans Transition Network and others to launch an immediate evacuation effort of our remaining Afghan allies, relocate them to Canada and safeguard them from Taliban retribution.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present this petition in support of Bill S-223, which seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. It would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without the consent of the person giving the organ. This bill has passed the Senate unanimously three times and was brought forward by multiple parties over 13 years. I hope this is the Parliament that gets it done.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise and present a petition on behalf of Canadians in support of Bill S-223. The bill would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without the consent of the person giving the organ.

As we all know, this bill has been presented multiple times in the House of Commons, and we are hoping that this is the Parliament where it finally gets across the finish line.

FARMERS' MARKETS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table this petition on behalf citizens in my riding of Courtenay—Alberni.

The petitioners cite that farmers' markets are an important tool for COVID-19 recovery and, specifically, how important the farmers market nutrition coupon programs are in helping create food security and resiliency by giving vulnerable people access to healthy, locally grown foods and dietary education, as well as positively impacting the physical and mental health of participants by increasing the diversity of fruits and vegetables they consume. A national matching program by the government would assist in meeting those demands, would encourage provinces without a provincial program to create one, and would support those provinces with a provincial program to expand and meet the demand.

The petitioners are calling on the government to create a national matching program for all provincial farmers market nutrition coupon programs across Canada that would match the provinces that already have one and, for those that do not, help them create one.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to follow my own rule about being succinct, and so I will just say that I am presenting the same petition that was presented by the members for North Island—Powell River and Edmonton Strathcona earlier, which were dealing with the climate emergency.

The petitioners are requesting that the government engage in seven actions, which were listed in the petition. I think the most important point is reducing emissions by at least 60% below 2005 levels by the year 2030 and making contributions to emissions reduction in countries in the global south.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): I have 56 petitions to table in the House today.

Routine Proceedings

The first petition is with respect to Bill S-223. Petitioners are calling on the government to support the rapid passage of this bill that would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ without the consent of the person taking it.

Petitioners are hopeful that this Parliament will be the one that finally gets it done. I promise hon. members that petitions on this subject will no longer be tabled as soon as this bill is passed.

CHARITABLE STATUS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am tabling notes the Liberal Party's commitment in its 2021 platform to deny charitable status to organizations that hold convictions about abortion, which the Liberal Party views as "dishonest".

Petitioners are concerned that this may jeopardize the charitable status of hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations that do not agree with the Liberal Party on this issue for matters of conscience. It notes that many Canadians depend on these charitable organizations and that previous attempts by the government to impose a values test on charities and deny them funding or charitable status as a result have certainly been poorly received.

Petitioners are highlighting the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the freedom of conscience it guarantees. They call on the House of Commons to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis without discrimination on the basis of political or religious values and without the imposition of another values test and also to affirm the right of Canadians to freedom of expression.

TAXATION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition I am tabling highlights concerns about double taxation associated with the GST being charged on top of the carbon tax. Petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to eliminate the GST on federal carbon tax levies and additional costs that the newly announced standards charge.

ANTI-CONVERSION LAWS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling highlights article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an article on religious freedom; in particular, the right of individuals to change their religion or belief.

Routine Proceedings

Petitioners raise concern about the growing use of so-called anti-conversion laws that prevent individuals from choosing their own religion, concerns in particular about developments in India, developments in the state of Karnataka and the targeting of the Missionaries of Charity in Gujarat. Petitioners would like to see all Indian states repeal anti-conversion laws. Pakistan's blasphemy law has been used to target people engaging in religious conversion. There are many countries around the world where this impediment exists to freedom of religion.

Petitioners call on the Government of Canada to actively oppose anti-conversion laws in every case where they exist, through both public statements and private advocacy.

OIL AND GAS

Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling highlights the significant need for oil and gas products and the ability of Canada to provide those products to Canadians and, therefore, calls on the government to work to ending the importation of foreign oil and gas into Canada to support job growth in the oil and gas sector here in Canada, with Canadian energy supplying Canadian energy needs.

EQUALIZATION

Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition raises concerns about the equalization formula as well as the government's decision to cap the fiscal stabilization program. I was pleased to second a private member's bill from my colleague from Calgary Shepard aimed at lifting the cap on the fiscal stabilization program and supporting greater transparency in negotiations around the equalization formula.

This is a significant concern for my constituents. They call upon the government to acknowledge the significant economic contribution that Alberta has made to Canada, the economic hardship the province has faced as a result of policies of the government and also to support changes to the equalization formula that reflect the concerns that many Albertans have with respect to the equalization program and the fiscal stabilization program.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling highlights the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China. Falun Gong practitioners seek to advance truthfulness, compassion and tolerance and yet they have faced all manner of persecution including organ harvesting.

Petitioners are calling on the government to use the tools given to it under the Magnitsky act to address these issues; in particular to deploy sanctions against 14 key officials and former officials within the CCP who demonstrate primary culpability in these atrocities perpetrated against Falun Gong practitioners.

• (1030)

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling is in respect to Bill C-7, which was passed in the last Parliament, particularly the

government's decision to support a Senate amendment that would allow euthanasia or assisted suicide for those who have been—

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know this has been an issue this week, and the hon. member is violating previous speakers' rulings that generally limit the number of petitions to five in any one proceeding.

The member opened his presentation by saying he had 56 petitions. I would like to quote from page 1172 of Bosc and Gagnon, which says the following:

Certified petitions are presented daily during Routine Proceedings, under the rubric "Presenting Petitions". A maximum of 15 minutes is provided for the presentation of petitions. To be recognized, Members must be in their assigned places. Members with more than one petition to present on a given day are advised to present them all when given the floor, as individual Members are recognized by the Chair only once under the rubric "Presenting Petitions". The Chair has on occasion limited the number of distinct petitions presented at one time by a single Member to five. This allows more Members to be recognized within the 15-minute time limitation.

I call on you, Mr. Speaker, to enforce these rules consistently so that every member can have an equal opportunity to present petitions. I would note that yesterday, the hon. member asked for unanimous consent to present 20 petitions and that was denied. It seems that it is quite inconsistent in this House as to what the rules are going to be. I would respectfully request that you issue a ruling consistent with the principles enunciated in Bosc and Gagnon.

• (1035)

Mr. Garnett Genus: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I have a couple of observations.

First of all, the NDP raised the same point of order earlier in the week and at the time the Chair ruled that its concerns were not valid, that members do have an opportunity to raise as many petitions as they wish, so it is interesting to see the NDP effectively challenging the previous ruling of the Chair on this issue.

Second, I do want to observe that the intention of the concern allegedly is to allow members the opportunity to present more petitions and you will note, Mr. Speaker, that I remained in my seat while all other members presented all petitions they had to present, intentionally putting myself last so that if there was not enough time, I would not be infringing on the time of other members.

Finally, the passage that the member read says that on occasion the Speaker has limited the number of petitions that a member can table for the purposes of allowing other members to present petitions. It would be very legitimate in a case where there were many members still waiting to present petitions for the Speaker to make use of that provision, but in this case, it is clear that no member is being limited by my desire to raise many important human rights and other issues. I am very surprised that the NDP is making an issue of the desire of a member of Parliament to bring forward petitions that come from his constituents about international human rights issues, justice issues, as well as about legislation that has been before this House.

The Deputy Speaker: It was previously decided that the Chair has the discretion on how many petitions a member can bring forward. It is at the Chair's discretion. There are two minutes and 55 seconds left in this rubric, and I will allow the member to continue.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your wise exercise of discretion on that point.

The petition I was tabling when I was interrupted by my good colleague was on Bill C-7, a bill that came forward in the last Parliament. At the time, the government chose to support an amendment that came from the Senate, an amendment that allowed individuals who are suffering from mental health challenges to receive facilitated suicide within the medical system.

Petitioners highlight the fact that mental health challenges are not irremediable. The Canadian Mental Health Association states, "As a recovery-oriented organization, CMHA does not believe that mental illnesses are irremediable".

Petitioners are very concerned this policy change completely changes the message to those who are struggling with mental health challenges, effectively offering them suicide instead of recovery as a path forward. They call on the government to reject this policy of facilitated suicide for those suffering from mental health challenges and to protect Canadians struggling with these challenges by facilitating treatment and recovery.

• (1040)

HAZARAS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am presenting speaks to the human rights situation of people in Afghanistan, in particular the vulnerable Hazara minority community. This petition was organized and signed prior to the Taliban takeover. Many concerns existed at that time about the persecution of the Hazara minority, and things have become considerably worse following the Taliban takeover.

Petitioners have a number of asks of the government with respect to standing up with the Hazara community. In this petition, they are asking the government to formally recognize the 1891-93 ethnic cleansing perpetuated against the Hazaras as a genocide and to designate September 25 as Hazara genocide memorial day. They also express support for a private member's bill from the last Parliament that aimed at ensuring all development assistance from Canada to Afghanistan was contributing to the advancement of peace and security within the region.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling highlights the horrific ongoing human rights abuses facing Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China.

Petitioners note mounting evidence of indoctrination, arbitrary detention, separation of children from their families, invasive surveillance, destruction of cultural sites, forced labour and organ harvesting.

Petitioners want to see the government formally recognize that Uighurs in China have been and are continuing to be subjected to

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genocide. They also want to see the use of the Magnitsky act to sanction those who are responsible for these heinous crimes. Parliament has recognized the Uighur genocide, but we have yet to see that recognition coming from the government.

The next petition I want to present highlights the human rights situation in Ethiopia—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. We are out of time.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 4—AN ACT TO PROVIDE FURTHER SUPPORT IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-2, An Act to provide further support in response to COVID-19, shall be disposed as follows: (a) the bill be deemed concurred in at report stage without further amendment immediately after the adoption of this order; (b) a motion for third reading may be made immediately after the bill has been concurred in at report stage; (c) when the bill is taken up at the third reading stage, a member of each recognized party and a member of the Green Party each be allowed to speak for not more than 10 minutes followed by five minutes for questions and comments and, at the conclusion of the time provided for debate or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, all questions necessary for the disposal of the third reading stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment provided that, if a recorded division is requested on any motion, it shall not be deferred; and (d) the House shall not adjourn until the proceedings on the bill have been completed, except pursuant to a motion proposed by a minister of the Crown, provided that once proceedings have been completed, the House may then proceed to consider other business or, if it has already passed the ordinary hour of daily adjournment, the House shall adjourn to the next sitting day.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the rising threat of the omicron variant, it is absolutely crucial that Bill C-2 pass in order to bring in the supports that Canadian businesses and workers need.

What we have learned over the past 12 months is that the most important and effective economic policy is one that protects the health of Canadians.

I would like to remind the Conservatives and the NDP, who voted against the bill, that we are still in a pandemic, and our entrepreneurs and workers continue to face significant challenges. This is certainly not the time to let them down.

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In these troubling times of rapidly increasing cases of the omicron variant, the federal government is ready to act, and we have the resources to do so.

In the economic and fiscal update presented earlier this week, our government announced the following investments: \$2 billion to procure COVID-19 therapeutics and treatments that will save lives and help prevent hospitalizations, \$1.7 billion to procure rapid testing supplies in order to identify infections earlier and break the chain of transmission, and \$7.3 billion to procure vaccine boosters.

We are facing a serious threat, but we are prepared. Responding to this threat is obviously going to be the federal government's top priority.

[English]

Let us take a step back for a moment. When the pandemic hit us, our government rapidly rolled out a full range of effective, broad-based programs to support Canadians through our country's greatest economic shock since the Great Depression. These actions were necessary and unprecedented in our lifetime.

A mere weeks after the start of the COVID-19 health crisis in Canada, we moved to introduce the emergency recovery benefit to ensure the Canadians who lost their jobs could keep food on the table and a roof over their head. We also introduced the emergency wage subsidy to help our businesses, particularly our small businesses, but also to help our workers and those working for our small businesses.

These supports have been absolutely critical, both for our economy and for our health. As the IMF recently said, "Government budget support measures during the COVID-19 pandemic have saved lives and jobs."

It is therefore not a coincidence that we, here in Canada, have the second-lowest COVID death rate out the G7. It is also no coincidence that we have the second-strongest job recovery in the G7. This is a direct result of the resilience of Canadians, but it is also a demonstration of the impact a federal government can have when it puts people first.

Conservative members in this House seem to take a different view, choosing instead to demonize those Canadians that needed support during the depth of the pandemic. For example, the Conservative finance critic said yesterday that CERB recipients were fraudsters stuffing their pockets.

We are talking about a program that helped nearly nine million Canadians and was a literal lifeline for so many. We are talking about vulnerable seniors. We are talking about workers who lost their jobs and needed to put food on the kitchen table. These are our neighbours, our fellow Canadians. They should not be vilified.

I stand behind the supports we put in place. I also stand behind the decision to end the CERB once the economy reopened and jobs were again available. We can, and we have, made the right decisions at the right time in order to support those in need and support economic growth.

• (1045)

[Translation]

From coast to coast to coast, our programs have been a lifeline for workers and businesses. They have helped protect millions of jobs and helped hundreds of thousands of Canadian businesses get through the worst days of the pandemic.

However, let us be clear. These emergency measures were always meant to be temporary and to help us get through the crisis. Fortunately, we are in a new phase and it is very different from the darkest chapters of our fight against COVID-19. Not only have we recovered 106% of the jobs lost during COVID-19, but our economy is bouncing back exceptionally well. In the last quarter, the growth rate was 5.4%, which is twice as high as expected.

We also have the most effective and successful vaccination campaign in the world. Indeed, 64 million doses have already been administered and more than 80% of Canadians aged five and up have received two doses of the vaccine.

We have concluded agreements to receive millions of additional doses to ensure that all Canadians have access to the third dose of the vaccine.

[English]

Thanks to one of the most successful vaccination campaigns in the world, most businesses here in Canada have safely reopened and our country's employment is now back to well above pre-pandemic levels. However, we know there are still workers and businesses whose livelihoods are being affected as a result of public health measures. That is why it is important to pivot our supports to more targeted measures that will provide help where it is needed most, and continue to create jobs and growth while prudently managing government spending.

Some may wonder how we can tell that we have reached this turning point in Canada's economic recovery from the COVID recession. Allow me to highlight several markers of our government's successful economic response plan that has brought us to where we are today.

Last year, in the Speech from the Throne, our government promised to create one million jobs, a goal we achieved in September of this year when Canada recovered all of the jobs lost at the worst point of the recession. There have been three million jobs recovered since the spring of 2020, a very impressive number. Our plan is working. We have now surpassed our target and have, in fact, recovered 106% of the jobs lost at the peak of the pandemic, significantly outpacing the United States, where just 83% of lost jobs have been recovered thus far.

By delivering significant fiscal policy support to the economy and avoiding the harmful austerity policies proposed by the Conservatives after the 2008 recession, our Liberal government has supported a much more rapid and resilient recovery. In fact, our economy is now back to pre-pandemic outputs many months earlier than in the 2008 recession, even though the COVID recession was four times deeper and more significant.

However, as welcome as these economic markers and signs of recovery are, our government recognizes that not all sectors of the economy are there yet. Some of the necessary health and safety measures that continue to save lives continue to be restrictive for our businesses and for certain sectors of the economy, and with the threat of omicron looming, we need to continue to provide support where and when it is needed. What this means for our government is that we are entering what I truly hope and believe will be the final pivot in delivering the support needed to ensure a robust, inclusive and strong recovery for our country.

• (1050)

[*Translation*]

The service industry continues to stimulate the recovery, but the progress made in the retail sector has been erased in part by the losses in other sectors, including the accommodation and food services sector.

As the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance indicated earlier, many of the business support programs ended in October with the reopening of our economy. However, we know that the work is not over. The federal government must continue to be there to support Canadians. That is exactly what we are doing with Bill C-2, which is before us today. We are moving on from broad, sweeping support, which was appropriate at the height of the crisis, to more targeted measures that will provide help where it is still needed.

[*English*]

This includes extending the Canada recovery hiring program until May 2022, which would help us finish the fight against COVID and continue to ensure that lost jobs are recovered as quickly as possible. For eligible employers with current revenue losses above 10%, our government would provide a subsidy rate of 50% to enable employers to hire the staff they need to grow. In addition, our government is proposing to deliver targeted support to businesses that are still facing significant pandemic-related challenges.

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, I am particularly concerned with the struggles still faced by the tourism industry and those who depend on it. Let us not sugar-coat it: The industry has gone through an absolutely devastating 21 months. Tourism revenues decreased by almost 50% between 2019 and 2020, going from \$104 billion to just \$53 billion, while jobs directly attributable to tourism decreased by 41%. Those numbers are shocking. We must acknowledge that hundreds of thousands of workers in the tourism industry have lost their jobs, and that although many industries have seen strong and sustained recovery, the tourism sector is still struggling to recover its losses.

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We must recognize the very difficult situation they face, and that is why we are moving forward in Bill C-2 with a new targeted tourism and hospitality recovery program. This new support program would provide wage and rent subsidies to tourism and hospitality businesses still facing serious pandemic-related challenges. Eligible applicants include hotels, travel agents, airports and other businesses directly related to tourism. However, we recognize that many more businesses rely indirectly on tourism. After all, about 10% of all jobs in Canada are dependent directly or indirectly on tourism. That is why we have expanded the list of eligible recipients to include restaurants, parks, sports facilities, theatres, festivals and more.

I know that this help is absolutely critical. I have spoken to hundreds of independent restaurant and tourism operators, and I have heard first-hand the distress and angst they have at the prospect of closing their businesses, often their life's work. Local businesses, like a favourite neighbourhood restaurant, are what make our communities and main streets home. We cannot leave them behind. That is why we have brought forward Bill C-2 and why it is so urgent that it pass.

• (1055)

[*Translation*]

To help these businesses that are still facing significant difficulties, our government is proposing to provide support through three new programs for businesses still grappling with major pandemic-related challenges.

The first is the tourism and hospitality recovery program, which would provide support to, for example, hotels, tour operators, travel agencies and restaurants with wage and rent subsidies of up to 75%.

The second is the hardest-hit business recovery program, which would provide support to other businesses that have faced deep losses, with wage and rent subsidies of up to 50%.

The third is the local lockdown program, which would provide businesses that face temporary new local lockdowns up to the maximum amount available through the wage and rent subsidy programs.

Finally, to ensure that workers who must isolate due to illness or must stay home to take care of a family member can continue to receive financial support, we are extending the recovery sickness benefit and the recovery caregiving benefit.

These measures are essential for our economy and to protect Canadians' health. They should be supported by all parties in the House.

*Government Orders**[English]*

As my time draws to a close in this debate on Bill C-2, let me take this opportunity to address Canadians before we leave for the holidays. I would ask them to book their appointments for a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. The booster shot is incredibly important. As a mother to a young child, I will also take this opportunity to address Canadian parents from right across the country and encourage them to get their children vaccinated as well.

Let us do everything we can to help the provinces and territories avoid putting in place further lockdown measures. Let us do everything possible to avoid overwhelming our health care system and our hospitals. Let us do everything possible to keep each other safe and healthy.

As this may be my last opportunity to speak before the holidays, I wish you, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and all Canadians a very happy holiday period, a safe holiday season and a healthy 2022.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member, in her capacity as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism, about the 12,000 independent travel advisers across the country who are suffering because of a lack of supports within Bill C-2. As the member may be aware in her capacity as the parliamentary secretary, many of these travel advisers had their commissions clawed back. They were not earning zero income; they were earning less than zero income and had to pay money back to the airlines. With the latest travel advisory, there will be more cancellations, and my understanding is that they are not eligible under Bill C-2 at this point.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his concern and his dedication to the tourism sector and to independent travel agents and advisers.

As I mentioned in my speech, Bill C-2 will be open and they will be eligible to apply for supports. I also note that we did extraordinary work to support Canadians when they had to cancel their travel plans last year at the height of the pandemic.

We will be there to support Canadians, as I know this is a volatile period. Of course, many plans are being changed right before the holidays. However, this is the right thing to do. We must keep Canadians safe. We do not know what other countries around the world may do. They may close their airspace, and we certainly do not want Canadians to be stranded abroad. That is why we have issued the travel advisory. We will continue to do everything necessary to continue to keep Canadians safe.

• (1100)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. She started it by saying that her government had procured vaccines. That is absolutely true. What I find strange, though, is how, in the economic update, the government used these vaccine procurements as an excuse for why it would not invest in health care until 2027.

My colleague concluded her speech by emphasizing how important the third dose will be, especially to protect our children. I just want to point out that—

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order. I would really like to hear this question; it is very important to me. However, unfortunately, I cannot because of interpretation.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for Edmonton Strathcona. The problem is now fixed and the member for Jonquière may continue.

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, my colleague was urging people to get vaccinated and get the third dose. However, if we want to get people vaccinated, we need to hire nurses, and to hire nurses the government needs to provide health transfers. Does my colleague agree with her government's plan to wait until 2027 to provide financial support to the provinces?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question, but I want to correct something my colleague said. We will continue to make health transfers to the provinces and territories. That is what we have always done and that is what we will continue to do. That is how Canada's health care system works.

We procured all of the vaccines, we bought the tools and equipment required to administer these vaccines and we sent all of that to the provinces and territories. The booster shots will be no different.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her holiday greetings. I also hope that she has a wonderful holiday season.

She talked about how proud she is of the Canadian government's response with regard to vaccines and also said she hopes this is the final pivot we need to make as we deal with the omicron variant. What I will ask her about, though, is our response globally.

What we know about the omicron variant is that it is happening because we did not allow populations around the world to get the vaccines they need. Is it not smart to not only vaccinate Canadians, as important as that is, but protect Canadians? For an actual global recovery, we will need to vaccinate everyone, but unfortunately the government still refuses to support the TRIPS waiver.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, I feel quite strongly about this. I was the parliamentary secretary for international trade and worked first-hand on this issue.

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Canada was a leader at the WTO when we were discussing the TRIPS waiver. Many countries in the WTO did not want to have that discussion. We were actually a convening power to bring everybody to the table. Many other issues are causing countries around the world to have difficulty in providing vaccines to their populations. It is not just access; it is also about vaccine hesitancy and manufacturing capability.

It is a complex issue, but I fully agree with my colleague that this pandemic is not over anywhere until it is over everywhere.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the government's fiscal update, the government proposes to provide \$37.4 million over three years, starting in 2021-22, to Transport Canada to support the implementation and oversight of this vaccine mandate for federally regulated air, rail and marine employees and passengers. The government is saying that it is going to provide this funding over a three-year period.

How long does the government plan on leaving in place a vaccine mandate for interprovincial travel? Is the government contemplating doing it for three years, beyond three years or even permanently? What is the government's intention with respect to this?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the sentiment from which the question comes, but, very respectfully, I would point out that three months ago we had never heard of omicron. Therefore, to ask what our plan is with respect to vaccine mandates for federal workers over a period of the next three years is fooling ourselves into thinking we can plan three years in advance.

What the government is doing, and I believe what all members of the House are doing, is reacting to circumstances as we have information and as we understand how COVID-19 continues to mutate and evolve. We will take whatever actions are necessary to keep Canadians safe. As I have said before, we have to be vigilant and we have to take the appropriate steps at the appropriate time.

● (1105)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague just mentioned that we had not heard of the omicron variant three months ago. That is true, but for over a year, epidemiologists, infectious disease specialists and the WHO have been warning Canada and all countries that if we do not vaccinate the developing world, a variant of concern will eventually develop and it will come to our country. The fact that Canada and other countries have stood by while only 10% of Africa is vaccinated has helped contribute to the omicron variant.

Will the member stand in the House and state clearly for Canadians that she supports the waiver of the patent rules at the WTO to enable countries like South Africa, India and others to start producing vaccines? Does she support that waiver, because the Canadian government has not said that directly yet?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, what I support is everybody in this world getting vaccinated. How we get there is very complex. It involves working with pharmaceutical companies. It involves educating populations as to the importance of vaccines. It also involves ensuring that the manufacturing capacity of these developing countries is going to produce vaccines that are safe for our populations.

I fully support the sentiment that my colleague brings to the House about the importance of vaccinating the entire world, but we need to ensure that it is done well and it is done in a smart way. That is the conversation Canada is engaged in at the WTO.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, back on October 21, the Prime Minister and the government announced that, as a priority, they would be coming out with ongoing support programs. That is the essence of this bill.

Could my colleague provide her thoughts on why Bill C-2 is so important, as we want to continue to support people and businesses?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, we came forward with Bill C-2 in response to what we heard on the ground. I have been speaking to businesses and workers. The tourism industry needs the support that is found in Bill C-2. I have been speaking to caregivers, as I am sure others in the House have, and they need the supports that are also found in Bill C-2. We are also extending sick leave benefits through this bill. I do not need to remind the House how incredibly important that is with this new wave of omicron.

Before the House adjourns for the holiday season, we must pass Bill C-2 so we can be prepared to support Canadians in their time of need.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that Canada's inflation rate is at its highest point in 30 years and that the 4.7% inflation rate is growing about 2% faster than Canadians' wages. For the average Canadian, that is equivalent to a pay cut.

We talked about “just inflation” and said the government was behind this inflation rate. What the Liberals said in their own defence was worse than the allegation. Let me explain. They said that the inflation rate was the result of global supply chains being disrupted by COVID-19, leading to higher prices. That is a bizarre explanation, since it is the prices for Canadian products that are rising the most. For example, the cost of home heating has gone up 26%.

In Canada, we have 1.3 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. That domestic energy supply provides heating for Canadian families. It has nothing to do with global supply chains.

In addition, gas prices have gone up 43%. What do we have right here in Canada? We have the second-largest oil and gas reserves in the world. In that case, why are we relying on global supply chains?

Yesterday, the Prime Minister said that we are relying on foreign oil in order to save the planet. He even mocked the Conservative Party by saying that those who want to produce oil here simply want to “drill, baby, drill”. However, he is the one who wants to “drill, baby, drill”, just anywhere else in the world besides Canada.

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The other day, I was in Saint John, New Brunswick. As I gazed out over the ocean, I saw a big ship that was carrying oil from the Middle East to Canada, oil coming from Egypt. Oil from the Red Sea was loaded onto that ship on Egypt's north coast, on the Mediterranean. How did the Egyptians get that oil from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean? They did so with the help of a pipeline.

The government is in favour of the pipelines that Egypt built to carry oil from the Middle East to a ship that has to cross the entire Atlantic Ocean. Ironically, that ship burns diesel fuel and increases the risk of oil spills in the ocean in order to bring that oil to eastern Canada at a higher price. Eastern Canadians are paying more for gas and other oil products. Why? It is because the Government of Canada blocked the extension of a pipeline from western Canada to Saint John, New Brunswick.

• (1110)

The Prime Minister says that the cost of gas is too high because of problems in the global supply chain. This policy is even more reprehensible when we know that if he had allowed a pipeline to be built and increased production of western oil, which is green, instead of importing more from the Middle East, our oil could have been delivered to Canadians in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and elsewhere in eastern Canada.

Thirdly, according to the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University, the cost of food for a middle-class family will increase by \$1,000 next year. A single mother will have to pay \$1,000 more to feed her children.

Canada ranks third in the world for the amount of farmland per capita. Why is the government saying that global supply chains are responsible for the rising cost of food in Canada when we have the capacity to produce our own food? We have enough farmers and land to produce our own food, so let us take advantage of that.

In fact, if every Canadian had an equal share of that land, we would each have the equivalent of 33 football fields. Canada clearly has enough land to produce its own food and should be able to manage that, but it cannot because carbon taxes, red tape and other regulations prevent our farmers from producing more food more affordably.

Yesterday, the Canadian Real Estate Association announced that housing prices have gone up 20% to 25% since last year, despite Canada being second only to Russia in sheer size. Canada also has enough lumber to build more houses, so the Liberals cannot blame global supply chains for the rising cost of land in Canada, because the Earth was created thousands of years ago, long before we got here. That land is already here and is not dependent on global supply chains, so the problem is here.

Canada is not producing enough energy to heat our homes and put gas in our cars. We are not producing enough food to feed our people, and we are not building enough houses to shelter them. About 85% of young Canadians say they want to buy a house, but they cannot afford to. As the very wealthy owners of big cottages and palatial homes watch their property values rise, people who have to rent are getting poorer and poorer because the value of the dollar is shrinking by the day.

• (1115)

What are we producing here in Canada? We are producing money. We are printing more money. Perhaps the only way the government has found to support the forestry sector is to produce more paper money. The reality is that when there are 400 billion more dollars chasing the same number of goods, prices go up.

There is another way to go. For example, Switzerland has a 1.5% inflation rate. That is one-third of our inflation rate. Why is inflation lower in Switzerland? It is because they are not printing any money. In Switzerland, the money supply went up 6%, compared to 23% in Canada. Canada is printing four times more money, which is why our inflation rate is four times higher than Switzerland's.

People will say we cannot consume everything Canada produces. It is true that we could not possibly consume all the oil and gas, natural gas, food and all the other products we make. However, one way to fight inflation is to sell more products around the world in order to bring up the value of our dollar. If we export more of our high-value products, that has to increase the value of our dollar, and it means we can buy more on the world markets.

We are seeing this in Switzerland. Since the Swiss franc is worth 8% more than the U.S. dollar, Switzerland has a competitive advantage when purchasing products on the international market. The Swiss franc has far more power, because it is worth more. The Canadian dollar is worth 20% less than the U.S. dollar, so we have less purchasing power in international markets.

Using and producing more of our own resources is not only about providing products to our own population. It also serves to increase the value and purchasing power of our dollar internationally.

Before anyone rushes to say that a stronger dollar is bad for our exports, I would point out that that is not what happened in Switzerland. In fact, the Swiss enjoy a trade surplus in terms of international trade, meaning they sell more to the rest of the world than they purchase. Why? Because they give their businesses the freedom to produce more. The Swiss create products, while Canada prints money. That is what needs to change.

The Conservative Party's policy is about supporting the construction of new pipelines in order to provide clean, affordable energy to our own population and to export it to the rest of the world. It is about allowing our energy companies to produce natural gas to provide Canadians with more affordable heating options. It is about allowing our farmers to sell more of the food they produce at a more reasonable cost. It is about selling 15% of the 37,000 federally owned buildings that are underutilized, especially since the onset of COVID-19 and the increase in teleworking, and converting them into affordable housing.

Rather than printing money, we will create more products, which can be purchased with money. That is our approach: purchase more and spend less. Let us do this with paycheques, not debt.

• (1120)

[English]

Statistics Canada reported a 30-year high in inflation. Inflation rising 2% faster than wages means a real pay cut for Canadians, and the government's defence against the allegation that it was to blame was worse than the charge. It claimed that the cause is COVID disruptions to international supply chains. The question is this: Why would we need international supply chains for the products that are rising most quickly in price, when those same products are made here in Canada?

Energy, food and real estate have increased more than almost any other product in the basket of goods Canadians buy. What do we have? We have energy, we have farmland and we have land and lumber for housing, so why is our country so dependent on the rest of the world for the goods that we have beneath our feet right here at home?

Let us go through them.

Home heating has gone up 26% in one year. Canada has 1,300 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Why are we depending on the rest of the world to heat our homes, when we have the energy to do it right under our feet here in Canada?

Gas is up 43%. What do we have here? We have the second-biggest supply of oil on planet earth, and yet the Prime Minister says we should not produce it here. He even tried to mock others by accusing them of them “Drill, baby, drill!”, but “Drill, baby, drill!” is his policy. He wants to drill oil wells all around the world; he just does not want any of the wages from those drilling projects to go to Canadian workers.

I stood at the Bay of Fundy, looking out at the Atlantic Ocean two weeks ago, watching a tanker that had travelled from the northern coast of Egypt through the Mediterranean and all the way to Saint John, where it will have been processed at the Irving refinery. Do members know how they got the oil onto that tanker? It was by a pipeline that went from the Red Sea across northern Egypt to the Mediterranean. Do not tell me this Prime Minister is against pipelines. He is in favour of every pipeline that one could build anywhere outside of Canada, as long as it does not use Canadian steel, pay Canadian wages, hire Canadian energy workers or provide jobs to refinery workers in eastern Canada. As long as the paycheques go to other countries, he is 100% in favour of pipelines.

Now, to go back to inflation, the question is this: Why are we paying a premium for Saudi, Middle Eastern, African and American oil when we have the second-biggest supply here in Canada? That should not be a question of international supply chains; it should be a question of domestic self-sufficiency.

The next issue is food, which is up \$1,000 next year, according to Dalhousie University's food institute. It expects that the average family will spend an extra grand feeding itself next year. Why? We have the third-largest area of farmland per capita in the world, and we have the best farmers, so why can we not supply our own nutri-

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tious food? The answer is that our foreign competitors do not apply carbon taxes at our rate to the farmers who are producing their food, nor do they face the same kind of regulatory and red-tape obstacles that drive up food production. Therefore, our farmers have to pass those costs on to consumers in the form of inflation, and our consumers then have to rely, embarrassingly and humiliatingly, on foreign supply chains to feed ourselves, even while we have been blessed with the best and the third-largest area of farmland on planet earth.

Then we come to housing. Just yesterday, the Canadian Real Estate Association reported that Canada has seen a 20% to 25% increase in real prices, which is the single biggest increase on record ever. Not adjusted for seasonal variation, the average house now costs \$720,000 and it is over a million bucks to buy the average house, not a mansion, in Canada's biggest city, Toronto.

• (1125)

We are developing in this country a landed aristocracy of extremely wealthy people who make more money through the appreciation of their real estate than they do from the wages of their labour, while we have a growing class of working millennials who now have no hope of ever owning a home.

According to an Ipsos survey, 85% of millennials say they want to own a home but cannot afford to. Who would be surprised about that when one has to pay a million dollars? One would have to save up \$100,000 in order to make a down payment on the average home in Toronto today at 10% down. If a person is saving \$500 a month, that is 200 months to save up for a down payment to have the privilege of then bearing a mortgage of \$900,000.

We have the second-biggest housing bubble in the world, according to Bloomberg. Again, how does one blame that on foreign supply chains? By definition, land does not have supply chains. It is already here under our feet, and we have the second-biggest land mass on earth. If we spread Canadians out evenly, each and every one of them would have 33 CFL-sized football fields to themselves. We would not actually be able to see another person in Canada if we were spread out evenly. We have more places in Canada where there is no one than we have places where there is anyone, yet we cannot find room to house our own people. This is ridiculous.

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Vancouver and Toronto are the second and fifth most unaffordable housing markets in the world when we compare median income to median house prices, more unaffordable than Manhattan; San Francisco; London, England; Singapore and countless other places with less land, more money and more people. Why? One cannot blame international supply chains or COVID for that. In fact, all the land and almost all the housing on the market today was built before the first case of COVID even hit our shores. As a result, one cannot blame any of those things. This is, by definition, a homemade problem, pun intended.

The government's defence for its 30-year high in inflation is ironically worse than the allegation itself. It has created an economy where we cannot supply ourselves with the very things God blessed this land with before we even arrived here. We have more land, yet we cannot grow our own food. We have more lumber, yet we cannot build our own homes. We have more energy, yet we cannot heat or power our lives. We are hopelessly dependent on the rest of the world, and that is why, when prices go up, we are so weak in trying to pay the price for it.

Some will say it is not that simple and we cannot simply supply every Canadian with domestically generated goods. What we can do, where we have to buy on an international level, is have more purchasing power with a stronger dollar. When we compete for scarce global goods, we do so against countries that have real purchasing power.

I give the example of Switzerland. It has increased its money supply by 6% since COVID struck. We increased ours by 23%. What is the result? Its inflation is 1.5% and our inflation is more than three times higher, at 4.7%.

Part of that is because the Swiss franc has real purchasing power. The Swiss can go out into the world market and buy things with their money that we cannot. Their franc is worth 8% more than the U.S. dollar and ours is worth 20% less. Therefore, when there is a widget that a Canadian needs and a Swiss citizen needs and we both walk up and we have the loonie and they have the franc, let us be frank about who is getting that widget. They are getting it, because they have good, sound money. They produce things while we produce cash, and as a result, they have more valuable money.

Before we hear Liberals whine on about how we could not export goods if we had a powerful dollar on the international markets, the Swiss are running a trade surplus, because they do not rely on cheap cash to sell their goods. They rely on a productive economy that generates value to sell their goods.

• (1130)

That is how to increase the well-being of a population. It is how to lift people out of poverty and give them an opportunity. It is not by producing cash, but by producing more of what cash buys.

Let us unleash the free enterprise system to grow more affordable and nutritious food, to supply more affordable homes to our people and to bring the prodigious energy with which our land has been blessed to our consumers. In other words, let us make more and cost less, with paycheques, not debt.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his comprehensive look at this. It was a refreshing, revisionist review of neo-conservative economics.

I am really glad to hear that he has awakened to the housing crisis in this country. Those of us in the NDP have been pointing this out for decades. I come from the Lower Mainland of B.C., and I can assure him that the housing crisis did not occur today and did not occur in the last three or four years. It has been building for the last 20 years. He was a member of the government that was in power in this country from 2006 to 2015, when the housing crisis was developing in the Lower Mainland.

There is another thing I want to mention. Of course, he has been a big proponent of free trade. However, what does free trade do, which we have been warning about for years? When all the tariffs are reduced at the borders, capital flees to wherever it is cheapest to produce. This reduces Canada's ability to compete.

Does the member now agree with the NDP that the neo-liberal free trade policy was wrong and made Canada dependent on other countries for primary goods? What responsibility does he take for the housing crisis in this country?

• (1135)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I will take responsibility for the fact that someone could buy an average house in Canada for \$450,000 when our party was in power. I will take full responsibility for that. Right now, that price is \$720,000. It is 58% higher today than it was when the Conservatives were in office.

The member is quite right that in his province, the problem is the worst. There is an NDP mayor in Vancouver, and we cannot get anything built. It is great for the rich. Do not get me wrong, it is not bad for everybody. Those who have a mansion in Vancouver are getting richer every day. They do not have to do a lick of work. They can sit back on their big, fat assets and get richer every day. There is also an NDP premier who is equally antidevelopment and is preventing people from building houses for more affordable living. The snobs who like to keep poor people and minorities out of their neighbourhoods are doing just fine in that NDP city, because they will not allow any construction to happen in those ritzy, trendy, champagne socialist neighbourhoods.

As for the issue of wages, the places that are beating us have high wages. Free-enterprise Ireland, free-enterprise Switzerland and free-enterprise Singapore have significantly higher wages than there are here in Canada, and they are beating us all around. High wages are good for competitiveness. High cost of government is not.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was elected to the House of Commons about two years ago. I just have to laugh every time I hear the Conservatives complain that the Liberals are not doing enough for the oil industry. The Liberals are doing more than the Conservatives. They bought a pipeline and, for the past two years, they have invested \$14 billion a year in the oil industry.

In Canada, greenhouse gas emissions have continued to rise ever since the Liberals came to power in 2015. They promised to plant two billion trees, but only 0.5% have been planted. The Liberals are better than the Conservatives for the industry. There are even some environmentalists who miss the Conservatives, and that is saying something.

I have some advice for my Conservative friends. They should take a page from the Liberals' playbook and add the words "green" and "sustainable" to the end of every sentence. That way, they will get elected.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that it is not the Liberals who are doing the most for oil consumption, it is the Bloc.

The Bloc Québécois wants us to subsidize Bombardier. What fuels Bombardier aircraft? Is it oil? Are these aircraft fuelled by solar energy? What do we find at the refineries in Montreal and Quebec City? Oil, but oil from the United States. We need to pay attention to that.

The Bloc supports only foreign oil companies. No one in the world does more for foreign oil than the Bloc Québécois. In my opinion, it is important to point that out.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the intervention by the member for Carleton today and I certainly heard a lot. Every time he addresses housing, he seems to talk about building new housing and what I imagine, based on his comments, would be more subdivisions and single detached houses. This is important and we definitely always need to focus on it at all levels of government, but what I never hear the Conservatives speak about, particularly the member, is affordable housing for folks who need their rent geared to their income. This is not just about housing affordability but affordable housing.

Can the member speak to his position, and perhaps the position of the Conservative Party, when it comes to people who need housing that is more geared to their incomes, folks who are really struggling out there, not just people who are looking to own a new single detached home?

• (1140)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, let me correct the member. Every single Canadian needs housing that is geared to their income. By definition, people cannot pay their mortgage on a house that is out of line with their income. However, that is exactly the problem the government has created.

When the government started printing cash in the spring of 2020, housing prices were dropping. Then suddenly it reversed course and went on a rampage that we have not seen at any time in this country's history, according to the top economists for The Canadian Real Estate Association just yesterday. What has that meant? It has meant that not only are the very poor unable to afford housing now, but when they calculate how many months it would take to save up for a future down payment, they realize they do not have enough living years to get there. There is now a class of people in this country who have made the mathematical calculation that they will never own a home.

I want the member, before he and his government start printing more cash and inflating the assets of their rich friends, to think carefully about the very dangerous societal impacts of a country where millions of people believe they will be dispossessed of home ownership forever.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, back in 2008 and 2009, Canada was the envy of the world when we sailed through the financial crisis. Why was that, and what policy differences are needed to put us at number one in the G7 again in terms of the economy?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I can say objectively that was the best question we have had so far. There is no doubt about it.

The member is absolutely right. We were the last to go into the 2008 recession and we were the first to come out of it. Why? It was because our spending was timely, targeted and temporary, because we cut red tape and taxes to stimulate investment and growth, and we did so while balancing the budget only four years later. We managed to keep our debt-to-GDP ratio the lowest in the entire G7, a great fortune that the government inherited from the Conservatives but unfortunately is quickly squandering.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am quite fond of my colleague from Carleton, so I will tell him up front that I do not agree with my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

I believe that the Conservatives are really good when it comes to oil. Just look at the previous session when they moved a motion that said that oil was irreplaceable and it was better than air and water.

I will nevertheless remind my colleague from Carleton, who often tells me that the top-selling vehicle is the F-150, and that there will soon be an electric version, that repeating a lie over and over does not make it true.

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The majority of the oil that Quebec consumes comes from Canada. Would my colleague agree that if we want to create wealth we may have to look at transitioning to cleaner energies, which would involve limiting our use of oil? I would like to hear his thoughts on that.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, because of the Bloc, foreign oil companies are able to sell more oil in eastern Canada. That is a fact. All of the oil coming from the Atlantic Ocean, in eastern Canada, comes from foreign oil companies, and the Bloc supports—

● (1145)

The Deputy Speaker: I apologize for interrupting the member, but there seems to be a problem with the interpretation.

The problem is now fixed.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, because there is no pipeline to carry oil from western Canada, eastern Canada has to get its oil from the Middle East.

Given how much they support Saudi Arabian oil, they should be called the Saudi Arabian Bloc instead of the Bloc Québécois. I do not know why. Maybe they can explain it.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague and friend, the member for Shefford.

Bill C-2 came back to the House after being examined and even improved in committee. I want to explain to the House why the Bloc Québécois supported the principle of the bill and voted in favour of it. As the omicron variant has unfortunately reminded us, we are still in the midst of a pandemic and many sectors are still struggling. From the outset, we collectively decided to support those sectors, knowing that we would need those workers and businesses when the pandemic was over.

Bill C-2 extends the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency rent subsidy, but in a more targeted way, in order to help sectors that are struggling, such as the tourism and hospitality industry. I am thinking here about the challenges facing large hotel groups, since international conferences and other such events have been put on pause. The bill also targets another sector that is very important to us, the arts and culture industry, and it contains measures for businesses in other struggling industries. The bill also proposes support for individuals who have to care for a sick person quarantined at home because of COVID-19, as well as support measures for provinces or regions if they have to go back into lockdown. We are in favour of all of that.

When we read the first version of the bill, we and many of our colleagues in the House noticed that self-employed workers had been overlooked, since the bill did not set anything aside for them after CERB ended. We wanted to ensure that self-employed workers in these struggling sectors would be supported.

The first question I asked the Minister of Finance was about the absence of support measures for these individuals in the targeted sectors. She replied and repeated publicly that the program, the government and the department were not in a position to provide

targeted support in those sectors, and officials appeared before the Standing Committee on Finance to confirm this. My colleague from Elmwood—Transcona also raised that issue at committee, as did my colleague from Shefford.

This is all very disappointing. After nearly two years of the pandemic, the government and its departments have not been able to evolve, move in new directions, be more flexible and better adapt the existing tools, especially by targeting certain sectors. This was done for the wage subsidy, but not for self-employed workers in the same sectors. It makes no sense.

Nevertheless, we negotiated and were guaranteed that there would be a support program for self-employed workers in the arts and culture sector. The Minister of Finance came to committee to tell us that, and the Minister of Canadian Heritage went into great detail explaining what it would look like, referring to the Quebec model in particular. In Quebec, the government supports foundations, which in turn support the self-employed workers in the sector. Since we found it unacceptable to leave out self-employed arts and culture workers, the guarantees we got suit us fine, and we are okay with things on that front.

The Bloc Québécois asked the government and the Minister of Finance for something else. The original version of the bill gave the minister and the Governor in Council sweeping power, in legal jargon, to change all of the terms of the bill and meet any new needs that might arise. According to the criteria, a business had to have lost 50% of its sales, or 40% for businesses in a targeted sector, during the qualifying periods in order to be eligible. Are those good percentages? Unfortunately, we did not have time to explore these issues in depth due to the short time frame we were given.

● (1150)

The Minister of Finance and government officials confirmed that Bill C-2, as written, gave the minister the power to make changes by way of regulation and to adjust support levels for targeted sectors.

That is a crucial element for the Bloc Québécois. During a pandemic, the situation and the circumstances can change fast. Some sectors that we feel need support because they play a crucial and strategic role in our economy may find themselves struggling. We need to do something about that. We actually got confirmation on that from the Minister of Finance.

The Bloc Québécois will be there to remind her. Quebec's manufacturing sector has approached us about this. Because of the pandemic, there is a huge shortage of semiconductors, and major Quebec companies that use semiconductors have seen very uneven or slowed production. The Minister of Finance told us that the numbers show the situation is not as bad as we feared, and she promised to give us those numbers. I would like to remind her that we are still waiting for those numbers. It has been a week, and we have not received anything. She could certainly do better on that front.

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What the Bloc Québécois likes about Bill C-2 is that, if the Minister of Finance needed to better support this sector, she would have the power to do so through regulations. This could be done quickly. The same goes for the aerospace industry. We are committed to talking about this at length when we come back to the House to see where things stand and how the needs have evolved. Again, the Bloc Québécois will be there to remind the Minister of Finance of the power she has and to remind her to use it for the good of the economy.

I will address another issue that is missing from Bill C-2. It is an incredible injustice that has to do with a serious crisis. I am talking about the situation with seniors who had to rely on various forms of emergency benefits during the pandemic and who are now getting part of their guaranteed income supplement taken away, because the Canada emergency response benefit is not considered working income; their file was processed by Service Canada, which prevented them from proceeding with a new calculation for the current year; or they were required to make a repayment in the same year instead of in instalments over a few years.

I am sure that my colleague from Shefford will speak to this in detail in her speech. The Bloc Québécois considers this a serious problem. We contacted the Minister of Finance and the respective ministers in Quebec about this both during and after the election campaign, urging them to act because this was important. We asked again in relation to Bill C-2. The Minister of Finance promised to deal with the situation in the days to follow. We were led to believe that it would be in the economic update. We finally got \$742 million. That is not what we were looking for, but it seems promising. We are waiting for the details before we make up our minds.

The big problem, however, is that the money would not be available until May 2022. Seniors have been living with reduced incomes for months now. The poorest seniors, the ones who receive the guaranteed income supplement, already have limited purchasing power. We are now struggling with inflation, but the fix would not come until next May. That is unacceptable. The Bloc Québécois will keep reminding the government that it needs to speed up the process.

We needed more time in committee. We were rushed, and it took the government two months to recall the House after an unnecessary election. Thus, we were unable to improve the bill as much as we could have.

However, I would like to remind members that we adopted an amendment proposed by my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona. That amendment does improve Bill C-2. I imagine that my colleague will speak more about it during his speech. An amendment moved by the member for Carleton was also adopted. However, the study of a bill requires more time.

In closing, I want to thank my colleagues who supported me at the Standing Committee on Finance. I am thinking of the member for Drummond concerning arts and culture, the member for Terrebonne, who is interested in pandemic-related assistance programs, my colleague from Shefford, who is interested in seniors, and my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue, who also supported me.

• (1155)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that surprises me about the Liberals' solution to the GIS issue is that it is only one payment that may not even be made until May. We already know that seniors are in crisis and need help now.

In the early days of the pandemic, in March 2020, hundreds of billions of dollars went to the banks. At this moment, real people are grappling with a real problem that urgently needs a solution. However, the government is telling them that they will have to wait another few months, even though they have already been waiting for a solution for several months. These people are living in their cars or on the streets. It is wholly unacceptable that they will not receive help until May.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I agree that when a problem affects people with significant economic power, it gets solved quickly. They have the government's ear, so the problem is soon corrected.

However, when it comes to poor people, people who do not speak loudly and are living their own lives as best they can, problems take longer to solve. These people are not heard as much because they speak less loudly and are not as close to the government. That is sad.

According to our calculations, the amounts provided for in the budget will correct the situation, but we need confirmation. However, the table shows that the money will not be paid out until next fiscal year, which starts in April. When we ask government officials about this, they say that it is scheduled for May. As my colleague was just saying, the problem should have been settled last July.

We are hearing horror stories in every one of our ridings. Some people have had to give up their homes, while others can no longer afford their medications. They could not wait this long, and they certainly cannot wait until May for this problem to be fixed. Our role as members of Parliament is to pressure the government to bring about change.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would recognize that the Bloc is supporting the passage of Bill C-2. It is important to recognize that because the bill would provide ongoing support. In particular, I always appreciate the focus that the Bloc puts on the arts and cultural communities, something I personally believe in very strongly.

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As has been pointed out, the bill would not resolve all the problems out there, but it is important that it ultimately pass because it supports many people and businesses today. Supporting Canadians in a broad sense means not only doing it through legislation, but through budgetary measures as well. To focus on this bill, it is a positive bill supporting certain aspects of our economy. Would the member agree with that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with my colleague from Winnipeg North. We need to pass this bill before we break for the holidays. It is very important for supporting Quebec's and Canada's economy.

However, I would like to remind my colleague and the House that the Liberal government has once again resorted to its usual tactics. It tabled this important and urgent bill late and is now pressuring us members to pass it as soon as possible.

I would like to remind my colleagues that the government waited two months before recalling the House. We could have started work much earlier, passed the bill much more quickly and amended it as needed.

• (1200)

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been discussing the issue of housing in this debate. What many other parties have failed to recognize is the fact that a critical way of lowering the cost of housing is to increase the overall supply of housing. We need policies that support more home and rental construction if housing overall is going to become more accessible and affordable. I would like to hear the member's comment on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, we are in the middle of a serious housing crisis. A few years ago, it was mostly limited to Vancouver and Toronto. Today, prices are through the roof in Montreal and throughout Quebec. House prices in Joliette are higher than they have ever been. It is a serious problem. In my opinion, the solution definitely lies in increasing the housing supply.

In terms of redistributing of wealth and paying special attention to the less fortunate, the solution lies in providing social housing. Fortunately, in Quebec, governments of all stripes have done more. The federal government needs to do much more than it is doing now.

We will continue to press the issue, in particular with the help of my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my excellent colleague from Joliette, who is also the finance critic. He is doing a fabulous job of handling this file, and I would like to congratulate him for his work.

I rise to speak during this second reading of Bill C-2 in a collaborative spirit. Like my colleague, I will begin by saying that the Bloc Qu b cois supports Bill C-2, which introduces new targeted assistance programs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As we know, the pandemic is far from over.

Having been elected in 2019, just before the pandemic started, I have seen collaboration happen. Since the beginning of the crisis, my Bloc Qu b cois colleagues and I have proposed dozens of improvements to the federal aid programs, particularly regarding business loans and the emergency wage subsidy. The emergency wage subsidy was very helpful for businesses in Shefford, allowing them to get through the crisis. For example, 70% of businesses in the Granby industrial park used the subsidy.

We have always made sure that the measures being taken increasingly meet the diverse needs of individuals and economic sectors and that they get adapted as the pandemic evolves. We will continue that work.

We have always insisted that we need to provide assistance for sectors that will take longer to feel the effects of the pandemic for longer, until business goes back to normal for them. The tourism, cultural, restaurant and event sectors are but a few examples. It so happens that these sectors are very important economic drivers that put Shefford on the map.

We made this request several times, including during the recent election campaign. It is now more urgent than ever given the current spread of the virus, which has resulted in many cancelled bookings. Since yesterday, restaurants, hotels and the tourism sector have been seeing numerous cancellations.

We believe that Bill C-2 must be passed as soon as possible, since it ensures the continuity of the emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency rent subsidy. Some businesses are still fragile, but they will be able to get through the crisis thanks to the tourism and hospitality recovery program, the hardest-hit business recovery program and the lockdown support measure. The problem is that these programs are a bit harder to access and less generous than the previous iterations. However, these three new programs will provide a baseline level of support for SMEs that are still hurting from the pandemic.

I would like to remind the House that many SMEs are still having a hard time even though the economy is taking off again in every region. We will need to monitor the spread of the omicron variant. According to a recent survey conducted by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 58% of SME owners reported lower-than-normal sales. Like my colleague from Joliette, I can only lament the fact that a useless election delayed the implementation of these new programs.

Let us be very clear: The government had no valid reason to call an election. Its claim that Parliament was not running smoothly was just a pretext. It was not true at all. As I said before, the Bloc Qu b cois was collaborating with the government. The Liberals called an election for the purely egotistical reason that they wanted a majority. They failed miserably, because we still have a minority government. The rapid passage of the bills implementing the pandemic assistance programs shows just how well parliamentarians collaborated during the last Parliament, the 43rd Parliament.

The number one priority of every member should have been to be there this fall to respond to the pandemic. The Liberals chose to call an election. The result was a delay in discussions and work leading to the new iterations of these programs. These programs should already have been adopted by now. The delays are the fault of no one but the Liberals.

I would like to reiterate the three conditions set out by the Bloc Québécois for Bill C-2.

First, the government must immediately commit to contributing to the Artists' Foundation to support self-employed workers in the arts and culture sector. This is a call that the government appears to have heard. We will monitor the situation closely. In my riding, artists are asking for help. As I said before, this is a very important sector in my riding of Shefford. We also need to continue monitoring certain definitions regarding the tourism sector in order to make sure no one is forgotten. Even suppliers of goods and services related to the tourism industry should have access to support.

Second, before the election campaign, we asked that the government stop penalizing working seniors who receive the guaranteed income supplement, the GIS, by considering the CERB as employment income in calculating the GIS. In my opinion, this is a key condition. One of the solutions we thought of was to allow for a recalculation of the GIS regardless of whether the request was made by Service Canada or the Canada Revenue Agency, in addition to allowing debts to be repaid over three years rather than one. We proposed solutions.

• (1205)

As the seniors critic, I have often risen in the House and asked for these solutions. I can point out that the minister announced this week in her economic update that she would fix this next May. That is all well and good, but with Christmas around the corner, seniors are poorer than ever. They were already in dire straits financially before the pandemic, and since July, things have gotten even worse. They will not get any gifts for new year, Valentine's Day or Easter either. May is way too far away.

In response to the economic update, my colleague from Joliette has already said that we will continue to work to get this problem solved faster. Obviously, we cannot help but notice that the months of pressure from our party have had some impact and that there would not have been any compensation if we had not been there. We must not forget that working seniors are bearing the brunt of these cuts to the GIS, even though they were legitimately entitled to claim the CERB during the first wave.

We also need to remember that those receiving the GIS are the most disadvantaged seniors, and that the federal government has been depriving them of hundreds of dollars every month since July. They no longer have the financial wiggle room to get through the next five months without having to make some tough choices, such as stopping certain medications or selling their possessions, given that inflation has pushed grocery prices up by 7%.

That is why the government needs to speed up the process. We will continue to demand that it reverse its ridiculous decision to create two classes of seniors, since the current financial situation of seniors proves that poverty does not start at age 75, that health

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problems do not start at age 75, and that the OAS must be raised by \$110 a month starting at age 65, because the government is completely overlooking seniors between the ages of 65 and 74.

Last week, I replaced a member of the Standing Committee on Finance. As we were questioning officials from the Canada Revenue Agency, I was astonished to discover that, in 2021, a country like Canada is unable to find technological solutions more quickly. The CRA knew since the summer of 2020 that problems would crop up. Its officials told us that there were still too many technological challenges to address the issues of either seniors or workers in the cultural sector.

Our third condition is that the minister confirm that she intends to use the power to adapt the assistance measures in Bill C-2 by regulation in order to meet the needs of other industries that are currently excluded from federal support, including the aerospace industry, if a need is demonstrated. As the crisis continues to evolve, there may be still more upheaval ahead.

In conclusion, we definitely need to monitor the situation, and the programs will have to be flexible. Bill C-2 makes it possible to help some sectors during this crisis by extending the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency rent subsidy. However, as my colleague from Joliette mentioned, nothing is being done about other serious problems affecting our businesses because of supply chain disruptions. Consider the microprocessor shortage, for example. This supply chain disruption is causing stoppages in several production chains in Quebec.

There is one final aspect that I would like to address. The government cannot claim urgency as an excuse when it is the one that delayed the work associated with the adoption of the new programs by calling the most expensive election in history just as the fourth wave began. We should already have addressed these issues affecting SMEs and businesses.

We need to adopt Bill C-2 because one thing is certain: The current situation being what it is, we cannot feel at ease rising for the holidays without passing this important bill. Let us work together for business owners and workers. Let us take action.

• (1210)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, where I agree fully with the member is in regard to the importance of seniors and the fact that we should work expeditiously to get the bill through, so it will be there before Christmas.

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I would like to remind my colleague is that virtually from day one, in 2015, we dramatically increased the amounts going to the poorest of all seniors in Canada by a substantial increase to the GIS. During the pandemic, we gave direct payments to GIS recipients and all OAS recipients. We have also proposed to increase payments substantially to seniors age 75 and over. We have also invested tens of millions of dollars into all sorts of organizations that provide services for seniors.

The member made a statement saying to give \$100 for every senior. Is that an add-on amount to what has already been committed? As this is the first time I have heard of this, what is the Bloc position on \$100 for every senior?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Madam Speaker, I find it fascinating that the Liberal government is in such denial about seniors living in financial insecurity and that it prefers to send out one-off cheques when what seniors really need is ongoing help.

If the Bloc Qu b cois had not been there back in April to remind the government that everyone was getting assistance during the pandemic except for seniors, they would not have even gotten the one cheque. The government sent another single cheque for the GIS and for OAS, but seniors aged 75 and over got another one-off cheque this summer, just before the election, coincidentally.

The government is now proposing an increase to OAS, but only for seniors aged 75 and up. However, seniors over 75 are not the only ones who need help. Seniors 65 and up need assistance as well, which is why the government needs to make adjustments to OAS for all seniors, aged 65 and up.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Shefford for talking about seniors. I heard the deputy House leader for the government talk about all they have done for seniors, but I agree with my colleague when she speaks of those people who have the lowest incomes. That is what matters here.

We know that cheques have gone out for old age security. They went out to everybody. Whether someone made \$90,000 or \$15,000, they got the same cheque, but the guaranteed income supplement is still an issue. People have to deal with the fact that the government is trying to reverse some decisions it made, but with the cost of inflation, we know that low-income seniors are really falling behind.

What does my colleague suggest when it comes to the guaranteed income supplement and what the government can do?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. It is an honour to serve with her at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Seniors and the status of women are two causes that matter very much to us both.

I agree with what she said about the Liberals not being mindful of what is going on with seniors. That is why the Bloc Qu b cois proposed extending the old age security increase to those 65 and over. We also want to let workers earn more before hitting the

threshold at which their guaranteed income supplement is clawed back, and we want to see credits for experienced workers that enable them to stay in the workforce.

Furthermore, I agree with my colleague that seniors are in a precarious position. I am amazed to hear the government claim that it has helped them through organizations that support seniors. Does the government really want to make seniors go line up at the food bank? That is good for those organizations, but it does not give seniors more money to buy groceries. The same goes for the New Horizons for Seniors program. It is a good program that gives seniors opportunities to socialize, but investing in that program does not put more money in seniors' pockets.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, there are structural reasons why a lot of seniors, people living with disabilities and others in Canada continue to face serious financial stress. We have proposed some more structural and systemic solutions to those problems. The Liberals came in with a one-time payment, and then Liberals such as the member for Winnipeg North get outraged. They get up and say, "We threw some money at you. Why are you still complaining? We paid you off. Be satisfied. Stop talking about poverty. Stop talking about how these people are still in a difficult situation. That is what the money was for."

The government reminds us in these situations of a lawyer for an unscrupulous wealthy person who pays people off and then has them sign non-disclosure agreements so they do not talk about the problem anymore.

Does the member think that maybe this time around the Liberals will be sending NDAs along with cheques to seniors just to try and shut people up about talking about the systemic—

• (1215)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mend s): I have to give the hon. member a moment to reply.

The hon. member for Shefford.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Madam Speaker, I have already talked about the one-time cheques. Seniors are outraged. They feel they are being used, manipulated for electoral purposes, rewarded with nothing more than a little cheque from the government every now and then. What they need is stable, long-term buying power.

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[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, today, we are talking about a motion to see Bill C-2 move swiftly through the House. On behalf of the New Democrats, we recognize the urgent need for many people, in the face of the pandemic, to receive help. It is true that some of those people will receive some help through Bill C-2. That is why the New Democrats have not tried to filibuster or obstruct the passage of the bill, but we have not tried to hasten it. We have laid out very clearly a path through the NDP to try to expedite the passage of the bill.

We talked about the problem of benefit clawbacks, not just with respect to the guaranteed income supplement but the Canada child benefit and Canada worker benefit. We talked about the need for a CERB low-income repayment amnesty. We talked about some of the people who were seriously affected by the government pursuing them for debts they had incurred, sometimes without much choice, such as foster kids in Manitoba. They were told by the provincial government they had to apply for CERB or they would not be eligible to apply for social assistance in the province of Manitoba.

Other people took the government at its word when it said to apply if they really needed help in the struggle of the pandemic, not only because of employment loss but also because of sudden increased costs, such as hiring a laundry service because family members or their support network could not go into their place of residence to assist with those things or having groceries delivered. There were a number of other costs.

When we raised the problems with the CERB and folks not being able to access any financial assistance because they had not necessarily lost employment, members on the Liberal benches exhorted people to apply for the CERB, highlighting that it was a no-fail application process. Unanimous consent motions were passed in this place, which meant not one member in the House objected to them, saying that if people really needed help and applied in good faith, they should not be punished or persecuted. That was why we felt it was very important to have a CERB low-income repayment amnesty.

We also talked about the fact that if the government was willing to claw back benefits from the most vulnerable in Canadian society because they were not entitled to them, we wanted to see it take action on clawing back benefits from the largest corporations, which were obviously in a good financial position because they were able to pay dividends to their shareholders. We know that while many businesses have struggled, some businesses have done exceptionally well, much better financially than in the years preceding the pandemic. Therefore, we have been calling for some action on that.

The government chose not to negotiate with us on the passage of this bill. That is its choice. This is not a case of sour grapes. It chose to negotiate with the Bloc. We are here to stand up for the people who were left out with respect to Bill C-2. The government had a choice. It could have worked with the NDP, in the name of the people for whom we are here to fight. It could have worked with the Bloc on the concerns its members chose to raise, or it could have worked with both of us. These were not mutually exclusive options. The government chose not to work with us or negotiate with us, so it is hard for us to expedite the passage of a bill that

leaves too many people out, and the government has not worked with us to try to address those legitimate concerns.

I think there was a perception by the government in the last Parliament that somehow, because we are a responsible party and we knew Canadians did not want an election during the pandemic, it could take our support on things for granted. That was never true; it was not something to be taken for granted. It was true that we wanted to avoid an election. The leader of the Conservative Party did not think we should have an election during a pandemic and was not prepared to trigger one. The Bloc Québécois members did not want an election during a pandemic, that it would be irresponsible and they would not trigger one. The New Democrats voted accordingly and the Prime Minister broke faith with all of us in the House who had said we should not have an election.

● (1220)

The Prime Minister got past June 2021 without having this place vote non-confidence in him. We wanted to get through the summer without having an election, so Parliament could come back in a timely way in September and deal with some of the very real issues with which Bill C-2 purports to deal. It does deal with some of them but not enough.

Instead of honouring the real effort that parties in this place made, despite many of the shortcomings of the government, to preserve that Parliament, in August, the Prime Minister took it upon himself to call an election anyway, an election that nobody wanted, an election for which the House of Commons had not called. He did it under a pretense that was not a product of the summer months.

If the Prime Minister thought there were big decisions his government needed to make, that was not news at the beginning of August. He would have known that by June and he could have been honest about it in this place. Instead, he denied that he wanted an election. People on all sides of the House were glad to hear it. We behaved accordingly and he broke faith with this place and with Canadians by calling that unnecessary and unwanted election.

I said “pretense” earlier. Why do I call it a pretense for an election? Because the Prime Minister said big questions had to be decided and the government may need to implement some major new initiatives. He took his sweet time and we came back late after the election. Then when we got back here, we had a Speech from the Throne that had nothing new to offer in terms of a change in pattern or major new policy direction by the government in the face of the pandemic.

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Bill C-2 is not a big, bold move except to the extent of abandoning hundreds of thousands of Canadians in the midst of a continuing pandemic and difficult economic times. However, he did not ask for a mandate for that. In the election, he said he would have the backs of Canadians. He never did go to Canadians in the election and he never was honest with them about the real turn he was going to take.

It turns out that the reason for the election was a pretense. While the Prime Minister tried to contrast himself with the Conservatives on the pandemic recovery during the election, on October 21, just a month after the election, he would take their advice and cancel the Canada recovery benefit with just two days' notice for people who were on the program, almost 900,000 of them.

There was nothing really new in the Speech from the Throne. The big job, agreeing with the Conservatives on how to handle the pandemic recovery, had already happened in October before the Prime Minister even had the decency to reconvene this place. The Speech from the Throne was not where he was going to make good on his commitment to Canadians to announce the new direction for which he needed a new mandate.

Maybe it would come in the fall economic statement, which happened this week. I am sorry to report that I do not see anything particularly new, bold or exciting. In fact, we did not even see a commitment to urgently implement some of the campaign promises the Liberals made.

What we did see the day before was the Prime Minister, who had an election to get a mandate to distinguish himself from the Conservatives, taking their advice to renew the mandate of the Bank of Canada, without any larger discussion as is happening in some other countries.

We know the United States has a dual mandate, employment and inflation. We know that New Zealand recently introduced its concern for the cost of housing in the mandate of its central bank. We know that the U.K. has recently asked its central bank to consider the impact of monetary policy on the battle against climate change.

Our allies, who are themselves competent financial managers, are talking about different ways to rebuild their economies coming out of the pandemic. However, the Liberals decided to take the advice of the official opposition after causing an election, because they said there was a huge difference about how they were going to handle things.

We stand in this place with a Prime Minister who broke faith on not having an election during a pandemic. We stand here with a Prime Minister who went to Canadians, saying he needed a mandate for something very different between he and his Conservative opposition. Then he proceeded to largely take their advice on the basic core elements of the pandemic recovery, something that is represented in this bill.

● (1225)

We stand before a government that has decided not to work closely with the NDP to address some of those things. However, we know the bill will pass quickly and the people who can get help through this little bill will get it, because the government chose to

work with somebody else, as its right. However, if the government wants our support on things like this, then its members need to sit down and talk to us. They need to talk to us about the people who we are here to represent and fight for, and that means seniors.

We have talked a lot about the guaranteed income supplement. The government made an announcement on Tuesday. We had been asking for a long time what it planned to do. The Liberals have told us, along with everybody else, in the fall economic statement, and there are a lot of questions about the adequacy of that solution. We would have been very happy on this side of the House to provide some feedback in advance of the announcement to ensure it would work for more people.

We will not get everything we want until we are in government, but I will give an example: the payment for people living with disabilities. This is a one-time payment, but it should be an increase in a regular benefit, something the Liberals went on to promise, but we have not heard anything about how they plan to deliver that. The Liberals initially announced that it would apply to people who received the disability tax credit. We had an opportunity to negotiate that, because we knew that was not good enough.

Not all people living with disabilities receive the disability tax credit. There are a bunch of reasons for that. First is that it is expensive and difficult to get certified for the disability tax credit. A lot of people living with disabilities live in poverty. They do not have the \$20 to \$40 for the administrative fees at the doctor's office to get a successful application for the disability tax credit.

Beyond that, a lot of them do not have an income that would allow them to benefit from a tax credit. They need to have enough income to pay taxes to benefit from a tax credit. Unfortunately too many people living with disabilities do not have enough income. Therefore, it was a bad way to deliver help to the people who needed it most.

The second problem was the one-time payment disproportionately would go to the people living with disabilities who had the highest incomes. That did not make sense from a policy point of view, because the money would not get where it was really needed and it would not get there quickly. Then there were long delays in that payment. My point is that we were able to expand the number of people who received that payment and help get it to more of the people who really needed it.

Now we have a situation where the government has announced another one-time payment to fix the GIS problem. It sounds like there is going to be another long delay in getting that help to people, people who are already homeless and do not have months to wait. We could have talked about a solution to that and have more assurances it would work well and work quickly. That did not happen

Government Orders

I am glad the government responded to public pressure. I am proud of the role the NDP has played in putting that pressure on the government. While I am also glad the government felt the need to respond, responding to public pressure and pressure of a political party in the House are not the same as negotiating a solution in the context of a bill.

We are not just here for seniors; we are here for workers. Many workers are being let down right now by the employment insurance system. The Liberals have said they will fix it, but we do not know when. There has been no clear signalling about when a fix for EI is going to come. Our constituency offices are hearing from people who are applying to EI and it is not there for them. The system cannot keep up with what is going on in the economy. That is why we needed exceptional pandemic benefits, the benefits the government just cancelled without having done the work of reforming employment insurance.

I was just talking to my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona about constituents who she was hearing from in her home province of Alberta. They cannot get financial assistance through employment insurance, despite having worked hard and paid their dues to the employment insurance system. They have been unable to access it when they need it.

We are here for people living with disabilities who are getting short shrift from the government. The Liberals say a lot of words, but they do not have a lot of action that will really help people in a timely way.

We have been here to advocate for students. The Canada emergency student benefit was not something the government was even contemplating, except for the pressure and the negotiation of the NDP.

• (1230)

Folks in this place might remember that the Canada emergency student benefit paid less than the CERB. Our position was to make students eligible for the CERB like everybody else. Students needed to pay their tuition in the fall of 2020, and they were not going to be able to get jobs in the summer. The government thought that students were naturally lazy: it could not just have them sitting around at home. It was not going to pay them to sit around and do nothing, so the government was going to pay them less than the CERB, but would create a phenomenal jobs program that would hire them in the summer.

Does anyone remember, in the lead-up to the summer of 2020, the jobs program that the Liberals were contemplating? That program came to be known as the WE Charity scandal. The money never got out the door, which was a good thing in hindsight, because we had no idea how they were contemplating rolling out that program. The point is that the program for students never happened. The jobs never came and they continued to have a reduced benefit on the false pretense that there were going to be jobs coming to them that would help them make up the difference and pay their tuition in the fall. That never happened.

There have been moments of co-operation in this Parliament, and we are willing to co-operate in expediting legislation when it reflects the priorities of the people we are here to represent. For folks

in the LGBTQ2S community, we worked with the government to expedite passage of the bill banning conversion therapy. This is something that Sheri Benson, who was elected from Saskatoon alongside me in 2015, first brought to the House. My colleague for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke has done a lot of excellent work in advancing it. Where there was something for the people that we are here to represent, and the government was doing it in a good way without leaving out a whole bunch of other people, we were happy to co-operate, just as we have been happy to co-operate on a bill that would finally bring 10 paid sick days to workers across the country.

Again, it is not a perfect bill. We think that there should be 10 paid sick days for workers across the country, but the bill says that a person would collect one sick day a month, so a person would have to wait 10 months to get those paid sick days. We are in a pandemic. The idea behind giving sick days was that if people were not feeling well, they would not have to go to work. The idea was not to have them work sick for 10 months while they accumulated the time they needed to protect themselves and everybody in their workplace from COVID-19. The idea was to give them that time so they could do the right thing and protect everybody in their workplaces and in their communities.

Nevertheless, we have been working with the government to quickly pass that legislation, because we recognize that, while it is not how we would do it, it is the best on offer and we have been fighting hard to make it better. We presented amendments in committee that would have found a compromise position on this long, 10-month wait. It would have made sure that workers had at least four days up front so that they could do the right thing. However, it was voted down by the Liberals, so we know that this is as good as we are going to get for now and we recognize that it has to be in place quickly. At least there was some discussion and negotiation around that.

This is all to say that New Democrats are here to fight for the people we represent. We are here to fight for seniors. We are here to fight for students. We are here to be a voice in this place for people living with disabilities across the country. We have been fighting for women, such as the women in the travel industry who were left out of Bill C-2. We are here for independent travel agents who work for themselves and have been doing work for their clients: First, at the beginning of the pandemic, they helped them to figure out cancelled trips, vouchers and rebates, and now they are doing bookings as people, in a sense of optimism, are starting to book travel. However, they are only going to get paid when people take those trips, and of course omicron is calling that into question. We are here to speak for them.

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When the government is willing to work with us to make sure that those people are not left behind in the bills that it presents, we will be there to try and make sure that the legislation advances quickly. When the government chooses other partners, that is its business, but it is leaving a lot of people behind in Bill C-2. I wish there was more time to fix it and leave fewer people behind, which is why we are not voting to expedite the bill, knowing full well that it will be expedited according to the program that the government has chosen by choosing its partners. We invite government members to work with us in the future to create better legislation and leave fewer people behind, but it just does not seem to be the approach that they are taking so far in this new Parliament.

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in fact, the government and ministers have been very open to working with all members of the House in an apolitical fashion to try to improve legislation, period.

There seems to be a difference when the NDP is in opposition, where it will promise and say absolutely anything, such as \$100,000 for every breathing Canadian coast to coast every year coming from the government as a direct payment. Whatever it takes, the NDP will say that.

In government, on the other hand, I will use the example the member just made reference to. In the legislation we talk about 10 paid sick days. In B.C., with an NDP premier, there are more workers and the province has passed five paid sick days. The NDP will praise the NDP government in B.C.

The member and the party have chosen not to support this legislation. This legislation is solid, good legislation for businesses and people. It would provide additional disposable income and support businesses.

How does the member justify explaining to his constituents that the NDP does not support Bill C-2?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, first of all, the member will know we have never had an NDP government here in Ottawa, and I look forward to the opportunity to prove him wrong.

Second, if having the member for Winnipeg North say something was enough to make it true, we would live in a world of contradiction.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on something the parliamentary secretary just said. He talked about this piece of legislation and its intent, in his words, to create “disposable income” for people. We have gone from providing supports to people to protect their lives and livelihoods to now providing them with disposable income.

I guess the new Liberal economic recovery plan is to use government money to pay people to go out and buy things instead of what this bill is intended for. I am just wondering this. Did the hon. member pick up on that, and does he have any comments on it?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I imagine my Conservative colleague will take some solace in the fact that what the member for Winnipeg North said was not true. In fact, the government

has taken the advice of the Conservatives and cancelled the Canada recovery benefit program. It has created a Canada worker lockdown benefit that so far has not applied anywhere in the country. Despite the program being retroactive, nobody will be able to qualify for it retroactively. I regret to say it may apply in some cases going forward because of omicron.

I was at a press conference earlier. My colleague for Winnipeg Centre has done some excellent work on the idea of a guaranteed livable basic income and has brought a bill forward to the House that I look forward to debating and passing. When we give people who are already living below the poverty line enough income to live with dignity, we are not giving them disposable income. We are giving them enough for rent and groceries.

There are a lot of people who could use more financial support who are not going to get disposable income out of it. What they are going to get is a bit of dignity and the ability to have a home, to depend on that home in the future and to not pay rent at the expense of knowing where they are going to get money for medication and groceries.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the incredible work he does to protect people living with disabilities, students and workers. The question I have for him today has to do with seniors in particular and the unbelievably disappointing GIS clawback we have seen.

I know the member wrote to the government almost five months ago, on August 3, asking it to fix this program and it did not. We have heard from the Deputy Prime Minister that there will be a fix coming and that it may come as late as May, which we all know is far too late for seniors who live in their cars, who cannot afford their groceries or who cannot afford their cancer treatments.

Could the member perhaps provide some feedback to the government on how we could fix the GIS clawback today and right now?

• (1240)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the emphasis on the seniors who have been in distress because of the clawback of the benefit.

I am shocked, really. We raised this in the summer when it was just becoming apparent that seniors were being affected. We have since learned in media reports that the government knew about the problem last May. Maybe the government thinks it makes sense to celebrate, on the one-year anniversary of finding out about the problem, by trying to fix it, but that is no celebration for seniors who have been living it.

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There are a lot of outstanding questions about whether this fix is going to work. I am glad to see the government bowing to public pressure and trying to find a solution, but it needs to do better. What we were asking for is that they simply eliminate pandemic benefits from the eligibility calculation for income-tested benefits. That is a big word salad. It just means the exceptional benefits paid in the pandemic would not count against their normal income under the statutory programs that people rely on.

Had the government warned people that they were going to take it back from them a year later and that they should put some aside for that, it would be one thing; however, expecting seniors who are already living in poverty to navigate all the details of government departments that members in this place often have a hard time figuring out, and expecting them to ask members of the government directly about things and get straight answers when we cannot, is wrong.

Expecting seniors in financial distress to figure it all out for themselves was wrong, punishing them for it was wrong, and delaying the solution for up to a year from when they knew about the problem is equally wrong.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member's contributions to the debate today.

In June of last year, when it came to Bill C-208, a bill that would allow someone to sell their family farm or fishing enterprise to their children and be treated the same as if selling to someone at arm's length, the government and the minister said that the coming into force date was not specified in that piece of legislation and therefore they would reinterpret it as coming into force this year.

In this bill, at least Finance Canada seems to have learned its lesson, and there is no coming into force date for the amendments here. Would the member agree that it is important for the government, and in this case particularly Finance Canada, to honour the will of Parliament and if a piece of legislation has no coming into force date when the government amends a current act, that act be deemed, once it has gone through both Houses and received royal assent, the law of the land?

Does the member believe that Finance Canada and the government have learned their lesson, and are doing that in Bill C-2?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member raising that bill. He would probably know that former NDP finance critic Guy Caron was the original drafter and champion of that bill. It was a bill I was very happy to support in the last Parliament.

It is generally understood, when legislators here make amendments to legislation or when we present a bill and the bill passes, that we expect it to come into force. It is not up to the government to decide willy-nilly when certain things are going to come into effect. There is a great amendment in this bill. It is not retroactive, in the way that it was okay for the government to have a retroactive claw-back of seniors' benefits, which is too bad. When it came to clawing back dividend payments from companies that did not need them, members should have heard the people at the finance committee: It was a big to-do about how terrible it would be to have

retroactive clawbacks. I thought that was funny. Maybe if seniors could call their wealth dividends, the government would care.

I did suggest that the finance committee have a look at how we label seniors' wealth dividends, so they could get more champions around the committee table. I hope we will do that. I certainly hope the amendments that have been made to this legislation will be considered in effect, along with the rest of the bill, once it passes.

• (1245)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member did not specifically answer the question of why the NDP would not support Bill C-2.

Bill C-2 would provide ongoing support to businesses and people in a very real and tangible way. I understand that it does not cover everything that the NDP would like it to cover, but it would support Canadians.

Could the member explain to the people who might be following the debate, or his constituents, specifically why the New Democrats would be voting against legislation that supports people going through the ongoing pandemic?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, we are debating a time allocation motion and tomorrow we are debating the bill. I will have more time tomorrow to put those thoughts on the record. The member is also welcome to look at the other speeches I have given on this bill, which detail in full why the NDP is not supporting this bill.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, what a moment. What an experience to stand in the House of Commons. I thank my constituents of Peterborough—Kawartha. I am here because of their support. I am here because they believed in me. I promise to do my best and do what I learned growing up in Douro, Ontario: work hard. Just like the Journey song says, I am just a small-town girl, and I truly believe in the lessons a small town teaches: help others with genuine service.

I want to take everyone back to June 2021. I received a call from a very distraught mom named Kim, whose daughter Cassy was missing. Cassy suffered from schizophrenia, and Kim felt the media was not giving her disappearance the attention it deserved, because she was a person who lived on the street. Kim did an interview with me on my social media, pleading with people to get Cassy home. Within 72 hours, Cassy was located in the sex trade in Toronto and brought home to Peterborough—Kawartha, thanks to the people on social media who shared that.

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I never met Cassy. I just chatted with her mom, but I want to fast-forward to August 2021, during the campaign. Just outside of my campaign office was a very distraught and distressed woman. I approached her and asked how I could help. She looked into my eyes and told me she was scared. She told me she had nowhere to live and the people on the street were hurting her. I noticed a wings tattoo on her chest, the same tattoo her mom Kim had described to me when we put out a call to find her. I wondered if this could be her, so I asked if her name was Cassy. She said yes.

Cassy was like many people who are forced to live on the street and struggling with mental illness and addiction. She had a mom and a family who loved her, but that is not always enough. Trauma and circumstance landed Cassy here. She did not choose this life.

I want to point out that I am splitting my time with the member for Miramichi—Grand Lake.

Cassy did not choose this life. I did not see Cassy every day, but when I did, she was distraught, exhausted, hungry and afraid. She did not have a home, and she did not have the intervention to help get her the treatment she needed. On September 20, 2021, yes, the day of the election, while I was running around with my team, I received a text that cut me to the core. The text was from Cassy's mom, and it read, "Cassy is dead. She was the body behind the music store. Family still to be notified so I don't think they have released her name to the media." I was absolutely shattered. I was gutted emotionally and heartbroken. I felt I had personally failed Cassy.

How did the system fail Cassy? How many more people like Cassy will be failed? In that moment, I questioned why I was running in politics and why it mattered. My partner Ryan was with me and, like a great partner does, he recalibrated me and picked me up. He took my hand and said that by taking this job as a member of Parliament, I could be part of the change that was needed for all people like Cassy.

I applied for this job because I know we can do better. We need to change how we talk about mental health; we need to better understand the complexities of addiction, and we need to change policy that intervenes when people like Cassy do not have the capacity to take care of themselves. We need the infrastructure and resources dedicated to building forward-thinking mental health treatment facilities. Mental health impacts every single one of us.

We have heard about so many programs and so much money being dumped into mental health, but the reality is that things are not getting better. They feel worse. Money does not solve everything. If we are not spending money in the right places or we do not have a reasonable timeline to allocate funds, vision or an innovative plan to partner with money, we cannot expect change. We need to change how we think and talk about mental health. This is what will help us change how we treat it. Humans have an incredible track record of not understanding something until we experience it.

• (1250)

Fortunately, and unfortunately, most of us have experienced how devastating mental illness is. Most of us know that our mental health contributes to our happiness, our creativity and our productivity, which are directly linked to our economy. Our economic cri-

sis is a mental health crisis. How can we expect people who cannot afford food or a home to get out of the poverty cycle? We have to get the cost of living down if we want to be serious about mental health. We have to create an environment that fosters independence and confidence.

I was appointed as shadow minister of tourism, and I know firsthand how much this industry is suffering. Many of those devastated by the pandemic do not want more loans; they want to work. One of my favourite economic solutions comes from the member for Carleton, who said that programs and subsidies need to be three things: timely, targeted and temporary.

Much like I said earlier, this economic crisis is a mental health crisis, and I will work diligently to help in the recovery of lost jobs. We need to be reunited with friends and family. We need each other more than ever. We need to acknowledge and respect public health guidelines, but we also need to be more prepared to deal with what is our new normal. We need to transition to learning to live with COVID.

This pandemic has magnified the opioid crisis. My riding of Peterborough—Kawartha has one of the highest rates of opioid deaths in the country. We have the second-highest overdose rate in the province of Ontario. We have people dying in the streets and in their homes. I myself have lost friends and family to overdoses and suicide.

As I stand here today, I want to leave this message for myself and for all of the people of my riding of Peterborough—Kawartha: We cannot give up; we cannot stop. We must work every day to learn what works, but more importantly, what does not work. I will work for Peterborough—Kawartha and for every Cassy who was failed by the system, because I believe that when we take care of our neighbours, we take care of our entire country. We cannot stop believing.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member on her first speech in the House of Commons. I can still reflect on and remember mine a few years back.

I want to pick up on the importance of the perceived and real fifth wave that is quickly approaching in terms of what the member would suggest to her constituents and colleagues in regard to the importance of the booster shot. We can appreciate that we want to be able to keep our families together and the economy open, but there are going to be some more difficult days ahead. Would she like to share her thoughts with her constituents and others with regard to the booster shot?

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Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments and the member's trip down memory lane in terms of his first speech.

This speech is about Cassy and mental health and people dying of opioids. That is what we need to be focusing on. Where is the treatment? Where is the money going to mental health facilities? That is what I would ask.

Of course everybody needs their vaccination, and of course we need to follow public health guidelines, but right now we have 75 people who died from an opioid overdose in Peterborough since March 2020 and we have had 25 who died of COVID. The government should not ignore what the opioid crisis is; it should do its job.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on her speech. I know it was her first, and it is not easy to stand up in the House. I really liked her speech, and Cassy's story was very touching.

Mental health is obviously a huge issue. Mental health is health. However, according to its fiscal update, the government will not invest in health transfers until 2027, even though this is a serious problem. All of Canada's premiers are calling on Ottawa to increase health transfers from 22% to 35%. Does my colleague agree with that request?

[*English*]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, right now what we need to focus on is how we help get better treatment facilities. We have a lot of harm reduction. We are talking about a lot of these things, and we need to get the cost of living down as well.

When we look at this, a lot of opioid addiction starts out of hunger as well. We need to look at how we are helping people survive the cost of living. People who have jobs are using food banks. That is where we should be focusing our attention.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to add my congratulations to the hon. member on her first speech in Parliament. She quite rightly raised the other pandemic in this country, which is the opioid overdose crisis. She also talked very sensibly about abandoning what does not work. I postulate that the war on drugs has not worked. The attempt to criminalize those who use drugs clearly has not had any effect. We are seeing record deaths in this country.

Does the member agree with the NDP that it is time to address the root of the problem, which is a toxic street drug supply, and move to a regulated, low-barrier, safe supply of drugs, so that at least those in our communities who are suffering the scourge of addiction, buying drugs from organized crime on the street and dying in record numbers, can get access to drugs in known titrations?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, when we look at how we treat addiction and mental health, we have to change how we talk about it. We have to see it as the disease that it is. Consumption treatment sites absolutely are important when we look at harm reduction, but the bigger, long-term sustainable solution is treatment and intervention. We need to focus on that.

Right now we have a situation in our community of Peterborough—Kawartha where the criminals who are dealing these drugs that are killing people are being put back out on the streets. Things like Bill C-5 are not helping with that. We need legislation that actually deals with this issue, to make sure the people who are dealing these drugs are held accountable.

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure today to speak to Bill C-2. In the last couple of weeks as a member of the finance committee and of the House of Commons, I learned something really interesting. One of the first questions that was asked in committee was, “Where is the money coming from?”

The Liberal government is going to spend \$7.4 billion on programs similar to CERB and the other programs in the original suite of benefits it put out during the pandemic. However, we have since learned that some of that money actually bled into criminal organizations. People were able to scam the public's money for criminal intent, and the Liberals are okay with that because just recently they lessened offences for using firearms and other violations.

We know that the Liberal government is weak on crime and soft on criminals. Canadians know this. However, if we look at what the Liberals are doing right now, they are going to take \$7.4 billion and dole it out, but they have no oversight of that. The Canada Revenue Agency has no oversight of it. The FINTRAC report showed us that millions and millions of hard-earned taxpayer dollars were scammed by criminals. Other monies went to prisoners. If there were even the potential that those hard-earned Canadian tax dollars bled into terrorist organizations, could members believe the Government of Canada would allow this to happen, but more so, could they believe it would do nothing about it?

The people of Miramichi—Grand Lake do not want to fund terrorist organizations. They do not want to fund prisoners. They do not want to fund organized crime. They do not want to fund criminals in whatever behaviours they are up to, and they certainly do not want to see firearms charges lessened.

The Liberal government right now is sending Canada backward in so many avenues. Let us talk about this first question, which my colleague from Carleton asked at committee: “Where is the money coming from?” The Government of Canada has no concept of where that \$7.4 billion is coming from. Eventually it said it is coming from the contingency fund. That is nice, but where did that money come from?

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I would like to focus on how that money would be coming from energy revenues. This country is a leader in the energy sector. Whether it is oil and gas, minerals or mining, we are actually a world leader in the development of those industries, and that is where a serious bulk of revenue flows in for our country and its taxpayers. The Liberals are actually funding the CERB and other programs with no oversight using the very tax dollars from the very industries they are trying to kill in front of the rest of the world.

Right now, they cannot solve the softwood timber tariffs. Because the United States needs more oil, they have to go to OPEC and other countries to get help with oil and pipelines. We have to wonder if the Canadian government could say, “We will help you with some oil. Let us build a pipeline together, and by the way, can you take that tariff off our softwood?”

It seems like a general argument. It seems very basic, but I bet the Liberals have not even tried it. They have not tried it because they have no plan for our country. They have no plan for Miramichi—Grand Lake. The only thing they want to do is talk about the climate crisis and having everyone's back. They had the back of the first nations in this country so vastly that they did not even attend the first Truth and Reconciliation Day. They held the flag at half-mast for six months of the year.

We are talking about a government that has no regard for the Canadian public, no regard for the hard-earned taxpayer dollars that are coming from Miramichi—Grand Lake and New Brunswick and the rest of the provinces and territories. We are talking about a government of this country, where the rise in inflation is second in the world.

• (1300)

I am 43 years old. I was fortunate to buy a house built in 1919. I got it in rural New Brunswick. It was very cheap, and I have done a lot of work to it over the years. There are people my age and a little younger than me who are never going to own a house in this country.

I bought a house for \$40,000 back in 2006. I could sell that house today for \$160,000 or \$170,000. I live in a very small town in the middle of rural New Brunswick, where the Internet is terrible and the only industry we ever had was forestry, and I have watched the demise of that over the course of time. If my house went up that much, imagine what a \$300,000 house bought in 2005 is worth today. It is probably worth millions of dollars.

People are not going to be able to afford a house in this country. They are not going to have kids. We need to grow our population. I have four children. I can say that having four children in today's Canada is a very expensive endeavour. I would do it all again. I love the fact that I have four children.

However, imagine being 28 or 29 years old today. That person wants to own a home, which should be worth \$250,000, but now costs \$800,000. They have a partner who wants to have children, and they cannot even afford to have one of them. This is the country that the government is leaving to our children and to the grandchildren we have not met yet. That is wrong.

As a member of the Conservative team, we have to go to committee to make sure that the Canada Revenue Agency is brought in to have oversight of those hard-earned Canadian tax dollars, and to make sure that the Auditor General is coming in to ask those serious questions. It is also so we can ask why they are choosing not to audit the people who scammed Canadians' hard-earned tax dollars.

Why is it happening? How could the Prime Minister of Canada support this endeavour? How could he continue to talk about having the backs of Canadians, when people in their 20s and 30s are never going to be able to own a house in this country? How can he say he has their backs? He is causing this inflation on the cost of housing. The cost of bacon has gone up 30% to 35% just in the past year or two. People cannot even afford bacon anymore.

I think what we have is an abuse of power. We have a Prime Minister, who is out of touch with all Canadians. He is certainly out of touch with rural Canada. He is out of touch with people in Miramichi—Grand Lake.

I have the FINTRAC report right here. I could not believe that it says CEBA-related fraud was carried out in a similar fashion with the loan being transferred from the applicant's business account to their personal account, then withdrawn for cash. We have people in this country who are taking tax dollars for their own benefit. We had a million jobs unfilled, houses that nobody can pay for and food that nobody can pay for.

That is the beauty of being in the House today. I have a good friend here beside me from Nova Scotia. My dad is from Nova Scotia. I have another buddy over here from Newfoundland, and they are here working for the Canadian people who put them here. They are in this House, and they are working for the hard-earned taxpayer dollars to make sure that there is oversight on that money.

The Conservative Party of Canada is the only party that ever had oversight of hard-earned Canadian tax dollars. We have to hold the government accountable because the Prime Minister is out of touch, not just with rural Canada, not just with Miramichi—Grand Lake, but with all Canadians.

We have to ensure that Canadian taxpayer dollars are not funding terrorist organizations, criminal organizations, scam artists and petty criminals. We cannot afford to have the hard-earned dollars of Canadians bleeding into those organizations.

We put forth a motion at committee. The Conservative Party, members of that committee and all members on this side of the House want oversight of the Prime Minister because Canadians are worth it, their tax dollars are worth it, and we have to make sure that we put the Canadian people first.

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• (1305)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member had some interesting comments. I do not necessarily agree with a lot of them. If I were to agree with them, it would likely imply that we would not have had programs such as CERB, the wage subsidy program and so forth because of fear or delay. What this is all about is Bill C-2, and Bill C-2 is all about supporting small businesses and supporting Canadians in real, tangible ways.

Why would the member not recognize that Canadians have an expectation of the government to be there during difficult times, i.e., the pandemic, to provide the necessary supports? That is where the money is going, to support real people and real businesses. Why not support that?

Mr. Jake Stewart: Madam Speaker, supporting businesses and supporting people in need are principles of the Conservative Party of Canada. The issue here is that the Liberals could not tell us where the money was coming from, and they could not tell us how much it would cost to administer. Eventually we got a number close to \$200 million, and the Liberals could not tell us if that was within the \$7.4 billion, or over and above it.

The Liberal Government of Canada has no concept of what it is doing to the Canadian taxpayers. Do we support businesses? We absolutely do. Do we support people in need? We absolutely do, but we will have oversight over Liberal money.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to say that my riding is the most beautiful in the world; it is paradise.

My colleague's speech was very interesting. As usual, the Conservatives talk a lot about the economic aspect.

We in the Bloc Québécois believe that seniors aged 65 and over are in a precarious economic situation at the moment. We have outlined the different variables in recent days and months. For several years now, the Bloc Québécois has been advocating for a better quality of life for seniors, particularly with regard to their purchasing power.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the idea that keeping seniors in poverty does not benefit anyone economically. It results in more health care costs, and the loss of seniors' purchasing power means fewer economic spinoffs.

What does he think of our request to increase seniors' purchasing power by giving them \$110—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. I must give the hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake a chance to respond.

The hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake.

[*English*]

Mr. Jake Stewart: Madam Speaker, obviously, the Conservative Party of Canada will always put seniors first. We know that the Liberal Government of Canada puts nobody first but its friends, with examples such as the WE scandal, the procurement scandals and SNC-Lavalin. There is not enough time. Members can look at what the Liberals have done to seniors. Do I agree with the member? In principle I do.

My colleague opposite and I have in common that we will put seniors first, and we know the Liberal government will put its friends first, along with criminals, prisoners and terrorists.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am not sure that the Harper Conservatives were putting seniors first when they were trying to raise the retirement age in this country from 65 to 67. All those 65- and 66-year-olds who would have been deprived of benefits were not very happy.

This bill would essentially end what we would call CERB benefits by putting in a condition that there has to be a complete lockdown in a province before workers would qualify for benefits. With omicron here, the NDP continues to maintain, as we have been suggesting for a while, that workers should get support until the COVID pandemic is over.

Does my hon. colleague agree with the NDP that the condition of requiring a complete lockdown is too onerous? If so, what would he suggest as being an appropriate condition for workers affected by the pandemic to receive benefits?

Mr. Jake Stewart: Madam Speaker, first and foremost, my colleague is misinformed. Second, the one thing we can get from the NDP in the House is that, when push comes to shove, they will vote for the Canadian government and the Prime Minister every single time. They are the reason the Liberals continue to have a minority government.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

The ask in Bill C-2 is \$7.4 billion, and the bill is being rushed through the House, with little time at committee to deal with another \$7.4 billion expenditure. A lot of these types of situations have happened over the last couple of years, since the pandemic started. I recall that back in early 2021, there was a \$52-billion spending bill, and the government wanted Parliament's approval in literally four hours, with little opportunity for oversight and little opportunity to provide any sort of transparency or accountability on that spending. Now, here with Bill C-2, we are being asked to approve \$7.4 billion.

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I want to focus on a couple of points today. Number one is who is left out in Bill C-2. I think it is very important that we recognize who is being left out in the bill. Second, I want to focus on the issue of accountability, transparency and oversight, which are severely lacking in the bill. The member for Carleton asked finance department officials where this money was coming from, and all we heard were crickets. He suggested that maybe there is a money tree in this country that the government is picking money from, but there was no answer. These are the types of questions we could deal with if we had more time.

I am really fortunate to come from the riding of Barrie—Innisfil, which is also known as “Terminal 4”. There are a lot of Pearson airport employees and airline, travel and tourism employees who live in my riding. Many of them have felt anxiety not just over the past 18 months in trying to pick up the pieces of their lives as the travel and tourism industry has been decimated, but also over the fact that in the last couple of days, we have seen advisories from the Government of Canada on travel. They are really curbing back some of the decisions that Canadians have made to travel over the holidays, to travel internationally to warm destinations, which typically Canadians do, or to travel to simply visit family in the United States. A lot of that is not happening, and it is having a serious impact on our travel and tourism industry, particularly the airline sector, which we know has been hard hit over the course of the last 21 months, and those in the travel adviser business, such as travel agents, many of whom have been left out over the course of the last 21 months from many of the benefits the government has provided for relief. Now they are being left behind again.

I heard the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism say that they will have to apply just like everybody else, but from the discussions I have had with the Association of Canadian Independent Travel Advisors, applying simply does not work. These people did not qualify because many of them are independent travel advisers. They do not have brick-and-mortar properties and do not have storefronts. They work out of their homes. However, they provide \$2.4 billion in revenue, at least they did in 2019 before the pandemic hit.

Many of the 12,000 independent travel advisers in this country, like Heather Kearns and Charlene Caldwell from my riding, did not qualify for any of the pandemic benefits. As a result, they have seen a drop, like a drop off a cliff, in their businesses. Oftentimes, they are paid for bookings when those trips happen, so members can imagine what it would be like if we booked travel and that travel got cancelled and clawed back, or if we did not get paid for anything we thought we would be booking.

It has been an awfully difficult 20 months for travel advisers, and it is going to continue that way. What Bill C-2 does not address directly is the demand from the Association of Canadian Independent Travel Advisors, which is for some sort of bridge financing to make it much easier for them to access government programs. I think that is a failure of Bill C-2.

The other thing, which we have heard about from seniors, is the GIS clawback. Many seniors are suffering right now. There is an affordability crisis going on in this country, and the cost of home heating, gas, groceries and hydro is disproportionately affecting seniors not just in my riding but right across this country. Many seniors

thought to apply for the CERB, and as a result of receiving it, they are now finding out there are GIS clawbacks. The government does address this, but not until May 2022, so many of those seniors will continue to suffer as a result of the affordability and “just inflation” crisis that is going on right now.

• (1315)

Those are a couple of what I think are serious faults in this piece of legislation.

Over the last couple of days, I have heard, as I expect many colleagues in the House have, from travel advisers and other people in the travel and tourism industry about how worried they are over the latest travel advisories, particularly at a time when Canada will be seeing its busiest period of travel. Many of those travel advisers will simply lose more income, so we should have broader supports available in Bill C-2 for the travel and tourism industry. They are not addressed in this piece of legislation, and those independent travel advisers will be severely impacted by this.

The other thing we want to see in Bill C-2, and this to me is extremely troubling, is the level of accountability and transparency that was requested by members of the Conservative Party at the finance committee, in particular for oversight. A FINTRAC report was done, and I will remind Canadians that FINTRAC stands for the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada. Its job is to monitor literally every financial transaction that happens in this country. It issued a report, and it was not until an ATIP request made by Mr. Ken Rubin, who is an Ottawa researcher, was received that the extent, scope and scale of the CERB fraud occurring in this country was known. What the Conservatives were looking for, as part of the amendments to Bill C-2 that were not included in the latest iteration of the bill, was an audit, based on the FINTRAC report, by the Auditor General, a review of some of the CRA actions that have gone on to investigate this simply to pursue the fraudsters.

I will provide some examples of what was in the FINTRAC report, and why this is so disturbing and should be disturbing to Canadians, given the scale, scope and amount of fraud. Who was involved in the fraud is also important.

This report was first published in 2020 by FINTRAC. Do members know how many investigations have been done by the Canada Revenue Agency since? It is zero in 21 months. That in and of itself is disturbing. What the Conservatives were trying to do was bring amendments to the bill so we could investigate that on behalf of Canadians, or at least allow the agencies responsible for investigations to look into the issue of fraud.

The FINTRAC report is an interesting read, and I encourage everybody to read it. I will certainly post it on some of my social media sites. There is a great summary in it, but a lot of the information is redacted. I know my time is short, so I will quickly summarize some of the challenges that went on with FINTRAC and why it was important that they be investigated. It states:

Reporting Entities indicated that criminal organizations, using stolen IDs and individuals recruited via social media, are operating "CERB scams" in certain cities....

This was in 2020, so it is in the present tense. It continues:

...prepaid cards are loaded with CERB benefits and other laundered funds.

Reporting Entities indicated that clients who do not meet the CERB eligibility requirements, or who are fully employed, still apply for, and receive CERB benefits....

A Reporting Entity noted that scammers are using stolen personal identifying information to apply online for CERB/GST refunds and arranging for funds to be deposited onto prepaid/reloadable cards.

We also heard about the gangs and criminal organizations that were using the CERB to fund the purchase of guns.

This is critically important to Canadians. The government shovelled billions of dollars out the door with no oversight, accountability or transparency. We as Conservatives think it is important to investigate this.

There is one other thing I will say. The other day at the ethics committee I asked for members to consider a motion to look into the over \$600 billion in pandemic spending that has not been accounted for by the government. That motion was rejected at committee by the Liberal members.

We need to get to the bottom of this so that Canadians have confidence and trust in the government and to make sure we understand where the money is going. It is disappointing to see that amendments on accountability and transparency were not part of the amendments accepted for Bill C-2, and it is difficult to understand why.

• (1320)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member talked a bit about accountability and transparency, and I want to tell him about a business in my riding that accessed the wage subsidy to lock out its boilermaker workers. It is Cessco steel. It locked out its workers, received the wage subsidy and used the wage subsidy to pay for scab labour.

We have asked the government to fix this loophole in the program time and time again. We have asked the government to review the process so this cannot happen again. However, to date, the government has ignored us.

I am wondering whether the member thinks we could have done so much better in implementing these programs. If the government had listened to the opposition when we told it about holes in some of the programs, Canadians would have been kept safer and we would have had a much better program rollout.

• (1325)

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, that is an interesting point, although I am not fully aware of the details of that particular case. More broadly, the government, in its haste to get this money out the door, should have been considering oversight. It should

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have been considering accountability and transparency as well. It should have been putting in place measures allowing investigative bodies and jurisdictions that have authority, such as the CRA and others, to investigate more quickly where this money had gone.

As I said in my speech, the CRA has not yet investigated this, despite the fact that FINTRAC has identified thousands of cases of fraud with the CERB. No charges have been laid at this point. This speaks to the will of the government to really investigate this. Is it just going to turn a blind eye to it?

We need to get to the bottom of this, and the amendments we proposed for Bill C-2 would have certainly helped in that regard.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have heard the Conservatives talk a lot about affordability and making sure that Canadians can continue to afford the goods and services they require these days. However, yesterday a concurrence motion was brought before the House to start the debate and discussion on Canada's first national tax on non-resident foreign owners of vacant land or underused housing.

Why would the Conservative Party have voted against that when it is clear that a measure like this is going to help improve the affordability situation?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, certainly affordability is a critical issue, and nowhere more than in my riding of Barrie—Innisfil, where young people and seniors are being priced out of the housing market. There is definitely a need to look into this. In fact, several of our proposals in the latest election campaign addressed the issue of affordability so we could look at foreign ownership and make sure we are doing all we can to make housing affordable in this country.

We will continue to push on affordability. The number one issue I hear about is housing attainability and affordability, and it is coupled with the fact that now we are seeing inflation at 18- or 19-year highs. Things are becoming increasingly unaffordable for Canadians, and a lot of that has to do with the policies of the government.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to my friend very closely as he spoke today about a particular section of our economy: the independent travel advisers. I know that a number of people on this side of the House, and I expect on the other side, have heard from those people. Primarily it is women who work from home. They have been lost in government assistance. These people do not get paid until a trip is taken, which might be months down the road, but there is nothing in Bill C-2 to help them. From listening to them, I know they feel they were almost deliberately cut out of it. I wonder if my friend has any comments about that.

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Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I spent a lot of my time talking about independent travel advisers and there is a reason for that. I spent a tremendous amount of time dealing with the national organization and local travel advisers. They do feel left out and they have been left out. Many of them have not been able to access some of the benefits. This is a \$2.4-billion industry and 12,000 people are independent travel advisers. We cannot just cast them aside. We have to make sure they are supported. They have not been supported, and we will continue to be a voice, not just in this place but anywhere we go, to support them across this country.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be following the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil, who spoke so eloquently about the struggles that independent travel advisers are having. I have met with many of them as well. Absolutely, they do feel left out of what the government is doing.

The government is essentially proposing in Bill C-2 that we give it all the money it needs right now and it will worry about accountability and transparency later on. I think the member went through some of the FINTRAC issues that were reported and the fraud issues that have been mounting. I will return to FINTRAC in a moment to read off some of its other concerns.

We, on this side of the House, supported Canadians who were banned from returning to work because of various health restrictions. We opposed the Liberals giving COVID cheques to prisoners, organized criminals, suspected fraudsters, and corporations paying out bonuses and dividends to executives. We did not support paying people not to work while the economy was open and there were a half-million vacant jobs. I remember my province of Alberta did re-open briefly.

I was just speaking with a hotelier who said that they can only reopen their kitchen three days a week because they cannot find staff. They are cleaning rooms all day long and until all hours because they just cannot find enough people to work during those key morning hours when they are trying to turn over a room for their next guest. Having a major hotel kitchen being open three days a week is not a way to run a business. It is going to lose business. People simply will not travel. The hotels are also losing out on the income needed to keep paying people for their work. It is a struggle on both sides, for employees and employers but we, on the Conservative side, are there for them.

I think the principle we should remind ourselves of is that, if a provincial government or a federal government takes away someone's ability to earn a living, it owes them compensation. I would call that a regulatory taking. It took something away from a person through no fault of their own so it should compensate that person, but that compensation should not extend to periods where the person chose not to work; made a choice. As well, if a person is engaging in criminal activity, of course that person should not be getting government benefits to facilitate their criminal enterprise.

We want help for tourism and hospitality companies hit by travel restrictions, but we oppose legislation like this that opens the floodgates to do whatever the government thinks necessary. This is \$7.4 billion of new spending on top of all the other spending it has been doing.

The House has already heard from two of my colleagues already who said that they tried to fix this at committee. We offered ideas to improve things. We set out four conditions that we thought would drastically improve this bill.

I was here during the last Parliament and we saw the government go out of its way to rush bills through the House and only come back later on to fix the errors that were made. Typically, those errors resulted in billions of dollars of taxpayers' money either being spent unwisely or being impossible to spend because the program just did not work for the people for whom it was designed. All of those things typically get fixed at a House committee. That is where witnesses testify whether the programs will work the way they are identified and where federal officials come to actually explain the programs.

We saw at the Standing Committee on Finance that there was a complete inability of officials to explain where the money was going to come from. I thought it was a very simple question, needing only a referral to the estimates. I have a Yiddish proverb, which I know many members expect. It is, "Sins hide not in your sleep but in your dreams." I remember the debate on a different bill in this House just a few days ago. I mentioned that usually with government legislation there is a difference between what the bill says and the intentions that the government has behind the bill. The two are usually completely separated from each other. The sins in this bill are that there is not enough accountability and transparency for the taxpayers who are being asked to shoulder a huge bill to get our country back on track.

The member who spoke previously talked about FINTRAC, so let me just continue reading off some of its summary concerns. "Reporting entities indicated that clients have applied for and received CERB despite not living in Canada and they appear to be residing in a 'jurisdiction of concern.'" We are paying for people outside Canada to get taxpayers' money that we really have no way of verifying whether they should be getting any of these funds and they are outside Canada. It is difficult for me to explain at the doors, through emails and on phone calls to taxpayers as to why they are subsidizing people outside of the country. "Reporting Entities noted that clients received multiple CERB deposits over a one-week period/made multiple applications for CERB benefits using one or multiple identities/conducted transactions to cash CERB cheques at multiple locations."

● (1330)

In any normal situation, this would be considered fraud. It would be something that we would be very concerned about and we would be looking for opportunities to restrain, constrain and stop it at the earliest of opportunities.

“Reporting Entities indicated that clients who appeared to be engaged in illegal or suspicious financial activity are also in receipt of CERB payments and employment income.” Last, “Reporting Entities indicated that clients appeared to receive CERB payments while also receiving income from their business and/or are receiving CEBA while also engaged in suspicious or fraudulent activity.” This is an indictment. The member who spoke previous to me started down this path. We rely on FINTRAC. I used to be a member of the Standing Committee on Finance, and I have had in-camera briefings where FINTRAC explains this. It is an amazing service that it provides to the Government of Canada to ensure that we do due diligence when we hand out benefits. Benefits must go to the people who are most in need of them, and it saps trust in government when it simply says it is going to open the floodgates and everyone will figure it out after the fact.

There is an Auditor General's report that has come out regarding border controls with the testing of individuals at the border and then following up with them as to whether they have actually quarantined. It is a damning report. I know you, Madam Speaker, have served on that committee before and you enjoy Auditor General reports, likely as much as I do. It is a damning report that in a situation where the government set up a program such as for cash payments that go out to people who need them, there is always a small group of people who will engage in fraud. The system should be designed to ensure that does not happen, so that taxpayers and citizens trust the system and trust that the government has a handle on this situation and that it will pursue those who abuse the system. It is reasonable for taxpayers and citizens to expect that we do this.

We have spent a prodigious amount of money and we are being asked to approve even more spending in this bill. We have proposed amendments that would drastically improve this bill to ensure we have that accountability and transparency mechanism. We just saw a fall economic statement that called for even more spending. There is more revenue and more spending going down, and in my riding residents are asking who is going to pay for all of these bills.

At the end of the day, this pandemic will end. I always tell people that this will end. I do not know when; I am not a doctor or a scientist. It will end and, at some point, these bills will come due. We are going to have to be rolling over some of this debt. Who is going to pay for all of this spending? We are well over a trillion dollars in debt.

I am reminded of John Diefenbaker. I was talking to my caucus and it reminded me of a quote from the 1960s when the great Diefenbaker was in this House debating with a Liberal, Pickersgill, on the other side and describing at the time some of their financial measures. The fall economic statement reminds me of this. He said that it is like homeopathic soup made from the shadow of a pigeon that died of starvation. I cannot imagine a better description of what I see there. Diefenbaker said it 50 or 60 years ago and nothing has really changed with the Liberal government. It is the same thing all over again. There are vast amounts of spending and very little in constraints and controls.

I can bring up another example. A PBO report came out just today on the icebreaker program. Two icebreakers were supposed to cost \$1.3 billion back in 2013. That cost now has ballooned

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to \$7.25 billion. They are not getting more icebreakers; they are just getting the two. It is cost controls and project management. The current government has been in power for six years, and this is entirely on it. The Liberals cannot blame anybody else.

In 2015, they were handed excellent books with balanced budgets. We repeatedly told the Liberals to get ready for a disastrous situation or a downturn. We could never have predicted that there would be a pandemic like this, that would be a drastic downturn in the nation's finances, where people would be told to stay at home. They would be prohibited from working so they would lose their livelihoods. In that situation it is absolutely legitimate for the government to step in and support people. Some would take advantage of it unfairly and we would have to follow up and make sure that fraudulent benefits were repaid to the taxpayer. In situations like that, I understand that we should support people.

However, taxpayers are asking themselves, “When is it enough?” They are asking when government will actually provide the transparency and the accountability that is expected when it borrows on the nation's credit card that all taxpayers are responsible for.

Like I said in my proverb, “Sins hide not in your sleep but in your dreams.” The government is dreaming that either the fall economic statement or a bill like this will restore trust in government.

• (1335)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always get a kick out of it when Conservatives say that they handed over the books with a balanced budget. Yes, if we did not mind the slashing of services to veterans, and the selling off of shares of GM at bargain prices, all just so that they could supposedly have a balanced budget going into an election.

Nonetheless, what surprises me even more is how short term the memory appears to be with this member. He is not new here, he was here in the previous Parliament. The member is fully aware that he and all Conservative members voted for all of that spending through unanimous consent motions. He could have stood up or shouted from his seated position. All it would have taken was a simple “No.” Then the money would not have been spent. He had the power to do that. Why did he not do it?

• (1340)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, at the time the government said it was an emergency, and we on this side of the House agreed it was an emergency. It was a worldwide pandemic.

Government Orders

Three days before the WHO announced that it was a worldwide emergency pandemic, the minister of health at the time said it was low risk, there was nothing going on and we should not worry about it.

I remember, it was Easter weekend, and we were all asked to vote on the spending. We said yes, it was an emergency. I even said it in my speech, that when the government takes from Canadians the ability to earn a living, a regulatory taking, it should then step in and compensate them for it. However, at a certain point, the emergency has to end. The understanding was always that the government would follow up with transparency and accountability, account for the money, hold people accountable and stop giving it to criminal organizations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague made much of the need to stop spending. Obviously, Parliament does not print money. However, in Quebec and in Canada, we are currently going through a major crisis, a housing crisis. We talked about it for a whole day last week in response to a motion moved by the Conservatives.

In Quebec, 450,000 households spend more than 30% of their income on housing. What we are currently seeing is that the market is not doing its job. It is not managing to control the price of houses or rents to give the most vulnerable people in Canada a place to live.

Every housing organization in Quebec, including FRAPU, the Réseau québécois des OSBL, and tenants' associations, unanimously agrees that the government needs to invest heavily to put an end to the housing crisis for once and for all. Does my colleague agree?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I urge members to be mindful of the volume of their voice for the sake of the interpreters.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and the energy with which he asked it.

I agree that there is a housing crisis in our country. The average price of a home in Canada has now increased to \$720,850. Even in my region, in Calgary, prices no longer have any connection to the salaries people can earn in the communities that I represent.

From November 2021 to now, the increase was 19.6%. I think that the problem is that government spending is too high and it is not slowing down. The mortgage rate is less than 1% at some banks. It is too easy to get too much money, and that is causing home prices to increase in Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the Conservatives, and certainly the New Democrats, have talked a lot about travel agents and those who have been left behind by the government, abandoned when the government shut down the Canada emergency response benefit. There are many Canadians who have not been getting the support they need.

Could my colleague speak about what the Conservatives would offer for those travel agents and those who have not been getting support? Clearly they are getting nothing right now. It is disproportionately women who are travel agents, who are staying at home, and who are going to be greatly impacted by the failure of the Liberal government that has abandoned them.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. I have spoken to many travel agents in my riding, primarily women. Usually it is either their second job, or one of two part-time jobs. They are being excluded. The simplest solution is to make them eligible for the same government programs for which larger corporations are eligible.

• (1345)

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill and to go through our concerns about being asked to approve another \$7 billion-plus. I will be splitting my time with my friend, the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola. I appreciate his contributions and look forward to his speech.

We often hear the Liberals say that they have a plan for the economy, but I think we all know that means a bunch of politicians and bureaucrats sitting around a table and coming up with yet another government program on which they can spend money.

We are being asked to scrutinize legislation that asks for over \$7 billion in additional funding. We have said many times in this place that the printing of money, the \$400 billion, is causing massive inflation problems right across the country. It is causing the price of pretty much everything to go up, making things more expensive, such as everyday goods, hurting those who are living off their paycheques and struggling to get by every day.

As we all know, every time a new plan is constructed, it eventually fails. Then we have the government saying that something is going wrong and it needs to come up with another program to fix the program it just had. It is like going to the doctor for high blood pressure and the doctor prescribes a pill. Then it is dry mouth and the doctor prescribes another pill. After that, it is high blood pressure again and that is another pill. The list goes on. It is the exact same issue we are dealing with here.

In this case, the government is talking about a new day care program, a program that, on its merits, looks like it will be deficit financed well into the future. It is a program that is going to cause significant issues for parents trying to access already limited spaces. What the government does, as we all know when it comes into the marketplace, is it eviscerates competition. It creates an uneven playing field with other operators.

Government Orders

We are talking about people who operate day cares from their basements, which are regulated but are provided in that neighbourhood home. The government, by putting in dollars and distorting the price, causes those spaces that would otherwise be provided in the free market to go away, causing more problems and more wait-lists. If people think day care is expensive now, wait until the government gets its hands on it fully.

It seems the government has two speeds: big government and bigger government. The day care is one, but we are talking about the expansion of a number of these programs.

We have said all along, as my friends have already pointed out, that when the government was telling people to stay home and businesses to close because we were dealing with the pandemic, and no one really knew what was going on, they deserved to be compensated, and we supported those programs. There were some problems with those programs, such as the wage subsidy, the rent program and many others, that we in the opposition brought to the government's attention. In some cases, changes were made and in some cases they were not made. A number of businesses were not able to qualify for these programs despite attention being given to these programs.

We are now finding out that possibly CERB money was given to organized crime potentially contributing to the already growing crime problem in some of our major cities. That deserves a level of scrutiny. That deserves responsibility by parliamentarians to do our job to find out what is going on, what is working and what is not working with this program.

• (1350)

As we know, the government does not have divine resources. The only thing the government has is the taxes we pay and if the government borrows money, it puts us in debt. If it prints money, it is the back door to taxing people. It is taxing savings and making the savings of many in the working class worth less.

As was pointed out many times in the House, those who are sitting in big mansions or on massive assets have seen their wealth grow. However, there are those people who are struggling to get by, struggling to find a house, struggling to even get into the housing market, struggling to pay their bills or even just going to the grocery store and realizing their cart is not as full as it used to be but the price at the till is the same. That is because the government has thrown all this money up into atmosphere and refuses to change course.

During the height of the pandemic, the first thing the government did was to try to seize absolute power to tax and spend on whatever it wanted for two years into the future.

• (1355)

Mr. John Brassard: That was another Bill C-2.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: That was another Bill C-2. I thank my friend from Barrie—Innisfil for reminding me of that. It was an opportunity for the government to try to seize absolute power, to take the opposition right out of the equation and put all the power into the executive branch. Thankfully, opposition members stood up to that as did Canadians in general.

We saw a portion of the initial \$400 billion go to the CERB, the wage subsidy and other programs, actual supports. We saw some of it go into the housing market, but we also saw a pretty big chunk go into basically a slush fund of Liberal spending on things that had nothing to do with COVID, but were couched in that language of COVID, adding to the problem we are at now. The fact is that businesses, especially the small ones, are struggling at this exact moment. They are struggling to deal with rising prices and labour shortages. Unfortunately it is not going to get much better.

Reports have shown that Canadians are going to spend upward of \$1,000 or even more on groceries compared to last year as the spending continues. We are not even talking about how we are going to service the debt into the near future. We are not talking about the billions of dollars that could have been used for a number of programs, but instead they are being used to pay interest, to service the debt. While we are paying the interest, we are still adding on, so we are struggling to keep our heads above water.

We need to try to expand the economy and we do that by keeping taxes low and the rules, regulations and red tape at a reasonable level. We let the market take charge and allow businesses to do what they do best, which is create jobs, opportunity and wealth for our communities; create paycheques for those working in the businesses, which then create more businesses and expanding opportunities. If we want to help the disenfranchised, we do that by expanding the economy. When we impose rules, regulations and red tape, we contract the economy. Then we have more intervention by government, and around and around we go.

As we mentioned many times, we would like to see more fiscal responsibility by the government, yes, helping those sectors that are being told they are unable to operate, specifically the travel and tourism sector, but also looking at programs where we can expand the economy, where we can build things here in our country. In Ontario, it has been tough. We have some of the highest electricity rates in North America thanks to the Ontario Liberals. What did that do to the once manufacturing engine of Canada? It decimated the manufacturing industry.

Unfortunately, a lot of those people who left Queen's Park came to Ottawa and are on that same path. In some cases, we paid their moving expenses. We need to start doing the opposite. We need to start encouraging investment, encouraging the brain power to come and grow here, create jobs, opportunity and wealth. We need lower taxes, less government and more freedom.

Statements by Members

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I found that speech very fascinating. On the one hand, the member was completely able to understand and see how an economy could expand and contract. Toward the end of his speech, he specifically talked about that and how government could take certain measures to expand and contract the economy.

However, at the beginning of his speech, he spoke about child care and he made a point of only saying that it would be contributing to a deficit rather than assessing that perhaps by putting more people into the workforce, we could expand our economy in the exact same way by the definitions he used.

Why are the Conservatives able to talk about expanding and contracting an economy whenever it serves their purpose, but when it is about investing and infusing opportunity for people in our economy, they are completely unable to do that?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, clearly the member across the way did not listen to a word I said. As was pointed out, the only speed the government has is big government and bigger government.

The cost of the child care program, which the Liberal government is going across the country trying to get signed, is going to be deficit financed, putting the cost on the backs of the kids who are entering child care. Not only that, but we can look at other jurisdictions where this has been tried. Of course, the only solution is more government. If we talk about any other solution that does not involve more government, the Liberals close their ears. It is absolutely amazing.

If we look at other jurisdictions in the country and elsewhere where this has been tried, there are massive waiting lists when government takes over child care. We need to expand the opportunities for all, allow government to have its place, allow the private sector to have a place, not eviscerate the private sector and expect the government to figure it all out.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, as this may be the last time I rise before the holidays, I wish you and all my colleagues happy holidays.

One group that has been left out throughout the whole pandemic is start-ups. I think of Wildflower bakery in my riding of Port Alberni. It has had limited seating and has had the challenge of staying up with the times. This new variant now is going to impact that business. Its competitors have been able to access the emergency supports, but it has been absolutely denied. We brought good ideas, through savestartups.ca, to the government and the government has ignored them. There is nothing in the bill that would help start-ups.

Could my colleague speak about start-ups in his riding that have been left behind and perhaps some ideas from the Conservatives to give those start-ups the desperate support they need?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, I also wish my friend a merry Christmas, and a safe and happy new year.

Small businesses are definitely struggling. We talked about businesses being told to shut down and stop their operations in many

cases, especially small businesses. Government did have to step aside.

On the bigger picture that my friend from British Columbia is talking about, we do a pretty good job in the start up of small and medium to large-sized businesses, but it is tough to find access to either funding or services to take them from the small to medium-sized operation. That is a missed opportunity in our society as a whole. Sometimes those businesses sell out or they are just not able to get to the next step and achieve the kind of success we want to see in our country. In worse cases, they go to other jurisdictions. That is one area we can fix.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, originally when COVID-19 and the pandemic arose, the Conservatives said we would support a response from the government that was responsive to needs, temporary and would bridge back to a regular economy. Liberal arrogance, as has been said many times, is the greatest kryptonite. It seems the Liberals have not learned anything from their previous experience with the Canada emergency response benefit.

A FINTRAC intelligence brief says, “Reporting Entities indicated that clients who do not meet the CERB eligibility requirements, or who are fully employed, still apply for, and receive CERB benefits, often while also engaging in suspicious financial activity.” There are so many things in the FINTRAC report that raise the hair on the back of one’s neck.

Does the member view this as being a targeted benefit and has the government shown that it has learned from the experience of the CERB with Bill C-2, that it is targeted to the people who need it the most and that there are protections to ensure those who should not receive this benefit do not get it?

● (1400)

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Clearly, Mr. Speaker, more work needs to be done. It is a shame we did not hear the speech from my colleague from British Columbia who had a lot to say on this. Hopefully we will hear from him soon.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk today about Canada’s role as a leader for disability inclusion.

[*Translation*]

Since 2015, we have taken unprecedented steps to build an inclusive Canada for persons with disabilities.

[*English*]

In budget 2021, we put the “nothing without us” strategy into action by investing in accessible communities, training and job creation, students with disabilities, and inclusive child care. We made good progress, but we have a lot more work to do. Looking ahead, we will reintroduce the Canada disability benefit act to help low-income Canadians with disabilities and move forward with the disability inclusion action plan. Everyone should be able to participate equally in our society, because it strengthens our communities and our economy and, most importantly, it is the right thing to do.

I would like to give a special shout-out to my friends at The Special Friends Network, the Bob Rumball centre, Lunchbox Café, Community Living North Halton, and everyone living with disabilities or different abilities, those who support them, and especially their friends and caretakers.

Since this is the last time I will be speaking in the House this year, I would like to wish you, Mr. Speaker, and everyone in the House, as well as my friends and neighbours, happy holidays, Merry Christmas and happy new year.

* * *

VACCINE REQUIREMENTS FOR SERVICE WORKERS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cost of everyday essentials is rising, and, thanks to the Liberal government, we can expect it to get worse. The government has driven up demand by pumping extra money into the economy, and now it is preparing to slash supply by bringing in vaccine mandates for truckers.

There is already a shortage of truckers. The Canadian Trucking Alliance expects to be short 18,000 jobs by March, increasing to 55,000 by 2023, but the government has a plan only to reduce the workforce with a new federal vaccine mandate. This will kill jobs and drive up prices in all sectors, from agriculture to energy and everything in between, solely for the sake of being punitive to people we used to call heroes only a few months ago.

The fact that reasonable accommodation is not being offered makes it clear that this is about coercion and not public health. The Liberals are about to create a catastrophic supply chain disruption. Instead of making life miserable for people who cannot or will not get vaccinated, they should provide reasonable accommodations to get our economy back on track, get inflation under control, and make life more affordable for Canadians.

* * *

YOUTH

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past two years, young people across the country have been struggling with increasing rates of mental distress. I have heard these concerns directly from my constituents in Fredericton.

Statements by Members

I think about all the students I met who were managing the difficulties of online learning while being isolated from friends and experiencing financial stress. Young Canadians have been serving as essential workers on the front lines of the pandemic as well, from stocking grocery shelves to staffing vaccine clinics. They stepped up and put their own health at risk while trying to learn and build our collective future. I know it has not been easy.

My message to them today is one of validation, appreciation and hope. I want to tell young people that we see their struggles and we support them. Our government is making historic investments to improve access to mental health services, including expanding access to services on college and university campuses, but there is much more work to do.

I call on members from all sides of this House to work together to ensure that every young person in Canada can access affordable, timely and culturally competent mental health care anywhere in the country. Our youth deserve nothing less.

* * *

[*Translation*]

125TH ANNIVERSARY OF LE SOLEIL

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulo, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the newspaper L'Électeur was founded in 1880. Wilfrid Laurier was a frequent contributor. One of his articles even resulted in the newspaper being banned by five bishops for promoting the study of living languages and the scientific method.

It was this ban that led to the founding of the newspaper Le Soleil in December 1896. Le Soleil is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year: 125 years of critical journalism, navigating seas both calm and rough, and steering clear of the rocks that time placed in the way of the paper and its workers; 125 years of growing in influence and keeping the public informed.

Today Le Soleil is a co-operative owned by its own workers. It has print and digital versions, with in-depth articles on a wide variety of subjects that are always interesting.

I congratulate the news professionals at Le Soleil for their work, and I wish Le Soleil a long life.

* * *

● (1405)

GENEROSITY OF THE PEOPLE OF LONGUEUIL— CHARLES-LEMOYNE

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyné, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for many of us, the holiday season is a time of joy and celebration, an opportunity to reconnect with family and friends. However, for some, it can be a very difficult time, and we know that will ring even more true this year.

Statements by Members

The people of Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine have a long-standing tradition of giving generously to the many local groups that organize donation drives in our community to make the holidays happier for individuals and families in need.

[English]

I thank them, and I encourage them to keep that spirit of giving going this year. The pandemic has been hard for everyone, but it can be doubly so for those who are alone, who have lost a loved one or who may be struggling to make ends meet.

[Translation]

Together, let us make sure everyone has a better holiday season this year.

Happy holidays and happy new year.

* * *

[English]

DUANE LACOSTE

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in September my constituency lost a cherished community member with the passing of Duane LaCoste.

Duane served his country in countless ways. In 1961 he joined the RCMP, and he would serve in B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. Duane was even posted in Ottawa, where he provided security to Prime Minister Pearson and Governor General Vanier. Duane retired from the force as sergeant in the town of Minnedosa and went on to serve as mayor for seven years. Duane was also a proud member of the Royal Canadian Legion for 47 years. As president of branch 138, he started a project that resulted in over 100 banners displayed in the community, recognizing the local men and women who served in uniform. In a life summary he wrote before he passed, he stated, “To my family, friends, and the communities I have served, God bless and take care.”

I thank Duane for his service. He will be missed.

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RICHARD GOLDBLOOM

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, on what would have been his 97th birthday, we commemorate the late Dr. Richard Goldbloom, a distinguished doctor, teacher and philanthropist in Halifax.

Dr. Goldbloom passed away last month at the end of a purposeful life of service, excellence and compassion, and he was predeceased by his wife of 66 years, the indomitable Ruth Goldbloom. A renowned pediatrician who served as president of the Canadian Paediatric Society, Dr. Goldbloom touched the lives of thousands of families and students throughout his career.

His contributions to the scientific community are phenomenal: He published 140 scientific papers related to medicine. He also served as president of the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra, the board chair of the Waterfront Development Corporation and the founding chair of the Discovery Centre. Dr. Goldbloom received numerous honorary doctorate degrees and was an officer of the Order of Canada and a recipient of the Order of Nova Scotia.

I hope all members of this House will join me in a round of applause to commemorate the life of a man who gave so much to Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

VOLUNTEERS OF GLENGARRY—PRESCOTT—RUSSELL

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the non-profit organizations and their volunteers who are working hard to ensure that less fortunate families have a great holiday season.

I am thinking especially of the volunteers who spend hours organizing holiday food drives. Whether they are at the grocery store raising money, putting together Christmas hampers at a food bank, or delivering those Christmas hampers, without them, the holiday season would not be the same for hundreds of families in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

I also want to thank all the residents who contribute to this holiday food drive. On behalf of the people of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, I say a big thank you to them. As we say back home, your hearts are in the right place.

I wish you a merry Christmas, happy holidays and the happiest of new years.

* * *

[English]

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to rise in the House today to acknowledge the efforts of an incredibly dedicated and passionate woman who has been at the helm of a very special organization in my riding, known as the Crossing All Bridges Learning Centre, or CAB for short. For the past seven years, Paula Thomlison has been the executive director and the driving force behind the centre, which supports developmentally challenged adults.

Paula joined the centre at a crucial time. The non-profit did not have a suitable place to provide programming for its students, and the organization's goal was to obtain a home of its own. Paula was instrumental in making that dream become a reality. In 2018, with the support of community leaders, organizations and individuals, CAB purchased a former school and now has a permanent location.

Prior to the election, I had the pleasure of being the chair of the board of CAB, and I was able to witness Paula's undeniable commitment to persons with disabilities, so that they could truly live their best lives. With a stable and bright future ahead of CAB, Paula will now embark on a well-deserved retirement.

I would like to thank Paula from the bottom of my heart for her endless contributions to my community and wish her all the best in the next chapter of her life. She will be missed.

* * *

● (1410)

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the holidays are a time for special family traditions, when we support one another so no one is left behind. This year my office started a new tradition by joining the Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton's holiday concert as steel pan drum performers, a joyous and wonderful way to start the holiday season.

The need for help is greater than ever. I encourage Canadians to give if they can, to local food banks, charities and toy drives. Last week I joined the Oakville firefighters, who are continuing their long tradition of collecting donations so every child has a special holiday. Organizations like Oak Park Neighbourhood Centre are working overtime to ensure that every family can celebrate the holidays.

While we are still in a pandemic, we head into the holidays with hope for the coming year. I wish everyone all the wonder and joy the season brings, and may the spirit of the holidays remain with members throughout 2022.

* * *

[*Translation*]

JIMMY DESBIENS

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, meteorologists are forecasting a cold and unpredictable winter. Will this be the winter that snowmobilers have been waiting for? We will see.

One thing is certain: We need to plan our trips according to the weather. Jimmy Desbiens, better known as Météo Chicoutimi, knows a thing or two about this.

Since 2008, his hobby has become a business, so he has stepped up efforts to provide citizens with quick access to local conditions. He has become the local weather expert for the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region. By sharing his forecasts gradually over time, he has built a reliable service and an excellent reputation.

Mr. Desbiens's hard work finally paid off recently. Météo Chicoutimi now has a major contract with the City of Saguenay.

Mr. Desbiens is a great example of how we can achieve our dreams with determination, hard work and perseverance. Being an entrepreneur is a way of life, and it is often only after thousands of hours of work that we see the results.

I offer my congratulations on his 13 years of hard work and his well-deserved success.

Statements by Members

[*English*]

NOVA SCOTIA CHRISTMAS TREE FARMERS

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia is the balsam fir Christmas tree capital of the world. Family farms across my province prepare every year for the busy Christmas season. Christmas tree farmers like former MP Gerald Keddy, former Senator Don Oliver and Kevin Veinotte, who I buy my trees from, ship their trees around the world and open their farms to families for picking out the right tree.

Christmas tree farming is an economic driver in my community and supports rural communities and families across Nova Scotia. The province of Nova Scotia exports more than seven million dollars' worth of Christmas trees every year. If people care about the environment, they should not buy a plastic tree from China. Instead, they should buy a renewable, sustainable and natural balsam fir tree from Nova Scotia. If they want to save the planet, they should buy a tree from Lunenburg or Queens County.

As we approach the holiday break, I hope everyone in my riding, all members present and their families have a very merry Christmas, and that all the tree farmers have a successful Christmas season.

* * *

MEDICAL ISOTOPES

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are familiar with nuclear power and its role in getting us to net zero, but what may be less well known is that Canada is also a world leader in producing life-saving medical isotopes and radiopharmaceuticals. In addition to their role in sanitizing billions of pieces of personal protective equipment during the pandemic, advanced medical isotopes are also used to diagnose and treat millions of patients each year, while also supporting cutting-edge research into cancer, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

With demand expected to double by 2023, I am proud to highlight the work being done by the Canadian medical isotope innovation ecosystem in partnership with the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, which will help Canada deliver on goals related to economic reconciliation, inclusion and rural economic development. This work ensures that Canadians continue to have access to cutting-edge therapies while providing over 8,500 jobs across Canada.

Oral Questions

• (1415)

HAMILTON CENTRE

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to end 2021 on a high note by sharing my gratitude for the people of Hamilton Centre, who put their trust in me to return to this 44th Parliament and ensure that our working-class values continue to be well represented here in the House of Commons.

I thank, from the “Hamilton Centre” of my heart, my riding association and the hundreds of campaign volunteers who mobilized to go door to door, street to street and neighbourhood to neighbourhood.

I say to my family, both blood and chosen, who act as my deep roots of grounding, that with their strength I may, from time to time, be forced to bend, but I will never break.

Finally, I offer my deepest and uttermost gratitude to my incredible spouse Jade and our dear son Langston, for whom I will never stop fighting to build a better world. I thank them for the sacrifices they have made throughout this work. Although it bears my name, it continues to be a burden they both have to carry. I love them all dearly.

Merry Christmas, happy holidays and happy new year.

* * *

[Translation]

WISHES FOR THE NEW YEAR

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with the holidays approaching, here is my wish list for the coming year.

For workers who do not have access to employment insurance because of outdated eligibility rules, I wish for rapid and comprehensive reforms.

For workers who are sick, I wish for 50 weeks of benefits now so they can take care of themselves with dignity.

For federally regulated workers whose employers bring in scabs during strikes, I wish for anti-scab legislation right away.

For workers on the verge of bankruptcy, I wish for the means to protect their nest egg immediately.

For health care workers, I wish for the immediate and unconditional increase of health transfers to 35% of health care costs.

Lastly, for Quebeckers, who have the right to make all their own decisions themselves, I wish for our own country once and for all.

* * *

[English]

CHRISTMAS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker,

'Twas the week before Christmas,
from the House floor,
MPs rewriting the verses of Clement Moore,

whose *Night Before Christmas* we all know so well,
yet spoofing it just right can be hard as hell.

When writing my version last year at this time,
it was hard to make AstraZeneca rhyme.

The task poets now face on the path we are on
is finding a word that rhymes with omicron.

In the year when the best gift under the tree
is likely to be booster dose number three,
it is hard to remember the joy of the season,
when nature and governments give us no reason.

The nation's debt load is now half a trillion,
but hope springs eternal so thanks a million.

To those who bring joy into all of our lives,
caregivers, friends, children, husbands and wives,
whether your home is Whoville, Perth or Timbuktu,
Merry Christmas to all, merry Christmas to you.

* * *

YALDA

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker,

[Member spoke in Farsi]

[English]

These lines are from noble Hafiz, a Persian poet whose renowned work, *The Divan of Hafiz*, is engaged for telling fortunes during the celebratory occasion of Yalda.

On December 21, I will join fellow Persians within Richmond Hill and around the globe in Yalda festivities when we mark the winter solstice by enjoying good company, the delight of traditional foods and the divinity of poetry.

Please join me in wishing all who celebrate Shabe Yalda a happy and safe celebration, and thanks to all for their continued support.

[Member spoke in Farsi]

[English]

I wish everyone merry Christmas, happy holidays and happy new year.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a year ago, the Minister of Finance said there would be deflation in Canada. She promised prices would go down for Canadian families.

Instead, we have seen grocery prices go up 15% to 20%. We have seen gas go up 40%. We have seen housing, rent and mortgage prices go up 20% to 30%. She misled Canadians with the deflation promise.

Oral Questions

Today, in the mandate letter for the Minister of Finance, why is there is no mention of the inflation crisis?

[English]

• (1420)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the person who is misleading Canadians when it comes to the economy is the Leader of the Opposition.

Here are the facts. Our GDP grew by 5.4% in the third quarter. We have recovered 106% of the jobs lost to the pandemic. As Stephen Poloz, the central banker appointed by Mr. Harper, put it over the weekend, “Aren't we lucky that the policies worked well to prevent the second Great Depression, which is what economists worried about when we first encountered COVID.”

That is the reality.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is the Minister of Finance was the first Canadian politician ever to be flagged for misleading Canadians online. It is quite rich for that minister to suggest other people are misleading Canadians, when she has been flagged just as Donald Trump was.

It is almost the end of the year. I will give the minister the opportunity to apologize to Canadians for misleading them during the federal election.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to allow the Leader of the Opposition to stop flip-flopping and to choose an economic lane. It is something his caucus might appreciate, too.

Today, the Conservatives are complaining about government spending, but on the campaign trail they proposed a deficit of \$168 billion for 2021-22. In the fall economic update, we showed a deficit for that year of \$144.5 billion, which was \$23.5 billion lower than what the Conservatives proposed.

Could the leader of flip-flops please let Canadians know what he really stands for?

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would note Donald Trump does not apologize either.

[Translation]

The cost of living crisis is worse than it has been in decades. It is a disaster. This winter, some families will have to choose between heating their house and buying groceries because wages are not going up. That is unacceptable.

Do the Liberals understand the choices Canadians have to make because of their inflation?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts: Our GDP went up 5.4% in the third quarter, and we have recovered 106% of the jobs that were lost.

Stephen Poloz, who was appointed by Mr. Harper, said we are lucky to have policies that worked to prevent a second Great Depression. Many economists were worried about that when the COVID-19 crisis hit. That is a fact.

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member for Malpeque could have asked the Prime Minister a question on the potato crisis in P.E.I. yesterday, but he did not do it.

The Liberal member for Cardigan had the message for Prince Edward Island farmers that no matter what happens, the government can help, but farmers will lose. He is right. Under the Liberals, farmers always lose.

The P.E.I. premier is questioning why the agriculture minister is not in Washington. Maybe it is because resolving this dispute is not even in her mandate letter. Why is the agriculture minister not in Washington, putting all her potato chips on the table and resolving this dispute?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me assure all farmers across our amazing country, very much including the farmers in P.E.I., that our government is extremely focused on supporting farmers in general and on supporting farmers when it comes to this trade issue.

I was sitting next to the Prime Minister when he raised this issue directly with the President of the United States. We will take no lessons from the Conservatives when it comes to standing up to the U.S. Canadians know they back down from the Americans in a fight.

• (1425)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers are very thankful the Liberals will take no lessons from the Conservatives when it comes to Canadian agriculture.

I spoke to P.E.I. farmers this morning and this is what one of them had to say: “With the stroke of a pen, the Liberals have destroyed everything I have worked for for six generations.” The agriculture minister is now saying this dispute will not be resolved until the new year, but CFIA is telling island farm families this half-baked ban will likely last until 2023.

How many harvests will be lost? How many businesses will be bankrupt? How many farmers will lose before the minister lifts the political ban on potato exports?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me once again say to Canadian farmers that they should not listen to the scaremongering they are hearing from Conservatives. They need to know that our government cares passionately about Canadian farmers. We know the importance of family farms to our economy.

Oral Questions

Let me also remind Canadian farmers that our government is prepared to stand up for national interests when it comes to trade with the United States. Canadian farmers know that from the COOL dispute we had right after we were first elected in 2015.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, secularism and Bill 21 are being attacked by a united front of federal officials, including elected members from all parties, starting with the Prime Minister himself. The worst part is that this united front is spreading misinformation. Let us set the record straight.

State secularism is not discriminatory. It applies to everyone. That is a fact. The teacher, Ms. Anvari, did not lose her job. She was reassigned. That is a fact. She was not reassigned because of her religion. She was reassigned because she knowingly broke the law.

When will the government stop spreading misinformation and stop Quebec-bashing?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said yesterday, we disagree with Bill 21. In our society, no one should have to change jobs because of their religion.

That is the position of our government and our party. We agree with Quebeckers who are defending their rights in court because they too think this law is unjust.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is more. It is comical.

Canadian cities have now gotten on board with the Quebec bashing. Yesterday, Brampton announced funding to challenge Bill 21. Oh, and they also called Quebeckers racist, because why not? Today, Toronto is joining in.

The worst part is that these people do not even know what they are talking about. They do not understand secularism and they do not understand Bill 21, not least because members here will not stop telling lies about it. They are grandstanding at Quebec's expense.

Will the government announce that it respects our democratic choices and will not challenge them in court?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that I represent a Toronto riding and that I was born in Alberta.

However, I want to sincerely tell the member from the Bloc Québécois and all Quebeckers that our government is working closely with the Government of Quebec, with municipalities in Quebec and even with members of the Bloc Québécois to support all Quebeckers.

I am urging the member not to try to stir up trouble between us and Quebec.

COVID-19 ECONOMIC MEASURES

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today there are more than 2,700 new COVID-19 cases in Quebec alone.

People are already gearing up for capacity limits to be introduced in stores and restaurants to limit the spread. This means that people will once again be out of work, except that, this time, there is no help for them. There is no CERB for workers and no wage subsidy for small businesses.

How can this government cut help for people when we are up against possibly the worst of the pandemic?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank my colleague for his question because I truly believe that COVID-19 is the greatest challenge today.

That is why I hope that all members will support Bill C-2. This bill will create support measures for individuals and businesses in the event of another lockdown, precisely because we agree with the NDP members that these support measures are necessary.

I hope that all members will vote in favour of Bill C-2.

● (1430)

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, COVID cases are increasing everywhere, and people are already gearing up for reduced limits to the numbers of people in stores and restaurants to limit the spread. This means people will once again be out of work, except for this time, there is nothing to help them. There is no CERB for workers and no wage subsidy for small businesses. How can the government cut help for people when we are up against possibly the worst of this pandemic?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that COVID is the greatest challenge facing Canada today. That is why I focused on it in the economic and fiscal update. I agree with him that we need to have support measures in place for people in businesses in the event of additional lockdowns. That is why I urge all members of the House to support Bill C-2. It would create precisely those tools. We need them. I really hope all members will support the bill.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I guess it is throwback Thursday. *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Beauty and the Beast* were on the big screens. Brian Adams' *I Do It for You* topped the charts. Mushroom cuts were in vogue, and the World Wide Web was first introduced to the public.

That was the last time inflation was this high. That was 30 years ago. When will the Prime Minister realize that his disastrous policies are to blame for our record-breaking inflation?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us ignore Conservatives' scaremongering and look at the global facts. In the U.S., November inflation was 6.8%, which was an increase from October. In Germany, November inflation was 6%, which was an increase from October. In the U.K., November inflation was 5.1%, which was an increase from October. Meanwhile in Canada, inflation is lower than in all of these countries and did not increase from October to November.

[Translation]

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian families are already stretched to the limit and struggling to make ends meet.

Despite the fact that inflation is at 4.7%, the highest level since 1991, the Prime Minister does not consider monetary policy to be a priority.

When will the Prime Minister finally put some thought into monetary policy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all agree that the cost of living is a challenge, but I do not hear many concrete solutions coming from the Conservatives.

I would therefore like to propose one. Let us support all Canadians who work in tourism, restaurants and other hard-hit businesses across the country by supporting Bill C-2.

[English]

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while working Canadians struggle to make ends meet, the finance minister continues to mislead Canadians by arguing that our economy is strong. That may be the case for some, but the conversations around the kitchen tables in rural Canada tell a very different story. Bills are piling up and credit cards are maxed. “Just inflation” has Canadians at their breaking points financially and emotionally.

When will the government take bold actions to strengthen the economy and combat inflation, instead of repeating tired old talking points?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that to pay the bills, the single most important thing is to have a job or to keep a business afloat. That is why, when COVID hit, we took immediate action. We have recovered every single one of the three million lost jobs and more. Fewer businesses have gone bankrupt over the past year than in the year before COVID.

Conservative austerity would have devastated the lives of millions of Canadians. We are proud to have acted decisively to save jobs and businesses. That is how to make life affordable.

• (1435)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure how that member is talking about making

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life affordable. Regardless, a job does not keep people from being hungry. One in eight people who visit food banks are employees. The growing cost of housing, rent and grocery prices are affecting those struggling the most to make ends meet, particularly single parents. Over 30% of visitors at food banks in Canada are children. This is wrong. This is heartbreaking, and it needs to change now.

When will the Liberals stop the “just inflation” crisis, which is hurting our most precious commodity, our children?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to take the Conservatives seriously that they care about single parents and children when they voted against the Canada child benefit, which helped lift 400,000 Canadian children out of poverty. It is hard to take them seriously when they campaigned on getting rid of the Canada early learning and child care system.

Let me tell members that we are making difference. Families right across this country are going to see a 50% reduction in fees as of January right through to the end of this year. That is going to help them with the cost of living and it is going to make sure that our kids have the very best, positive start in life.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we gave this government an opportunity to do the right thing by Saskatchewan to remove a long-standing tax exemption in our Constitution. Rather than do the right thing and ensure that large, profitable corporations pay their share of taxes, the Liberals decided to block our attempts to stand up for Saskatchewan.

I ask the Minister of Justice this: Can we work together to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan are not left paying the bill for a sweetheart deal that was made over 150 years ago, or will the Liberals continue to ignore my province?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's concern on the issue.

We have agreed, as a government, to take note debate on this in February. Our objection yesterday was to the fact that one does not make a constitutional amendment with a unanimous consent motion without ever having discussed it or debated it in any forum in the House. We respect Saskatchewan. We will do that take note debate, and we will act accordingly.

*Oral Questions***TRANSPORTATION**

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers depend on effective rail service. They cannot get paid for their hard work if they cannot ship their crops to market. Now, a foreign hedge fund has started a campaign to take over the board of CN Rail with a plan to make service cuts to maximize profits for shareholders. Farmers know what happens when services are cut back in the interests of shareholders. Terminals cannot get cars to load, and ships sit empty, waiting.

When will the government take action to protect farmers and ensure healthy competition and reliable rail service?

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to advocate for efficient and safe rail service. The fluidity and reliability of our supply chain is critical to our economy.

I have been hearing about this ongoing situation with CN in the media and also in popular podcasts. CN is responsible for its own leadership decisions, but let me assure my hon. colleague that our government will take action to continue to protect the interests of Canadians and the safety and reliability of our rail network to ensure fluid supply chains.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the economic update will not go down in history, but it speaks volumes about federal priorities.

The crux of this document is a promise to pick a fight with Quebec and the provinces over health care. Five days after all the premiers called for a meeting to negotiate an increase in health care funding, Ottawa told them they will not get another dime until 2027.

Why is the government trying to pick a fight when, really, everyone should be coming together to support health care workers?

• (1440)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising the issue.

The last thing we want to do is pick a fight. On the contrary, we have been working together very closely for 21 months. I had another meeting yesterday evening with all my provincial counterparts, the ministers of health. We know how important it is right now to work to get through the upcoming omicron variant crisis.

We all agree that it is important to speed up the administration of vaccine boosters, to make sure that rapid testing is available for people who need it, and to continue to tell people to follow public health guidelines. In Canada, we have the strongest system in the world to overcome the wave that is coming in the next few weeks.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, recent developments are a stark reminder that we are still in the midst of a health crisis and that our health care system remains overburdened.

Nevertheless, this week, despite Quebec announcing new restrictions because of concerns about the variant, despite Ottawa recommending no travel, despite the Liberal Party recommending that people work from home, despite all of that, the government tabled an economic update in which it indicated that there will be no funding until 2027.

Can any of the geniuses across the way explain that to me?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question gives me the opportunity to reiterate two extremely important things.

The first is the strength of mutual support, especially in our federalist country these past few months. Without the co-operation of all levels of government, we would have had thousands more deaths, we would have suffered major economic losses, and we would have put the health of millions of Canadians at risk.

Next, I commend all of my provincial and territorial colleagues for their extraordinary co-operation and for proving that, in Canada, when we work together, we are stronger and we go further.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am impressed.

No one is questioning the fact that Ottawa spent money during the pandemic. The problem is that the government made cuts to health care funding before the pandemic.

The government is now saying that it will not make any investments until 2027. The federal government was not making investments before the pandemic and will not be making any after it. The Liberals confirmed this week that they did not learn anything from COVID-19 and the fact that health care workers are exhausted. It is frustrating.

How can the government be so oblivious to what is happening in our health care facilities?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the Bloc could take a minute and reflect on just how much Canada has done for Quebec. However, getting them to acknowledge that Canada, Quebec and the provinces are able to work together is a bit like pulling teeth.

Canada covered \$8 out of every \$10 of pandemic spending. Our government has always been there when it comes to vaccines, rapid tests and the necessary equipment.

We worked with Quebec and will continue to work with Quebec. The Bloc has such a hard time acknowledging that because what they really want is to pick a fight.

[English]

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we learned that housing inflation hit a record 25%. Bloomberg says we have the second-biggest housing bubble in the world. However, where is the money coming from? After all, the wages with which Canadians buy housing are down in real terms. The number of immigrants is also down.

For the Minister of Finance, if the number of people and the amount of wages needed to buy homes are down, yet house prices are up, where is the money coming from?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that has brought federal leadership back into the housing sector. Since coming into office, we have invested over \$27 billion; brought in the national housing strategy; and brought in measures to help Canadians with housing supply, access to affordable housing, rent supports and so on.

When the Conservatives had the opportunity to do the right thing last night by voting in a tax against foreign home buyers they voted against it, so they have no credibility on this issue.

• (1445)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister has gone into hiding on this housing-inflation question. Her officials tell The Globe and Mail that she has been skipping her briefings, so perhaps she did not have the answer, but I will ask it again.

Housing price inflation is hitting a record 25%, even though the wages with which Canadians buy housing is down and the GDP is still down from 2019 levels. Given that we have less wealth with which to buy housing, where is the money coming from?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we respect Canadians, and we respect that Canadians need help with the high cost of living. Unfortunately, the member for Carleton refers to support for child care as a slush fund for families.

That is offensive to families. It is offensive to children, and it is offensive to dealing with the very real high costs of living that Canadians are facing. On this side of the House we will be there to support Canadians, support families and make sure they have the tools and resources they need for success.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I refer to the \$100 billion of new and unnecessary spending as a slush fund. That is \$6,600 in new costs for every single family in Canada. We know those families cannot afford to pay it, even if the finance minister is in hiding from this question. The reality is that house prices are up 25%, the worst housing inflation on record and the second-worst housing bubble in the world.

With wages actually down, meaning the money with which people buy houses has dropped, where is the money coming from?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate it if the member for Carleton would apologize to hard-working families for

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saying that support for child care is akin to a slush fund. On this side of the House—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sorry, but I am trying to hear the answer and there is just too much noise in here. Order, please. The hon. member for Carleton wants to hear the response.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, once again, on this side of the House, we understand there is a high cost of living. That is specifically why we are helping hard-working families with the high cost of child care. It is specifically why we are helping hard-working families to access more affordable housing and housing affordability.

Unfortunately the members opposite just do not get it and are not proposing anything that would actually help Canadian families.

* * *

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, four years ago, the federal government promised funding for the LGBTQ community capacity fund to help make up for decades of systemic discrimination, but it will run out of funding this March. The government cannot expect to repair harm and discrimination with only one round of grants. It must keep its promise.

Will the Liberals give the 2SLGBTQI community the long-term stable financial support we need?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we as a government have always stood up for the rights of the LGBTQ2 community domestically and abroad. We always consult with the community on ways to increase the capacity of community organizations, including in the LGBTQ2 community, to serve more Canadians and to serve fellow community members.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in addition to falling short on funding capacity building for 2SLGBTQI organizations in Canada, the Liberals are also failing to do their part to defend our rights abroad, this in an increasingly dangerous world where in countries like Afghanistan being queer is now literally a death sentence. One simple and effective step that community advocates and New Democrats have been calling for since 2015 would be the appointment of a Canadian special envoy for LGBTQ rights.

Will the government act now in this time of crisis in places like Afghanistan and appoint a Canadian special envoy to help advance and protect LGBTQ rights around the world?

Oral Questions

● (1450)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my former position as the minister of international development, I was very pleased to work with the hon. member and advocates around our country and the world to ensure that Canada was playing its part to protect and support the LGBTQ2+ community around the world. We know there are so many places around the world where it is not safe for people to be who they are and to love who they are.

I am very pleased to continue to do this work and to ensure that we provide that support and protection here at home and right around the world.

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GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year, our government launched its first-ever Black entrepreneurship program to help Black Canadian business owners and entrepreneurs. Yesterday, we took another step in supporting Black Canadians as we made an announcement about the Black entrepreneurship knowledge hub component of the program.

Could the Minister of Small Business and Economic Development inform the House on how the knowledge hub will benefit and empower Black entrepreneurs and business owners across the country? I also would like to take this moment to wish her a happy birthday.

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government firmly believes in creating a strong and more inclusive economy. I was very proud to announce this week the establishment of the Black entrepreneurship knowledge hub, a partnership between Carleton University and the Dream Legacy Foundation. Once operational, the knowledge hub will conduct research and collect data on Black entrepreneurship in Canada and identify barriers to success as well as opportunities to help Black Canadian business owners grow their business.

We are excited and we are looking forward to the outcome and the great work that the knowledge hub is going to be doing.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada must say “no” to Huawei. Yesterday, The Washington Post reported that Huawei was promoting facial and voice recognition software that would help it track shoppers, monitor political dissidents and manage re-education camps. This is appalling. While Canada’s most trusted allies are banning Huawei from their networks, the government refuses to act.

Again, when will the minister say “no way” to Huawei?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that one of the priorities of this government is to keep our networks safe. We know the network is a most critical infrastructure now and for generations to come.

An experienced member like him would understand that when taking a decision like that, the lens through which we look at it is national security. We understand that on this side of the House. I wish those colleagues would understand as well.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for three years, the government has promised to have a decision “within a few weeks”. Our own intelligence agencies have warned the Prime Minister against allowing Huawei into our 5G networks. It turns out, they were right.

For years, Huawei denied that it was a tool of the Communist regime in Beijing. Now we have evidence that the company is deeply implicated in designing surveillance tools to keep track of millions, if not billions, of people around the world.

Is that acceptable to the minister, and will he make a decision on Huawei before the year end, yes or no?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he is a very senior member on the other side of the aisle and understands these issues. Canadians watching understand—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I will let the minister continue.

The hon. Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for making sure I can continue to explain for my esteemed colleague the importance of the network in Canada.

Just before Christmas, Canadians are watching question period, I am sure, and one thing they understand is that we on this side of the aisle understand what national security is about and we will make the right decision for this generation and future generations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how much more evidence does the Prime Minister need to ban Huawei?

This week we learned from the Washington Post that Huawei was promoting its products to governments saying that they could use voice recognition on citizens and even surveil politicians of interest.

The Prime Minister knows that under the Chinese Communist regime, businesses are required to provide information to the regime on demand. Having this technology in Canada guarantees that information on Canadians could be made available to the Chinese Communist regime.

Will the Prime Minister commit to banning Huawei by the end of the year?

• (1455)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question. He is well versed in matters of national security so he will certainly understand the importance of telecommunications networks today and for future generations.

My colleague, Quebeckers and Canadians watching us today expect this government to take national security seriously and they know that is the case. We will do what is best for the country.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do indeed know a thing or two about security, and we know that four of the countries in the Five Eyes alliance, which Canada is a part of, have decided to ban Huawei because it poses a threat to their national security.

Why is Canada incapable of understanding that Huawei must be banned from 5G development for national security reasons? Yet more evidence came to light this week in the Washington Post. Huawei is known to have technology used for spying on citizens, and information can be transmitted to the Chinese Communist regime.

When will Canada ban Huawei? Will it do so before the end of the year?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is an important question, and I thank my colleague for asking it. Canadians tuning in today just before Christmas certainly understand the importance of telecommunications networks.

I have tremendous respect for my colleague, who understands the importance of national security better than anyone. I am sure that, in his heart of hearts, he wants us to make the decision that is in Canadians' best interest and puts national security first.

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HEALTH

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the science on COVID-19 is clear. No one in the world is safe until everyone in the world is.

We will never get out of this pandemic if we have to keep battling new variants emerging from countries that have low vaccination rates because of a lack of resources.

It is not rocket science. The government must waive patents on the vaccines so that developing countries can produce their own and administer them quickly. Ottawa must also provide logistical support where required.

Will the government put pressure on other countries and on the industry to get patents waived more quickly?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that important question. He is absolutely right, and that is one of the options we are looking at.

That said, right now, we need to focus on getting eligible Canadians double- and triple-vaccinated. We are heading into an omicron wave that will be very tough and trying for our country.

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We have already promised 200 million vaccine doses to the global effort and they will be delivered by the end of 2022. We have also promised a \$2.5-billion contribution to help developing countries administer these vaccines as quickly as possible.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not seem to understand that the variants are developing because of the low vaccination rate around the world.

Negotiations on the vaccine patent waiver for developing countries are at a standstill. We see that Canada's passiveness is contributing to putting entire populations at risk. It is turning these countries into potential sources of variants against their will, instead of letting them have vaccine manufacturing facilities that would increase worldwide vaccination rates.

Will the government commit to applying pressure internationally, at the WTO in particular, so that rich countries and their pharmaceutical companies will finally agree to this essential patent waiver?

• (1500)

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear that our government has always been and will always be a strong advocate for vaccine equity everywhere around the world. Canada is taking leadership at the WTO and working with the international community to ensure the global trading system can contribute to removing barriers to vaccine access.

I just had a meeting with the Ottawa group members this morning. We are advancing issues that not only include IP, but also supply chain, production and export restrictions. Our government is going to continue to do this very important work with the international community—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of speaking to students in a grade 10 civics class this morning in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. I asked for their feedback on Bill C-5.

Oral Questions

They would like to know if the government is willing to amend the bill and keep mandatory minimums for extortion with a firearm; importing, exporting or possession of drugs for the purpose of exporting; and the production of hard drugs; that is heroin, cocaine, fentanyl and crystal meth. In their opinion, these serious crimes make sense with mandatory minimums.

If these kids get it, why does the government not get it?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what this government does get is that mandatory minimum penalties have been an abject failure in all regards. They do not work to decrease criminality. They do not work to decrease recidivism. All they do is clog up the criminal justice system, cause delays and have a serious disproportionate impact on systemic racism.

Serious crimes in our system will always carry serious consequences. All of the crimes named where the situation is serious will carry a serious maximum sentence.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada, the supply of fentanyl is a key factor in its just-released projections of the rising number of opioid-related deaths that Canadians should expect to see over the next six months. At the very same time, the Liberal government is trying to eliminate jail time for the very people charged with producing, importing and trafficking fentanyl.

Can the Minister of Justice tell Canadians why his government is trying to make life easier for the drug producers and traffickers fuelling the opioid crisis?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I would ask the opposition to stop misleading Canadians. Serious drug traffickers—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, people charged with serious drug crimes, with trafficking and importing, will always face serious consequences in our criminal justice system. That is simply the case. All the mandatory minimum penalties do is clog up the system, and increase systemic racism and the impact of systemic racism within the system. The statistics show the opposition's policy of "tough on crime" is an abject failure and we are going to move beyond it and treat health problems as health problems and criminal justice problems as criminal justice problems.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberals are doing just the opposite; 4,000 opioid-related deaths by June is the projection just announced yesterday by the government's own agency. That is not just a number, that is 4,000 Canadians who have families, friends and plans for the future. The opioid crisis has affected communities of every single member of this House.

Will the government finally consider the victims of this crisis over its efforts to eliminate jail time for the criminals importing, producing and trafficking these deadly drugs?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right; the opioid crisis is a terrible crisis. On av-

erage, about 20 people die of it every day. That is why we need to do things that take into account all sorts of measures that will be helpful to save lives. We are putting into place, in collaboration with provinces, territories and municipalities, measures to reduce harm, reduce risk, and provide safe provisions and access to safe drugs. We will also work with provinces and territories to make sure they have access to services—

• (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vancouver Granville.

* * *

[Translation]

COVID-19 ECONOMIC MEASURES

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the constituents of my riding of Vancouver Granville felt the effects of COVID-19 in all aspects of their lives. Thanks to this government's prudent financial management, however, we have seen a strong economic recovery.

Could the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance tell the House about some of the measures included in the recent financial update that will continue to support this recovery?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we learned over the past 21 months is that the most important economic policy is a strong health policy.

In the economic and fiscal update, I announced \$2 billion for therapeutics, \$1.7 billion for rapid tests and \$7.3 billion for vaccines and boosters. That is what we are doing.

* * *

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs Canada is cutting case workers in March, despite veterans and their families waiting up to two years for the benefits to which they are entitled. Last year alone, the department left over \$635 million unspent. This is not helping veterans.

When will the government take action and address the veterans' care crisis?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's question and concern. As he is well aware, we have made a number of investments in Veterans Affairs and we have hired over 400 case workers. As we indicated in our platform, we will make more—

The Speaker: I am just going to ask the minister if he has a headset handy. It appears he does not have one.

The government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we know how important it is to invest in veterans. That is why we reversed the cuts that we saw in veterans officers right across this country, as we watched the essential services that veterans were getting be cut—

The Speaker: One moment, I believe the interpretation has stopped. I will ask the hon. government House leader to start from the beginning and answer that question, please.

[Translation]

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we understand the importance of our veterans, who need help. It is unfortunate that there were significant cuts to services.

[English]

I will say that what was done to our veterans was absolutely unacceptable. We are going to be there for our veterans every step of the way, making sure that we restore those cuts and support them.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture entered into an agreement with Quebec this past August to increase the percentage of temporary foreign workers in the agri-food industry from 10% to 20%. Unfortunately, nothing has been done since.

Exceldor, Quebec's largest chicken slaughter plant, is still short more than 300 workers. These delays are forcing them to euthanize chickens. Animals are being sacrificed, and so is producers' revenue. I have a simple question for the minister: When will the 20% rate be applied in Quebec?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to reassure my colleague. As a first step, we signed the agreement with Quebec over the summer. Quebec then went to work with the unions, as we had asked. They came back to the Minister of Employment, who accepted the request. The process is still ongoing, and I very much look forward to our agri-food businesses using this advantage to hire up to 20% foreign workers.

• (1510)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, procedures, procedures, procedures. Sébastien Charrois is a constituent of mine whose family has been raising chickens for generations. He is at the

Oral Questions

end of his rope. He cannot find enough people to catch and transport the chickens in his barns.

Transportation companies cannot do the work, and they cannot bring in temporary foreign workers. Tens of thousands of chickens are going to be euthanized if he does not find temporary workers. I have a simple question for the government: When will it do what needs to be done to bring in temporary foreign workers immediately?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our temporary foreign worker programs are extremely important, especially to the agriculture and agri-food sector.

The Minister of Employment, the Minister of Immigration and I can assure the House that we are making headway with this major reform. We want to acknowledge good employers. The vast majority of our employers and agricultural producers are good employers.

We want to find a way to speed up the process and increase the ratio of foreign workers in plants, which has already been done with the Province of Quebec.

* * *

[English]

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since my Motion No. 103 in 2017, we have changed the conversation so that no federal leader could ever pretend that Islamophobia is not a threat. We have made progress since then, including a national summit earlier this year, but as long as Muslim Canadians fear for their safety in the workplace or walking down the street, we have to do more.

Could the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion please tell the House what the government is doing to continue combatting Islamophobia in Canada?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Islamophobia is real and a troubling fact. That is why earlier this past summer we held a national summit on Islamophobia to hear directly from community members about their lived experiences, but also taking concrete steps on how we can assist them further.

I am pleased to inform the hon. member for Mississauga—Erin Mills that we will take further action, including dedicated resources to tackle Islamophobia and working with Muslim Canadians on the appointment of a special representative to tackle Islamophobia. On this side of the House, we will continue to fight hatred in Canada to keep communities safe.

*Oral Questions***SENIORS**

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seniors across this country who had their GIS cut off cannot afford food, medicine, heat and rent. Some of them are already homeless and some of them are at risk to be homeless soon.

For months, the NDP asked the government to fix the problem. Finally there was an announcement that gave seniors across this country hope for a one-time payment. Sadly, today we found out that payment is not coming until May. The government should be ashamed. Seniors are losing everything and it is doing nothing.

When will the Prime Minister stop turning his back on the seniors of this country?

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since day one, our government has prioritized being there for the most vulnerable. For low-income seniors with the greatest need, we have increased the OAS and GIS.

We know during the pandemic working seniors needed income support, and they should not be penalized for it now. That is why our government is making a major investment through a one-time payment for seniors who have had their benefits affected. Seniors can rest assured we will always be there for them.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, back in 2015 the Liberals promised to end all boil water advisories in first nations communities within five years, yet today 42 advisories remain in 30 communities. A recent Parliamentary Budget Officer report calls out a significant gap: \$138 million more is needed in annual operating spending.

When will the government allocate the resources necessary to fulfill its 2015 promise and ensure that every first nations community has what every person in Canada deserves, access to clean drinking water?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can reassure the member this government has every intention of working hand in glove with indigenous communities to raise all long-term boil water advisories. Our work is paying off.

In fact, 74% of long-term boil water advisories have been lifted since we have been in government. We have another 16% of the long-term boil water advisories under construction and we will not rest until we get this done.

• (1515)

The Speaker: That is all the time we have for question period today.

We have a point of order from the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, we all recognize that a lot of people are now on the hybrid system. We respect that and there is no problem with it. However, there is a problem when a minister or anyone else does not have their headset. Time is running out. The

Minister of Veterans Affairs spoke for 14 seconds before he finally recognized that he did not have his headset on correctly. Then, my hon. counterpart, whom I recognize was very efficient with his speech, spoke for 30 seconds. Let me be clear: When the time is running out, the time is running out for everybody.

The Speaker: To respond to that, the problem was not the minister. He was part of it, but we had technical difficulties with interpretation, and it is too bad that the technical area did not work. That is why we extended time.

The Speaker used his judgment; he wanted to make sure a complete answer got out, not broken pieces. That was my issue. I am sorry not everyone agrees with it.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, this problem was created on our side. I offer a sincere apology to the House. We will endeavour to ensure that all members have their appropriate headsets. I apologize that we caused this disruption.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I note that the whip seems to have impaired one of his ministers, who was not here in person, from answering a question. The Minister of Finance was deprived of the chance to answer housing inflation questions, and I think it is inappropriate for the whip—

The Speaker: I believe the hon. minister was here in person virtually. That counts. We are not to comment on whether members are in the House, and technically she was in the House.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

There have been consultations with the other parties, and I hope that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following important motion: That the House call upon the government to use all available tools to fight against Islamophobia, starting with the designation of a special envoy to monitor and combat Islamophobia.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

* * *

[Translation]

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the administration of the House and the federal government take steps to ensure that, as of January 31, 2022, the masks distributed on Parliament Hill and in the various federal departments and agencies come from domestic businesses that produce this type of personal protective equipment, or PPE.

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

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

Hearing no objection, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I support the last motion, but I suggest that in the future you leave sufficient time, after a question is read out, for the interpretation to be completed before seeing if there are any nays, because the response was called before interpretation was completed in one case.

The Speaker: I will do that. That is a good point and I appreciate the help.

• (1520)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I simply want to draw to the Chair's attention that when calling for unanimous consent moments ago, I do not know if you had the opportunity to hear everyone in the House.

The Speaker: I did not hear anything in the negative. I paused and listened. I want to point out that if there is—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I know it is almost Christmas and everybody is excited, but please calm down, or Santa Claus is going to bring members a lump of coal.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I believe that in the confusion of what was going on and the amount of heckling, perhaps you did not hear it. There was definitely a negative from this side, and I think we were taken aback and surprised by the manner in which the motion was passed.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. I do recognize that sometimes there can be some heckling from one side. However, in this specific situation, and let me be very serious, we are talking about a really serious issue. We are talking about Islamophobia and everybody was listening carefully. What I am talking about is coming from the government side. Maybe the Liberals regret their choice, but they made it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a bit of confusion here. What I understand from the government is that the Liberals were supposedly slow to respond to the motion moved by the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

Speaker's Ruling

However, they had plenty of time to respond. If they have gotten that slow, it serves them right. Everyone had time to vote on the motion, and it was adopted.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, all I am trying to say is that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: They are doing it right now while I am trying to make a point of order. This is my point.

All I am trying to say is that there was a reaction. They are suggesting there was not and there was. If they did not hear it or if you, Mr. Speaker, did not hear it, that is one thing, but I am trying to note it for you. I certainly do not appreciate that the House leader of the opposition accused me of lying when I got up and spoke earlier and told you what had happened.

The Speaker: I will speak to that for a second, and then we will see if there is still a point of order.

When we ask for a reaction, I need a clear yea or nay, and at this point there are nays. I wanted to hear something then and I did not hear anything. Therefore, it was passed. That is the ruling.

The hon. member for Perth—Wellington has a point of order.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands owes an apology to this House. It has long been the practice in the House that decisions of the Chair are not challenged. Members cannot challenge the decisions of the Speaker and that is exactly what the member for Kingston and the Islands was doing. He should apologize.

The Speaker: I believe he was just trying to clarify what happened. It was not what I heard or what anyone else heard, so we will leave it at that and move on, if that is okay.

On a point of order, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I certainly was not challenging your ruling. I was trying to let you know what my observations in the House were.

The Speaker: Let us leave it at that and move on.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

INTRODUCTION OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston brought forward a point of order this morning, and it was a good one.

I want to make a statement regarding the length of explanations made by members during the rubric Introduction of Private Members' Bills during Routine Proceedings. After points of order raised earlier today by the members for Kingston and the Islands and Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, I undertook to return to the House on this matter.

Business of the House

[Translation]

When introducing a private member's bill, a member is permitted to give an explanation outlining the purpose of the bill. The explanation must be succinct and not enter into debate.

● (1525)

[English]

For the benefit of members, footnote 80 in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 1130, states, "A succinct explanation has traditionally been interpreted to mean 30 to 60 seconds." The Chair wants to remind members to keep their explanations within that time frame. I want all members to remember this, and I appreciate their co-operation.

I know there is excitement in wanting to move on, but before continuing, I want to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very merry Christmas and all the best in the new year.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems likely that we will all soon be returning to our ridings to continue to work very hard on behalf of all Canadians and our constituents.

[English]

This gives me the opportunity to thank everybody who works for the best democratic system in the world, our parliamentary system. Let me be clear: We cannot fight issues without the support of everybody here, especially those who work for the House of Commons.

[Translation]

From the bottom of our hearts, we want to thank those who allow us to have the privilege of debating issues in the House. The debate may get fierce at times, but that is the beauty of parliamentary democracy in Canada, and we will always fight to preserve it.

I thank all my colleagues on both sides of the House for the privilege of sitting here and having exciting debates. I also thank all the people in our ridings who help us stay in direct contact with our constituents. I want to acknowledge Isabelle and Éric, who are doing such a great job in my constituency office.

Now, as tradition would have it, I will ask my ministerial counterpart what the parliamentary agenda will be for the next few hours and perhaps the next few days.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. opposition colleague for his comments. I absolutely join him in thanking everyone who works here.

[English]

It is an extraordinarily difficult thing, particularly during a pandemic, to provide the support we have seen. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Clerk of the House, Mr. Charles Robert, his wonderful team of clerks, every branch of service in the administra-

tion of the House of Commons, including the Parliamentary Protective Service, and the pages, who help us so much in our work, particularly during these challenging times.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to wish you and your family, and indeed all members, a very merry Christmas, happy holiday and happy new year. I hope that all members are able to spend time with their families and are both safe and healthy in these very challenging times.

I think we have demonstrated over the last four weeks, with my hon. counterparts from the Conservatives, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democrats, a wonderful spirit of co-operation. We have been able to get a lot done on behalf of Canadians. I want to thank them, and through them I thank their caucuses for a very productive last four weeks.

This afternoon, we will continue our work on Bill C-2, an act to provide further support in response to COVID-19, and Bill C-3, which would provide workers in federally regulated sectors with 10 days of paid sick leave and make it an offence to intimidate or prevent patients from seeking care.

I will advise that in February, the government will propose a take-note debate on Saskatchewan's proposed constitutional amendment. I would also like to table, in both official languages, an amendment to Bill C-3, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canada Labour Code.

Finally, there have been discussions among the parties, and I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, special order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-2, An Act to provide further support in response to COVID-19, as amended, be deemed concurred in at the report stage, that the motion for third reading of the bill be deemed moved and seconded and that the House proceed immediately to a recorded division on the motion for third reading.

● (1530)

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. minister moving the motion will please say nay. It is agreed.

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

I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

AN ACT TO PROVIDE FURTHER SUPPORT IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.) moved that Bill C-2, An Act to provide further support in response to COVID-19, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-2.

[*English*]

Call in the members.

• (1615)

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

(*Division No. 18*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Atwin
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blois	Boissonnault
Bradford	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Carr
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Garneau	Garon
Gaudreau	Gerretsen
Gill	Gould
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Joly	Jones

Jowhari	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lemire
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Michaud	Miller
Morrice	Morrissey
Murray	Naqi
Ng	Noormohamed
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Pauzé	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Sorbara	Spengemann
Ste-Marie	St-Onge
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thériault
Therrien	Thompson
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vignola	Villemure
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Weiler	Wilkinson
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Government Orders

NAYS

Members

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Ashton	Bachrach
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Berthold	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney
Block	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Calkins
Cannings	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Collins (Victoria)
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	Deltell

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Findlay	Gallant
Garrison	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Green
Hallan	Hoback
Hughes	Idlout
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Martel	Masse
Mathysen	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
McPherson	Melillo
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Perkins
Poilievre	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shiple
Singh	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
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Warkentin	Waugh
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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, special order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-3, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canada Labour Code be disposed of as follows:

1. the bill, as amended, be deemed to have been concurred at the report stage with the further amendments contained in the document tabled earlier today;

2. the bill be immediately considered at third reading stage;

3. when the bill is taken up at third reading stage, a member of each recognized party be allowed to speak for not more than 10 minutes each followed by five minutes for questions and comments and, at the conclusion of the time provided for debate or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, the bill shall be deemed read a third time and passed;

4. the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections to the bill as may be necessary to give effect to this motion; and

5. after the completion of proceedings on the bill, the House shall stand adjourned until Monday, January 31, 2022, provided that, for the purposes of any Standing Order, it shall be deemed to have been adjourned pursuant to Standing Order 28 and be deemed to have sat on Friday, December 17, 2021.

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

[Translation]

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

I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

The Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to the third reading stage of Bill C-3.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.) moved that Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canada Labour Code, be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am deeply grateful for the leadership shown in the House today. All parties supported Bill C-3 at second reading; all parties supported Bill C-3 at committee, and all parties are now supporting the passage of Bill C-3 with reasoned amendments from the opposition.

I want to recognize my opposition critics: the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and the member for Thérèse-De Blainville. We worked with urgency and with openness.

I want to thank the members of HUMA for taking up this bill with the swiftness it deserved and giving it due and reasoned consideration.

I also want to recognize the House leaders, as well as the Minister of Justice, for their work.

I want to recognize all the officials who worked diligently on this legislation.

[Translation]

The pandemic has shown us that many workers do not have paid sick leave.

• (1620)

[English]

No one should have to choose between staying home when they are sick or being able to afford rent and groceries.

[Translation]

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 are working with the provinces, territories and other interested stakeholders to develop with an action plan to legislate sick leave across the country.

[English]

Approximately 955,000 employees, approximately 6% of all Canadian employees, are working for 18,500 employers in federally regulated industries. In 2019, about 582,700 employees, representing 63.3% of all employees employed in federally regulated industries, had access to fewer than 10 days of paid sick leave to treat a personal illness or injury. Statistics from 2019 show that Canadian workers took an average of eight-and-a-half days of leave for illness and issues related to a disability.

As a government, we moved quickly and urgently on this bill, and parliamentarians of all parties and in both chambers have done the same. The last two years have shown us the cost of what further inaction would be: people forced to choose between going into work sick and risk spreading the virus to others and being able to afford groceries or rent, productivity loss, quarantine, shutdowns, lockdowns. The cost of inaction is too great. However, beyond the current pandemic, Bill C-3 would put in place an enduring protection for workers in our country.

I will speak briefly to the amendments, both those made at HUMA and those made today in the House. No medical certificate would be required for five days or less of paid sick leave. Requiring a medical certificate for each day of paid sick leave taken would have been too much of a barrier to access. I heard that from the House and Senate committees undertaking this bill.

An Ipsos poll that was taken just before the pandemic shows that 82% of Canadians would rather go to work sick than obtain a medical certificate. Workers would earn 10 days of paid sick leave throughout the year, but would have three days after the first 30 days of continuous work. This is something we heard again at committee, both in the House and Senate, and we deemed it important to provide.

Finally, anyone experiencing the loss of an immediate family member can feel shock and grief in addition to having their well-being and effectiveness at work impacted. Bill C-3 now includes 10 days of leave for the loss of an immediate family member. The loss of a child is devastating. It is a devastation no one should know. There is an amendment to Bill C-3 to provide eight weeks of leave for parents who are confronted with this unspeakable tragedy. Our government took steps to ensure that when workers experienced such a tragic event, there would be supports now in place.

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There is a lot more work to do. We must continue to move not only with speed, but with accuracy to implement this legislation. This has to be done right, but it has to be done quickly. The pandemic is relentless, but so are Canadians and the members of the House. We will engage urgently with stakeholders to do the necessary work to ensure workers in Canada have access to paid sick leave as soon as possible.

As has been the case with workers and their issues throughout Canada's history, no one has been as effective as, or shone a clearer light on the importance of this topic than, organized labour and Canada's unions. I want to specifically thank those groups, whether provincial labour federations, individual members of a local, or national union leaders, for the work they did to make this idea a reality.

I would also touch on the proposed Criminal Code offences and those amendments that would target intimidation and obstruction of health service workers. It was made clear that it is not an offence for people to attend or approach a health care facility simply to communicate information and to do so peacefully. We have all seen the necessity of those Criminal Code amendments.

I will close with two observations. One came very early on in my time as the labour minister when meeting with frontline workers. Someone asked that we stop calling them heroes and start treating them like human beings.

The other is a quote from Jim Stanford, the economist who wrote in *The Globe and Mail* earlier this month. He states:

It would be reckless and short-sighted to return to a pre-COVID "normal" that compelled sick workers to show up, regardless of the risk to others.

Today, members of the House said they unanimously agreed. The government and the House met the moment. This legislation will be a permanent support for workers and will help us fight, and finish the fight, against this pandemic.

I thank all the members of the House who supported this legislation and all those who have worked so hard to find a reasonable and honourable way forward. The message they have sent to Canadian workers and Canadians in general about how seriously we take the fight against the pandemic was written in their vote, which was unanimous.

• (1625)

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was not intending to ask a question. I was happy to stand and applaud the minister's lovely speech. Obviously, I am very pleased at the result here and that we worked so well together, so I will give him the opportunity to say a few more words about the importance of getting this done, particularly as my colleague's private member's bill with respect to bereavement leave was included in it. I was fearful it would never see the light of day as a private member's bill, so I am particularly honoured that the minister and government saw fit to work with us to make it a reality. For that I thank them.

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Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, I am delighted to add that there was incredible co-operation shown in the House on this issue, and I want to personally thank the hon. member and my critics in general. We have come a long way. We have shown the House at its best. We have shown it to be trained on a mission and willing to make the compromises necessary in order to get this bill passed. However, I think the fact that it passed unanimously through the House is a clear sign not only of the seriousness of the issue and the concern parliamentarians have for the workers of this country, but also that when we want to, and when we are able to find that path forward, we will find it and will do good work here.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the minister. I recognize this is a very unusual way to pass a private member's bill in a government bill. I was just telling my colleagues I could not find another example of this having been done in such a manner. I also want to say to the member for Central Nova that he is forgiven for drawing me as number 293 in the private member's bill draw as we were able to do this.

There are a few members in the caucus who I want to recognize very quickly. Like me, they are parents who lost kids as well, the member for Bay of Quinte, the member for Dufferin—Caledon, the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman and the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley. If I missed anyone, forgive me and come talk to me afterwards. As well, the Minister of Immigration lost a child, actually during the last Parliament, I believe. Then a former member, James Cumming lost his son, Garrett G-man Cumming, who passed away of Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

I also want to recognize and thank the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, our House leader, the Bloc House leader, the hon. member for La Prairie, the government House leader, the House leaders of the other parties and independent members who agreed to this unanimous consent motion.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

My colleagues know that bereavement leave for parents who have lost a child is very important to me. I lived through such a tragic event just before the Conservative Party convention in Halifax. It was really hard for my family and hard on my marriage at the time.

I hope that this law will serve as a model for the provinces. Once passed, it will only apply to federally regulated workers who fall under the Canada Labour Code. I hope that the provinces will be inspired by all these ideas and will include them in their own labour codes.

In addition, mothers and fathers will finally be equal. Over the past few decades, we have often talked about mothers who went through this. We must also think of the fathers who experienced this tragic loss. It is also just as important for children who lose a sister or a brother.

[*English*]

I also want to mention a few things. I returned to the House, it was about October 15, for the Infant Loss Awareness Day, to do a Standing Order 31 statement. I got really kind notes. I want to recognize

Bill Morneau, the minister of finance at the time. He sent me a really kind note. He is the father of several very well-accomplished ladies. I want to recognize him for the note. I have actually kept the note. I want to recognize the current Minister of Labour. He sent me a very kind note; I still have it in my desk. I hope it is okay I mention this. I kept that note since that time. I cannot say enough thanks to the House leaders for having done this.

I am speaking simply to the amendment. I have a Yiddish proverb, as I always do. I cannot help myself.

“If you want to make God laugh, tell him about your plans.”

Frankly, if anyone had told me back in 2015 that I would be tabling a private member's bill twice on bereavement leave for parents, moms and dads, I would have asked, “Why would I ever do such a thing? I am a fiscal guy. I love equalization. I love talking about numbers, foreign affairs issues, those types of things. Bereavement leave, miscarriage leave, Canada Labour Code leave is not what I would call in my bailiwick. It is not in my wheelhouse.” I made it my wheelhouse to try to get something done.

This is a beautiful Christmas gift to parents across Canada, and to myself as well. I want to say thank you. It is nice to know, and speaking as an optimist, a very cynical optimist, that politicians can come together sometimes and improve a government bill like this.

I wish you all a merry Christmas. Happy new year.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, with respect to the bill we are about to pass, I would like to begin by commending the Minister of Labour, who, as part of his new portfolio, had to lead a file pertaining to amendments to the Canada Labour Code, in order to strengthen workers' rights. Federally regulated employees, 58% of whom had no sick leave, will be able to access a bank of 10 paid sick days. This is an important step forward in the area of labour law.

The crisis we are going through has revealed how significant and important the presence of workers from all sectors is. All workers definitely contribute to our social and economic fortitude, and they deserve better working conditions.

Yesterday at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, I said that 10 days of sick leave should not be viewed solely as an expense.

Given the labour shortage, employers sometimes fear that they will have to carry a burden. However, the fact that employees seeking stability within their businesses can have benefits like paid sick leave can also be beneficial for employers. It helps attract and retain workers.

Salary is important to a worker, but having the right to annual leave and sick leave counts for a lot, too. We have taken a step forward. I would say to the minister that we have more work to do. There are still many things we need to strengthen in the Canada Labour Code.

In my first debate, I talked about the fact that the government had committed in its budget to raising the minimum wage for federally regulated employees. I think we should move forward on that. We have some great work ahead of us.

Workers can be thankful for the step we have taken, and I commend the work that was done in committee at the two meetings yesterday.

I think that we got the guarantees we were looking for with respect to strengthening the Criminal Code. Labour organizations told us how important this was, especially within the health care sector, since this measure is designed for them. Health care professionals and patients have experienced intimidation or have been prevented from doing their jobs. The act of intimidating a worker or impeding them from doing their job will now be considered an aggravating factor during sentencing.

However, the right to protest and picket is a very important right guaranteed by the Constitution, and many workers have used these methods to gain more rights. While I respect the right to protest, I think that we managed to provide additional protections for health care workers and for patients. We hope to never have reason for this provision of the Criminal Code to be enforced.

At the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, we, along with our Conservative colleagues, had the opportunity to discuss the bereavement leave measure. This is not talked about as much, but we did strengthen the bill by proposing a leave for parents who lose a child under the age of 18. The death of a child has a huge impact on a family and especially on women. This measure is another step forward.

• (1635)

I want to acknowledge the efforts to make improvements in this area, as we see in the report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities that was tabled yesterday in the House.

I think we can leave for the holidays with a sense of mission accomplished. I would not call this a giant leap for humanity, but it is a step toward a better quality of life for all workers.

Here is one more new year's wish: I wish for plenty of improvements to labour legislation.

• (1640)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was not planning to speak today, but I would like to after all. I listened to my colleagues' wonderful speeches, including the one by my colleague opposite. I believe that what we are doing today is very important.

I lost my daughter at birth 30 years ago. She was stillborn. I do not want to talk about that event specifically, but I do want to talk

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about what happened at work, where people had a hard time understanding what I was going through. That was 30 years ago, of course.

I would like to ask my colleague how Bill C-3 will change the workplace experience for the men and women dealing with this kind of situation. Why is this bill important for them?

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, my thoughts are with the member for what she went through.

We know these are very difficult things to experience. It will make a real difference in the workplace to know that a person in this situation will not have to worry about the time off they will be granted. They will be able to take the time they need to grieve and will not have to worry about losing their job because of it. The employment relationship will remain intact, and they will have time to take care of themselves.

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise quite sheepishly, having not received the memo on the festive tone of this afternoon's debates, so I will ask members to indulge me. In my community, plain talk is not bad manners, and I have prepared a full speech that does identify some gaps, which I think are germane to the conversation. This is not intended in any way to end off on a bad note or a sour note, but to really contemplate deeply what is at stake here in the House. It keeps me up at night, like many members I am sure, and it wakes me up early in the morning.

While there remains much to be said about the timing and need of the last election called by the Prime Minister, I have to admit the opportunity for me to retreat from this place of privilege and return to the doorsteps of my constituency provided me with an invaluable grounding for what is at stake among these future proceedings of the session. This is a monumental day, and I do not want to take anything away from that. It is a burden that we carry. In fact, we have asked millions of Canadians to carry a very heavy burden in order to make it through this COVID pandemic.

While returning to this topic and supporting Bill C-3, having heard the various interventions pertaining to the same, many members have questioned the relationship between the first two parts of this bill, which would amend the Criminal Code, and the third part, which would be establishing something under the Canada Labour Code.

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For those from the public, and who may be tuning in to this debate through livestream, or perhaps reading it in the Hansard, I will provide a summary of Bill C-3. The first two parts would amend the Criminal Code by creating two new offences relating to the protection of health care professionals and patient access to health care. The first offence would apply to any act of intimidation that is intended to cause fear in a patient, health care professional or any person who supports them and prevents them from accessing or providing health care services. The second offence would also cover intentional acts that prevent a person from accessing services provided by a health care professional. Both offences would be punishable by a maximum term of imprisonment of up to 10 years and up to two years on a summary conviction.

Part three, which seems to be where perhaps some people have the disconnect between these two, pertains to amending the Canada Labour Code to establish 10 days of paid sick leave. This leave would be available each calendar year to employees in federally regulated private sectors who have been continuously employed for more than one month.

In fairness, perhaps on the surface these two policies under different acts may not appear to be connected. It is in fact my intention today to offer my support for the deep relevance between these two interconnected parts. I would argue that the deep despair and well-documented societal impacts of four consecutive waves of COVID, each with its own circumstances of social isolation and economic hardships, are ultimately due to all levels of government's failure to adequately respond to the scale and the scope of this pandemic.

The utter fear, uncertainty and doubt experienced by segments of our population have made them especially susceptible to this anti-science, anti-government and, by extension, anti-health care movement, from which come many of the targeted and vile attacks we are now legislatively responding to.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, health care workers have faced a high risk of infection and violence. In fact, since long before the pandemic health care professionals are four times more likely to experience violence in the workplace than other professions. Unfortunately, many of these acts of violence go unreported. According to the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, in 2019 61% of nurses reported experiencing violence, harassment and assault on the job, and because women make up a significant portion of the health care workforce, they are disproportionately victimized by these acts of violence.

To discourage these acts of violence, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions has recommended amending the Criminal Code, which is what is before us today, so I commend them on their long-standing work. This request was also the subject of a 2019 health committee recommendation. Specifically, the committee recommended amending the Criminal Code to require that it be considered an aggravating factor in sentencing if the victim of assault is a health care worker. This recommendation was based upon the NDP's bill, Bill C-434, introduced by my dear friend and NDP caucus colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

• (1645)

As it pertains to putting the 10-day paid sick leave issue into context, people should never have to choose between their income and

their health. Since the beginning of this pandemic, the NDP caucus has been demanding that the Liberals provide workers with 10 days of paid sick leave.

After winning an initial concession on this leave by offering it to people with COVID-19, we succeeded in forcing the Liberals to offer two weeks of federally funded leave through the CRB sickness benefit. The New Democrats not only support 10 paid sick days, we led the calls for it in the House. My hon. colleague for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie fought hard at committee, where he tabled four amendments, two that were unanimously supported and two that were rejected.

I feel it important to note on the record today that the NDP fought for amendments that were accepted unanimously. One is that an employer cannot request a doctor's certificate for less than five consecutive sick days. This is major because stakeholders say that asking for a doctor's certificate is a barrier to its use and people would rather go to work than chase an appointment. Plus we know that it clogs up the health care system when it does not need to.

The second amendment that passed due to the hon. member is after 30 days of employment, the employee gets one day of sick leave. In the original version of the law, it was at the beginning of each month, which would have meant that someone hired on January 1 would have to wait until March 1 for their first accrued day.

Both amendments were intended to make sick days more accessible and the NDP forced the issue to make the program more accessible to workers and more responsive to their needs. This is a victory. The five consecutive days before the employer has the option to request a doctor's certificate will make a significant difference.

We did, however, have two other amendments that failed. The first amendment opposed by the Liberals was that all employees, upon hiring, would have access to four paid sick days. They would accumulate another six, one per month, as proposed in the bill, of up to 10 per year. Having four days right from the start is very important because stakeholders tell us that very rarely do people take a day off work and an illness often requires a few days off.

The minister, in his testimony yesterday morning, said that he was open to such an amendment, speaking of the urgency of the current omicron context. By voting against the amendment, the Liberals have refused to speed up access to paid sick days in the midst of another pandemic winter. Workers will continue to go to work sick since they will not have access to enough days to isolate themselves at home until next November at the earliest. This is irresponsible.

The second amendment that the Liberals opposed was that all employees with two or more years of seniority would get 10 sick days when the law came into effect. This would have provided access to the full strength of the program immediately for the majority of employees under federal jurisdiction. Since this amendment was rejected, all employees will begin accrual as if they were newly hired. I suggest that this is precisely because of these types of gaps in our social safety nets that we ultimately remain in this mess of targeted attacks on our hospitals and health care workers.

Last week, I called on the hon. member on the Conservative side to join our calls for more advances and protections. We have the opportunity to take a first step in the right direction in the House today as an informal form of sectoral bargaining for workers. We know this is going to be a vital protection.

This past election allowed me to speak to my constituents on their doorsteps. It is heartbreaking to feel as though people who I know to be rational, family members and classmates who I grew up with, neighbours I have known to be caring and compassionate, have been manipulated by the rhetoric of right-wing populism, grifters and agitators who would seek to turn this profound moment of suffering into some sort of personal sales pitch or nationwide tour targeting our frontline health care workers fighting the onslaught of successive waves of COVID.

For those caught up in this fear and confusion, I offer to endeavour to work harder as a member of Parliament to ensure that their basic needs are met and the most current evidence-based information is communicated without political interference or manipulation.

I call on the members of the House, who have rightly identified the divisions in our country, to recognize its root cause. It is the

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failure of all levels of government to adequately take care of the basic needs of all people, not just throughout COVID but in the decades preceding it.

I will close with the simple reassertion that these three parts of Bill C-3 are the cause and the effect of the social isolation, political estrangement and economic isolation felt by everyday people and, most unfortunate, targeted at our frontline health care workers. In taking better care of them, we will take better care of each other.

• (1650)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to wish a very merry Christmas and a happy new year to the good people of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksasing, all my colleagues in the House of Commons, all those who make it possible for us to be here and all Canadians. Be safe and travel safe.

[*Translation*]

It being 4:53 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, Bill C-3, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canada Labour Code, is deemed read a third time and passed.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Accordingly, pursuant to the order made earlier today, the House stands adjourned until Monday, January 31, 2022, at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

Happy holidays.

(The House adjourned at 4:54 p.m.)

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