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Thursday, September 24, 2020

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 24, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 67 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-2, An Act relating to economic recovery in response to COVID-19.

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

* * *

HON. JOHN TURNER

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today in the House to pay tribute to the late Right Hon. John Turner, Canada's 17th prime minister.

I knew John my whole life, and he believed fiercely in the values that make us who we are as Canadians, values like treating everyone with dignity and respect and always being willing to stand up for what is just and right. Today we remember him as a House of Commons man, a strong advocate for equality and a champion of our democracy.

[*Translation*]

We live in an extraordinary country, thanks in part to people like John Turner. John learned to love democracy very early in life. From his earliest years, his mother taught him the importance of public service.

Throughout his career, first as a lawyer and later as a politician, he was always the epitome of elegance and humility. John treated every person with dignity and respect. No matter how busy he was, he never forgot anyone's birthday.

As a member of Parliament, John had the privilege of serving three different provinces. Thanks to his mastery of the law and the democratic process, he was able to overhaul the Criminal Code. His work for the Department of Justice paved the way for legal aid in Canada, ensuring that every person could defend their rights, regardless of their economic or cultural background. These changes transformed the lives of millions of Canadians.

It was obvious to anyone who spoke with John how much he loved Canada. John always talked about his country with immense hope and optimism. For him, Canada was a place where people helped and respected one another, a place where equality was a way of life.

[*English*]

It was just last year that John was on the Hill to celebrate his 90th birthday with people from across the political spectrum, and I remember that he was still passionate about strengthening our democratic institutions. He used to say that "Democracy doesn't happen by accident." He was right.

John knew that keeping our democracy strong and free meant we needed to put in the hard work to keep it that way. He believed in the incredible power of young people to get involved in our democratic process and encouraged them to do that wherever he could. John knew that Canadians, regardless of age or background, formed the heart of our country and that our future depended on all of us working together for everyone.

Today, as we mourn his loss and reflect on his legacy, let us all remember our ability to give back to our own communities.

To John's wife, Geills, and their children Elizabeth, Michael, David and Andrew, to his grandchildren, his sister Brenda Norris and brother-in-law David Kilgour, your husband, loving father and brother was a great Canadian. We are all so lucky you shared him with us.

I invite my fellow Canadians to join us in signing the virtual book of condolences, and together, let us continue to work to defend and strengthen our democracy. As John once said, let us not take this country for granted.

Tributes

● (1010)

[Translation]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition and the Conservative Party of Canada, I have the honour to pay tribute to former prime minister the Right Hon. John Turner.

[English]

Some people leave their mark on this place in a way that outlasts them by decades. To walk the halls and see their portraits is to be reminded daily that we stand where they stood.

The tributes that have poured out for Mr. John Turner in the last week could easily lead one to believe that the very existence of the modern Liberal Party is his greatest legacy. So many veterans of the Martin and Chrétien campaigns of the 1990s and early 2000s took to television, to social media, and to local radio and newspapers this week to pay tribute to the man they give credit for getting them involved in politics.

Their stories had one common theme. They spoke to a plain truth that John Turner never forgot and that so many who held the same lofty offices as his have never known. John Turner cared about individual Canadians, and not just those he encountered in the halls of power, where he spent more than 20 years as attorney general, finance minister, prime minister and leader of the opposition. Stories this week have been set in airplanes, taverns, church basements and coffee shops, stories of a man who took the extra time to know Canadians' stories and remember their names.

We have a tendency in moments like this to turn men into monuments, and with a prime minister who was an Olympic athlete and a Rhodes Scholar, that would be very easy to do. However, to Canadians who shared their stories this week of a man who remembered their names years after first meeting them, of a politician who inspired them to get off the couch, of an adversary without a shred of malice in his heart, the John Turner who comes through is one who always had more interest in being a person than he ever had in being a portrait.

I will relate a story. It is very interesting, and when I first heard it I questioned whether it was actually true. When I tell the story, I think those who have not heard it will share in my awe.

As the story goes, the young Liberal MP John Turner and his wife were vacationing in Barbados. While on the beach one morning, Mr. Turner's wife noticed a man out for a swim who appeared to be in trouble. The surf was rough that day. There was a strong undertow and the elderly man was not a strong swimmer. Mr. Turner's wife anxiously alerted her husband to the situation. Without hesitation, the young MP, who was a competitive swimmer in his university days, plunged into the surf. Grasping the man in a life-saving hold, he struggled against the undertow and finally made it back to shore.

Once on the beach, Mr. Turner set out to give the man mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. When the resuscitated gentleman came to his senses, who was the person Mr. Turner had saved? It was none other than the Progressive Conservative leader, former prime minister and then leader of the opposition John Diefenbaker. Is that not unbelievable? It is one thing to run into a colleague on a holiday, es-

pecially an opposition colleague, but it is another thing to save that individual's life. What an amazing and wonderful story.

They say that the greatest compliments are those that come from our staunchest adversaries, and in spite of being one of his fiercest adversaries, former Progressive Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney had this to say about Mr. Turner:

The fact that he was a gentleman set him apart.... He was leader of the opposition...and while we had many battles...there was no malice in the man. He was a man of principle, so he brought a great sense of dignity both to himself and to the various jobs he held.

He always conducted himself with dignity and with elegance, so I think he's going to be remembered, of course, as a prime minister, but also as a parliamentarian, who contributed a great deal to Canada in the course of a highly successful life.

As I say, he brought to politics a very, very good mind and a vision for Canada. He brought all those values, including integrity and dignity, to his job. He symbolized, I thought, much of what was best about Canada.

What wonderful words from former prime minister Brian Mulroney about the Right. Hon. John Turner.

● (1015)

In closing, history has taught us that we always knew where John Turner stood. It did not matter if it was the prime minister he served, the Canadian people he faced or the party that he dedicated his life to. He did the hard job for every prime minister he served, and from what I have heard, when he disagreed with them they knew it. In fact, John Turner was the last finance minister to have resigned from cabinet on principle. Mr. Turner had all the qualities one would want in a Canadian statesman, even when people disagreed with him, and sometimes especially when people disagreed with him.

Our public life is richer because of the contributions the Right Hon. John Turner made. May he rest in peace.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, John Napier Turner was born in England in 1929. He emigrated to Canada with his mother in 1932 after his father died.

A true athlete, he qualified for the 1948 Olympics in London but was unable to compete because of a knee injury. Although sprinting was his speciality, his political career was more like a marathon.

John Turner entered politics for the first time in 1962, when he was elected to represent the Liberal Party of Canada in the riding of Saint-Laurent—Saint-Georges, on the Island of Montreal. Six years later, in 1968, this ambitious man ran to succeed Lester B. Pearson as the leader of the Liberal Party. However, it was Pierre Elliott Trudeau who became the Liberal leader and then prime minister.

As the justice minister under that government, John Turner decriminalized abortion and homosexuality. These changes to the Criminal code were a major step forward for the rights of women and the LGBT community. It was also in his capacity as justice minister that Mr. Turner applied the controversial War Measures Act during the October 1970 crisis. In 1972, he became finance minister, a position he held for three years.

Members will recall that John Turner was not happy about Quebec not being a party to the constitutional agreement of 1982. While his Liberal Party colleagues were adamantly opposed to recognizing Quebec's distinct character, John Turner was in favour of the Meech Lake accord. That is why Jean Chrétien, his long-time political rival, accused him of not standing up to Quebec.

In 1984 John Turner finally achieved his dream, replacing Pierre Elliott Trudeau as the leader of the Liberal Party and becoming Prime Minister. Although his time as Prime Minister was short, lasting only 79 days, John Turner loyally remained the leader of the official opposition until 1990 and finally retired from politics in 1993.

His important contribution to politics deserves recognition.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends mourning his loss today.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we are paying tribute to John Napier Turner, who made major contributions to politics in Canada.

[English]

With the passing of John Turner we mourn a prime minister of Canada and a man who made incredible contributions to public life as a minister of finance, a minister of justice, and briefly as a prime minister and as the leader of the opposition in his decades of public life.

As the House is well aware, John Turner was larger than life outside of politics as well. He was a Rhodes scholar, a talented athlete and a skilled lawyer.

Ed Broadbent, a former leader of the NDP, who served with him in Parliament, said of him that of all the party leaders he had known, John Turner had the deepest respect for Parliament and for its democratic rules and procedures.

In the end, though, he never did take a seat in Parliament as a prime minister, 11 seats down from your seat, Mr. Speaker.

We can talk about his contributions. We can certainly talk about his background. However, I would like to speak about his being an inspiration to so many Canadians. I know this because of my own family history. My father, who is now 98 and still married to my mother, who is 97—we have good genes in New Westminster—was a long-time school administrator and teacher, and someone who won a high school basketball championship in British Columbia and was a school board trustee in New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby. He had never run for higher office, but when John Turner became the leader of the Liberal Party, he was inspired and sought and won the Liberal nomination. He ran for the Liberals in that riding, 20 years before I ran for the NDP. Though that election did not

turn out as either my father or John Turner had planned, the reality is that John Turner inspired hundreds of candidates across the country and millions of Canadians in the elections of 1984 and 1988. If members were to visit my parents' home in New Westminster, B.C., they would see many pictures of John Turner with my father.

That inspiration John Turner developed and provoked in so many Canadians is something that lives today. His deep respect for democracy was something I think all Canadians admire. The reality is that our democracy is as good and as strong as the calibre of the representatives Canadians choose for themselves.

John Turner was an exemplary public servant and will be greatly missed.

● (1020)

[Translation]

The NDP caucus and our leader offer our sincere condolences to the family and friends of John Napier Turner.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like the unanimous consent of the House to also offer condolences on behalf of the Green Party.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to thank all of my colleagues.

It is a great honour for me to address the chamber to pay tribute to my friend, John Turner.

[English]

I, obviously, am from a different generation, and in case anyone thinks I have changed sides, I am wearing red today in honour of John Turner. I do not know how I became so lucky to be considered worthy to be one of the few opposition MPs invited to what I think will go down in history as an extraordinary event, his 90th birthday party on June 10 last year.

Routine Proceedings

John Turner did not approach reflections on his 90th birthday as someone who was out of it, who was not paying attention, who was just reflecting on the past, but gave a speech that was a clarion call to democracy. To his last days, he was engaged in the life of this country. He loved Canada so passionately, and his contributions to this country must not be underestimated. When he was Minister of Justice, he gave us legal aid. He said that everyone had to have access to the law, that they had to have access to a defence. He also took the first step on the very long road to LGBTQ rights by ending the criminality of same-sex relations in this country through a change to the Criminal Code.

He did much, and he was remembered and celebrated at that birthday party, as we have now heard, by Brian Mulroney by video and other living prime ministers who were present, including the Right Hon. Joe Clark, who gave a spectacular address, the Right Hon. Paul Martin and the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien. It was an extraordinary evening.

I want to give my condolences to Geills; Elizabeth; granddaughter, Fiona, and to my dear friends, Laura and David Kilgour, family members of someone who exemplifies what it means to be a great Canadian. John Turner is the exemplar of what that looks like: John Turner was a great Canadian.

Rather than spending anymore time saying things about him that I have learned, I have to say that he fought so hard against the creation of the PMO as a big-time institution. He was there, working for our current prime minister's father. Indeed, Tom Axworthy famously relates how when he was working for Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Tom was sent with a message from John Turner, Minister of Finance. Turner said to him, "You just go back there and tell the boss that I don't need some junior G-man from PMO coming around here to tell me what to do." Those were the days. It has taken a while.

I want to end what I am saying by quoting what John Turner told us on his birthday. It goes to the essence of what he meant by saying that democracy does not happen by accident, as the Prime Minister has mentioned. He said that often:

I don't like the use of the term "backbencher" when describing MPs. It is the MP who holds a prominent position in the House of Commons. My thinking on this is honed from the Magna Carta—one of the greatest pieces of democracy ever. Written in 1215, it laid out the essence of democracy in Great Britain and became the template of democracy worldwide.

Then, reflecting on the Magna Carta and the importance of the people voting, and the people who are elected occupying the position of government, he said:

It's so different today, where Prime Ministers

—and here I want to make sure that is plural, so that no one thinks they are being singled out—

act in a manner that I can only describe as unilateral.

The most important part of democracy in my view is that "people govern people". We have to hold that principle sacred...where debate and opinion of people matter.

...democracy does not happen by accident.

I thank John Turner for his constant reminder that we have to contribute to our society and give back. He lived under principles of faith as a devote Catholic. He understood that what we do to

each other, we can expect to be done unto us, and we have an obligation to the entire family of humanity.

Eternal rest grant unto him. Light perpetual shine upon him. May he rest in peace.

● (1025)

The Speaker: I am grateful that we are able to come together today to pay our respects to our colleague as members of the parliamentary family. During and even beyond his long political career, John Turner was a passionate defender of our parliamentary democracy.

[*Translation*]

Together let's commemorate the life of Canada's 17th prime minister.

I invite all hon. members to stand to observe a moment of silence.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

HONG KONG

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition from Canadians concerned with the passing of the national security legislation in Hong Kong. It is their belief that the passing of this law is in gross violation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the one country, two system framework. The petitioners call upon the government to impose appropriate sanctions under the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act.

● (1030)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be back. I am presenting two petitions today. The first is in support of Bill S-204, which was put forward in the Senate by Senator Salma Ataullahjan. The bill would make it a criminal offence for Canadians to go abroad to receive an organ for which there has not been consent, and it would also create a provision to make someone inadmissible to Canada if they had been involved in organ harvesting or trafficking. This is an important human rights bill. Efforts have been made to pass similar versions of this bill in this and the other place for over 10 years.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition speaks to the government's priorities with respect to health care in January and February when it could have been focusing on improving seniors care and preparing for a response to the pandemic. The government's focus was instead on removing vital safeguards associated with the government's euthanasia regime. The petitioners raise concern about the government's plans previously in Bill C-7 to eliminate a 10-day reflection period and also reduce the number of witnesses required. The petitioners believe that these were important safeguards that need to be in place and question the government's priorities with respect to removing safeguards when there are so many other vital health care issues that we should be focused on.

MATERNITY LEAVE

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions that I would like to table today. The first is signed by over 2,600 Canadians and calls on the government to extend paid maternity leave for a minimum of three months for mothers in Canada during the pandemic, and noting that many of them are not receiving adequate health care due to the redirection of these health resources as a result of COVID-19. As well, many are not able to get affordable, quality child care at this time. As such, the petitioners note that COVID-19 has significantly impacted their physical and mental health and call on the government to allow mothers who are currently on 12 months of maternity leave the option of switching to 18 months of maternity leave.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has over 6,000 signatures. The petitioners call for action from the government for people who are struggling with family separation because of the delay in spousal sponsorship applications. People are desperate to reunite with their loved ones, yet the immigration process for spousal sponsorship has ground to a halt. They call on the government to create a special temporary resident visa for applicants, with reasonable eligibility criteria and conditions, and to allow spouses and their children from visa required countries to easily apply for the STRV online and to issue and deliver multi-entry STRVs electronically and expeditiously. We need to ensure that the capacity to process applications is increased and that we address the lengthy delays that exist. Prompt action is required.

OPIOIDS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to table a petition on behalf of residents from Cumberland and Courtney. They call on the government to declare the current opioid overdose and fentanyl poisoning crisis a national public health emergency under the Emergencies Act in order that the government can manage and resource this crisis with the aim of reducing and eliminating preventable deaths from poisoned fentanyl. We have lost over 147 residents in British Columbia in August alone. The government has not declared it a public health emergency despite the fact that over 15,000 Canadians have died since 2016. The petitioners want the government to reform current drug policy and decriminalize personal possession. Last, they want the government to create with urgency and immediacy a system to provide safe, unadulterated access to substances so that people who

Routine Proceedings

use substances experimentally, recreationally or chronically are not at imminent risk of overdose due to a contaminated source. These petitioners are mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters and cousins of people who have died and lost loved ones. The government needs to take action.

● (1035)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today on the traditional territory of the Algonquin peoples to present the following petition. It relates to an aspect of the climate crisis and calls on the government to deal with how we send our money to developing countries and how that money should be allocated.

The petitioners recognize that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has clearly indicated that the impact of accelerated global warming has disproportionate impacts on the most vulnerable. This is increasing inequities, particularly for women, in the developing world. Approximately a third of Canada's climate finance has been in investment projects for adaptation and is, very specifically, missing some opportunities to allocate money as grants instead of loans.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to commit at least 50% of Canada's public climate finance for developing countries to adaptation and at least 15% to projects that target gender equality as a primary objective.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to stand today to present a petition by seniors advocates in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

COVID-19 has exposed the degradation of care to seniors and the instability of the workforce.

Privilege

The petitioners are calling on the government to include long-term care in the public health system by creating national standards for care and staffing levels under the Canada Health Act and ensure accountability; eliminate profit-making by government-funded long-term care facilities, ensure funds are spent as allocated and ban subcontracting; standardize equitable living wages and benefits, and implement single-site employment for all staff; strengthen government oversight, and initiate strong penalties and clawbacks for facilities not complying with the regulations; and require independent family councils with protect rights.

I would like to thank Penny MacCourt in my riding. There are 2,500 signatures on this petition.

The Speaker: Before proceeding, I just want to remind all members that when presenting petitions we ask that they be as brief as possible and have a synopsis. We only have limited time, and we want to make sure that all members get to present their petitions.

I wish to inform the House that, because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by 20 minutes today.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

PROVISION OF DOCUMENTS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today on a question of privilege concerning the Liberal government's disrespect of an order of the Standing Committee on Finance requiring the production of records related to the Prime Minister's half-billion-dollar WE scandal.

At its July 7 meeting, the finance committee adopted the following motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a), the Committee order that any contracts concluded with We Charity and Me to We, all briefing notes, memos and emails, including the contribution agreement between the government and the organization, from senior officials prepared for or sent to any Minister regarding the design and creation of the Canada Student Service Grant, as well as any written correspondence and records of other correspondence with We Charity and Me to We from March 2020 be provided to the Committee no later than August 8, 2020; that matters of Cabinet confidence and national security be excluded from the request; and that any redactions necessary, including to protect the privacy of Canadian citizens and permanent residents whose names and personal information may be included in the documents, as well as public servants who have been providing assistance on this matter, be made by the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel of the House of Commons.

On or about August 8, the government provided the finance committee's clerk with about 5,600 pages of materials. These documents were subsequently released to committee members on August 18, mere minutes before the prorogation of Parliament. It is important to understand that these pages often included several copies of the same emails and, worse, many of the pages featured blacked-out, redacted, obscured and hidden content. It is those redactions that trouble me, and they should trouble every member of Parliament.

I will quote Speaker Milliken's highly publicized Afghan detainee documents ruling from April 27, 2010. This is on page 2042 of the debates. He said:

Before us are issues that question the very foundations upon which our parliamentary system is built. In a system of responsible government, the fundamental

right of the House of Commons to hold the government to account for its actions is an indisputable privilege and in fact an obligation.

The finance committee exercised its privilege and obligation to get to the bottom of this extraordinarily troubling WE scandal wherein the Prime Minister handed his friends \$543.33 million in a contribution agreement to run a paid volunteer scheme, instead of trusting Canada's hard-working public servants to administer the CSSG.

The order I quoted, which passed, allowed for cabinet confidences and national security content to be excluded. All other vetting was to be done by the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel. Of course, a contract to a children's charity for a youth volunteering program would not involve national security, but it is simply a standard form for motions generally used at committees lately.

The government, however, contravened the committee's order, as is explained in the law clerk's own August 18 letter to the finance committee:

The letters accompanying the documents for each department stated that redactions had been made to protect Cabinet confidences in accordance with the motion adopted by FINA. In addition, the letters and documents indicate that the departments had also made redactions to protect personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act, to protect third party information and information on the vulnerability of their computer or communication systems, or methods employed to protect their systems. These latter grounds for exemption from disclosure are contained in the Access to Information Act.

Upon reception of the documents on August 9, 2020, you provided them to my Office so that we could make the necessary redactions to protect the privacy of Canadian citizens and permanent residents, as well as public services as contemplated by the production order. However, as mentioned above, the documents had already been redacted by the departments to protect personal information and on other grounds.

Here comes the kicker:

As my Office has not been given the opportunity to see the unredacted documents, we are not able to confirm whether those redactions are consistent with the order of Committee.

● (1040)

Further down the page, Mr. Dufresne adds the following:

As mentioned above, the department made certain redactions to the documents on grounds that were not contemplated in the order of the Committee.

A moment ago, I referred to the finance committee using a familiar form of motion. I should pause here to note that the entire pattern of document redactions is also familiar. On February 26, the health committee adopted a document production order seeking records concerning the Liberal government's preparations for the current pandemic. In response, the government provided significantly censored documents, covering up key details about the Liberals' failures to prepare Canada adequately against COVID-19. That episode required Mr. Dufresne to write a similar letter to the clerk of the health committee noting the government's open defiance of a parliamentary committee exercising its constitutional rights.

For a government that preaches transparency and openness by default, its track record of blocking out inconvenient facts speaks louder. However, one significant evolution since the health committee's experience is that here the government tried to deflect responsibility elsewhere for the redactions.

According to an article on August 27 on CBC News entitled, "Commons law clerk says government went too far in redacting WE Charity documents":

Last week, a spokesperson for the Prime Minister's Office told CBC News that the redactions were done by the parliamentary law clerk, who was following the committee's direction to remove documents covered by cabinet confidentiality and personal information about Canadian citizens.

The Prime Minister's Office was trying to deny its complicity in the cover-up concerning these documents. In fact, this seems to have been a talking point circulated among Liberals.

On the evening of August 19, I was part of a panel discussion on CBC's *Power & Politics* along with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice. He repeated the Prime Minister's Office's alternative facts and told viewers that night, "The motion included a proviso that redactions should be done as necessary to protect certain interests, including privacy interests, etc., and those should be done by House administration, including the Office of the Law Clerk. That is exactly what happened in this case. The motion was followed to the letter. Redactions were done not by the government and not by political staff but by House of Commons objective officials."

The denials of the Prime Minister's Office have been exposed as bald-faced lies in the law clerk's letter. Those denials were also given voice by the parliamentary secretary, who had likely been unwittingly briefed and scripted by the PMO to believe that they were true.

It is my respectful submission, Mr. Speaker, that two separate grounds for a prima facie contempt of Parliament are made out in these facts.

First, as the law clerk and parliamentary counsel informed the committee's clerk on August 18, the government disrespected a lawful order of a committee of the House of Commons to produce documents. This is, for reasons I will argue, an appropriate case to come directly before the House.

Second, the Prime Minister's Office and the parliamentary secretary, in attempting to deflect criticism from the government's redaction of those documents in disobedience of a committee's order,

Privilege

made misrepresentations about the work of a table office of this House and risked damaging his reputation in the process.

Allow me to offer you, Mr. Speaker, some of the applicable precedents and procedural background to these issues.

As to the first ground, the breach of a committee order, the law clerk's own letter helpfully offers a succinct explanation of the situation. This is what it says:

We note that the House's and its committees' power to order the production of records is absolute and unfettered as it constitutes a constitutional parliamentary privilege that supersedes statutory obligations, such as the exemptions found in the Access to Information Act. The House and its committees are the appropriate authority to determine whether any reason for withholding the documents should be accepted or not. One such measure is the Committee's decision to have my Office make the necessary redactions to protect personal information and the public servants providing assistance in this matter.

• (1045)

Page 137 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, explains the source of this authority:

By virtue of the preamble and section 18 of the Constitution Act, 1867, Parliament has the ability to institute its own inquiries, to require the attendance of witnesses and to order the production of documents, rights which are fundamental to its proper functioning. These rights are as old as Parliament itself.

Bosc and Gagnon add, further down on that same page, that:

For the purposes of an inquiry, the committee may send for any papers that are relevant to its order of reference.

This right to order the production of documents is unlimited. At pages 984 to 986, Bosc and Gagnon elaborate that:

Public servants and Ministers may sometimes invoke their obligations under certain legislation to justify their position. Companies may be reluctant to release papers which could jeopardize their industrial security or infringe upon their legal obligations, particularly with regard to the protection of personal information. Others have cited solicitor-client privilege in refusing to allow access to legal papers or notices.

These types of situations have absolutely no bearing on the power of committees to order the production of papers and records. No statute or practice diminishes the fullness of that power rooted in House privileges unless there is an explicit legal provision to that effect, or unless the House adopts a specific resolution limiting the power. The House has never set a limit on its power to order the production of papers and records.

Tension between government and Parliament on the interaction between the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act on the one hand, with the document production orders on the other, is as old as the laws themselves.

Some books were not available from the Library of Parliament due to COVID limitations, so I am drawing from digital text.

For example, the first report of the former Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections from the third session of the 34th Parliament states, at page 9 of the Journals for May 29, 1991:

Privilege

After careful consideration and consultation, the committee has concluded there is nothing in the Privacy Act to prevent the House of Commons from issuing an order for the production of unexpurgated versions of the two reports.... The House, in our opinion, has the absolute power to issue an order requiring the solicitor General to provide the two reports in their entirety.

Disregarding a committee order is a very serious matter. Page 239 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, explains this:

Disobedience to rules or orders represents an affront to the dignity of the House, and accordingly the House could take action, not simply for satisfaction but to ensure that the House of Commons is held in the respect necessary for its authority to be vindicated. Without proper respect, the House of Commons could not function. Thus, disobedience may well be considered contempt.

In substituting its own judgment for the finance committee's or the law clerk's, the government has overstepped its authority and flouted the will of the finance committee.

Sir John Bourinot in his first edition of *Parliamentary Procedure and Practice in the Dominion of Canada*, wrote at page 281:

But it must be remembered that under all circumstances it is for the House to consider whether the reasons given for refusing the information are sufficient. The right of Parliament to obtain every possible information on public questions is undoubted, and the circumstances must be exceptional, and the reasons very cogent, when it cannot be at once laid before the Houses.

In the Afghan documents ruling, the chair articulated at page 2,044 an approach to raising those "reasons very cogent", namely to make the case through the persuasion of debate and the offering of amendments to the motion under debate.

In the end the government does not have the final say for, as Speaker Milliken put it:

The House debated the matter and voted to adopt an Order for the production of documents despite the request of the Government.

● (1050)

In usurping the role assigned to the law clerk, the Liberal government's evasion of accountability represents a grave affront to the dignity and authority of the House of Commons.

Page 138 of Bosc and Gagnon speaks to the present situation stating, "If such an order is ignored, the committee has no means to enforce the order on its own. It may report the matter to the House and recommend that appropriate action be taken. It is then a decision of the House whether or not to issue an order for the production of papers."

Obviously, the committee was unable to report its situation directly to the House because the Prime Minister shut down Parliament through prorogation quite literally within minutes of the documents becoming available. In fact, it has become perfectly plain for all to see the motivation for prorogation was to shut down committee investigations getting too close to the Prime Minister for his own comfort.

If the Speech from the Throne was about presenting a refreshing agenda reflecting the COVID pandemic, the Prime Minister simply could have prorogued Parliament the night before last, or yesterday morning for that matter. He did not need to shut down Parliament on August 18. The only thing that accomplished was killing committee investigations cold in their tracks.

This brings me to page 152 and 153 of Bosc and Gagnon, which I want to address directly. They state, "Speakers have consistently ruled that, except in the most extreme situations, they will hear questions of privilege arising from committee proceedings only upon presentation of a report from the committee which deals directly with the matter".

I would respectfully submit the present situation is one of those extreme cases where the Speaker's direct intervention is warranted. This is not a matter in which we can just pick up tomorrow where we left off.

Page 977 of Bosc and Gagnon explains, "Certain specific conditions must be met to continue with a study begun during a previous session or Parliament.... Finally, committees must be constituted; that is, they must be assigned members and a Chair must be chosen."

The finance committee has no members and it has no chair. In fact, if the Liberals were being particularly cynical, they could exploit Parliamentary tactics to keep our committees from considering substantive business until November.

On December 4, 1992, the House considered a question of privilege concerning the intimidation of a subcommittee witness. In making his argument, then Liberal deputy House leader Don Boudria said at page 14,630 of the Debates:

I wish to bring to your attention in the unlikely event that you would be tempted to rule that this matter should be dealt with at committee, that in fact the committees are in the process of winding down for the Christmas period.

This evidence was brought before a sub-committee which has terminated its proceedings for the next few months. Therefore, the evidence on this could only be heard before committee in a number of months from now at the earliest, if at all, in the event of a prorogation of Parliament later.

For his part, Mr. Speaker Fraser argued at page 14,631, ruling, "Some mention has been made that this matter arose in a committee and hon. members will have heard me say many times that usually matters should be put back to committee. My own feeling is that under the circumstances which have been explained to me that is not the convenient or appropriate thing to do at this time."

Mr. Speaker, your most recent privilege ruling concerned a complaint about something that has previously arisen in committee of the whole and Bosc and Gagnon explain on page 919 its relevance to the present case, stating, "Once that committee has completed its business, it ceases to exist."

In your ruling on July 22, 2020, at page 2,701 of the Debates you said, "I accept that the particular circumstances of this situation, notably the challenge surrounding the committee of the whole format, do make it appropriate to bring the matter to the Speaker."

● (1055)

We are, I would argue, in substantively the same position today with standing committees such as the finance committee. Committees were terminated with prorogation and have not yet been reconstituted, and may not be for some time.

I respectfully submit that you ought to extend by analogy your July ruling, not to mention Fraser's 1992 ruling, to the present circumstances of unconstituted standing committees. Prorogation denied the committee the opportunity to meet and to report this abuse by the government to this House. The time necessary to reconstitute committees and the delays that could be attempted compound this problem. The House must have a means to address behaviour contemptuous of committees.

Having made out the grounds for finding a *prima facie* contempt, I want to speak briefly on the remedy. When members rise on questions of privilege, the Chair always hears that they are prepared to move an appropriate motion. I, too, am prepared to do so. However, I quote Speaker Milliken, who asked rhetorically in the 2010 ruling I cited, at page 2,044:

The authorities I have cited are unanimous in the view of the House's privilege to ask for the production of papers and many go on to explain that accommodations are made between those seeking information and those in possession of it to ensure that arrangements are made in the best interests of the public they both serve.

...Is it possible to put in place a mechanism by which these documents could be made available to the House without compromising the security and confidentiality of the information they contain? In other words, is it possible for the two sides, working together in the best interests of the Canadians they serve, to devise a means where both their concerns are met? Surely that is not too much to hope for.

This notion of a *prima facie* ruling forcing an opportunity to reach a negotiated settlement before addressing the matter before a motion and vote was echoed by Speaker Levac of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on September 13, 2012, at page 5 of the Votes and Proceedings. It is a ruling that should ring bells for some Liberals across the way, specifically for staffers in the Prime Minister's Office. It concerned the Dalton McGuinty government's defiance of a document production order related to the gas plant scandal.

Many of the folks at the heart of the Ontario Liberal operation later picked up and headed down the 401 to Ottawa, some with outrageously high expense claims I should add, and they brought their political playbooks to the nation's capital. One of them who did not make it to Ottawa though was Dalton McGuinty's chief of staff. He was instead sentenced to imprisonment for his role in destroying gas plant scandal records, so it should go without saying that opposition members of Parliament are anxious to lay hands on the full records of the sweetheart deal between the Prime Minister's friends at WE and the Canadian taxpayers.

The Conservatives are prepared to be constructive and reasonable if it means getting expeditious access to the documents in question. Perhaps in the time you are deliberating on these issues we may be able to reach an adequate compromise. To throw out an idea, I note that among the ranks of the official opposition are several privy councillors. One or more of them, on the strengths of their Privy Council oaths, could view the documents to be able to provide assurances to other MPs that the government's grounds for redactions are legitimately claimed.

I recognize that solution may not work well for members of the other two opposition parties. Perhaps an alternative would be for the government to simply allow the House law clerk and his team of lawyers a chance to view the original documents so they can provide MPs with these assurances. I note in passing that the law clerk's own special adviser and counsel previously served as chief

of staff to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, so I could not imagine the Liberals having a serious objection to this course of action. Nonetheless, my point is that there are solutions staring us right in the face, if only the Liberal government would engage us on them.

However, if discussions cannot reach an expeditious compromise, I am fully prepared to put a solution forward by way of a motion for the House to decide.

Next, I would like to turn to the second ground for a *prima facie* contempt finding: the Prime Minister's Office's lies about the law clerk redacting the documents.

● (1100)

Bosc and Gagnon explain this contempt at page 81, which states:

There are, however, other affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges. Thus, the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege: tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties; or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House, such as disobedience of its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its Members, or its officers.

It is worth noting here that the corresponding entry in *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, fourth edition, at page 763, clarifies that the reference to libels extends to slanders. However, in any event, Bosc and Gagnon, at page 81, elaborates upon the scope of contempt of Parliament as follows:

The House of Commons enjoys very wide latitude in maintaining its dignity and authority through the exercise of its contempt power. In other words, the House may consider any misconduct to be contempt and may deal with it accordingly....

Throughout the Commonwealth most procedural authorities hold that contempts, as opposed to privileges, cannot be enumerated or categorized.

To be clear, Mr. Dufresne is, of course, a table officer of the House. Citation 219 of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, sixth edition, reminds us, "The Officers in the service of the House of Commons are the Clerk of the House, the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, the Deputy Clerk, and the Clerks Assistant."

The Prime Minister's Office, in its effort to spin its way out of a scandal, which has enveloped the whole of government and claimed the career of a finance minister, lied about the work of Mr. Dufresne, attempting to lay blame at his feet. What is more is that the Prime Minister's staff enlisted a member of the House, the member for Parkdale—High Park, to go on television to spread their spin about the law clerk. Maingot, at page 250, writes, "As in the case of a court of law, the House of Commons is entitled to the utmost respect; thus, when someone publishes libellous reflections on the House, they will be treated as contempt of the House."

Privilege

Indeed, in a case concerning the defamation of a table officer, Mr. Speaker Tusa of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, on June 24, 1987, at page 79 of the Journals, found a prima facie case of privilege about remarks which “may have harmed the credibility of the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk”. In that case, the legislative assembly subsequently adopted the following motion:

That this House accepts the apology of the Minister of Justice with respect to his public remarks attacking the credibility of the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk, and confirms that those remarks constituted a breach of the privileges of this Assembly.

Madam Speaker Sauvé articulated a view on October 29, 1980, at page 4213 of the Debates, on an appropriate threshold when falsehoods were deployed. She stated:

Members will appreciate that the expression “false” is subject to but one interpretation in the House of Commons Debates, that is, pejorative, and it is considered unparliamentary when referring to another hon. member. While the word has less sinister meanings in the context of contempt, it seems to me that to amount to contempt, representations or statements about our proceedings or of the participation of members should not only be erroneous or incorrect, but, rather, should be purposely untrue and improper and import a ring of deceit. To be false in the context of contempt, and interpretation of our proceedings must be an obviously, purposely distorted one....My role, therefore, is to interpret the extracts of the document in question, not in terms of their substance, but to find whether, on their face, they represent such a distorted interpretation of the events or remarks in our proceedings that they obviously attract the characterization of “false”.

The Prime Minister's Office quite clearly knew who was responsible for redacting the documents provided by the government to the finance committee when it was spinning journalists and putting out the justice minister's parliamentary secretary on TV panels.

• (1105)

We are not talking about the woman or man on the street in North Bay who might be following our proceedings from afar through the news. Instead, we are talking about a central player in the scandal implicating an esteemed officer, a table officer of the House, in a distorted interpretation of events, purposely untrue and bearing a heavy ring of deceit.

As Saskatchewan's Mr. Speaker Tusa said on May 23, 1989, at page 94 of the Journals, “it is the duty of the House to protect its officers.” That goes to the essence of my question of privilege.

Members of Parliament have many things said about us in the course of our work. However, we also have many platforms, including the most awesome of them all, the floor of the House of Commons, to respond and defend ourselves. Our table officers, who provide us with such solid support and service, on the other hand, have no such outlet and, if they tried, could risk compromising their neutrality. That is why it is incumbent on us, incumbent on the House, to protect our clerks at the table.

That is why I am asking you, Mr. Speaker, to find a prima facie contempt in respect of the Prime Minister's Office and the parliamentary secretary's defamation about the role played by the law clerk in blocking government transparency and breaching a committee's order. We must protect the hard-working staff of the House from being exploited, in this case exploited for political gain, when there is a lie at the heart of such exploitation.

If you find a prima facie contempt, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to move an appropriate motion.

• (1110)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his submission. I will take it under advisement and return to the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think you will find that the government did in fact comply with the motion as adopted by the committee. However, it is disappointing that in a time that we are facing a second wave of a pandemic, the Conservatives want to use this time in the House to play partisan politics and talk about the WE Charity rather than focus on providing the help that Canadians need.

I will get the opportunity to review the many comments put on the record by the member opposite and will provide further comment in the coming days.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member for La Prairie wishes to speak to the question of privilege.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we would like to reserve the right to respond to this question of privilege at a later date.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): I would like to take a few minutes to add some comments to the excellent presentation given by my colleague from Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

[English]

I would like to add some points, in part because it was my NDP motion that was brought forward to the finance committee on July 7. I very carefully wrote that motion to ensure that any redactions necessary be made by the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel at the House of Commons. The idea was very clear that any redactions to take place would only be made through the Office of the Law Clerk. As members are well aware, all MPs from all parties voted for that motion. Therefore, this is not a partisan issue it all; it is an issue of ensuring that the privileges of the House of Commons are maintained.

It was with shock and consternation that the same day we became aware of this, through the Office of the Law Clerk writing to the clerk of the Standing Committee on Finance, saying very clearly that departments had made certain redactions to the documents on grounds that were not contemplated in the order of the committee and also stating, “As my Office has not been given the opportunity to see the unredacted documents, we are not able to confirm whether those redactions are consistent with the order of the Committee”, the committee was shut down.

Of course, the committee would have acted immediately, but as the member points out, at the very same moment we became aware of the censorship of these documents, of which there are 5,000 pages, with 1,000 of them completely or substantially altered and censored, Parliament was prorogued, and the committee will not be meeting again potentially for several weeks.

As the House is aware, and as the member has cited, this work of the finance committee comes through an order of the House of Commons. Unanimously, because of the pandemic, we agreed at that time that the finance committee would provide oversight for all spending related to the pandemic. Surely, in this case, it means the House of Commons was mandating the finance committee to do that work.

As members know, Standing Order 108 states, “Standing committees shall be severally empowered to examine and enquire into all such matters as may be referred to them by the House....” This is clearly what happened in this case.

As the member has cited, chapter 20 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which we very clearly follow as a bible with respect to the directions it provides us, states:

The Standing Orders do not delimit the power to order the production of papers and records. The result is a broad, absolute power that on the surface appears to be without restriction. There is no limit on the types of papers likely to be requested; the only prerequisite is that the papers exist in hard copy or electronic format, and that they are located in Canada. They can be papers originating from or in the possession of governments....

Clearly, a House of Commons mandate was given to the finance committee and the committee was endeavouring to provide that oversight.

Unanimously, on July 7, with the support of all members from all parties, an order was made for the production of papers. On August 18, we found out they had been censored or substantially redacted. Over 1,000 pages had basically been wholly or substantially blacked out.

I know other members will be intervening on this, hopefully today, because it is important that you, Mr. Speaker, be given the opportunity to come to a rapid decision in this respect.

The decision made on April 27, 2010, by Speaker Milliken against the Harper government at the time, states the following:

It is the view of the Chair that accepting an unconditional authority of the executive to censor the information provided to Parliament would in fact jeopardize the...separation of powers that is purported to lie at the heart of our parliamentary system and the independence of its constituent parts. Furthermore, it risks diminishing the inherent privileges of the House and its members, which have been earned and must be safeguarded.

He also stated:

...procedural authorities are categorical in repeatedly asserting the powers of the House in ordering the production of documents. No exceptions are made for any category of government documents, even those related to national security.

At the time, he was referring to the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan.

The Address

• (1115)

[Translation]

My caucus and I are of the opinion this definitely constitutes a question of privilege. If a debate were to be held on this matter, our caucus would be ready to participate because this matter is extremely important to parliamentary privilege.

The Speaker: I thank hon. members.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[English]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from September 23 consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech delivered at the opening of the session.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to speak on behalf of Canada's Conservatives and the official opposition to respond to the government's Speech from the Throne.

[Translation]

I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent, the House Leader of the Official Opposition.

[English]

We heard another Liberal Speech from the Throne. It was another speech full of recycled Liberal promises, with grand gestures and lofty visions, but with no real plan to deal with the pandemic, no real plan to deal with the urgent health care needs of the provinces, no real plan to deal with the lack of jobs and no real plan to deal with Canadian unity issues or western alienation. There was no plan to deal with the economy.

The Liberal Speech from the Throne was full of the same old promises and recycled ideas that we have all been hearing for years and years. Many of these promises have been unfulfilled and they leave countless people behind.

I am talking about people like the single mom from Burlington who has to choose between staying home with her sick kids and picking up another shift at the local Subway to pay the rent. I am talking about the fish harvester down east who is not sure how they are going to afford their next season. I am talking about the producer in Brandon, Manitoba burdened by the carbon tax and worried about a trade war keeping their goods from market. I am talking about the dad in Hinton, Alberta who does not know what he is going to do when the bank's mortgage deferral program comes to an end.

The Address

I am talking about the family in Cantley, Quebec that is trying to get their minivan to last through just one more winter, and they cannot afford an electric car. I am talking about the people who drive Ford 150s, like thousands of Canadians. They are tired of being insulted by Liberal elites. I am talking about the family in Yukon that runs a fly-in guide outfitting business. They rely almost entirely on international tourism.

These are the people that Conservatives are standing up for. These are the people who we know have been left behind in this Liberal Speech from the Throne.

Let us just make sure that it is clear: The Prime Minister shut down Parliament. He prorogued Parliament, he shut down committees and he stopped everything dead in its tracks when he was being exposed for his scandal. Why was this? He said he was going to present a Speech from the Throne that would give Canadians a plan. It did none of that. It is clear the only reason the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament was to cover up and distract from his own scandal.

It is also very disturbing that there was no plan to deal with this pandemic. When our leader spoke with the Prime Minister last week, he asked the Prime Minister to ensure that Canadians had better and faster access to COVID testing options. It is vitally important right now that Canadians have options to get tested for COVID and they get the results back in a timely manner. It is unacceptable that we trust countries such as Japan, Germany and the U.S. with our national security intelligence, but we do not trust their approval of 15-minute saliva tests.

Just last March, the Prime Minister promised that rapid testing for Canadians would be his top priority. Half a year and half a trillion dollars later, Canadian families are still waiting in line for hours and sometimes days for tests, let alone for results. The Prime Minister has failed to deliver. Maybe the wealthy, well-connected friends of the Liberal elite can afford to stay quarantined. Maybe they can afford to wait, but hard-working Canadians cannot afford to take weeks off to quarantine if they come up in a contact-tracing list. They deserve a plan and they deserve to have some hope.

There was no commitment to increase health transfers, which was the provinces' top ask. Instead of giving the provinces the resources they need to fight the pandemic, the Liberals are once again interfering in provincial jurisdiction.

Last week, on behalf of the provinces, Premiers Kenney, Pallister, Ford and Legault were here in Ottawa, presenting a united front and asking the federal government to do the right thing by providing appropriate health care funding to the provinces with no strings attached. Contrary to what the Prime Minister thinks, and who believes Ottawa knows best, it is the provinces that are best placed to deal with issues that fall within provincial jurisdiction.

• (1120)

Last week, to highlight the extent of the health care funding problem, my premier, Manitoba's Premier Pallister, explained it this way. He said that never has there been a higher demand for health care, never have federal contributions to health care been so low and, because of this, never have wait times been so long. This was before the pandemic even started. Now, with the second wave of

the pandemic upon us, people are hurting and sometimes even dying because the federal government is not giving the provinces the health care funding they need to look after their people.

Furthermore, the Canadian Medical Association had this to say about the failure of the current Liberal Prime Minister's Speech from the Throne. It stated:

...today's speech falls short of delivering on the promise of ensuring a resilient health care system and keeping Canadians healthy.

The top issue we are dealing with today is a health crisis, and the Liberals failed to address it in the Speech from the Throne. It is absolutely unacceptable. While I could continue on the issue of health care, I know that my colleague, the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill and our shadow minister for health, will have a lot more to say during this debate and during the days and weeks ahead.

I want to close my remarks today with a very important issue. I understand that for some who are here in the east it may not be top of mind. For those who live in Ontario, Quebec and maybe the Atlantic provinces, I fully understand and I can see why they do not see this as top of mind. I wish the Prime Minister would help to bring it to the forefront. It is the issue of unity in this country and the issue of the western provinces, including the one I come from, feeling alienated by the Prime Minister and the current government. The Prime Minister likes to say that we are stronger when we are united and we are all in this together, yet our country is more divided than ever.

Our Conservative leader made it clear during his first call with the Prime Minister that if the Prime Minister is serious he must make addressing national unity concerns and western alienation a priority. However, there is not a single thing in the throne speech to even acknowledge that there is a problem.

Our government needs to show Canadians that it values and respects all of them and their contributions to this country. This respect starts with an understanding that revenue generated by various resources in each region of the country helps to build roads, hospitals and infrastructure in other parts of the country and not just in the provinces where the resources are found. The lack of respect by the Prime Minister for our natural resource industries is unacceptable because these industries form the backbone of our economy.

In the words of Alberta premier Jason Kenney:

In a 6,783 word throne speech, not one word recognized the crisis facing Canada's largest industry: the energy sector that supports 800,000 jobs.... Instead, we got a litany of policies that would strangle investment and jeopardize resource jobs when we most need the industry that generates 20 percent of government revenues in Canada.

To highlight the failure of the Liberal government to deal with the issues facing Alberta, Premier Kenney went on to say:

Alberta is disappointed that instead of listening to Canada's provinces, the federal government doubled down on policies that will kill jobs, make Canada poorer and weaken national unity.

In fact, agriculture, forestry and energy resources were not mentioned once in this speech. This is completely unacceptable given that we found out yesterday that Canada recorded its largest ever drop in natural resources employment in the second quarter.

Under the leadership of the hon. member for Durham, Canadians can rest assured that we will hold the Prime Minister and the Liberal government to account. We will not support this Speech from the Throne, but we will put forward a plan that keeps Canadians safe, protects jobs and gets our country back on track.

● (1125)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on the government's side recognize the importance of working with the provinces, territories and other stakeholders to do what we can to minimize the negative impact of a second wave.

I would like to provide a quote from the Premier of Manitoba. It is a response to the safe restart agreement that contradicts most of what the deputy leader of the Conservative Party says. The letter states:

This federal funding will help support work already undertaken by the Government of Manitoba to increase daily testing capacity from a baseline of 1,000 tests to more than 3,000 tests per day.

It further states:

The Government of Canada will provide \$700 million to support health care system capacity to respond to a potential future wave of COVID-19. A further \$500 million will address immediate needs and gaps in the support and protection of people experiencing challenges related to mental health, substance use or homelessness. This investment will help to keep Canadians safe and healthy with the health care supports they need.

Does the member agree that it is time we get co-operation from the official opposition, as we are receiving it even from Conservative premiers in Canada?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, as an opposition, the Conservatives have shown ourselves to be very co-operative since the pandemic hit in passing emergency legislation. We had to be very careful because we saw the Liberal government try to make a power grab during the pandemic. We had to be careful, but we have been very co-operative. I will take no lectures from my colleague from Manitoba on the Liberal side regarding co-operating. We have done our fair share of co-operating.

Today is the day, and the opposition will take this day, to stand up for Canadians who are left behind by the Liberals. This is not just about throwing money at something. This is money that the Liberals are very good at promising and very bad at delivering, as we have seen over the last five years. The money never gets to its intended place. We saw this when times were good and the Liberals were promising money for infrastructure. We can ask Manitoba how far that money went and whether it was even delivered. I can say it did not get to its intended place.

The Address

We are not impressed by Liberal promises. We have heard them. We have seen them. We got the T-shirt.

● (1130)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne offers supply-managed farmers full and fair compensation for recent trade agreements.

I have some questions and I would like my colleague to comment. First, is this the last time this promise will be made? We like this promise, we agree with it and we want it to be kept, but this is not the first time we have heard it. There needs to be action. Farmers are fed up. They have run out of patience. It is time for them to be properly compensated.

Second, when it says "full and fair" does that include the agreement with Europe, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership or CUSMA? Does that include the limits on exports of dairy by-products to other countries, which makes no sense? Does that include the fact that CUSMA came into force on July 1? We are worried. It is time for the government to stop interfering in provincial jurisdictions, start minding its own business and, most importantly, do what it promised.

I would like my colleague to comment on the compensation for farmers.

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague, as I come from an agricultural riding in Manitoba. I have been so disappointed, as have all of us on this side, by the lack of value, attention and credit given to our agricultural sector in Canada. This includes those who are part of the supply management system, but also livestock producers and grain producers. Every sector of the agricultural industry in Canada has been ignored and disrespected. People have pretended that the sector does not exist and what it contributes does not exist. The Speech from the Throne is another example of that.

We have to continue to advocate for farmers. The Liberals seem not to have set foot on a farm in many years, and I would invite some of them to visit some rural areas. I know they do not represent those areas, but they need to understand the sacrifices our farmers make in producing food not only for Canada, but for the world, and they do it in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way. They should be congratulated, rewarded and supported instead of ignored.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House on behalf of the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent and, very humbly, as the official opposition House leader.

*The Address**[English]*

I want to sincerely give thanks for all the support for my colleagues in the official opposition and, obviously, for my leader, the hon. member for Durham, leader of the official opposition and of all Conservatives in Canada from coast to coast. As we know, he and his wife are now fighting COVID-19. He will get back here stronger than ever; I can assure the House of that.

[Translation]

We are gathered here today after the House was prorogued for five weeks. During the summer, committees were working to shed light on the government's serious, unacceptable ethical lapses, but the Prime Minister decided to prorogue the House. Parliamentary committees were all suspended. We could not do our jobs in the House or in committee. We are now back in the House after the throne speech.

A Speech from the Throne is a unique and exceptional opportunity to bring Canadians together, to talk about national unity and the fact that the provinces and the federal government must work together and respect jurisdictions. This is an opportunity for the government to show that it has a clear plan and knows where it is going, all while effectively managing government spending. The throne speech is an opportunity for the government to show that it has a plan. What we saw yesterday was anything but a plan. The government gave a classic Liberal speech and completely ignored these three fundamental elements.

First let us consider the issue of spending. We all realize that in a crisis like the one we are experiencing now, investing is essential. Yes, unfortunately, that creates deficits. We faced that reality in 2008-09. We are not happy about it, but we understand that it has to be done. However, we still need to know where we are heading. What the Prime Minister and his government showed us yesterday, given the speech delivered by the Governor General, is that they do not realize that the money being spent today does not belong to us. Yesterday's speech was all spend, spend, spend, but there was nothing about controlling that spending. That is unacceptable.

Of course we must invest in certain sectors. Yes, we must do something for the workers who have lost their jobs because of the crisis. Yes, we must do something for the businesses that have to close temporarily, and will have to take advantage of a potential economic recovery. We must be there to support them. We still need to know where we are heading, and the government has done everything but control spending. We all remember the economic snapshot provided by the former finance minister. We all saw that the deficit was approaching half a trillion dollars and that our debt load had reached over one trillion dollars. The former finance minister never mentioned those two significant figures, and with good reason, because that is not a record to be proud of.

We believe that investments must be made, but there must be a plan. Yesterday's throne speech shows us that the government wants to spend money we do not have and does not know where it is heading. I remind members that money we do not have is a debt that must be paid by our children and grandchildren. The Conservatives are thinking of the younger generation. Yes, the next generation will have to pay for the government's unbridled spending.

When we ask for better control of spending, we are thinking first and foremost of young Canadians.

Furthermore, true to Liberal tradition, the government is picking fights with the provinces. No sooner was the Speech from the Throne a wrap than the Premier of Quebec took to social media to express his disapproval on the grounds that the speech sidelined collaboration and scorned jurisdiction. I want to make it perfectly clear that jurisdiction is no mere academic notion meant for the likes of professors and constitutional experts. The government needs to understand and act on its responsibilities while allowing the provinces to take care of theirs. Yesterday, the government said it would invest in health, education, child care and so on, but those are basically provincial responsibilities, not federal ones. What the federal government is responsible for is making sure tests are approved so they can be done as efficiently as possible, but the government is not even meeting its own expectations in that regard. It is minding the business of others instead of taking care of its own.

● (1135)

There is a solution to this, one that the leader of the official opposition proposed two and half weeks ago after meeting with the Premier of Quebec, and that is increasing health transfers to the provinces. That would be a legitimate and important step forward, as indicated by the member for Durham, the leader of the official opposition, our Conservative leader, after meeting with the Premier of Quebec, and we are proud of it. This is classic Conservative: We respect provincial jurisdictions.

As we all know, there are new needs related to health care. The COVID-19 crisis has brought this to light with regard to seniors, among others. We know that transfers do need to be increased, and if there is one area where we need to spend—if we are fortunate enough to win Canadians' trust—we would definitely invest more in health by increasing transfers to the provinces, since health is a provincial jurisdiction. That happens at the provincial level, not the federal level.

Lastly, a Speech from the Throne should emphasize Canadian unity. All of us Canadians need to stand shoulder to shoulder and work together. Whether we are from Ontario, Vancouver, British Columbia, or wherever, we need to work together. There was absolutely nothing in yesterday's speech that would support and foster a strong, united Canada. There was not a single word about Quebec's aerospace industry, not a single word about natural resources in the west, nothing in the speech to bring Canadians together.

Let me be perfectly clear. Some hear “natural resources” and automatically think of the west, but 50,000 people in Quebec work in the petrochemical industry. That is a lot of people. That is why we believe all provinces must be involved and must work together to make Canada a better place.

The Speech from the Throne is a unique opportunity to underscore that. It is the ideal time for us all to work together for the good of Canadians, and for all Canadians, no matter where they live, to make a tangible contribution to our recovery.

Sadly, the Prime Minister failed to do that. I therefore move, seconded by the member for Lévis—Lotbinière, that the motion be amended by adding the following:

And regrets to inform Your Excellency that your government has failed to provide a plan to approve and deploy new rapid testing measures to aid the provinces in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic;

Further regret to inform Your Excellency that your government has failed to provide an adequate plan to support the future of Canadian workers and small businesses inclusive of a program for wage subsidization that protects Canadian jobs while effectively promoting the value and dignity of work, along with a more extensive plan for commercial rent assistance and effective small business supply chain protection;

Further regret to inform Your Excellency that your government continues to neglect the unity problems that its policies have created in the Western provinces by undermining the role that resource workers, and resource producing provinces have played in paying for quality public services across the Federation;

Further regrets to inform Your Excellency that your government has not acknowledged the need for a new policy regarding Communist China that reflects its responsibility for imposing a new police state-style security law on the over 300,000 Canadians in Hong Kong, as well as committing a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Uyghur Muslims in the Chinese area of Xinjiang; and

Also further regrets to inform Your Excellency that your government has failed to provide adequate transparency to the House with regard to the relationship between the organization known as the WE Charity, the Prime Minister's family, the relevant government ministries, and outside organizations involved in the development of the Canada Student Services Grant program.

• (1140)

The Deputy Speaker: The motion in amendment is in order.

Before we begin, I respectfully request that hon. members remember that time is very limited during during questions and comments. I know that this hybrid format is new. Therefore, it is vital that we respect the time members have.

That is why I am asking hon. members to keep their interventions short so as to allow as many members as possible to have an opportunity to ask questions or provide comments to the member who spoke.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Malpeque.

• (1145)

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are some regrets on this side too. I was hoping the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, in his new capacity, would get up and thank this government for the leadership it has provided since COVID first hit in March.

His remarks were full of contradictions. On the one hand, the member and the party opposite are saying we should stop spending and that the government is spending too much. On the other hand, members have said that the government should transfer more money to the provinces, and spend here and spend there.

Does the member not realize that we have already transferred \$19 billion to the provinces under the safe restart recovery program? Does he not realize that we have transferred \$2 billion to assist the provinces with education? Does the member think that is

The Address

important? Also, the throne speech outlines so many things for individuals and businesses to get the economy started again and protect individuals and businesses during the second wave.

Could the member get up and just say thanks?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: No, I will not say thanks to the government, and this is why, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, there is a real miss in this throne speech: control. Where is the control in spending money? It is too easy for the government to say that today it will spend \$2 billion for this and \$4 billion for that, will create brand new programs and will give \$900 million to family friends to create a brand new program with WE Charity.

This is what we have seen in the last six months. Obviously we have to seriously address this issue. Obviously we have to help Canadians. Obviously we have to help businesses. However, the point is that we have to do it with control, and the government has absolutely no control—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House leader for the official opposition for his enthusiasm and spirit and for talking about our working together.

In talking about working together, one thing we put forward was to call on the government to extend the amount of sick days to 10 so that when someone is sick, they will stay home instead of possibly going to work because they have to pay their bills and feed their family. Instead of going to work and spreading the virus in this pandemic, they should be at home taking care of themselves, and their children if they are sent home from school sick with symptoms of COVID. This is something that we are calling on the government to take action on to make sure that people are getting the support they need. During this pandemic, we have seen the gaps in the social safety net. People need help right now.

Does the member and does his party support us in calling on the government to take care of those workers and to extend sick days, and not just during the pandemic but once and for all?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the NDP for this important question.

Obviously, there are a lot of people who were put aside by these government policies in the last six months. My colleague, the deputy official leader of the opposition, the member for Portage—Lisgar, said very clearly that this throne speech and this government have failed in the last six months to directly help people who needed it.

The Address

Yes, obviously, there are a lot of people who have been served, which is fine, but, unfortunately, what we have seen is a government policy is that continues help some people while creating another problem.

• (1150)

[Translation]

Canada is experiencing a serious labour shortage in every sector because of the Liberals' policies, yet they want to renew these policies as though there is nothing wrong with them.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the new opposition House leader. Congratulations to him.

I am proud to be a Quebecker, and I am proud of Quebec. I will say a few words about the Speech from the Throne. I did not make a note of all the ways that it intruded into provincial jurisdiction, nor all of Quebec's models that the Canadian government wants to copy for Canada-wide programs.

I am thinking specifically about the child care program. The Canadian government wants to bring in a Canada-wide child care program based on the Quebec model. I would point out that this model has been around for about 25 years. It is unique in North America and is held up as an example around the world.

Would the hon. member agree that the proposed Canada-wide program is just another intrusion into provincial jurisdiction, especially since Quebec has its own program? Would the hon. member agree that the right thing to do would be to transfer the money to Quebec, since it already has its own program?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, as a proud federalist, I am also very proud to be a Quebecker and to represent Quebec.

Yes, we believe that, unfortunately, the government's proposal is a direct intrusion into provincial jurisdiction. It was rather odd to hear the Governor General state during the throne speech that the government plans to learn from Quebec's example. Since the government wants to use Quebec's model, which has been in place for 25 years, is that not proof that this is an area of provincial jurisdiction?

The Liberal Party already made this promise two decades ago, but it never kept it. It promised care for children who are now too old for child care.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. opposition members for their comments.

First, I would like to state what I believe to be a fundamental fact in this moment in our country's history: COVID-19 is still very much here. We have not yet beaten this pandemic. We are fighting a battle, and this is a battle we must win.

I know the fight against this disease in the past six months has been difficult for Canadians. For too many people, especially our seniors, the most vulnerable, it has been a matter of life and death. This ordeal is unlike anything that we, as Canadians, have lived through in modern history.

[English]

I wish I could stand in this place and say that it is over, that the hard work is behind us, but that is simply not the reality. In the four biggest provinces of Canada the second wave is not just starting, but is already under way. On March 13, when we went into lockdown, there were only 47 new cases of COVID-19. Just yesterday we had well over 1,000 new cases. The fact is this fall could be worse than last spring. That depends on the actions we all take in the coming days and weeks, because we all, collectively, have the power to beat down this second wave. We can and we must. All Canadians need to wear their masks. We need to wash our hands. We need to avoid gatherings, especially indoors, and remember that this is not the time for partying. We need to maintain social distance. We need to download and use the COVID Alert app. Of course, we all need to get our flu shots.

As for us parliamentarians, we have a job to do as well, an important job, which is to ensure that Canadians, and the businesses that employ them so they can feed their families, get the support they need to help them pull through this pandemic. We need to do whatever it takes to support people through this crisis. The reality is that the best way to support our economic recovery is by making sure that we are supporting the health and safety of Canadians right now.

There are folks, including members on the opposite side of the aisle, who think that we should have moved more quickly to help businesses and more slowly to help individual Canadians. That is simply wrong. We know that supporting hard-working Canadian families, our seniors and young people is the best way to make sure that our economy comes roaring back as quickly as possible. It is disappointing that the Conservative Party has chosen to put politics first. It would rather vote to have an election in the midst of a pandemic than to vote to extend badly needed help to Canadians at a time of unprecedented need.

• (1155)

[Translation]

Our sole objective since March has been to help Canadians get through this crisis, to protect their health and their businesses, and to protect workers and their livelihoods.

We know that the pandemic has hit some groups more than others. This includes our seniors, working mothers, racialized Canadians, indigenous peoples and youth. We intend to address these inequalities.

[English]

I listened carefully to the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition made yesterday and the interventions by the two hon. MPs who spoke to the Conservative approach today. I think they are faced first with a fundamental challenge. The deputy leader got up and started by saying that we have no plan, and then proceeded to explain how she disagrees with all the different elements of our plan. Again, the Conservatives cannot have it both ways.

We know that the preoccupation of many Canadians, as highlighted by the hon. deputy leader, is with the health and safety of Canadians. That is something we all share, we as elected officials and Canadians. That is why, from the very beginning of this pandemic, we have worked with top scientists, doctors, public health agencies across the country, premiers and municipal governments. We have worked with everyone to focus on keeping Canadians safe and healthy through this challenge. From the very beginning we sat down regularly with the premiers. Indeed, I think we have had close to 20 first ministers meetings just over the past six months to talk about how we need to work together to help Canadians.

I will come back to the contention by the Conservatives that we are somehow in a national unity crisis, just to highlight the reality that Canadians across all orders of government and all regions of the country have never been more united in working together to deliver safely for all Canadians. Indeed, as we look around the world and contrast how we have managed through this pandemic with places where the positioning around a pandemic response has been a source of partisan controversy and discourse, we see the fact that Canadians have come together has been very significant in contributing to our well-being. The reality is that from the beginning of our meetings with those premiers, our position as a federal government has been, how can we help?

[Translation]

We were there to encourage more testing. We were there to give them the tools to do more testing, whether it was money, resources or equipment they needed. From the beginning, we have been encouraging and helping the provinces to expand their testing capacity. Across the country, we are seeing an increase in testing capacity, thanks in part to the \$19 billion we gave the provinces for a safe recovery.

Since the pandemic started, we have sent the provinces half a billion dollars in health transfers. To support a just recovery, we then transferred another half a billion for health care systems, since we realize that this is an unprecedented public health crisis.

We are going to continue making decisions based on science and listening to the experts who are doing everything they can to keep Canadians safe. At the same time, we are also taking action to make sure we have the means to boost testing numbers.

• (1200)

[English]

That is why, with our international procurements and the incredible innovative work being done here right here by Canadian scientists and researchers, who are creating new alternatives to testing moving forward with new equipment that we can produce right here in Canada, we have significantly stepped up the federal government's ability to support the provinces in their responsibilities around testing. We will continue to do that.

We recognize that big questions around health care are being brought forward by the crisis of this pandemic. That is exactly why we have not only transferred, as I said, a billion dollars to the provinces to help with the immediate, acute supports, on top of the \$19 billion we transferred to the provinces through the Safe Restart Agreement, but we have also committed to absolutely sit-

The Address

ting down with the provinces this fall to talk about the future of the Canada health transfers, recognizing that our health care systems are changing and that there are new needs. We recognize, for example, that more and more of health care is not going to be delivered in institutional settings but in home settings. That means investing in home care, investing in supports for the delivery of health services, not just to hospitals and institutions, but through a broader range of ways. The federal government will be there to be part of that conversation.

We also recognize that increasingly treatment for diseases is not through surgical intervention or institutionalization, but through increasingly sophisticated medications and pharmaceuticals. Of course, as pharmaceuticals becomes more complex and sophisticated, their costs go up. That is why as a federal government we have already stepped up over the past years to drive down the cost of prescription drug prices, to be there to support the provinces with rare disease, high-cost drug strategies. We will continue to do that as we move toward a national universal pharmacare program, working first with the provinces that want to move quickly on it. Those are also parts of the conversations that we need to have about the future of health care in this country.

Let me be very, very clear that the federal government continues to have an important role to play in ensuring the safety and security of all Canadians. We will be there with the health care system and with supports for social programs, as we have been from the beginning.

As we look forward to a post-pandemic world, which cannot come fast enough for any of us, we know that we have to learn lessons from this pandemic. However, while we are in this pandemic, the federal government will be there every step of the way with a focus on supporting the health of Canadians.

[Translation]

Of course, we recognize the provinces' responsibilities and jurisdictions when it comes to health. They do great work in their jurisdictions.

However, we also recognize that we need to help them when they become overwhelmed or face particularly difficult challenges. That is why, when the Premier of Quebec asked us to send in the army to help in long-term care facilities during this crisis that Quebec could not manage alone, we did not hesitate to help. We are there to help protect our seniors and to support Canadians. That is a promise that we made from the very beginning of this pandemic and we are keeping it.

We are showing that, yes, we are there. We sent the Canadian Armed Forces to help our seniors. We are continuing to help thanks to the Canadian Red Cross, which is still working in Quebec's long-term care facilities to help the province regain control of this tragic situation.

The Address

We will help Canadians in partnership with the provinces. Some people are recommending that we should simply send transfer payments and give the provinces blank cheques for their health care systems, but that would not have helped because we needed people on the ground, soldiers and Canadian Red Cross personnel.

This is not just a question of money, although we will certainly continue sending money. We have transferred over \$40 billion to the provinces for their health care systems, and we will continue to take action to protect the health of Canadians. However, we will do so as Canadians would expect, in other words, in partnership with the provinces. That is what we will continue to do.

Despite everything, the Conservatives continue to suggest that we have not been there for Canadians.

• (1205)

[English]

The Conservatives say that our plan has left everyday Canadians behind. When the pandemic struck, the Conservatives were more concerned with austerity than with helping people, and now they have doubled down on that view. When they say we have not been there to help ordinary help, I can say that almost nine million Canadians who received the Canada emergency wage subsidy would disagree with them. We were there to support Canadians right across the country despite the Conservatives saying that we should not be.

We were there for the millions of workers who managed to keep their jobs or get hired back to their jobs because of the wage subsidy that supported payroll. Those people needed support through this pandemic.

The issue that keeps coming back from the Conservatives is that we are doing too much, we are investing too much in Canadians, we are helping Canadians too much and that it is irresponsible for the future. The reality is, as I said, the best way to recover the economy of the country is to support Canadians through this health crisis. That is what the Conservatives do not understand.

In the short term, while we are living with this pandemic, we will continue to invest in Canadians and support them.

What we are not hearing from the Conservatives in their response to the Speech from the Throne is specifically what spending measures they disagree with. Do they disagree with the extension of the Canada emergency wage subsidy, because that is in the Speech from the Throne. We are extending it through to next summer. Do they disagree with the \$500 a week that people got through CERB, which we are now going to be continuing to deliver through the EI system and with a benefit that is going to support those Canadians who still cannot access EI? We know that supporting Canadians who need the \$500 a week through the continuation of this pandemic is essential, yet the Conservatives do not seem to want us to do that.

Therefore, my question continues to be this. What do the Conservatives actually disagree with? What is it that they do not think we should be doing for Canadians right now? Where do they leave Canadians aside? Where do they say that we have to recover the economy, so we have to stop spending?

If we had not stepped up as a federal government right across the country, in every province and territory, to put money directly in the pockets of people from the beginning of this pandemic, what would Canadians have done? First, they would have had to go further into debt to pay for groceries or to pay their rent. The help we gave was significant, but not only did it prevent them from going deeper into debt, it also prevented many people from having to use food banks and from losing their homes and jobs.

The reality is that there were still far too many people who had to go to food banks. That is why we invested hundreds of millions of dollars in food banks, shelters and supports for the most vulnerable across the country. Every step of the way, we had the backs of Canadians. We are committing now, as we approach this second wave, to continue to have the backs of people, and the Conservatives would rather vote for an election right now rather than support people.

The Conservatives are asking a lot of questions that Canadians are asking, such as what the path is for our deficit and if we will be fiscally responsible. This is where we have to make a very clear distinction between the short-term measures that are there to support Canadians and the long-term recovery plan in a post-pandemic world. The short-term measures we need to support Canadians will be there for them. We will support Canadians through this pandemic in all the ways we need to, because that is the best way to get us to a strong economy on the other side. Again, what the Conservatives do not understand is doing less to support Canadians will actually hurt our economy in the long run. It will lead to a slower recovery and greater deficits.

Absolutely, once we are through this pandemic, it will be extremely important to be fiscally responsible and sustainable. That is where the investments we are proposing in the throne speech on child care, on housing and on pharmacare are not just things that support the social safety net. It actually leads to better growth; more women in the workforce; more families not facing impossible choices when their kids have to stay home; more support for businesses that do not have to pay the same level of prescription drug coverage with a national universal pharmacare program; more people who are not costing us through shelter systems and vulnerabilities, but have their own homes and are able to contribute to our country.

These are not simply social measures. They are economic measures as we move forward and they will be done because the pandemic has shown us the cracks in our society that Canadians need to fill.

• (1210)

[Translation]

The Conservatives often talk to us about our seniors and the need to support them better in these tough times. We have provided an additional \$2.5 billion in support to eligible seniors in the form of one-time, tax-free OAS and GIS payments. We are supporting community-based projects aimed at improving seniors' quality of life and reducing their social isolation. To that end, we invested an additional \$20 million in the new horizons for seniors program.

The Speech from the Throne lays out the work we will do with the provinces and territories to set national standards for long-term care. We will take action to ensure that seniors are able to stay in their own homes longer. We will work with our colleagues here in Parliament on Criminal Code amendments to hold those who neglect seniors under their care accountable.

The Speech from the Throne also states that we will look at new measures to ensure better pay for personal support workers, who do a difficult but essential job. Our society must better value their diligence, their skills and their hard work. We must keep trying to do better by our seniors. If the Conservatives disagree, they can keep saying so and vote against the throne speech, which offers real help for our seniors. If they disagree with these measures, they can tell seniors themselves. That is what they are saying.

When it comes to job creation, we know that we have a lot of work to do to get the economy back to where it was before the pandemic and create an even stronger economy. In our first five years in office, we created more than a million jobs for Canadians. During the pandemic, our country saw record job losses, as did every country in the world.

The Conservatives keep saying that the CERB and the support we are giving people who have to pay rent and buy groceries are a disincentive to work. The reality is that we are always going to be there to support workers. We know that Canadians want to contribute and work, but there is a job shortage because of the pandemic. Many sectors were hit extremely hard by this pandemic. We will continue to be there to help people who want to work but have no job to go to. The Conservatives claim that if we stop providing support to millions of people, they will find jobs, but that is a totally ridiculous and irresponsible thing to say.

Once again, I am asking the Conservatives to list the specific measures in the throne speech that they disagree with. Since they do not like the Liberal Party and its approach, they ought to suggest something else. However, they have nothing to suggest. They know that our priority from the beginning has been to be there for Canadians. Since they have nothing to suggest, they talk about a national unity crisis. In reality, Canadians have never been so united.

• (1215)

[English]

That has been the story of this pandemic: Canadians coming together to work together in all orders of government to deliver for people; to work together in communities; to work together in workplaces; to be there for opposite sides of the country; PPE produced in Ontario, making its way across the country; supports in scientific resources developed in the west, in B.C., sharing their impact

The Address

across the country; seafood harvested on our coasts, feeding the rest of the world; and energy workers in Alberta, who continue to innovate and look forward to a better world where their kids will continue to have jobs and opportunities.

The members opposite have asked me about Alberta and are highlighting it. Let me tell them how this government has been there for all Canadians and specifically, because they keep asking, for Alberta.

From the very beginning, the Canada emergency response benefit helped thousands upon thousands of Albertans who were already being challenged with a crisis in the oil and gas sector that is global and is particularly acute in Alberta.

We were there with the CERB. We were there with the emergency wage subsidy to keep people on. We made investments in cleaning up orphan wells, which was a provincial area of jurisdiction but that we are happy to support because we need to give people opportunities to do the right thing and to have work through this difficult time.

On top of that, we sat down and delivered part of \$19 billion that we transferred to provinces that has helped Albertans and people across the country with that safe restart. Those transfers to keep people safe were worked out and agreed with all premiers, including the premier of Alberta. Just a few weeks ago, when school boards and parents across the country were worried about kids getting back to school, we signed a \$2 billion safe restart agreement with the provinces to make sure, among other things, that school boards in Alberta would have some money to make sure that kids get back to school safely.

However, the Conservatives are choosing to create a national unity crisis. All Canadians are challenged by this, with some areas being much harder hit than others: the tourism sector, the oil and gas industry, and certain cultural sectors that are based on performance. There are many sectors that are hurting and we are continuing to look at ways to deliver supports to them right across the country. I know the deputy leader did not mean to mislead the House, so I am hoping she is going to be able to correct herself. She said that the agriculture, the forestry industry and natural resources are not even mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. That is not true and she can check on page 24 if she really wants to, but we took a lot of time to reassure people and talk about the challenges faced by people across the country.

The Address

If we want to talk about agriculture, we know that the capacity of hard-working farmers and fishers across this country to put food on our tables and contribute to important global supply chains by working hard even through a pandemic is incredibly important. Our farmers have been absolute heroes in making that happen. That is why when we look at the things they are worried about with increasing flooding and increasing droughts because of climate change, we realize that the deputy leader's party and former government did really hurt farmers in the Prairies. They killed the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration. The PFRA was there to help manage water in the Prairies in a way that is only becoming more important with the impacts of climate change. However, the previous Conservative government killed it. The reality is that we know that managing our water resources, particularly for our farmers in the Prairies, is essential. That is why this throne speech promises to deliver on a Canadian water agency to replace and continue the good work of the PFRA. For that alone, Conservatives on the Prairies should be voting for this throne speech; but no, the Conservatives killed the PFRA so they would not want to highlight that we are actually bringing it back.

We talk about how important our forestry workers are going to be in building good jobs for the future, how important our natural resources industries and miners are going to be in building jobs for the future. We know that we are moving toward a society and a world where more and more high-tech solutions are going to rely on rare minerals, on good-quality and well-extracted products. Look at the fact that Canada's clean aluminum is so important to so many supply chains across the country.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

Canada's clean aluminum is produced with minimal greenhouse gas emissions and is prized by industries from around the world that want to be able to say their electronic devices do not contribute to climate change. That is good news for aluminum workers. It is also great for workers in our natural resources sector that we can show that electric car batteries are made with minerals extracted here, in Canada, in a responsible, forward-looking way.

I was very happy to have a chance to speak to people in the mining sectors, and I know what Canada has to offer in terms of both natural resources and natural resource processing. This will help us secure a place in the economy of the future, which will be more prosperous and more sustainable. That is critical. We spoke about this in the throne speech. We will continue to recognize that the best way to restart the economy is to also look at where the economy is going. A low-carbon economy is the way of the future. However, the reality is that we will not be able to reach net zero by 2050 without the full participation and innovation of workers in our energy and natural resources sectors.

There are energy experts in Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. These workers are always looking to innovate, plan for a better future and find concrete solutions. We need them to make our economy cleaner, more efficient, and more successful on the global marketplace. This is an integral part of our future, and we will continue to invest in this sector.

The Conservatives want to turn this into a national unity crisis. I am sorry, but that is frankly irresponsible. More than anyone else in the world, Canadians showed that they were there for one another during this pandemic. To try to make this into a political attack is simply irresponsible and ridiculous.

[*English*]

We will continue to be there for Canadians through this pandemic. We will continue to support the families and the workers who need it right across the country. We will continue to do what is necessary to have Canadians' backs, regardless of what the Conservatives might say. We will continue to recognize the cracks in our systems that the pandemic has revealed: the challenges around homelessness, the challenges around women excluded from the workforce, the challenges around access to health care and pharmacare and the challenges around systemic racism that continue to hold back far too many people across the country. That is why, as we move forward in fighting systemic racism, we move forward first and foremost on economic empowerment for Black entrepreneurs and Black-owned businesses.

It is interesting, because I heard a lot of people say that there are so many other things to do. Yes, there are. If one sits down with Black community leaders and talks to Black entrepreneurs, one of the first things they will ask for is better access to capital. That is why we were so glad a few weeks ago to be able to announce that we have worked with Canada's top banks on delivering access to capital to start rebalancing the economic scales and the barriers that exist because of systems that are discriminatory, but there is so much more to do and we talk about that in the throne speech. We need to reform our justice system. We need to improve outcomes for Black communities and young people. These are the things we are going to continue to do not just for Black Canadians but for all racialized Canadians.

On the flip side, that pathway toward reconciliation continues to be more important than ever before. All the commitments this government has made over the years on moving forward on reconciliation that we have been steadily working on and living up to now need to be accelerated. We need to continue to protect indigenous brothers and sisters from the impacts of this pandemic, but we also need to be giving them the tools and the ability to thrive and prosper in their communities right across the country. That is where we are going to be accelerating many measures of reconciliation. That is why we will be bringing forward in the House, before the end of this year, legislation to enact the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, despite the fact that the Conservatives are already set to vote against it.

• (1225)

We know that Canada is an incredible country. It is an incredible country, not because of geography, not because of history as much as because of Canadians themselves: people who are there to support each other, to work hard for each other, to build their success and to make sure that their communities feel success as well, to stand up for each others' rights and opportunities and to build a better future. That is what this pandemic has shown, Canadians stepping up to do what really matters.

It is unfortunate to see the Conservatives choosing to focus on politics at this time when Canadians are pulling together, trying to create divisions instead of recognizing that Canadians are working together. On this side of the House, we will continue to work not just to support Canadians, but with all members of the House to move forward on meaningful, tangible ways to help Canadians now and into the future.

[Translation]

This moment in our history is going to make a big difference, not only for the next few years, but for decades to come.

This is about how we are going to help the most vulnerable people and rebuild a forward-looking economy with opportunities for everyone across the country. This is about how we are going to ensure that the barriers that exist because of systemic racism are reduced and eliminated. The choices we make today as a country are extremely important to the life of our nation.

Our parents and grandparents, who lived through the Great Depression and the Second World War, worked very hard. They laid the foundation of our society and the country we live in today. They faced crises and made changes with the future in mind. They created the world as we know it today. That is what they lived through. That is what they accomplished.

There are two things I would add. First of all, we must learn from their example. They successfully created the incredibly prosperous world we enjoyed at the end of the 20th century. We must emulate the way they responded to a crisis by coming together and working hard to build a better future.

As we ponder that, we need to learn from their example and understand what we need to do to make things better. We need to acknowledge that the seniors who built the country we love today are now extremely vulnerable, living in long-term care homes across the country. It is our duty to focus on them and do everything we can to protect them. As a country, we will be there to honour their sacrifices and recognize their vulnerability.

Together, we will overcome this challenge. I know we can work together. I know we can keep our promises to Canadians. I know the future will be better because of the work we are going to do together.

• (1230)

[English]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise after the Prime Minister, who today has delivered his second partisan speech in the last several hours because last night he had a so-called national address to the

The Address

nation, which was anything but a call from the Prime Minister and rather a call from the Liberal Party leader.

[Translation]

What we saw today was a Prime Minister who is completely out of touch with Canadians. When it comes to national unity, the Prime Minister chose to fan the flames rather than focus on what Canadians are going through.

Yes, there is a national unity problem in this country. Yes, westerners are fed up with federal policy. Yes, the government of Quebec is fed up with the current government meddling in provincial jurisdictions.

Concerning this reality, the Prime Minister said it was “irresponsible and ridiculous”. What we are currently going through is anything but ridiculous.

[English]

What people in the west are living with right now is not funny. However, the Prime Minister is saying that it is irresponsible to raise the issue. That is funny. How can the Prime Minister be so arrogant today?

[Translation]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Madam Speaker, the story of the pandemic in Canada is the story of people working together. Since the beginning of the pandemic we have had 18 meetings with the provincial premiers. At each meeting the federal government asked how it could help the provinces protect their citizens and what it could do, together with the provinces, to ensure the health and safety of Canadians. During those 18 meetings with the premiers, we made record investments to the tune of \$19 billion to help the provinces achieve a safe reopening. We invested \$2 billion to ensure a safer return to school in Canada.

We are in the midst of a crisis. At the same time, Canadians are coming together from coast to coast to coast. The reality is that pointing out we are divided is pure Conservative spin. Yes, some people have different political views, while others are frustrated, and I understand that. However, it is wrong to say that Canadians are divided when we are more united than ever, especially in comparison with our American neighbours. We are working together to protect each other. The reality is that we will continue to work together.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I heard the Prime Minister say that the Conservatives are going to have to answer a lot of questions. I think the Prime Minister is also going to have to answer some questions, especially about seniors.

He spoke about seniors a moment ago. He is going to have to tell us why, for the first time ever, he is creating two classes of seniors, namely “young” seniors and “old” seniors.

He is also going to have to answer some questions about WE Charity.

The Address

The federal government does not run any hospitals. It does not run any seniors' homes. The provinces are the experts, yet the federal government is still trying to tell them what to do, instead of just transferring the money they need to provide high-quality services in the provinces, including Quebec.

With an air of condescension, not to say contempt, he said that we are asking for a blank cheque. We are not asking for a blank cheque. All we want is for the federal government to keep its word and cover 50% of Canada's health care costs. All we want is for the federal government to respect the Constitution that the Prime Minister's father foisted on Quebec.

• (1235)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I am happy to correct the hon. member, who I am certain did not want to mislead the House. The federal government is responsible for providing health care to indigenous people living on reserve and to members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

It is worth pointing out that we have military health care expertise, because it means that our soldiers were able to help Quebec's long-term care facilities. Our military has considerable expertise that helped Quebec better protect its seniors. We will continue to respect jurisdictions. We will continue to be there for Canadians.

The member also referred to our promise to increase old age security for seniors aged 75 and over. We recognize that people are living longer and longer, which is a good thing. Unfortunately, as people age, their expenses increase, and their pension does not go nearly as far as it used to. We therefore recognized the importance of doing more for seniors so that they can live longer in dignity, and we will continue to do just that.

We will always continue to work in partnership with and respect the provinces. That is what makes our beautiful country, our great confederation, work. As a federalist, I know that there are things that my sovereigntist friend and I will not agree on, but we will always agree on the fact that we all need to work to protect Canadians, no matter where they live in this country.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, so many people in northwest British Columbia continue to struggle with the loss of their income as a result of this pandemic. This includes people working in retail, people working in tourism and people working in hospitality.

The government's original plan for the transition from CERB to EI included an unexplained reduction in benefits of \$400 per month. Will the Prime Minister please confirm that he has now accepted the NDP's demand that there be no reduction in benefits in the transition from the CERB program?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to highlight that we recognize the challenges faced by Canadians right across the country. From the very beginning, with the Canada emergency response benefit, we were there to support Canadians, even though the Conservatives continue to insist that we should not have been so quick with the CERB, should not have been so quick to help Canadians and should have focused on businesses first instead.

We know that supporting workers and families across this country was the right thing to do. We all want to imagine a country in which our economy will be running again at full steam without this pandemic, but we are not there yet. We still have far too many people who are out of work, far too many people who would love to find a job or would love to be working but simply cannot.

That is why we are transitioning the CERB into a robust EI system that will continue to offer \$500 a week to people who are looking for work or who cannot find work and to people who need that support because they simply have to be home to support their families during this difficult time.

For the people who have not been able to access or cannot access EI, we are creating a Canada recovery benefit that will support them with \$500 a month, because that is the support that all Canadians deserve.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am so glad that the Prime Minister talked about CERB, because it was a program that not only helped so many individual Canadians, but in fact put our economy in such a place that it could continue to survive throughout this pandemic.

I will take this opportunity, as I have done before, to thank the incredible public service that delivered on that program. The reality is that we went from the World Health Organization declaring a global pandemic to having money in the bank accounts of 5.4 million Canadians in one month and four days. By any standard that is an extreme accomplishment, and it is all due to the incredible public service we have.

The Prime Minister would know that the economy and our environment are incredibly important to me. The throne speech hit on the government's aim to legislate Canada's global goal of net zero by 2050. I am curious if the Prime Minister could expand on how he sees the changes to our economy, and what parts of the economy we will push and support to make this a reality so we can meet our goals.

• (1240)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Madam Speaker, let me first respond to the initial comments of our esteemed colleague from Kingston and the Islands.

The Canadian public service has been extraordinary, and not just the federal public service but those right across the provinces, as we have worked on initiatives to support vulnerable workers and support local food banks and shelters, and as we have delivered unprecedented financial supports, with the CERB and the Canada emergency wage subsidy, for an economy that was shut down through the spring. They are extraordinary people who, even as everyone else was hunkering down and staying home, stayed at work, connected online and delivered innovative, creative ways of supporting Canadians. We are all deeply indebted to them.

With regard to the environment, we will continue to recognize that the best way to build a strong economy for the future, for the long term, for future generations and for now is to invest in innovative new technologies, in decarbonization and in moving forward to ensure that every sector is playing a role in transforming our country for the better, from energy workers to auto workers, from fishers and foresters to farmers.

We know that working together on fighting climate change and building an economy of the future goes along with being responsible and sustainable in the long term.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Speaker, so much fuss for so little return. Parliament was shut down a month ago in the midst of a serious pandemic. Now we are probably at the start of the second wave. When Parliament was shut down, the government said there would be a throne speech. We were expecting clear measures, unambiguous ideas and concrete solutions to the current situation.

Furthermore, the Prime Minister delivered an address to the nation. People were calling us, wanting to know what he was going to announce. This was an extraordinary situation. We were on tenterhooks, expecting something big. Unfortunately, the Speech from the Throne is a hodgepodge of ideas that we have heard many times before. It is a rehash of last year's throne speech. These are empty ideas, not solutions. People may say that it is greener. The greener thing about it is all the old ideas they recycled.

Apart from that, apart from a huge, perhaps historic, intrusion into provincial jurisdictions by the federal government, there is nothing noteworthy. After listening to the Prime Minister's address to the nation, I thought, what a joke. Was that all? He told us to wash our hands, wear a mask and use the COVID Alert app, and said that the government would take on debt instead of Canadians. There was nothing new. It was really a one-man show. What a joke.

I was wondering why he went to all the trouble, and then I realized. We know how magicians make things disappear. They create a diversion. They distract us and then use sleight of hand. That is what this government is trying to do. It is using the throne speech and address to the nation to create a diversion and try to hide something. It pretends it is being serious and taking the bull by the horns.

He wants to make the WE scandal disappear into thin air. This whole charade was designed to get the Prime Minister out of the mess he has been in for the past month over WE Charity. He was up to his neck in this scandal. It was the worst scandal his government had gone through, and there were plenty. Four committees were studying the matter. The Minister of Finance resigned, which is a big deal. The Prime Minister is facing his third probe by the Ethics Commissioner. He is rewriting the Guinness Book of World Records. He is the Wayne Gretzky of ethics violations. All this to hush up the scandal. The government should not expect to get off lightly, because the Bloc Québécois intends to keep the ball rolling. We are going to keep a close eye on what is happening with the WE scandal.

The Address

People are asking us what the solution is. It is very simple. This address to the nation and the throne speech should have been about the public health crisis and the health care systems that have been affected by this unprecedented crisis. The solution came from the provincial premiers and the Government of Quebec. It is simple. The solution is to put money into health care. That is all there is to it. That is all the provinces want. They must get help to pay for health care.

The Prime Minister says he has met with them 20 times, but he is not listening to them. He met with them 20 times and every time the ministers told him the same thing, but he is not listening. He could meet with them 100 times, and it would not matter. He is not listening to Canada's health care experts, the people in charge of safeguarding the health of Quebecers and Canadians.

● (1245)

Earlier, the Prime Minister spoke about blank cheques. He just does not get it. The Canadian Constitution clearly states that health care falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. It says so in black and white. To help the provinces and Quebec provide proper funding for health care, the federal government needs to contribute.

The federal government is saying that it will not give out any blank cheques, but it is not the government's money. The Prime Minister needs to understand that. It is not his money. It is taxpayers' money.

Quebec taxpayers pay taxes and give the federal government a blank cheque. They give the federal government that money, but in return they expect to receive services from the federal government. Quebec taxpayers expect to receive quality health care after paying those taxes. After putting money in its own pockets, this government is meddling in things that are none of its concern, acting like an armchair quarterback and saying that the provinces need to do this or that, when it knows nothing about what needs to be done.

The federal government was supposed to provide 50% of the funding, but that was cut to 33% and then 25%. In the early 2010s, the Conservatives had a great idea. They said that they were going to put a 3% cap on increases to health care transfers. It was their idea.

The 2013 Thomson report was clear. Maintaining health care spending, including in Quebec, requires an annual funding increase of 5.6%. It does not take a PhD in math to understand that when costs increase by 5.6% annually and the federal government only allocates 3% more in its budget, the remaining 2.6% is on the wrong side of the balance sheet. That is obvious.

Last week, the premiers of Quebec and the provinces stated that, based on their calculations, they need an additional \$28 billion for health care. Once again, the federal government refused and said it was not going to write a blank cheque.

Ironically, this government tries to interfere in the jurisdiction of the provinces and Quebec, but it cannot manage its own affairs properly.

The Address

The rail crisis was a federal matter, yet for 20 days, the government stated that it would not do anything and that it was up to the provinces and Quebec to take care of it. It is actually a federal matter. The government needs to do its job. It went out of its way to do nothing. That is unbelievable. I call that compulsive passive resistance.

Then the pandemic began. Since the virus came from overseas, the Prime Minister was advised to close the borders. It was only logical. That was his job. That is what he is there for, among other things, but he said that he would not close the borders. It took the mayor of Montreal going to Dorval and saying that enough is enough. The mayor did what the Prime Minister was supposed to do. The government is not looking after its own affairs.

Foreign workers who arrived here were meant to be put in quarantine, and the federal government was supposed to manage the situation. It failed to do that. It does not take care of its own affairs, but it pretends it is king and says it will manage areas under provincial jurisdiction. It needs to mind its own business. That is what Quebecers want, for this government to mind its own business.

With regard to hospital staff, nurses are doing an amazing job. They have been performing miracles for years. As a result of increased chronic underfunding by this government, and by the federal government in general, they are being called upon to make more and more miracles happen. They are being left to fend for themselves. Orderlies are having to take on more and more work. Burnout is ever present. Instead of saying that it is going to help them, give them money, support them, give them resources and not let them down, what is the government doing? It is telling them how to do their jobs and refusing to provide more help. That is what the government said in the throne speech. It makes no sense.

The government saw the throne speech as an opportunity to interfere in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction, including long-term care facilities, home care, family doctors, virtual health care, mental health resources, pharmacare, training for workers, and child care. These things are none of the federal government's business.

• (1250)

What exactly is the federal government's business? Taxpayers' money. The federal government should take that money and give it back to the government responsible for providing these services to taxpayers, be that in Quebec City or Ottawa. That is precisely how the Canadian federation works. I did not make that up or make the rules. The Liberals are the ones not following the rules.

There is some good news, sort of. It is not entirely good news though. It never is.

Helping seniors is a good thing. For the past year, we have been talking about how seniors are in a precarious financial situation, and the crisis caused by the pandemic has made things even worse. These seniors are isolated and sick, and, sadly, many of them have died. We asked the government to help them, but the government decided to help only those over 75. We do not understand that kind of logic. Do they think nothing happens to people between the ages of 65 and 75? Do they think those people live a charmed life? Why create two classes of seniors?

The government is going to help certain industries that are struggling, including the travel, tourism and culture sectors. That is great. However, the throne speech included nothing for the aerospace industry, even though it accounts for 43,000 direct and indirect jobs in Quebec and is its largest export. This sector was hit hard by the pandemic, and yet the throne speech offers no solutions.

The government has promised to create a million jobs. This is the usual smoke and mirrors from the Liberal Party, which seems to like round numbers. It says it is going to create a million jobs, but we have no idea how.

The Liberal Party has already promised to plant two billion trees. People were impressed and wondered how the government would do that. The government would only reply that it was going to plant those trees, but now, one year later, not one tree has been planted.

The Liberals promised that Canada would reach net zero by 2050. People were impressed. They wondered what the Liberals' secret was and asked them how they were going to do it. The Liberals have no idea. This is a joke. It is all smoke and mirrors.

The government says it will create one million jobs. It may want to start by protecting aerospace jobs that are so important for Quebec. These are good jobs that benefit all of Quebec and its exports. It is not complicated. It is what needs to be done. Again, however, this government pouts and does not want to deal with the economy in a smart way, when all it would take is an aerospace policy. In Canada and Quebec, we are the only country that does not help its aerospace industry in a structured way. In Quebec, we are capable of building a plane from stem to stern. It is a source of pride. We do that in spite of the federal government and the fact that half of our taxes do not come back to us in a smart way.

The government said it would make web giants contribute. That is good news. It is interesting. Yet, the government does not mention tax havens because the Liberals are spineless. I know some Liberal members and I like them. I have not spoken at length with them about it, but I know that they would say that tax havens do not make sense. Why then are the Liberals not taking action? Which friends do they want to protect by standing by while everyone has been urging them to take action on this issue over the years? These tax havens represent billions of dollars in lost taxes.

The government has extended the Canada emergency wage subsidy. The Liberals know that it is a good measure because they used it for six months and made \$800,000. They tested the subsidy and found that it worked for them. They thought it was great and decided to keep it in place.

The government is talking about a green recovery. Fine, but since we are on the subject, I would have liked the speech to nix the Trans Mountain expansion. Many economists and academics, even some from western Canada, are saying that this project is not viable, that it will not make money and that investing \$12 billion in it is unthinkable. The message was crystal clear, we have heard it over and over, and it became glaringly obvious two weeks ago. The writing was on the wall. The throne speech should have made a definitive statement about it, but it was not even mentioned.

• (1255)

The government's environmental whims are shorter-lived than a balloon at a porcupine party. They come and go. That is a fact.

The government sacrificed the future of farmers and milk quotas, for example, for the sake of more international agreements. The government sacrificed these things for the sake of globalization, and farmers lost billions of dollars. They were promised again and again that they would get compensation and that the money was there. It was there in last year's throne speech. What happened since then? Nothing. What is happening now? Still nothing.

This sends a message to farmers. The government is putting their finances in jeopardy because it cannot negotiate sensible agreements with other countries. As a result, the government cannot and will not help them. Farmers are told that they will get help, but they will not. That is typical of the Government of Canada.

In conclusion, there is very little in the throne speech to satisfy the Bloc Québécois. If the government wants our support for the throne speech, it will have to produce an agreement to increase health transfers by next week. That is what Quebecers are asking for. That is what Quebec's health care system needs. That is what the Bloc Québécois wants.

I would like to table, seconded by the hon. member for Salaberry—Surroît, an amendment to the amendment:

That the amendment be modified by adding, after the fourth paragraph, the following:

"We regret that your government did not respond to the unanimous call from the Premier of Quebec, and provincial and territorial premiers for an unconditional increase to the Canada Health Transfer so it represents 35% of health care costs in Quebec, the provinces and territories;

We also regret that your government is creating two classes of seniors by proposing to increase old age security only for people aged 75 and over;

We regret that your government is violating constitutional jurisdiction by not allowing Quebec and the provinces to opt out, with full compensation, of federal programs in areas under their jurisdiction;"

• (1300)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The subamendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed but not surprised. My colleagues, the members of the Bloc, would like to see the demise of Canada. That is fairly well established. All they want is to have the

The Address

cash without any standards or anything tagged onto the money. They just want the government to give them the money.

This is completely at odds with the people I represent. The people who I represent are not that much different from a majority of Canadians. They understand and appreciate that the federal government's role is more than just handing over cash or a blank cheque. They understand and appreciate the value of our health care system. They want a national government that genuinely cares about the delivery of that health care system.

The federal government does have a role to play. The Canada Health Act dictates that the federal government has a role to play.

The member commented that the throne speech would do nothing for the aerospace industry. Facts are often distorted in the chamber. The government cares passionately about the aerospace industry, whether it is in the province of Quebec or in the province of Manitoba. I suspect that the wage subsidy program has been very beneficial for many aerospace jobs.

Would the member not recognize that many of the initiatives that have been brought into force over the last six months have literally saved thousands of jobs in the province of Quebec and have assisted many more, tens of thousands, people, providing money to them?

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, the member opposite must not have very many constitutionalist friends. Personally, I am going by the Constitution. I read it and I have studied it. I know what I am talking about.

He said that health care does not fall under Quebec's jurisdiction and that the federal government has a role to play in it. I am sorry, but he should read his materials again. He cannot be serious. Nobody who has read the Constitution would say that the federal government has no business writing blank cheques.

The Constitution dates back to 1867. The sources of revenue available to the provinces and Quebec were insufficient to manage all the expenses. That is why provincial transfers were created in 1867. At the time, the federal government's main sources of revenue were quite profitable. They were related to transportation and borders.

Back in 1867, one of the only ways the provinces could get money was an income tax. There was no such thing at the time. Income taxes were created in the early 20th century by British Columbia. When the Canadian government saw that this was working, it decided it wanted in on the action, even though this was not supposed to be a source of revenue for it. It is the story of the Canadian federation. I could give an eight-hour speech on this, but I think I had better stop here.

The people across the aisle are going to have to realize that what we are saying is not just hot air. It is based on facts.

The Address

He talked about aerospace policy. We do not just want the government to shell out money reluctantly or grudgingly, as it has been doing for years. When there were problems with the C Series, Bombardier waited a long time for federal money, which almost failed to materialize. At the time, most of the aerospace funding was going to sectors that channelled more capital towards Ontario and Quebec. That is more misinformation from the member opposite.

At some point, the member is going to have to learn how to handle information properly. If he wants to debate that, I have no problem with it.

• (1305)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is great to hear Bloc Québécois members passionately defending the Canadian Constitution. It is truly a delight to hear. It is fitting and informative.

The NDP has gone after clear wins for people, measures that will help them in their everyday lives. The crisis has shown how important sick leave is. People who do not feel well and have COVID symptoms should not be forced to go to work. They should be able to stay home, because that is a fundamental right in terms of workers' health and safety.

Does my Bloc colleague agree that people should be entitled to sick leave?

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that I am not extolling the virtues of the Constitution. I am quite familiar with the Constitution, since it has been hindering Quebec's economic development since 1867. That is why we take great interest in the Canadian Constitution and why we want out of it. From the very beginning, the Constitution has been diminishing our rights and institutionalizing our minority status in Canada. That is a fact. An entire nation and its people were simply confined under the label of "province" among the other provinces of Canada.

He is extolling the virtues of centralization and that is proof of encroachment. NDP members are like Liberals in a hurry. They want to take away the provinces' powers and Quebec's powers; that is what they are fighting for. It is too bad the member from Rosemont does not talk about this in his riding; I am not sure he would be here after the next election.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke at length about the aerospace sector and Quebec's position as a leader in that field. Another area in which Quebec is a leader is the electrification of transportation, which came up in the Speech from the Throne. The ideas are there, but the details are not and that concerns us.

Quebec is already leading the way in generous car purchase incentives and first when it comes to electric vehicles in Canada. We have 1,800 charging stations. We are talking about 4,700 jobs and 58 businesses. The Speech from the Throne mentions this sector.

Where will the government put its federal investments? Will they be sent to competitors of the Quebec market, cancelling out Quebec's efforts? Will the government instead negotiate with Quebec on mineral processing and battery production and support the ecosystem of our SMEs that built this expertise?

In his last intervention, my colleague said that Quebec's initiatives have always been underestimated. What does he think about the potential harm of the Speech from the Throne to the promise of electric transportation?

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

Quebec is definitely becoming more and more engaged in the green energy transition. We are pioneers in Canada. It is not that we are any better or worse than others. The fact is that our use of hydroelectricity has led us to make this energy transition more quickly.

We cannot ask this government to help both western oil and Quebec's energy transition. This just goes to show that Canada is not working, because we cannot serve two masters at any one time. Grasp all, lose all, the saying goes.

I completely agree with increasing support for the energy transition. To date, unfortunately, we have only been paid lip service.

• (1310)

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois's perception is shaped by its very narrow vision for the future of this country and Quebec.

The federal government invests 87¢ for every dollar invested in Canada, at all levels of government. The federal government invests to help our workers, families and SMEs, and to protect our economy and our families. This government is prepared to help Quebecers and our SMEs all across the country.

As for climate change and environmental protections, why does the member not talk about the Government of Quebec's position on "net-zero"? Our government knows where it stands on this.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, Lavoisier said, "Nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed."

The money that the federal government gives Quebec represents taxes paid by Quebecers. It is not a gift.

The Bloc Québécois certainly does not think of Quebec as a minor player. On the contrary, for the Bloc, Quebec is a major player, and we hold Quebecers in such esteem that we believe they are capable of seizing control of their own destiny. Does that mean that we hate Canada? Absolutely not. It is just that we are different and we deserve our own country.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague and friend, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, who is going to speak to us about issues that affect his community and the people of British Columbia.

The Address

I am pleased to rise in the House to respond to the Speech from the Throne on behalf of the NDP. Quite frankly, my first reaction, and I believe everyone's first reaction, was to wonder whether this was all worth it. There has been much ado about nothing. The government prorogued and shut down Parliament claiming that we needed to take a new direction, to start fresh with a forward-looking vision.

Yesterday, I felt like I was in the movie *Groundhog Day*, like I woke up and was back in October 2019. The Speech from the Throne is a rehashing of the Liberals' platform from last year. It contains some worthwhile measures, some unfortunate ones, and some omissions. However, there is nothing to explain why the government decided to prorogue Parliament. The Speech from the Throne is a carbon copy of the one the government proposed during the last session. The NDP feels this was a missed opportunity.

The government doubled down with the Prime Minister's speech to the nation. It was ridiculous and comical. I think the Prime Minister did not like that the Governor General got to read his text, so he thought he would go on TV and read it himself, just to be sure he would get his face on the nightly news. I think the Prime Minister actually has plenty of opportunities to speak to Canadians and the media.

We were treated to a pointless throne speech that seemed like reheated leftovers, followed by an address to the nation that was equally pointless and told us nothing new. It simply reminded us to be careful and wear masks. It seems like the Liberals used our parliamentary institution to deliver political talking points, with no real message. Some might point out that this is not the first time the Liberals have done that, and I would agree. We in the NDP were left wanting more.

Parts of the throne speech seem promising. The Liberals say we need to look after families and children, invest in child care, and make sure people can get their prescription drugs. The NDP has a pretty good memory. The Liberals first brought up the idea of public child care and pharmacare back in 1997. The Liberals have been talking about these great social programs for almost 25 years, but they never actually follow through. They always say they could not do it this time but will do it next time. They expect us to believe them every time.

The real test is not the Speech from the Throne, but whether the government will make the right decisions and, ultimately, make investments that will really help Canadians.

We worked with the government over the past few months because we wanted to make sure everyone could eat and pay rent during the crisis. People need access to a basic income so they can power through this health and economic crisis.

At first, the Liberal government's responses were not very encouraging. We said that millions of people were losing their jobs and had no income to support their families. The government's first response was that those people could apply for employment insurance. We reminded the Liberals that 60% of workers do not have access to EI because it is a highly flawed program. Our progressive left-wing party has long been calling for an overhaul of the EI program.

We managed to get the Canada emergency response benefit. At first the Liberals told us that they were not offering it to everyone, but we wanted it to be given to everyone. Anyone who did not need it could pay it back in taxes. Then the Liberals proposed a sum of \$1,000 a month. In many places, that was not nearly enough. In places like Vancouver, Toronto or Montreal, once the rent is paid, assuming that is enough to cover the rent, there would be nothing left over. The Liberals were reluctant, but we managed to push them to provide \$2,000 a month.

● (1315)

Then we realized that self-employed workers, freelancers and contract employees were not covered. If someone has 10 or 12 contracts and loses eight or nine of them because of the crisis, they still have a little income. Initially, all of these people were excluded from the CERB. We negotiated, worked and pushed for measures, and we were able to make sure that people could earn up to \$1,000 a month and still access the CERB.

The Liberals forgot about students, who were also excluded. We pointed out that not all students are mollycoddled young people living with their parents. Many of them had to pay rent and put food on the table, but they did not have summer jobs. We therefore called for a student benefit. It took a while. We worked hard and negotiated with the government, and we succeeded. This proves that progressive members who are willing to work constructively are needed. They can get things done for ordinary folks, for self-employed workers and for students.

Earlier, I spoke about sick days. Clearly, my Bloc Québécois colleague has no qualms about brushing this issue aside. In real life, sick days are very important to people, especially during a crisis and a pandemic. We do not want anyone who has symptoms such as a fever or cough to go to work. We made significant progress by putting pressure on the government. Getting sick days for workers was an achievement that was applauded by Quebec and Canadian unions. I believe we took an important step forward.

The Address

Of course, there were things missing from the throne speech. We are in the midst of a health crisis because of a virus that has been around for six months and will probably be around for six more. However, the Liberal government is doing nothing about transfer payments for the public health care system. Stephen Harper's Conservatives cut the health transfer escalator. Despite their fine talk, the Liberals have upheld the Conservatives' vision, putting enormous pressure on public health care systems in Quebec and across Canada. During the crisis, we saw that our public health care system needs money and oxygen. It must be able to recruit staff and offer good working conditions and salaries so that they stay on the job. We saw and are still seeing orderlies who do not want to go to work because it is too dangerous. We understand. They are paid a pittance. Some nurses are leaving the profession because the hours are too hard.

Obviously, hospitals are run by Quebec and the provinces, not Ottawa. However, the federal government must cover the costs and make a significant contribution. At present, the federal contribution does not even cover 25% of total health care costs. The NDP and others are telling the federal government that it is missing the boat. Why is the government not announcing that it will transfer more money to public health care systems? Why do we have a so-called public system that is largely privatized?

The NDP is the party of Tommy Douglas and universal health care. People should be able to access care with their health card, not their credit card. Why are there so many private seniors' homes and long-term care homes? Because people want to make money off health care for seniors. Disaster struck the Centre Herron, a private long-term care home in Dorval. Residents were paying between \$3,000 and \$10,000 a month but were not even getting clean diapers. They were eating spoiled food. They were not being cared for. They were falling down, and nobody was picking them up. That is completely unacceptable to the NDP. We do not want the private sector involved in our health care systems, and certainly not in elder care.

We are going through a public health crisis right now, but let us not forget that we are still in the midst of an environmental and climate crisis. That has not gone away. We are travelling and driving a little less. The economy has slowed down, and our greenhouse gas emissions have dropped, but that will not last. If we do not change our ways and change our production and consumption patterns, we are heading straight for a wall.

● (1320)

I would refer members to a book written by Frédéric Bérard, law professor at the University of Montreal, entitled *La Terre est une poubelle en feu*, or “the earth is a flaming trash can”. We are seeing this again with the wildfires in California. The book's title is not simple imagery, it is actually quite accurate. If we do not drastically change our way of life, our greenhouse gas emissions will continue to rise and we will completely miss our Paris targets. It is becoming increasingly hard to imagine that we will be able to limit global warming to 1.5°C, which is the commitment we made. The Liberals keep contradicting themselves on this. They say all the right things, yet they continue buying pipelines, expanding oil production and boosting subsidies to oil companies. The NDP will oppose that.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, we heard a lot of promises in yesterday's throne speech. However, Quebec, the Gaspé and the lower St. Lawrence region have been hit even harder by the second wave of the crisis than the first. Health care professionals are near the end of their rope and we need financial support. The federal government's job is easy; it simply has to increase health transfers. What we heard yesterday will be an intrusion into Quebec and provincial jurisdictions. It shows a lack of respect for the demands and the will of Quebecers.

At least my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and I can agree on that. He said it feels like groundhog day, like this speech is a carbon copy of the 2019 throne speech. He called it leftovers. Still, his party, which is also known as the Liberals' farm team, is going to support the throne speech.

If this is a carbon copy, I would like to know why he would vote differently than he did in 2019.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very interesting question.

As a political party, the NDP is a left-wing, socialist and social democratic party and we have been setting ourselves apart from the Liberals for more than 60 years. We are extremely proud of that and we will continue to bring truly progressive ideas to the House.

However, I understand her concern. The Speech from the Throne leaves out a host of things that are important for Quebec. The entire cultural sector, which includes the living arts, performing arts and entertainment, is suffering right now and there is no sign of when we will be able to have shows that are profitable. For our artists, the situation is extremely worrisome right now.

Once again, the Liberals missed an opportunity to help the aerospace industry, which represents tens of thousands of good jobs in Quebec. The entire supply chain is quite interesting. We are the only country in the world that produces planes and does not have a national aerospace strategy. I think that the Liberals should rectify this situation and support the aerospace sector. It is very important for Canada and for several regions in Quebec.

● (1325)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday, in the Speech from the Throne, we heard many election promises. It is true that this is a new version of the first throne speech. I had the opportunity to hear three throne speeches, and I have to say that there are more broken promises in them than throughout Canada's history. What concerns me is credibility.

Some businesses in my riding are having trouble because they decided to make use of the work-sharing program. Unfortunately, employees have not received a dime since these businesses began using the program. The systems that manage the CERB and employment insurance are not connected. Yesterday, the government announced a litany of new programs when it is unable to even manage the programs that are already in place.

Is my NDP colleague concerned to see that the government is announcing all sorts of new measures when it is not even capable of managing those that are already in place?

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

We share many of these concerns. The Liberals promised that the government would levy a 3% tax on the income of web giants, which do not currently pay taxes. These are thieves and cheats who are not participating in the system. However, the government made no mention of this in yesterday's throne speech. This is worrisome because it is yet another broken promise.

The current government is incapable of providing services. I have a good example that affects a lot of people in Quebec, especially in Montreal. The immigration department is essentially shut down at the moment. There are some family reunification cases in which people have not seen their spouses or children for months. They do not know when their loved ones will be able to come to Canada so their families can be reunited. Many people are very worried, and the federal apparatus seems to be broken. Many services are not being provided, and yes, we find this extremely worrisome.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour today to speak in reply to the Speech from the Throne, which we know is just a speech that, basically, we have heard before. In 2015, there were similar promises made. In this Speech from the Throne, we really got a litany of broken promises from the Liberal Party on things that actually matter, and that are important to Canadians.

Specifically, through this pandemic we have seen the gaps in the social safety net and people are struggling right now. They are struggling to stay employed, keep a roof over their heads and put food on the table for their families. This is not a time for just words. It is a time for action. This pandemic, as I said, has exposed huge gaps in the social safety net. These are things that New Democrats have been talking about, such as the importance of 10 paid sick days so that people are not going to work while they are sick and infecting their colleagues, but instead are taking care of their own health or are able to stay home to look after their children when their children might show signs of having the virus.

We cannot go backwards. We know that so many things are not working right now for people. This pandemic has exposed that. Our health care system is not covering everybody, and people are losing their jobs and not being able to make ends meet. Even with the CERB, many people are still not able to cover their bills. The CERB is set to expire in nine days and we are being told that many Canadians are expected to take a cut on their CERB payment. These are people who have lost their businesses, which they closed

to protect public health. Now the government is looking at penalizing them.

People were excited about the Speech from the Throne. They were expecting transformational change. The government talked about building back better, but it missed so many things, and it is heartbreaking. Let us look at the things the government did not talk about. The opioid crisis was just briefly mentioned. The Liberal government still has not even declared the opioid crisis a public health emergency. In August alone in British Columbia, there were 147 lives lost. These are daughters, sons, brothers, sisters and cousins. Families and community members are dying from a tainted drug supply and the government still has not rolled out a plan to save those people's lives.

There was nothing in the throne speech for veterans. Can anyone believe that? These are the people who put their lives on the line to serve and protect Canadians, many of them now suffering from PTSD. Some of them are in the growing backlog of over 50,000 claims that the government has not even opened the envelopes of to start working on. We are seeing a growing number of homeless veterans.

The Royal Canadian Legion command wrote a letter to the government asking for help. It is saying that one in 10 legions across the country is looking at closing its doors permanently. The British Columbia/Yukon command wrote a letter saying it might be four in 10 legions that are closing their doors. They received no mention in the Speech from the Throne. That speech is meant to be about where the government is going, so it is clearly going to leave veterans behind. This is absolutely shameful. It should be responding to veterans. They have not even gotten a letter in response to their requests for help. This is highlighting the importance of the people being left behind.

Students were promised they were going to get help. My daughter, on April 24, watched the news when the Prime Minister said the government needed their help, that it knew the businesses they worked at were closed and their summer jobs were not going to happen, and that it needed them to volunteer. My daughter delivered food at the local food bank with her friends, helping to contribute. Then on June 25, the Prime Minister announced a program to help students that was starting that day. Students felt betrayed and wondered how this could be happening. Then the WE scandal emerged and they did not get any help.

There was nothing in the Speech from the Throne targeting students. There is \$900 million still allocated for students and it needs to get out the door to them. If we do the math, there is \$450 that could potentially go toward tuition for each student across the country. A lot of students do not know how they are going to get through the school year. There is no help from the government. They have questions. They are our future and it is important that we invest in them.

The Address

There was nothing about wild salmon in the throne speech. British Columbia has the largest salmon-bearing river in the world: the Fraser. Last year, there was half of the lowest return in recorded history. This year was half of that. We are losing our wild salmon and there was nothing in the Speech from the Throne to address that. We need help. We need the government to understand the importance of salmon to British Columbians.

• (1330)

While I am on the subject of British Columbia, my colleague from Vancouver East had a question on the order paper to find out how the national housing strategy is rolling out for people. I will tell the House how it is rolling out in British Columbia. We have 0.5% of the national co-investment fund, a \$1.46-billion fund, and this is affirmed in a question on the order paper. Members should ask the homeless people right now how that is playing out for them. In our communities, it is real.

There is no mention of indigenous urban housing in the Speech from the Throne. Among indigenous people, 80% live off-reserve. Many of them are homeless, and they are not getting the help they need from the federal government. The Province of B.C. knows that it is not getting funding. This is also supported by the minister there, who has been fighting hard to make sure people have a home in British Columbia. We are building half of the non-market housing in the country right now in our province, and I am very proud of our provincial government for the work it has been doing, but it could be doing a lot more with help from the federal government.

There are so many things that are missing in the Speech from the Throne. There is still no fix for the commercial emergency rent assistance program. They are still relying on landlords. That is why they have only gotten a third of the money out the door. Only 15% of landlords have applied for the program. For the rest of the people who need the help the most, the tenants, the program still has not been fixed for them to apply.

I applaud the government for responding to our request when we asked for the wage subsidy to go from 10% to 75%. We appreciate them working with us. Last week we sent a letter asking the government to extend the wage subsidy. It honoured that. These are very important supports for small and medium-sized businesses across our country, and I urge the government to fix the emergency commercial rent assistance program.

The government says its most important relationship is with Canada's indigenous peoples, yet the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls Calls for Justice document was tabled over a year ago. A constituent in my riding, Chantel Moore, died on the anniversary of that document being tabled, and the government has done nothing to respond to the Calls for Justice. It is still failing to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

When it comes to respecting indigenous rights, we can look to the Nuu-chah-nulth court case where the government spent \$19 million on lawyers fighting it. Right now is no different from the Marshall court decision for the Mi'kmaq in 1999. They're frustrated. They just want to go out and earn a moderate living. They just want to feed their families. They want to be on the water, fishing, not in court, and the government does nothing. There is nothing in the Speech from the Throne addressing that. It has not resourced

the tables. It sends its negotiators to the table knowingly empty-handed. How is that the way to treat its most important relationship? People are living in terrible conditions, trying to figure out how they are going to feed their families. This is not honourable.

The Liberals talked about planting trees. They have not planted a tree since their last Speech from the Throne. Regarding clean energy, they have not met a single climate target that they set out, not one. They talked about broadband. They promised that before. Regarding pharmacare, people are living in pain. They cannot fill their prescriptions. The Liberals promised this in 1997 under Jean Chrétien in the Red Book, and they are promising it again today. Regarding child care, we learned from our colleagues and friends from Quebec who have delivered a child care plan across their province. Now 70,000 parents have gone back to work and Quebec's GDP has gone up 2%.

It is critical that the Liberals do this now, that we get action and no more talk. It is time. It is urgent, and we need the government to respond. We will be here to continue to drag the Liberals to follow through with their promises in the Speech from the Throne. They can count on the New Democrats to do that. We have done that through this pandemic and we are going to be here every day fighting for everyday Canadians.

• (1335)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like first to thank the hon. member for raising the opioid issue. He has been tirelessly advocating for stronger federal, provincial, municipal and all action on that front. I join him in that, as we have lost too many people. As for his daughter's volunteer work, I thank him as well. It is not easy to get young people to volunteer in such a socially conscious way and during the pandemic put themselves and their families at risk. That service is also to be acknowledged.

I do, however, take issue with some of the member's statistics and some of his analysis of the throne speech. The member says it is all words and no action.

I would like to ask him whether the billion dollars announced this week, ahead of the throne speech, and invested straight into municipalities to acquire and secure housing for the most vulnerable, as well as the government's commitment to end chronic homelessness right across the country, do not address and include veterans?

I would like the member to address the fact that the investments we have committed to in this throne speech for youth employment services are employment dollars committed to and invested in all students and young people, not just those going to college but all vulnerable youth across the country. Will he be supporting that?

Finally, I address the child care issue. I was a reporter here when we were six weeks away from a national child care strategy being locked in for 10 solid years. There were provincial commitments right across the country from coast to coast coast, and your party chose to defeat that government. Six weeks ahead of those dollars being locked in, we lost 10 years of a national child care policy.

Will that party, this time, support a child care policy or will it gamble another Conservative government into existence?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Just as a reminder, members should speak through the Chair, please.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, there is a lot to unpack there. It would take me another 10 minutes. If you will grant it to me, Madam Speaker, I am happy to respond.

We are going to do everything we can to leverage getting help to Canadians. We will be here to do that. If the government responds by helping Canadians, we will continue to work with that government.

The member talks about affordable housing. I will talk about how it is working for people in our communities. For the growing number of people who are homeless, especially now with the pandemic, the government is not moving with the speed and urgency that is necessary.

The member talked about veterans' housing. My colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke can tell us about a great facility called Cockrell House that Angus Stanfield runs with no help from the federal government. It gets none. It operates on donations received through the poppy fund. We want to create a pilot project in our riding. I hope that the member reaches back to me and gives us help so that we can provide safe and secure housing for veterans.

The member needs to come to my riding. He needs to come to Ahousaht and see the squalid conditions that indigenous people are living in. These are the people he says are the government's most important relationship. I will tell him how that looks. Houses are mouldy. There are elders and children living in third-world conditions, and the Liberals want to tout and brag about the money they are rolling out the door to build housing. I will tell him to come to my riding and meet the people on the street. There is nowhere to go. That is what we are facing right now.

Young people feel apathy when they hear a Speech from the Throne from the same government. I do not know why the Liberals did not put electoral reform on their litany of unfulfilled promises. Why not? We know they are not going to do it.

• (1340)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my friend a question about

the government's response to COVID in terms of the public health aspects of this.

We know from international best practices a few things that work. Closing the border quickly would have worked, and that did not happen. Another is having masking in place. We know that the government actually destroyed a stockpile of masks last year and we were not ready in terms of having sufficient numbers of masks available. We are still behind on testing. In many places, people cannot get a test if they are not showing symptoms. If they do not fit within a certain prescribed window of having been exposed but think they might have been exposed earlier, they might not get a test.

Specifically, could the member comment on the fact that, in my province and in his province, people still cannot enter a diagnosis in the federal tracing app? The government has rolled out a tracing app, but if people are in B.C., Alberta or Quebec they still cannot enter a diagnosis, months later.

What are people in British Columbia saying about the fact that they are excluded from being able to participate in what are supposed to be national measures to respond to COVID-19?

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, that is a great question. Clearly, there is a huge gap and a huge problem. We are hearing every day from constituents that they are waiting in long lineups or the HealthLink phone line is not working. They are frustrated. The provinces are frustrated. We are hearing from all of the provinces that have had numerous promises from the federal government to address the very concerns that the member has outlined. Absolutely, we need to follow through with evidence- and science-based decision making and recommendations from the public health officers, but they need to be resourced. The government needs to move much faster so that we can flatten the curve as we head into a second wave.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish to advise that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

I appreciate the opportunity to address yesterday's throne speech and how it will impact the good people of Charlottetown, who I am so proud to represent.

I would like to begin by recognizing some people who have really shone through the pandemic. It is probably apt to begin with our public service. The public service in Canada has developed and tweaked programs on the fly that have been immensely successful in keeping Canadians safe and attending to their immediate needs. The efforts that have been made and the excellence that has been displayed merits our appreciation.

Closer to home, there are a couple of people who I also want to single out.

The Address

Back in the early days of the pandemic, I had the honour to attend a public meeting on a variety of issues. One of the constituents there was an infectious disease specialist, Dr. Greg German. Dr. German informed the people there that Prince Edward Island was ready to face the pandemic, that it was well equipped in terms of personal protective equipment and that there were protocols in place for testing. This has all completely borne out. Dr. German and his team are to be complimented for what we see now, which is a very significant increase in the testing capacity on Prince Edward Island.

Also, our chief public health officer for Prince Edward Island, Dr. Heather Morrison, has absolutely worked tirelessly to keep islanders safe, and the proof is in the pudding. On Prince Edward Island we have had very few cases of COVID. We have had no hospitalizations, no deaths and no community transmission. This is in no small measure due to the tireless efforts of Dr. Morrison. I salute her and all those who have done such a great job in keeping us safe in Prince Edward Island.

Back in the early days of the pandemic, there was outright fear. The pandemic was and is frightening. I would say that in the early days, fear was probably our greatest enemy, but I think it is also fair to say that it was a powerful motivator. It was fear that kept so many people on guard and tuned in to the daily briefings. It was fear that kept us vigilant, but that is no way to live and so we adapted. Personal protective equipment was sourced and shipped. The Canada emergency response benefit was implemented. Wages were subsidized. Money was sent to support the provinces, and the army was called in to assist at-risk seniors within our long-term care system. We adapted and we learned, and as a result, we have largely avoided the nightmare scenarios that we have seen in other countries.

We now know that it is within our ability to fight this thing, and because of that we have far less reason to be afraid. I would humbly submit that as we enter the second wave, complacency is now our biggest threat. Where fear makes people act, complacency makes them indifferent, and during a pandemic, that can be lethal. The truth is that we have been complacent about many things for some time now. It was complacency that chipped away at our social safety net, and it was complacency that created the truly horrifying situations recorded in the armed forces' report on the long-term care homes they were sent to assist.

Complacency leads to austerity. It is a philosophy that tells us we simply cannot do any better and that we should quit while we are behind. I remember the devastating impact that austerity had on Atlantic Canada during the Harper years. Nationally, it brought us not only increased inequality but also anemic growth. In yesterday's throne speech we heard that now is the time for action, not complacency and certainly not austerity.

I want to talk about something that was mentioned in the throne speech that is extremely important for Prince Edward Island and all seasonal economies, and that is the employment insurance system.

• (1345)

Yesterday, we heard the government's pledge to take action to reform the EI program. This is something that will be very well received in Prince Edward Island and is long overdue. I have seen

first-hand men and women in the seasonal economy disadvantaged by decisions that in no way reflected the realities on the ground. One in particular that hits very close to home is the October 2014 decision taken by the Harper government to divide Prince Edward Island into two EI zones.

The result of this in a place that is as densely populated and as closely knit in Prince Edward Island is that it pit workers against one another. It pit islanders against one another, but it also did something even worse than that. It incentivized dishonesty. It incentivized people who were in one zone to have their residence listed as being in the other zone for the purpose of survival. This is something that has been rectified on an interim basis by the measures our government has taken with respect to EI. The result of the interim measures that have been taken and that will be in place for the next year is that seasonal workers and those who need the EI system across Prince Edward Island will be treated equally.

The announcement in the throne speech to reform the EI system will hopefully result in that interim measure being made permanent in a meaningful way. I will personally be advocating for public input into the measures that will be coming forward. I believe that the disastrous 2014 changes on Prince Edward Island were brought on completely without input. It is only with the people directly affected that we will achieve the right result. Employment insurance is a 20th century idea in desperate need of 21st century reforms.

We need to be completely cognizant that we are in the recovery phase. We talk about building back better, but quite frankly, that is a conversation for next month or next year. We cannot skip ahead. We have to find our feet before we can start building, but when we do, I believe that the reforms to the EI system and the Canada emergency response benefit have started a very important conversation in this country around universal basic income. I believe that universal basic income should be part of the ongoing conversations. Poverty and inequality are far too prevalent in this country despite our wealth as a nation. We have an alphabet soup of poverty reduction measures: OAS, GIS, employment insurance, Canada emergency response benefit, social assistance, workers' compensation benefit, Canada child benefit and HST rebates. All of these things constitute our social safety net. All of these things have their own rules and their own bureaucracy to make sure they get into the right hands.

There has been much written about the need to have this streamlined. This experiment that has been forced upon us as a result of the pandemic is an indicator of the potential of this idea. I believe Prince Edward Island will be uniquely positioned to serve as a pilot for such an initiative. Again, this is a conversation to be had once we find our feet.

I want to finish by offering a few comments with respect to the real existential threat in this country and that is the threat of climate change. There is plenty of room for debate on how to combat a problem that is so immense that its fallout will be measured in geological time. Here is what the government plans to bring to the table: a working plan to exceed Canada's 2030 climate goal; legislation to give Canada's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050 the weight of law; thousands of jobs retrofitting homes and buildings, which will have the added bonus of cutting energy costs; and investments to reduce the impact of climate change disasters such as floods and wildfires.

I see my time is at an end, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much for affording me an opportunity to offer some insights with respect to the throne speech. I look forward to the questions from my colleagues.

• (1350)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the reasons this pandemic has struck Canada in such a way is the failure of the government to plan effectively in advance. Less than 20 years ago, we had another coronavirus pandemic in terms of SARS. It did not reach the same proportions, but it was in response to that pandemic that the government of the day created the Public Health Agency, which was supposed to prepare us for events like this. However, the government was not prepared. It destroyed aspects of our mask stockpile and that put us in a situation where the government was procuring very large amounts of PPE from China.

I want to specifically ask about this procurement. Many concerns have been raised about how Uighur Muslims in China. They face horrific repression and the largest mass detention of a minority since the Holocaust, according to many experts. They are being forced to participate in slave labour, including the production of PPE.

When we asked the government what safeguards are in place to ensure that slave labour is not part of the supply chain for our government-procured PPE, we were told by the minister that there is a process by which companies self-certify. In other words, those companies tell us everything is fine and we believe them.

Is the member concerned about the involvement, or the possible involvement, of slave labour in the supply chain for government-procured PPE? Is the member prepared to support new legislation to ensure that does not happen going forward? It is similar to, for instance, the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which was passed with overwhelming support in U.S. Congress.

• (1355)

Mr. Sean Casey: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the passion he brings to international human rights. This is a positive contribution to all of the discussions we have in Parliament.

I would respectfully submit that the government has done an admirable job in protecting Canadians from the coronavirus right down the line, including the funds that have been rolled out and the acquisition of PPE. We can be rightly proud of the public servants

The Address

and decision-makers, who have done such an excellent job in having Canadians' backs through the pandemic.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, in this throne speech there are many indications of future interference in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. For example, with regard to health care, the federal government, which does not manage any hospitals and has no expertise in that area, would like to tell us how to manage ours.

In the event that the government were to implement its proposed national pharmacare plan, should Quebec not have the option of withdrawing with full compensation given that it has its own pharmacare plan?

Mr. Sean Casey: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

During the pandemic, I believe that there was unprecedented collaboration between the provincial and federal governments. I am convinced that this will continue. The Government of Quebec and the federal government did a good job of protecting their citizens. The areas of jurisdiction of the federal government, the Quebec government and the provincial governments are certainly being respected. I am certain and confident that this will continue.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member ended his speech talking about climate change, which is an issue that is of utmost importance to many people in north-west B.C. I could not help but notice in the throne speech that the Liberals plan to legislate a 2050 climate target. I fail to see how this exercise can be productive at all, given that they have failed to meet any of the targets that they have set for themselves and for our country. What my teenaged daughters and I would like to see are targets within this political horizon, targets for the next two and five years.

How can we possibly hold the Liberal government accountable for a target 30 years in the future? We need action now, not in 2050.

Mr. Sean Casey: Madam Speaker, I respectfully disagree with my hon. colleague. We set a target with respect to the protection of oceans, which we met. We will continue to strive to meet the targets.

With respect to the announcement in the throne speech of enshrining into legislation the 2050 targets, this is yet another indicator of how very seriously this government does and must take our climate targets. The record of the government with respect to meeting its oceans protection targets is an excellent example of what we are capable of and what we want to be accountable for. It is that accountability that underpins the decision to enshrine into legislation the 2050 targets.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

● (1400)

*[English]***MOHAMED-ASLIM ZAFIS**

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I pay tribute to Mohamed-Aslim Zafis who was brutally and senselessly murdered, while volunteering to keep people healthy and safe as they went into the mosque to pray.

Mohamed was a good man, a valued community member and someone whom I knew well. He welcomed everyone to the mosque, handed out food hampers, put others before himself and always had treats for the children.

I ask that we remember Mohamed's kindness, his family, the International Muslims Organization of Toronto and Muslim communities across the country. Our caring, resilient community is grieving Mohamed's loss.

I thank the first responders and all those providing care: president Omar Farouk, Imams Taher and Junaid, and Sheikh Abdullah.

The reports that his murder was motivated by neo-Nazism and Islamophobia are deeply concerning. We stand with Muslim communities against such hatred, which has no place in Canada.

* * *

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.): Madam Speaker, COVID-19 impacted every industry. However, it really hit the tourism travel industries and the hospitality economy hard. Many operations did not open this season, some destinations adjusted to the new normal and were successful, other groups and clusters worked together and discovered a new way forward just to survive.

Our government's COVID-19 programs helped keep Canadians employed and supported these businesses through the pandemic, and we are continuing to help.

In yesterday's Speech from the Throne, our government committed to helping regional airports and ensuring tourism businesses weather the storm, taking avail of our many programs to get the help they need.

Travel and tourism are true economic engines for our country. It supports more than two million jobs and in excess of 200,000 businesses. Our government knows how important this sector is.

When we do return to the new tourism normal and the new normal, everyone will want what Canada has to offer: friendly faces, iconic places and rich cultures from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

*[Translation]***ROGER GUERTIN**

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, on July 3, we lost a great patriot: Roger Guertin.

I want to pay tribute to this extraordinary man, who deserves much of the credit for the seat I hold today. I want to extend my deepest condolences to Roger's family, Denise, Sébastien and Julien, his many friends and his political family.

Roger was kind, humble and generous. He was a man of integrity who will be remembered for his many years of service on the St. Lawrence Seaway and for his commitment to Quebec's separatist movement. In our minds, he will forever be the man who held down the fort during difficult times. It never occurred to him to give up. He believed in the country of Quebec.

He was a great friend, my inspiration and my captain. I am losing a mentor and a devoted ally of the cause. I will miss his happy, hopeful face. I want to close with a quote from Félix Leclerc that aptly describes the memory of Roger Guertin:

I know of a country
Far away from here
Where the ocean, life
And love unite.

* * *

LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge the hard work being done by staff and volunteers at long-term care facilities in Nickel Belt, including Elizabeth Centre, in Val Caron, Villa St. Gabriel Villa, in Chelmsford, and Au Château, in Sturgeon Falls. Alicia Woods, the owner of Covergalls, launched a campaign to donate a portion of the proceeds from the sale of masks to long-term care facilities so they can purchase PPE.

[English]

Their products support Canadian jobs.

Covergalls, under #CanadaStrong, donated \$3,000 to Villa St. Gabriel in Chelmsford and continues to build awareness about long-term health facilities.

This pandemic has isolated our most vulnerable. The generosity of Canadian women-led companies like Covergalls give real support. I thank all the hard-working staff.

Let us keep supporting our long-term care residents. Together, we can get through these challenging times and be stronger than ever.

#CanadaStrong.

● (1405)

INTERNET SERVICES

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents are not buying the vacuous platitudes of the current government anymore. Working from home, educating our kids and running our businesses are the fundamentals.

This year we have been reminded of the importance of connectivity as we work our way through the COVID-19 crisis from our homes. Rural Canadians need accessible, reliable, affordable Internet. The government is really good at making promises, but disastrous on delivering action.

Yesterday we heard another vague promise. Today we need action. We need direct federal investment and local, provincial and national partnerships to get the job done now.

On behalf of the people of Parry Sound—Muskoka, northern Ontario and all rural Canadians, I want to implore the government to lay off the empty promises and show us how it will deliver accessible, reliable, affordable Internet to the thousands of rural Canadians who are exhausted from the years of empty Liberal promises.

* * *

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in the Speech from the Throne, I was pleased to see that the input I had received from my constituents of Don Valley East through the seven virtual town halls I have hosted since the pandemic have been incorporated.

I have received numerous calls from my constituents expressing their satisfaction at the way our government has handled the COVID-19 crisis and the fact that their input resulted in not only the fine-tuning of programs like the Canada emergency response benefit and the Canada emergency wage subsidy, but being augmented into the road going forward.

Our government has listened to Canadians and our post-pandemic plan is focusing on social justice and fiscal prudence for a green, sustainable and equitable agenda where no one is left behind.

* * *

[Translation]

JOHN NAPIER WYNDHAM TURNER

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the Hon. John Napier Wyndham Turner, the 17th prime minister of Canada, who passed away on Friday at the age of 91. John Turner was an athlete, a Rhodes scholar and a lawyer who was admired for his dazzling intellect.

His mother used to say that he would become pope or prime minister, and Canada was the best choice. He served as a member of Parliament, minister, prime minister and leader of the opposition, and he loved Parliament and its time-honoured traditions. He has the distinction of having sat in the House of Commons as a member of Parliament for three different provinces, namely Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia.

Statements by Members

On a personal note, I was lucky to know him. Over the years, he generously shared his time to give me advice when I was in Toronto. His stories were hilarious, although some cannot be repeated in public. John Turner was a great Canadian.

I offer my sincere condolences to his wife Geills and his family. Thank you for sharing him with us. May he rest in peace.

* * *

[English]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be back in this place representing the good people of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Much has occurred in the past months since we last sat. It is fair to say that there have been more unfortunate stories than any of us would like to see in our home ridings. However, there have also been some positive stories and I would like to share one with members today.

This year a record number of new trees were planted in British Columbia. Despite COVID-19, roughly 300 million trees were planted in British Columbia. That is important because the Liberal government promised to plant two billion trees and, in comparison, not a single one made it into the ground.

The Prime Minister, as we learned again today, is magnificent at making promises he cannot keep, but is weak sauce when it comes to delivery.

Reforestation is important. In many communities in my riding forestry, particularly lumber mills, is the largest private sector employer. Without a vibrant private sector, there is no funding for the public sector.

I ask members to join me in thanking the many young Canadians in British Columbia who spent their summer planting these 300 million trees for all of us.

* * *

RUTH BADER GINSBURG

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, September 18 was a dark day that mourned the loss of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Although she was a petite woman, she established herself as a giant on whose shoulders we stand.

As a law professor, lawyer, judge and justice, she basically created the legal concept of gender discrimination and then set about challenging that discrimination in all of its forms. She is gone, but her legacy, the opportunities she created, the rights she fought for and the status quo she changed will live on.

Statements by Members

This week we celebrate gender equality in Canada and I can think of no better time to recognize Justice Ginsburg's legacy. As she said in her own words, "As society sees what women can do, as women see what women can do, there will be more women out there doing things, and we'll all be better off for it."

May her memory be a blessing.

* * *

• (1410)

2020 NEW BRUNSWICK ELECTION

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since early this year New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs and his team have worked to successfully limit the spread of COVID-19 in New Brunswick. Thanks to his PC government's recognizing the havoc that the virus would unleash, they put in place measures early on to protect New Brunswickers. His hard work was recognized by voters on September 14 when they elected 27 PC MLAs to lead New Brunswick with a majority government.

I was also proud to see all PC MLAs elected across my riding of Fundy Royal, including Premier Blaine Higgs, Gary Crossman, Bill Oliver, Bruce Fitch, Sherry Wilson, Ross Wetmore, Mike Holland, Glen Savoie and Tammy Scott-Wallace.

On behalf of me and our entire Conservative caucus, I wish to congratulate Premier Higgs and his team on the election results. We look forward to working with him in the months and years ahead.

* * *

COVID-19 TESTING

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a single mom working back-to-back shifts to make ends meet cannot stand for seven hours in line for a COVID-19 test. People in rural and remote communities or living on reserve need quick access and readily available testing options.

As Dr. Colin Furness, an infection control epidemiologist and assistant professor at the University of Toronto, said, "As a screening tool, saliva tests would let parents test their kids, and themselves, regularly."

Canadians are struggling. The government needs to realize that the expectation of a quarantine for 14 days if a person has come in contact with a case is elitist. Several of our close allies, including Germany, the U.S.A. and Japan, have rapid testing options. Meanwhile, our government continues to drag its heels on reviewing these technologies.

That is why Conservatives continue to call on the Prime Minister to finally do his job and both expeditiously and fulsomely review these testing options. Canadians are depending on this.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Frédéric Bérard, a professor at the University of Montreal, recently wrote a book called *La Terre est une poubelle*

en feu, or "the earth is a flaming trash can". Given the massive fires in California, this title is not just an image, but a sad reality.

The Liberals need to realize that we are going through a health and economic crisis, but the climate crisis has not gone away. On that, the government is sending mixed messages that are causing confusion. It continues to subsidize oil companies, it is boosting oil exploration in Atlantic Canada, it is wasting billions of dollars on the Trans Mountain expansion, it has failed to plant a single tree, it is leaving the door open to GNL Quebec and every year it gets further away from our greenhouse gas reduction targets.

We have to change the way we produce, consume and travel. We have to electrify all our means of transportation. It is time for an ambitious and coherent plan to leave a viable planet for future generations.

* * *

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF SAINT-JÉRÔME CEGEP

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to tell the House about the 50th anniversary of the Saint-Jérôme CEGEP, an institution that has spent half a century shaping our society now and for the future. What a legacy.

Founded in 1970, the Saint-Jérôme CEGEP now offers about 30 programs and has two college centres for the transfer of technology and three teaching campuses in the Laurentians. It goes without saying that our CEGEP is a crucial contributor to cultural and socio-economic development in Rivière-du-Nord, the Laurentians and Quebec as a whole. More than 35,000 students have graduated from the CEGEP over the past 50 years.

I am grateful to all the staff, past and present, for their work, and I want to emphasize the hard work and dedication of the current executive director, Nadine Le Gal. This year, over 700 people have been working hard every day to keep the CEGEP running smoothly.

Its slogan is very apt: Better together.

* * *

COVID-19 TESTING

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are outraged. Canada has been grappling with the coronavirus for over six months now, and this government is dragging its feet on approving a rapid test kit.

In yesterday's throne speech, the Governor General clearly stated that Canadians should not have to wait in line for hours on end to be tested. Meanwhile, according to media reports in Kitchener, Ontario, people started lining up for a drive-thru testing site at 2:30 a.m.

Health Canada has received applications for 14 different rapid tests, but the government has not approved any of them. In other jurisdictions, COVID-19 testing can be done in 15 minutes, costs only \$5 and does not require a lab. The Prime Minister demonstrated yesterday that he is far more concerned about Canadians' perception of his party than he is about their health.

Canadians co-operated with his government to flatten the curve. Will his government now co-operate with Canadians?

* * *

• (1415)

ALINE CHRÉTIEN

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recently lost an incredible woman, one half of one of the great love stories of our time, Aline Chrétien, wife of former prime minister Jean Chrétien.

Canada is truly saddened by this loss because Ms. Chrétien was a great Canadian and a great Quebecker who gave up so much for her country. When her husband was the member for Beauséjour, here, in New Brunswick, she really made a difference in the lives of the Acadian people of our province.

Ms. Chrétien adopted the Acadian people as her own and the feeling was mutual, because Acadians had the deepest respect for her. She became friends with another great woman, Viola Léger, former senator for New Brunswick and actress from La Sagouine. Ms. Léger liked to remind people that it was not the Prime Minister who appointed her to the Senate but rather Ms. Chrétien.

On behalf of all Canadians, I want to extend my deepest condolences to the Chrétien family and thank them for their great contribution.

In closing, yesterday, I had the privilege of speaking with Mr. Chrétien. He asked me, on behalf of his family, to thank all members of the House, the government, his former colleagues and all Canadians for their messages of sympathy and for sharing their memories of an incredible woman, his dear, sweet Aline.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE IN EDMONTON MANNING

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I spent the last week visiting the agriculture sector in my riding. Families, community organizations and small businesses form the core of these farms, cultivations and small operations. They feed our cities, they sustain our exports to the world and they play a critical part in our communities.

Watrin Grain, a grain farm that diversifies in many products, including canola, keeps our market supplied and provides Canadian products to the world. We must support them against China's coercive diplomacy. Riverbend Gardens provides domestic food to local markets to sell quality and healthy alternative products grown at home here in Canada. Lady Flower Gardens, which provides food to the food bank, also creates opportunities for our indigenous peoples.

Oral Questions

Efforts like these represent the goodwill of the agricultural producers. The federal government must support them.

The Speaker: Before we continue, I want to take this opportunity to remind hon. members, as we get into something new, that the members in the House have to stand to be recognized, which has been done for years. I would ask those at home to please turn on their cameras well in advance and not wait until the last second. That is their way of standing up remotely. It makes it easier to deal with any technological problems that we may incur as we go on.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second wave of the pandemic is here and most Canadians who may come up in a contact tracing list cannot afford to take two or three weeks off to get tested for COVID.

Last March, the Prime Minister promised that rapid COVID testing for Canadians would be a top priority. Half a year and half a trillion dollars later, Canadian families still have to wait in line for hours, and sometimes days, to get tested.

Why is the Prime Minister failing Canadians on this vital test during the pandemic?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we have been working with the provinces and territories on increasing testing across the country. We provided \$19 billion through the safe restart agreement to increase testing capacity amongst other things. We procured supplies and provided resources to help the provinces with testing, contract tracing and data. I have held 18 meetings with the first ministers over the course of the pandemic.

We will continue to do what it takes to keep Canadians safe and ensure our scientists have all the tools necessary to rapidly approve tests that are safe for Canadians.

• (1420)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister locked the doors of Parliament to cover up his WE scandal under the guise of a Speech from the Throne that would address the pandemic. However, the throne speech was nothing but a litany of recycled Liberal broken promises that leaves countless numbers of people behind.

Oral Questions

This Prime Minister has no plan to deal with the health crisis, no plan to deal with job losses and no plan to address divisions in our country. Why did the Prime Minister waste all of this time just to cover up his scandal, instead of using it to help Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic is the most serious public health crisis Canada has ever faced. The last six months have revealed fundamental gaps in our society and in countries around the world. For those who are already struggling, the pandemic has been even more difficult.

We must address the challenges of today and support vulnerable people for the future. We will take bold action on health, on the economy, on equality and on the environment. Those are the things that Canadians expect while we continue to have their backs through this pandemic and chart a better course for a brighter future for all Canadians.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's throne speech was nothing more than an attempt to change the channel on his corrupt government's actions.

The speech was almost 7,000 words long but mentioned Canada's natural resources only once. There was no mention of unionized oil and gas workers in Alberta, no plan for forestry workers in Quebec and B.C., and farmers, all they can expect is more carbon tax.

Why did the Prime Minister knowingly leave millions of Canadians behind?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of this pandemic, we have been there for Canadians right across the country. Almost nine million people received the Canada emergency response benefit, and with the measures we are putting forward today, we are actually going to continue to be able to support the millions who continue to be out of work, looking for work but unable to find it because our economy is still in recovery. We have also stepped up in supporting small businesses by extending the Canada emergency business account and extending the wage subsidy.

These are the things that are going to get our economy going by supporting Canadians through this pandemic.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's throne speech was a typical Liberal speech. They were setting the stage for fights with the provinces.

Before the throne speech was even finished, Quebec Premier François Legault was already saying that he was disappointed because this speech once again showed the federal government meddling in provincial jurisdictions, especially health. That is not its role, but meddling is the hallmark of the Liberal government.

Why does the current Prime Minister's Liberal government not respect jurisdictions, let the provinces look after health care, and let the Prime Minister take care of issues affecting Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to hear the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent say that the federal government does not have a role in protecting our seniors. That was not how the Premier of Quebec felt when he asked us to send in the armed forces to help seniors in our long-term care homes.

We will always be there to support our seniors. We will work together with the province, and with all the provinces, to protect the safety and health of all Canadians, especially seniors in this case.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as if Quebecers and Canadians needed any more proof, that was yet another unpleasant demonstration of the Liberal Prime Minister's arrogance.

Yes, the army did what it was trained to do. Whenever there is a need, we ask the armed forces to step up. I know people in the armed forces. I represent them in my riding. They are very happy to serve Canadians.

Once again, the Prime Minister has shown contempt for Quebec, for Quebecers, for Quebec's premier and for all Canadians, because the Prime Minister does not respect provincial jurisdiction.

When will he realize that Canada is about working with the provinces, not against them?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always recognized and will continue to recognize provincial jurisdiction. We also recognize that we need to work together during this unprecedented pandemic. All levels of government are working together to protect Canadians and restart the economy during this crisis. We are not here to play politics like the member opposite. We are here to work with the premiers and Canadians to implement measures that will help everyone.

* * *

● (1425)

HEALTH

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the middle of a second wave of COVID-19, the Premier of Quebec and three of his counterparts came to Ottawa last week to send a simple message: help us. They came asking for money to combat COVID-19. That is why the Speech from the Throne is an insult to them. There is not a single word on health transfers, and no money either. There is nothing but preaching and interference.

In the middle of a pandemic, is the Prime Minister going to increase health transfers, or is he looking to pick another fight with Quebec?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to be able to work with all members of this House on the pandemic. I am sad to see that some have already forgotten the work we did a few months ago. We increased health transfers, which already stand at \$40 billion a year, by half a billion dollars at the beginning of this pandemic and again in the \$19-billion safe restart agreement between the federal government and the provinces.

I made a direct commitment to Premier Legault and other premiers to talk about health transfers to ensure that Canada continues to be able to serve its citizens.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister is not great at math.

The Deputy Prime Minister said that her government refuses to increase health transfers, in the throne speech, saying that the government must justify its spending to Canadians. What is the justification for its spending? The justification is COVID-19, the worst pandemic in history, which has taken the lives of 5,800 Quebecers. That seems clear to me.

When will the government realize that we are in the middle of a second wave and increase health transfers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we increased health transfers by half a billion dollars at the beginning of the pandemic, and by another half a billion dollars as part of the \$19 billion that we sent to the provinces for a safe restart. We also sent \$2 billion directly to help get children back to school. We will continue to work with the provinces, to help Canadians stay healthy and to restart the economy. We will continue to be there for Canadians, now that the CERB is transitioning to EI.

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are worried. The numbers are going up. It is clear that we are dealing with a second wave of COVID-19, but at the same time, the Prime Minister has not really presented a plan.

What is the plan for increasing COVID-19 testing? What is the plan for our seniors in long-term care centres? What is the plan for ensuring that paying the price for the recovery falls not on ordinary Canadians, but on those who have made huge profits during the pandemic?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to point out that our approach recognizes first and foremost that we are still in a pandemic, that it is still going and that people still need help. That is why we continue to work with the provinces to speed up the testing process and make sure everyone can access it.

We will be there to help seniors, because that is what we have always said we would do. We will help young people. We will help families by continuing support for families through EI. We will continue helping small businesses through measures that will contribute to the economic recovery. We will continue to be there for them.

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of a second wave. The numbers are increasing and people are deeply worried, but the Prime Minister has still not laid out clear plans for some of the most concerning parts of this pandemic.

What is the plan to make sure people have access to testing? What is the plan to make sure our seniors are no longer bearing the brunt of COVID-19? What is the plan to make sure families who need child care can get access to it? What is the plan to make sure, when we get past the second wave, that it is not everyday families struggling to get by who pay the price, but those who have profited off this pandemic who pay the price for the recovery?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the throne speech delivered by the Governor General yesterday lays out our approach in all those elements. Moving forward, we will continue to build on what we have done for child care and continue what we are doing to support families across the country, making sure that while we are dealing with this health crisis, we continue to have Canadians' backs.

The plan we laid out is a bold one that touches on the economy, the environment, health and safety, questions of fairness and the barriers still facing too many Canadians. We will continue to work together to deliver for Canadians.

* * *

● (1430)

HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, Tokyo airports started using rapid COVID-19 tests. These are different tests from those the Prime Minister outlined this morning that take hours to get and days to receive the results. They are different. When the health minister found out that this technology was available, why did she not pull her officials into the office and ask when the review was going to be done or when this was going to be available to Canadians?

The question, very bluntly, is this: On what day will the COVID-19 rapid test reviews be complete?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout this pandemic, what we have done is rely on the expertise of the researchers, the scientists and the experts to guide us in the measures we are taking to respond to COVID-19. We will continue to do that because we know that, in fact, science and research are the keys to unlocking the next set of tools that Canadians and all global citizens are waiting for.

Oral Questions

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe the information the minister has relied upon to date is that COVID-19 is not transmitted from person to person, masks do not work and border controls are quasi-racist. That is the information she is relying upon, so forgive us if we do not believe her.

Why is she apologizing for Chinese numbers on COVID-19 transmissions? Why is she trusting Chinese numbers more than reviews from tests that Japan has approved?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite may realize, science evolves. In fact, when COVID-19 first arrived on the global stage, not a lot was known about the virus. Every step of the way, we have worked with researchers, scientists and the excellent public health officers across the country to ensure that our response meets the new understandings as they evolve.

This is a dynamic situation. Of course, our advice will change as the science changes around the coronavirus. I am proud of the medical community and the hard-working research community—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lakeland.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been half a year and other developed countries have gotten it done.

Apparently, elite billionaires on private jets get special treatment when they fly into Canada. When Canadians found that out last week, the public safety minister actually claimed he did not know about it.

Let us get this straight. In the middle of a pandemic that has locked down our country and almost shut down our economy, the Liberals do not know who or how many are receiving exemptions from the 14-day mandatory quarantine at the border.

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to point out that the reporting on this incident was false, and unfortunately the member opposite may not have heard that there were no national interest exemptions issued in this case. The decision was made by a border services officer based on the information he was provided at the time of entry for those two individuals. The information provided, unfortunately, was not sufficient to allow entry.

We have acknowledged that the border officer in that case made a mistake and that those people should not have been admitted. I have spoken to the head of the CBSA and it will not happen again.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more than six months ago, the Conservatives said the Liberals should shut down the border to block the virus and save Canadian lives. However, now the minister is actually admitting that after they dithered and delayed and did it anyway, they do not have control, or he is pretending they do not. The Liberals gave a pass to hundreds of rich, connected travellers, but the minister personally rejected the fiancé of a Canadian who is sick with cancer. That is quite the

double standard. Meanwhile, everyday Canadians, businesses and families still face uncertainty at the border.

How many more elite billionaires are getting special treatment?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will point out again that no elite billionaires were given special treatment and they will not receive special treatment.

The rules that have been put in place to maintain the integrity of our borders and the safety of Canadians are clear and enforced by our border services officers. We also have a process in place to deal with cases of compassion so that we can determine whether or not they are necessary for entry and that this can be done safely.

We will work with our public health authorities and with the provincial public health authorities. Our first priority will always be the protection, health and safety of Canadians.

* * *

● (1435)

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised Canadians that their government would be transparent. Canadians now know that he did not intend to keep that promise.

For instance, it was only after the media reported on blatant conflicts of interest among certain members of the COVID-19 vaccine task force that the Prime Minister decided to release the information. He knew it, but he was hiding it from Canadians. Why?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I would like some clarification. I do not know what the member said.

What is his question?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had another question, but I will be nice to the minister and repeat the first one.

Some members of the COVID-19 vaccine task force, which was established by the government in May and which we learned about in August, had dangerous potential conflicts of interest. The public was not aware of this. Global News and Radio-Canada broke the news.

Why did the government wait for the media to break the news?

Why did it hide this information from Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we very much value the work of top scientific and industry experts. We very much focus on evidence-based, science-based decisions. There is a robust conflict of interest process in place. There is also an online registry of declared interests with respect to the task force the member opposite is alluding to.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said his decisions are based on science. Every expert told us that the federal government's underfunding of health care for decades has undermined the system. We saw that in the long-term care facilities.

It was impossible to be prepared for an unforeseen event like COVID-19 when systematic federal cuts left us with barely enough money to take care of our people. The federal government was contributing 50¢ out of every dollar, lowered that to 22¢ and is now planning on contributing only 18¢.

Instead of giving lessons, will he finally increase health transfers on an ongoing basis?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said earlier, there have been health transfers to the provinces from the start, including a sum of half a billion dollars and more money that followed.

The Government of Canada was there when the provinces needed it. We will continue to be there. This is a team effort that is being made across the country to combat COVID-19.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our health care providers have still not recovered from the first wave and now the second is starting. What our guardian angels need is for the federal government to keep its word and transfer the necessary funding to Quebec so that it can take care of its people. However, in the throne speech, the Liberals are telling us how to do our job.

When will the federal government start rowing in the same direction as everyone else by increasing health transfers on an ongoing basis?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Bloc Québécois colleague seems to be saying that the issue of seniors is a matter of jurisdiction.

We believe that the issue of seniors is a matter of the right to life, the right to dignity, the right to necessary medications and the right to good health care. We will always be there for our seniors.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the government leader realize that the situation of seniors in Quebec's long-term care facilities is directly related to the health care cuts that this government has been making for the past 25 years? Be-

Oral Questions

cause of its continued cuts, this government bears responsibility for the situation of seniors.

Just today, the Premier of Quebec had this to say about the Prime Minister: "Rather than talking about increasing transfers to provinces, he is saying that he is going to interfere and tell us how to do things when it comes to long-term care, family doctors and mental health. That is rather insulting."

What does this government have to say to the Premier of Quebec?

• (1440)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Bloc Québécois is turning a conversation about seniors into a constitutional squabble when it should be about human beings. These are the people who have suffered the most during this pandemic.

Whenever those of us on this side of the House rise to talk about seniors, we are going to talk about the right to life, the right to dignity, the right to medication and the right to quality health care.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were told last year that they needed to ban single-use plastics. We started packing our groceries in reusable bags and using reusable cups for morning coffee runs. Then the pandemic hit and the government said to stop.

The Chemistry Industry Association said it feels that now more than ever "we must ensure that new regulatory measures will continue to contribute to—and not detract from—our much-needed economic recovery."

How many workers, making products that health care workers need, will lose their jobs?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has made a commitment to address the issue of plastic pollution. One part of that involves a ban on harmful single-use plastics, but the bulk of the strategy, actually working in tandem with provinces and territories across the country, involves additional recycling, simplification of product design and a whole range of other measures.

It is important for us ensure that we are addressing the issue of plastic pollution. We will do so in a thoughtful way and are working very closely with the provinces and territories to do that.

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if this year showed us anything, it is that we need single-use plastic products like masks, gloves and other PPE. Yesterday, the Chemistry Industry Association said that instead of "pursuing this go-it-alone policy" like the federal government's plan to ban certain plastic products, "Canada should commit to a reimagination of recycling and repurposing plastics" and maximize their lifespan and value.

Oral Questions

Why is this government attacking an industry that makes products critical to our COVID-19 response instead of working with industry to make them sustainable?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would direct my hon. colleague to some of the information that is on the web. This is exactly what we are doing. We are working to ensure that recycling happens, and that it actually happens at a much elevated rate to what it normally is. We are working very actively with the governments of the provinces and territories across this country, including the governments in western Canada on this issue. In fact, with respect to PPE, that was a direct issue that was on the agenda of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. It was chaired by the province of Saskatchewan.

There is an initiative under way between the federal government and the provinces and territories to look at how we had better either replace some of those products or to get them into the recycling stream. It is an important issue and we are working hard—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we saw a throne speech heavy on rhetoric, light on details. A representative from Clean Energy Fuels said that the throne speech had a bunch of promises but without any action, as usual.

With feedback like this, the government expects us to believe that it will beat the 2030 targets, targets it is not even on pace to meeting. Now, the Liberals promised to plant two billion trees. So far, how many have they planted? Zero.

Why should Canadians trust a government that makes such lofty statements but cannot even plant a single tree?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, a throne speech is a statement of intent and priorities. What he would have found if he had read the third chapter in the throne speech is a commitment to immediately bring forward a plan that will allow Canadians visibility on how we will not only meet but exceed the 2030 targets. I look forward to bringing that plan forward in the coming weeks and months.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals created the housing crisis in 1993 by cancelling the national affordable housing program, and the crisis has only gotten worse with the pandemic. Vancouver East has the largest homeless encampment in the country. Reannouncing the 3,000 housing units is not good enough when 235,000 Canadians face homelessness each year.

The ongoing failure to have an indigenous-led urban, rural and northern housing strategy is shameful. The all-talk-no-action approach is not worth the paper it is written on, without meaningful action. Will the Prime Minister adopt the recovery-for-all six-point plan, to end the housing crisis?

• (1445)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very unfortunate that the member opposite chooses to ignore the groundbreaking announcement that we made just prior to the throne speech: the rapid housing initiative that will build 3,000 additional permanent and affordable housing units all across the country, targeting Canadians who are on the street and those who are at risk of being homeless, in addition to populations at risk such as women and children fleeing domestic violence. This, in addition to other aspects of the national housing strategy, brings us to close to \$56 billion in—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway has the floor.

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PHARMACARE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, once again the Liberals repeated their promise of national pharmacare. They claim they are paving the way to universal pharmacare for Canadians, but they refuse to commit to public delivery and fail to set out any timeline for action. Liberals have been paving the way for decades. Canadians deserve something concrete. Will the government finally commit to public pharmacare, and tell Canadians when they can get this overdue essential medical service?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite that no Canadian should have to choose between paying for prescriptions and putting food on the table. That is why we have done more than any government in a generation to lower drug prices including new rules on patented drugs, saving Canadians over \$13 billion. However, now it is time for the hard work, to sit down with provinces and territories and commit to working, all together, to ensure that all Canadians can access affordable medication.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a year ago at this time I walked through the P.E.I. National Park in the Cavendish area to witness the damage from post-tropical storm Dorian that happened on September 7 and 8. The damage was shocking. There was 14 feet of erosion along the Cavendish Beach shoreline, and in Cavendish campground 80% of the trees were destroyed and the campsites themselves were annihilated.

What is the government doing to rehabilitate that campground and the P.E.I. National Park; and when is it going to get to it?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, issues associated with damage to the national parks are an important priority for the government. We are working through the issues associated with this particular park and the damage that was caused, and we will certainly be coming back to the hon. member.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has now been a week that tensions have been high in the normally quiet Acadian community of Clare where local fishers are concerned about a fishery taking place during a sensitive time for the lobster biomass.

After many questions asked and discussions on this crisis with the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, why has she failed to take any action?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my number one priority right now with regard to the tensions in southwest Nova Scotia is to make sure that we are ensuring the safety of all of the people who are in the area.

We know that the best path forward is through a constructive, respectful dialogue with first nations as well as with industry members from Nova Scotia. I have been meeting with the chiefs from Nova Scotia as well as with industry representatives. We are continuing to have those dialogues and we will make sure that we find the path forward to make sure that first nations' treaty rights are implemented.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister of fisheries is the only person who can bring this crisis to an end. She has known that tensions have been high for many months.

Does the minister realize that her failure and inaction has put the safety of all at risk? It is completely unacceptable. How long will it take for her to act?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do believe that the path forward is to make sure that we are having respectful and collaborative dialogue with the parties involved. My number one priority is to make sure that people are safe and to lower tensions.

We have to work together toward a solution to the impasse. That is what we are doing now. This is a very long-standing and deeply personal issue to many, many people. We are going to work with the first nations as well as with industry to make sure that we find that path forward.

[Translation]

Oral Questions

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “disappointing, hollow, partisan, directionless and anemic” are some of the harsh words used to describe the Liberal government's Speech from the Throne.

The Liberals appear to have learned nothing from their failure to prevent the first wave of COVID-19. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce clearly stated that what we need is more than just a patchwork of disjointed initiatives.

People are concerned. Why are the Liberals letting this virus do even more damage to Canadians' health and finances?

● (1450)

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

As the Prime Minister said yesterday, Canada now knows how to deal with the second wave of COVID-19.

Our priority in terms of both the economy and health is to combat the second wave. That is the responsibility of all members of the House. I would like to point out to Canadians that is also the responsibility of each and every Canadian. We can succeed, but we all have to try to work together.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the only plan the Liberals have is to lecture Quebec, interfere in its jurisdictions and start quarrels. That helps no one. Yesterday's throne speech, a partisan ad to the Prime Minister's nation, was full of empty words and recycled promises. It was desperately lacking in rigour and timelines.

Dan Kelly of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business noted that many of these commitments are coming far too late for many small businesses.

Do the Liberals realize that by proroguing Parliament, they jeopardized the survival of thousands of small businesses in Canada?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it sounds like my colleague took one of the Bloc Québécois's questions.

Since he is criticizing the throne speech, I would like to know what he would have cut. Would he have cut assistance for seniors? Would he have cut assistance for businesses? Would he have cut the CERB? Would he have cut assistance for people with disabilities? It is easy to stand there and criticize, to express disappointment, but I would like to know what the member would have cut. He should at least have the courage to tell us.

*Oral Questions***SENIORS**

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about those who are most affected. COVID-19 has affected everyone, seniors especially. The majority of COVID-19 victims are seniors, and they have also been the most isolated, separated from their loved ones, alone and anxious. Now, they are the ones left out of the Speech from the Throne.

Why is the Prime Minister insisting on creating two classes of seniors, and why is he abandoning seniors aged 65 to 75?

[English]

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity to answer this question. We know that seniors are being affected more than many other Canadians because they are staying home and staying safe.

We know that the social isolation among seniors is requiring much support from the government. We have provided direct financial support and we have supported them with additional funding through new horizons for seniors.

These have been important resources on the ground that have helped seniors get through this challenging time, but you have raised a question why—

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in order to help seniors, we need to increase their purchasing power in the long term.

The government has spent close to \$400 billion since the beginning of the pandemic, and yesterday it said that this was not the time for austerity. Now is not the time for austerity, according to this government, except when it comes to helping seniors and giving a little more to those who built Quebec and Canada.

Can the government tell seniors why it still refuses to increase the pension by \$110 a month for seniors 65 and older?

[English]

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind those in the House of what we have been doing to support seniors over the last many months. We have provided direct financial support to those seniors 65 and above who are on OAS of \$300, and an additional \$200 for those on the guaranteed income supplement.

We have also provided a GST credit to those most vulnerable seniors, and if we look at seniors who are a couple, they get \$1,500 of direct tax-free support to help them during this pandemic. We have additionally—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the agriculture industry has been through a lot, even before the pandemic. The pandemic has made existing problems worse and added new ones.

Whether it is competitiveness, market access, processing capacity or reduced production, farmers have needed an action plan for some time. Yesterday, we got the same platitudes and vague promises that we have heard for years from the Liberal government.

When will the government finally back up its promises with meaningful actions?

• (1455)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank our farmers, as well as the ranchers and food workers, because they have been working extremely hard. It is because of their hard work that we were able to have good food on our plates during the crisis. We are there for them and we will continue to be there for them.

We have put out significant additional money to support them. I am thinking about the \$77.5 million for our processors, the \$15 million was to give \$1,500—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers take pride in being stewards of their land, ensuring it is sustainable for generations to come while lowering carbon emissions.

While their campaign speech yesterday recognized these efforts, the Liberals' words still do not match their actions. To date, grain farmers have two options for drying their grain: natural gas or propane. There are no alternatives.

Will the government recognize that fact and exempt the on-farm use of fuels from the punitive carbon tax?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right when she says that the farmers are good stewards of the land. They care for the land, they care for our environment and we do appreciate it. In the Speech from the Throne yesterday, we recognized that they will be strong partners in the relaunch of the economy and also to fight climate change. Putting a price on a pollution is one important tool to fight climate change.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's Liberal throne speech simply repeated the failed promises they have already failed to keep, especially when it comes to rural broadband. In April, the Liberal government admitted that the connect to innovate program had already failed to distribute much-needed funds for rural broadband to rural communities.

Once again, we keep hearing the same buzzwords, with no plan and no action taking place. Families, small businesses and farmers in rural Ontario and in remote villages in Newfoundland and Labrador and indigenous communities across Canada are waiting to connect and are struggling because of this failure to connect.

When will Canadians see real action to get their Internet up to speed?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his new role and look forward to working with him.

Since we formed government, we have invested to connect a million households to high-speed Internet, but that work is far from over. Colleagues heard in the throne speech yesterday our plans to accelerate and add ambitions to our plans. I am counting on my colleague's support to ensure that the throne speech and subsequent measures are supported so that we can connect every Canadian to high-speed Internet.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a key focus for our government as we restart our economy is facilitating Canadians' return to work in a way that keeps them safe and healthy while sustainably growing the economy. One way is by taking measures to close the gender gap between men and women in the workforce, which will boost economic growth, productivity and prosperity for the whole country.

Can the hon. Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development tell the House how our government will be helping women across Canada to fully engage in the workforce and reach their economic potential?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague from Davenport well knows, women have been on the front lines of the fight against COVID. They have also been sidelined and our economic recovery depends on women entering and re-entering the workforce.

Yesterday's throne speech ensured that Canadians know we will not lose the hard-won gains of the past decades, that we will work to ensure that there is an economic recovery with a plan to get women back into the workforce, and that we will ensure women's health and safety so that they can care for children, care for our elders and ensure that Canada's full potential is realized.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the last five months, COVID-19 has had to share headlines with almost daily shootings across the GTA. Criminals do not care about COVID-19 and they certainly will not follow any new gun bans the Liberals pass. Organized crime and guns smuggled across the border go hand in hand.

Oral Questions

When will the government finally realize that the solution is not going after law-abiding gun owners in small towns, but going after smuggled guns and organized crime?

• (1500)

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is absolutely committed to strengthening gun control measures as part of a larger response to the gun violence and violence generally that is impacting our communities right across the country.

We have worked very closely with communities, provinces and territories and with the police to take measures that we know will be effective. We will be bringing forward legislation to strengthen our efforts at the border to prevent the theft and diversion of guns into the hands of criminals, and also will take steps to ensure that for those who are currently in possession of firearms, if the firearms represent a danger to others, they are removed.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's trade agreement with the EU, CETA, will no longer apply to the U.K. as of December 31. Canadian businesses from multiple sectors across the country are very concerned that we do not have a new agreement signed. In February, the Deputy Prime Minister stated that the government would inform the House of any negotiations that it enters into with intent within 90 days of those negotiations starting. This means that, technically, we would not be entering into negotiations until December, when this agreement ends.

When are the Liberals going to enter into negotiations with the U.K.?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remain in close communication with my contact in the U.K. The U.K. trade secretary is really pleased that we will continue to work with the U.K. to build on our strong trade agreement. We are going to continue working on a solid path for both of our countries to grow our economies and benefit our people on a transition agreement that will ensure continuity for businesses here in Canada and for workers and businesses in the United Kingdom. We are going to keep working hard for Canadians.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three years ago, almost to the day, a dear friend died of a drug overdose. Kamloops has seen more people die of illegal drug overdoses in the first half of 2020 than in all of 2019.

In the throne speech, all the government did was acknowledge there is an opioid epidemic. It gave no hint of a plan. There was one sentence, when more than 1,000 people in B.C. have died. There are heartbroken families. Fentanyl is being smuggled unchecked and there is no plan from the Liberals.

How does the government justify such neglect?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite might realize, in fact this government has done more than any previous government to meet substance users where they are by making sure that there is easier access to medications, like Suboxone and methadone, and working with provinces and territories to make sure that there are overdose prevention sites supporting community-based projects or substance use and addiction programs for treatment, safer supply programs.

We are tirelessly working with provinces and communities to ensure that people who use substances have treatments that work for them.

[Translation]

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian manufacturers across the country did an amazing job of quickly responding to COVID-19 by retooling their operations to assist in the production of much-needed personal protective equipment. For example, Yoga Jeans is now producing hospital gowns for health care workers.

Can the minister tell Canadians of the historic efforts to mobilize industry supported by our government's Made in Canada initiative?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saint-Laurent for her question and hard work.

Through our Made in Canada project, we are supporting Canadian businesses, including those mentioned by my colleague, so that our front-line workers have the equipment they need to take care of Canadians. Together, we will continue to make good progress in better protecting the health and safety of Canadians.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, as students went back to school in Victoria, teachers were told to open the windows to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, they had to close the windows because of the smoke from the climate fires. The federal government has missed every single climate target that it set, and it is even on track to miss Stephen Harper's weak targets. Parents and young people are understandably worried. They want real climate action.

When will the government deliver more than empty words and broken promises to address the climate crisis?

• (1505)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the wildfires in the United States and the attendant smoke that exists in British Columbia are a sign of things to come if we do not aggressively address the climate issue.

The government developed the pan-Canadian framework, which identified over 225 megatonnes of reductions during its first term in office. It is the first real climate plan this country has ever had. In the throne speech yesterday, we reiterated our commitment to bringing forward an enhanced climate plan that will provide transparency about how the government will not only meet but exceed our 2030 targets. We intend to do that in the very near term.

FISHERIES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to raise an urgent question. A number of years ago, the Cohen Commission set September 30, 2020, which seemed a long time in the future, for the Minister of Fisheries to act to protect wild B.C. salmon from the terrible impacts of what are sometimes called fish farms but which are more accurately described as toxic fish factories.

September 30, the deadline, looms at the same time as Pacific salmon is in a desperate state of crisis throughout all its ecosystems. Will the Minister of Fisheries commit to act to shut down the open pen toxic fish factories by September 30?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my department is absolutely committed to the conservation and protection of the wild Pacific salmon. That is why my department's policy and decision-making looks at the potential risk and heavily relies on sound peer-reviewed science in order to make our decisions. To date, the department has eight of the nine risk assessments completed. We know that there is still one more to be finished.

I will have more to say on this in the coming days.

The Speaker: That is all the time we have today for question period. Before we go to the Point of Order, while I have everybody's attention, I want to remind our members who are joining us but who are away from the chamber that technically it is up to them to find a good source of Internet. If members are joining us from home, they should make sure they are wired directly into their router and that the signal is strong. Members should work with our IT department and their ambassadors to make sure that it works. That goes for anyone joining us from outside.

[Translation]

The House leader of the official opposition on a point of order.

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, we all understand that this is a brand-new hybrid Parliament. It is only natural that some things will work and some will not, technically speaking. That comes from the fact that this technology is new to our country.

Earlier, the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles asked a question. It is our understanding that the minister could not answer for technological reasons. I therefore seek the consent of the House to allow the member to ask this question again, since he did not have the opportunity to do so earlier.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the question to be asked again?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in May, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement set up the COVID-19 Supply Council.

Canadians were outraged, but not surprised to see the Liberals helping friends of the Trudeau family with the WE Charity and hiding the business connections of certain council members. Now Canadians want guarantees. They want their money to be invested in their best interests, not the best interest of friends of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Can the government confirm, yes or no, whether there are conflicts of interest on the COVID-19 Supply Council?

[English]

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as this is the beginning of the new session, I would like to thank the hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek for her contributions in the last session of Parliament.

[Translation]

I want to say that, from the beginning, we have been working with partners from all levels of government and with the industry to obtain the necessary medical supplies as part of the government-wide response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The council has built on our collaborative approach to help us address existing and future supply challenges.

• (1510)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, as you know, today is Thursday.

I will ask the traditional Thursday question once the points of order have been dealt with.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is a very straightforward point of order regarding the statement

Business of the House

I made earlier, which was not quite done. I had three or four words left to say.

The microphones were muted, and my team told me that the minute was not up, so I would like to start over if I may. It was an important tribute to an important person who recently passed away.

I therefore seek the unanimous consent of the House.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, on July 3, we lost a great patriot: Roger Guertin.

I want to pay tribute to this extraordinary man, who deserves much of the credit for the seat I hold today. I want to extend my deepest condolences to Roger's family, Denise, Sébastien and Julien, his many friends and his political family.

Roger was kind, humble and generous. He was a man of integrity who will be remembered for his many years of service on the St. Lawrence Seaway and for his commitment to Quebec's separatist movement. In our minds, he will forever be the man who held down the fort during difficult times. It never occurred to him to give up. He believed in the country of Quebec.

He was a great friend, my inspiration and my captain. I have lost a mentor and a devoted ally of the cause. I will miss his happy, hopeful face.

I want to close with a quote by Félix Leclerc that aptly describes the memory of Roger Guertin:

I know of a country
Far away from here
Where the ocean, life
And love unite.

My friend, I love you.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is Thursday, and tradition dictates that the government House leader and the opposition House leader have an exchange regarding what to expect in the week ahead.

I would first like to take a moment to sincerely thank my colleagues, the other House leaders, for the extraordinary collaboration everyone has demonstrated over the past two weeks to make this hybrid Parliament happen and restart the committees. I therefore thank the government House leader; the Bloc Québécois House leader, the member for La Prairie; and the NDP House leader, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Privilege

Everyone has been working hard and making every effort for the sake of Canada and the House of Commons. My sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to these efforts.

Since Parliament is sitting, could the government House leader advise the House of the business planned for the next few days?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by congratulating my colleague on his appointment to this important position, which reflects both his leader's confidence in him and his fitness for this extremely important role.

I look forward to collaborating and working with him.

[English]

On that note, I also want to thank all the parties for their collaboration yesterday on adopting the motion that allows MPs from all regions across the country to participate in the debates. This is extremely important.

[Translation]

To answer my colleague and friend's question directly, I will say that tomorrow, Friday, will be the second day of debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

On Monday and Tuesday, we will begin debate on Bill C-2, an act relating to economic recovery in response to COVID-19, which was introduced this morning by the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion.

Finally, the third and fourth days set aside in the House for debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne will be Wednesday and Thursday respectively.

* * *

• (1515)

[English]

PRIVILEGE

RESPONSE BY PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO ORDER PAPER QUESTION

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a lasting tribute to my predecessor, the late Gord Brown, that our riding reflects all of the beautiful attributes of my constituency.

I am rising today on a question of privilege regarding a deliberately misleading statement presented to the House by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. This was by way of the government's response to Order Paper Question No. 443, tabled during the previous session of Parliament.

On May 11, 2020, I asked the government, through that written question, about the construction and renovations at Harrington Lake, projects which came to light this spring. Specifically, I asked for the estimated costs of, first, each new building or other structure constructed or in the process of being constructed, and second, all renovations.

In the parliamentary secretary's response, tabled on July 20, 2020, the House was informed that estimated costs of construction

work at the Prime Minister's summer home would cost taxpayers some \$8.63 million.

Subsequently, on August 4, 2020, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation published an online article entitled "Prime minister's cottage renos cost more than disclosed to Parliament", which informs readers that an access to information request revealed that annual expenditures totalled more than \$10 million.

For its part, the National Capital Commission claims the difference between the two amounts comes down to operational or maintenance budgets, but some of the invoices cited by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation include the removal of the caretaker's house foundation and installation of security infrastructure. Those do not sound like operational or maintenance items. Those are capital items.

The Chair is often inclined to view such disputes as contests over facts. That is not the case here. Instead, what we have is wilful muddying of language. While we have no procedural definition of "renovation", the Merriam-Webster dictionary offers, "to restore to a former better state (as by cleaning, repairing, or rebuilding)", and defines "maintenance" as "the upkeep of property or equipment". There is no way to construe one word in the context of the repairs to a residence that would not include everything deemed relevant to the other.

It is my view that the government, by the very act of attempting to portray these two requests as different, has shown an attempt to deliberately mislead the House with its written response and is therefore in contempt of the House.

Speakers have, when faced with allegations of the House's being deliberately misled, applied a three-part test, which is articulated at footnote 129 on page 85 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition:

...one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the Member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement, the Member intended to mislead the House.

I believe these three elements can be made out in the present case.

First, the statement in the response to Question No. 443 is simply misleading. The numbers in the response and those disclosed under the Access to Information Act do not reconcile. Erskine May is worth noting here at paragraph 22.23 under "Answers and Corrections", where it states:

When factual mistakes are discovered in an answer to a question, Ministers may submit written ministerial corrections for publication in the [House papers and online]. Such corrections are required to be free-standing and should not be used to provide new information, however closely related to the original proceeding. Nor should they be used to rehearse the arguments which may have given rise to the original erroneous answer.

This point from Erskine May is crucial because it establishes that when it comes to questions, ministerial responsibility is firm. Ministers are responsible, solely, for the information provided by their department. Contradictory information provided to the House by the minister's department in response to questions is treated the same as though the information was provided personally by the minister.

Second, the parliamentary secretary, or the person preparing the response on his behalf, had to have known the response to be misleading. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation access to information response is based on real, tangible documents. These documents, the actual bills, were certainly available at the time of preparing the response to my written question. In fact, many departments have their access to information and privacy officials prepare Order Paper question responses because they overlap in the skills and procedures involved.

Third, it is my view that the lower numbers provided in the response to the written question are for the purpose of misleading the House. We are not talking here about blowing a construction estimate several years down the road, a pattern pretty common in government. These are two sets of figures most likely being prepared simultaneously and quite likely by the same official.

● (1520)

In fact, I am informed that the documents provided to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation are date stamped April 22 of this year, a full three months before the answer to my question was tabled in the House. This means that the government cannot even plausibly argue that the costs changed between the time that the answer was provided to me and when the same response was provided to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. The government would have known that the costs provided to me omitted items that were part of the completed costing document, which was later provided to the federation.

What is more, Mr. Speaker, you may recall how the whole matter of the Harrington Lake renovations came to be on the public radar. My colleague, the hon. member for Carleton, first raised questions about whether there had been construction going on at the Prime Minister's luxury cottage. He was mocked. He was ridiculed as if he was peddling some delusional conspiracy theory. The parliamentary secretary for housing even tweeted a reply featuring a Star Wars spaceship photo shopped onto the grounds of Harrington Lake.

It is clear that the government has taken a communication strategy to avoid well-deserved scrutiny for these extraordinary expenditures at a time when so many Canadians are struggling. As my colleague eloquently said when the truth came out proving that he had been right all along, "It sounds like they have effectively built the Prime Minister a new waterfront mansion while his old mansion is renovated. And they are trying to cover it up with complicated stories about how they have just moved the caretaker's derelict cottage up the road. What they should have just said is the Prime Minister needs a lakeside mansion while his existing one is renovated." It is no surprise that yet again, efforts to minimize and deflect scrutiny are on display again. The problem with that is it is not just spin; it is misleading.

Privilege

A number of Speaker's rulings have established *prima facie* cases of privilege when it has been established that misleading information had been provided by the government.

For example, on December 6, 1978, Mr. Speaker Jerome found a *prima facie* case of privilege where evidence at a royal commission had demonstrated that an MP had been purposely misled by a solicitor general some five years earlier.

Again, on February 1, 2002, Mr. Speaker Milliken found a *prima facie* case when conflicting information was provided by a minister despite the fact that the minister stated he had no intention of misleading the House. Nonetheless, contradictory statements were made leaving the House with two different version of events.

Now, just as then, we have before the House two contradictory statements made on behalf of the same minister on the same matter of the government's administrative responsibilities.

Later, on March 9, 2011, Mr. Speaker Milliken found a *prima facie* case involving a minister's statement in committee and the House. He said that the minister's statements had, at the very least, caused confusion.

More recently, on March 3, 2014, another of your predecessors, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, found that a member had offered contradictory statements which merited further consideration by an appropriate committee. It is normally a cliché that the Chair cannot judge the quality of the government's response, whether oral or written, but those responses are not beyond the Chair's jurisdiction on contempt.

As Madam Speaker Sauvé said on December 16, 1980, at page 5797 of the Debates, "While it is correct to say that the government is not required by our rules to answer written or oral questions, it would be bold to suggest that no circumstances could ever exist for a *prima facie* question of privilege to be made where there was a deliberate attempt to deny answers to an hon. member."

Before wrapping up, I should offer a comment about the timing of my intervention. The procedural authorities state that a question of privilege must be raised at the earliest opportunity. I had planned to raise this matter at the sitting scheduled for August 26, but the Prime Minister's decision to shut down Parliament with prorogation robbed me of that opportunity.

Despite prorogation, the Chair is perfectly capable of entertaining a question of privilege arising during the previous session. As Bosc and Gagnon point out at page 81, "Instances of contempt in one Parliament may even be punished during another Parliament." Of course, in the present situation, we are talking about different sessions of the same Parliament.

The Address

Should you agree with me, Mr. Speaker, that there is a *prima facie* case of privilege here, I will be prepared to move the appropriate motion.

• (1525)

The Speaker: I want to thank the member. I will take it under advisement and return to the House with a ruling.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[*Translation*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak to one of the most important steps for Canadian democracy. The Speech from the Throne lays the foundation for the direction and the objectives of the next parliamentary session, a session that will be particularly important because it marks the national economic recovery, as the country begins to emerge from the first wave of COVID-19.

I am also pleased to rise today because the throne speech sets the stage for a just, green recovery, leading to a more resilient, more inclusive Canada. This speech sets out four foundations or phases that will benefit the environment, employment and safety in my riding of Sherbrooke and across Canada.

As I mentioned, this is an unprecedented crisis. First and foremost, I want to offer my sincerest condolences to those who have lost a loved one to COVID-19. They are all in our thoughts.

As you heard in the throne speech, protecting Canadians from the virus is our priority and has been from the start.

I also want to take a moment to thank all those who have worked and are still working hard, day and night, to get us through this crisis. While many people had to stay home to prevent the virus from spreading, some had to continue working, sometimes under very difficult conditions. We called them “essential workers”, “guardian angels” and “heroes”. One thing is certain: These are good, compassionate people. Workers in health care, social services, education, food service, transportation and many other sectors have shown bravery and generosity, and we thank them for that.

I also want to acknowledge the work done by the government and public servants, who took the time and effort to listen to people on the ground. This localized approach allowed us to implement targeted programs to help people in need and adjust these programs as the crisis evolved. I am proud to be part of a government that did not hesitate to give Canadians urgent assistance when they needed it most. Members know that the most vulnerable people are often the ones most affected by a crisis. Time was of the essence.

When Canadians lost their jobs, lost the income they needed to support themselves and their families, I think it was our duty to respond quickly, and we answered the call.

The localized approach that the government adopted for developing its assistance programs is one that I personally promoted throughout the crisis in my riding of Sherbrooke. It brought a human touch to our crisis management approach. That was a priority for me and my team.

I can tell you that we were busy. We were there for our constituents day after day. We helped Sherbrooke residents who were stuck abroad because their flights were cancelled. We helped local businesses find the resources they needed to stay afloat and keep their workforce on the payroll. We also helped constituents who were losing their jobs keep paying the bills and buying groceries.

That is the spirit of the second foundation of the Speech from the Throne: helping Canadians through the pandemic. We have already started.

As the parliamentary secretary for economic development, I had the opportunity to be in regular contact with representatives from economic sectors, to take their sectors' pulse during this crisis and keep the government informed.

Over the past few months, I have spoken to several dozen community futures development corporations, or CFDCs. I was able to get a real-time look at the challenges faced by the businesses they support. These conversations helped us learn about the reality on the ground and adjust the programs we were putting in place, so we could expand them where the needs were greatest.

Take, for example, the Community Futures regional relief fund, which injected \$962 million into our SMEs when they needed it most. Of that amount, \$70 million was distributed through the CFDC network, and any funds remaining at the end of the program will stay within the network. This funding will double the number of businesses that can be helped by the CFDCs.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention the extraordinary work of the CFDC network's team, including special advisor Hélène Deslauriers, who reminded us of the huge impact that small businesses have on many communities.

• (1530)

She also pointed out that the RRRF helped save a number of businesses that were in danger of going under. This program is just one of many we created, such as the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which saved many businesses from bankruptcy. This subsidy also enabled millions of workers to stay on the payroll so that they could return to work more quickly as the economy recovered. When the business community asked us to extend the subsidy, we listened, and we reinvested in Canadian businesses. The subsidy will be extended until next summer.

Faced with the uncertainty caused by such a crisis, our response needs to be bold, inclusive and pragmatic. According to forecasts from the Business Development Bank of Canada, our measures will help restore most of the jobs that were lost. The best measure for keeping businesses afloat is to have customers come knocking. Seeing our little neighbourhood shops and beloved small businesses reopening safely is good for the economy and especially vital for our cities and regions. We need to help our businesses adapt and innovate in order to get back up and running as soon as possible. I mention innovation as a solution, because I had a chance to see what an impact it can have.

One thing that kept coming up as I visited businesses in Quebec was the importance of innovation and the power of science as an economic driver. Innovation is a pillar of local economic growth. It creates good jobs and keeps our businesses competitive and vibrant. I am thinking in particular of the Quantum Institute at the University of Sherbrooke. It will not officially open until the fall of 2021, but it has already contributed to the creation of four start-ups. This type of initiative, bridging the gap between academia and business, will train the highly qualified work force that will drive the economy of tomorrow. By being there for organizations like the Quantum Institute, we can stay competitive in a society that is constantly evolving.

As we mentioned in the throne speech, for innovation to be possible, businesses must have the tools they need to go digital. For many Sherbrooke stores, like Piosa, and restaurants, like O'Chevreuil, that are relying more than ever on online sales, going digital was a turning point. That is the key to making sure all of our industries remain prosperous and competitive.

When our government talks about innovation, we are obviously also talking about green innovation. At the recovery forum that I held here in Sherbrooke, we brought together about a hundred economic stakeholders in order to gather feedback directly from the business community. I was very pleased to see that everyone understood the importance of a green recovery.

During the crisis, I had the opportunity to visit a number of businesses that have introduced innovative technologies. I firmly believe that innovation and the search for new solutions will foster both large and small projects that will help create a greener future for Quebec and Canada, which brings me to the third phase of the throne speech, which is to build back better and seize this opportunity to create a more resilient, more inclusive, greener and fairer Canada.

The fourth pillar is a very simple one: We must stay true to ourselves, true to the Canadian values that guide us. Canada is and al-

The Address

ways has been a welcoming country. It must remain so. Our country was founded on two official languages, French and English. As a Quebecker, I am proud of the government's commitment to protecting both official languages. Creating the Université de l'Ontario français and overhauling the Official Languages Act are two of the ways we are ensuring the longevity of our two languages.

Lastly, I want to say that yesterday's throne speech heralds a boots-on-the-ground, people-centred approach to protecting Canadians from COVID-19 and helping them during the pandemic. Our approach will make Canada stronger, more inclusive and more resilient.

• (1535)

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke a lot about economic development. The only bright spot in the Alberta economy, given the Liberal government has economically developed the energy sector out of existence over the last five years, was the hospitality and tourism industry. This year, my province has taken a complete beating because of the lack of tourism, including at the Calgary Stampede, which had to shut down, with a loss of \$500 million to the local economy.

We need to get the hospitality and tourism industry going again. Given that the parliamentary secretary has such an interest in economic development, will she be pressing the Minister of Health to do a feasibility study for pre- and post-arrival COVID testing at airports? Will she be pressing the Minister of Health to find ways to expeditiously and fulsomely review rapid and at-home testing?

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her important question.

Indeed, tourism was one of the hardest-hit sectors and it was one of the first to feel the impact. It will take a long time for it to recover from the economic repercussions of this crisis.

From the beginning, our government has been there for the tourism sector, just as it has for all sectors affected by COVID-19, quickly bringing in support measures.

Throughout the crisis, I have maintained direct contact with those on the ground to really understand what was going on with them, and I was very present to assure them that the government would always be there to support them.

*The Address**[English]*

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned that her government was close to the people. Any government that is close to the people would know that the tragedy that occurred in our long-term care sector was devastating in communities across this country. Eighty per cent of the deaths in this country that were due to COVID occurred in long-term care centres, yet the throne speech released yesterday by her party made no commitment to binding national standards in long-term care, announced no federal funds that would be tied to enforcement and made no mention of home care, which is the preferred option for most seniors.

Would my hon. colleague agree with the New Democrats that we need binding national standards in this country, with federal funds for provinces and territories that agree to meet those standards, so that we can provide quality care to every senior in this country?

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway.

What happened at the long-term care facilities is indeed unacceptable and our government was there from the start to ensure that situations like that did not happen again, including through the safe restart agreement and a transfer, through that agreement, of \$19 billion.

It should be noted that the agreement follows an agreement between all the provinces and all the territories, illustrating the great collaboration we had during the entire crisis and our willingness to maintain our top priority since the beginning of the crisis, namely, ensuring the health and safety of all Canadians.

● (1540)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question about pharmacare for the parliamentary secretary.

The throne speech said that pharmacare was a priority, but not an urgent one. I noticed that the throne speech only mentions some small steps towards creating universal pharmacare.

Pharmacare is urgent, though. What will the member say to make this a higher priority? They need to hurry up.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her very important question.

The government has been working towards this from the beginning. All along, our government's priority has been the health and safety of Canadians. We met our objectives through the programs that we implemented.

I heard my colleague's plea for swift action. We are doing crisis management. We did implement programs very quickly to address this crisis and to help people.

We are now going to set ourselves up for the best possible recovery.

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

When we come together in this place, it should be to help the people of our Confederation. We meet to scrutinize each other's decisions, our policies, our actions and the use of money that the people we represent have earned.

In my time in office, I have watched the power of this place be willfully abdicated to men who seek their own enrichment, affirm their vanity or hide their incompetence and ignorance. I have watched them lean on those here with honeyed words, promises of riches or position or, if that fails, threats. I have watched many here lose the sense of gravity of the power bestowed upon us by the people we represent.

We must put our people first, all of them, regardless of political affiliation, ability to curry favour or religious belief. We must be radically compassionate, radically selfless and radically courageous. I have watched those we represent lose faith or, worse, lose an understanding of the power they hold, and that must end.

During this dramatically transitional time in the history of our nation, the choices each of us makes from this day forward will determine the power of this place, the unity of our country and the well-being of our people. In this place, courage has been lacking. Yesterday's Speech from the Throne was no different.

In the last several years, we have watched our country lose its economic footing. Earlier this year, protests shut down Canada's rail systems. I have watched the people I represent fall into despair as their primary industry came under attack. I have also watched thousands of Canadians lose their lives and millions more lose their jobs, their mental health, their homes and their families because of the collective failure of those on the government side of the House to have the courage to challenge power, to question the status quo and not to acquiesce to a man who has long ago lost the moral authority to govern.

This year, after the rail blockades, with the reports of a new infectious disease emerging in China, this man was comfortable telling Canadians that there was no person-to-person transmission in the spread of COVID-19. His MPs nodded and clapped. The result was Canadians losing their lives and their jobs. He had no compunction when telling Canadians that border control measures and masks did not work, and his MPs nodded and clapped. The result was Canadians losing their lives and their jobs. He sent critical supplies of personal protective equipment to China when we had a shortage. His MPs nodded and clapped. The result was Canadians losing their lives and their jobs.

He allowed for the shuttering of the federal early warning system for public health dangers. He failed to develop a process that would allow for the full but timely review of rapid and at-home tests for the novel coronavirus, and his MPs have not pressed this issue. The result has been Canadians losing their lives and their jobs. He has not been transparent about his plans for the procurement and distribution of a potential vaccine for the COVID-19 virus.

While he was doing this, he was awarding contracts to a charity run by two guys who gave his family members hundreds of thousands of dollars in celebrity appearance fees and who did a super woke video on *MTV Cribs*, which showcased their charity as a cultish mess of celebrity appropriation of African culture of the worst order. It is no doubt that this contributed to his inability to secure a seat on the UN Security Council, because the picture the international community now has of him is as a dilettantish practitioner of blackface.

When my colleagues were able to compel documents related to the scandal, even though he had shuttered Parliament, he went one step further and prorogued this place, that is, fully shut it down to prevent the rest of Parliament from questioning him. He also lost his finance minister under a cloud of scandal. That was five weeks ago.

During that time, Canada lost more lives, more jobs and wobbled listlessly, as the world around us changed and became more unstable. His fig leaf for this action was to provide a new vision for the country, a plan, but he did not deliver. His throne speech took no responsibility for the failures he made in preaching wrong information, and not just preaching it, but doubling down on it and dismissing any questioning of the information that he was providing as wrong thought.

• (1545)

The Prime Minister took no responsibility for that, and he has no plan and presented no plan to fix these systems that allowed Canadians to be told that there was no person-to-person transmission of the virus, that masks should not be worn and that border controls were racist. There were no plans to move hell and high water to get rapid testing technologies reviewed. There was no mention of the relief for the people in my riding who work in the energy sector.

The speech was panned by the AFN national chief last night. There was no action towards reconciliation. The Liberal Party has promised child care since 1997, and last night on national television his minister could not tell Canadians how many spots the government proposed to make, in what parts of the country, under what program, by when and how much it would cost. The same goes for lowering drug costs for Canadians or a plan for Canadians to have access to the pharmaceuticals they need. This was the theme of the entire speech: five weeks lost during a pandemic with an attempt to distract Canadians from scandal with a bunch of garbage, seemingly hastily written on the back of napkin, when a real plan was needed.

On the same day that this load of something was delivered, it was reported that there were 301 opioid-related deaths in Alberta between April and June. There was nothing in the Prime Minister's speech about how to save the lives of these people. There were 128 people in Alberta who died from COVID-19 during the same peri-

od. Be it COVID or the opioid crisis, the Prime Minister seems to be willing to ignore pandemics when it suits him.

For those who are saying that it is too early to question the government's response to the pandemic and economic collapse, which has been the argument on the other side today, I say this: For those who have lost their lives, who have lost their jobs and who have lost time as a result of this government's inaction, it is already too late. The government's inaction has cost them all of these things.

It is too late for Sarah Campbell. I cannot believe that the public safety minister said there was a compassionate program to deal with her when she went without her fiancé's companionship during her cancer treatments this year and they refused to look at her. The government refused to have a plan for people who are separated by border closures. The government has failed them. It is too late for my constituent Cheryl, who wrote to me at a loss to express her desperation, her loss of hope and her husband losing his job in the oil sector. It is too late for so many, and the Prime Minister has no plan and only scandal to offer them. However, there is hope.

I had lost a lot of hope after the last election. It was hard for me. The people I represent are not in a good spot. Many of them are fighting mental health issues from the loss of work, and they are struggling to make ends meet. They feel isolated and ignored by the people in charge of this nation. I have been trying everything I can do with the courage inside of me to fight for them, to get change that would allow them to see themselves in a prosperous, peaceful future Canada.

Enter the member of Parliament for Durham, the new leader of Canada's official opposition and the Conservative Party of Canada. In a few short weeks, even as he battled the coronavirus himself, as the new leader of our party he has given me a boost of hope that I needed, not just as a member of Parliament, but as a member of a community that is struggling, as a wife apart from her husband and as a powerful woman who will not back down to anyone. He has done something that is vitally important to me personally: publicly expressed firm support for the human rights of all Canadians, including a commitment to fighting discrimination faced by the LGBTQ community and to working to protect and enhance women's rights without apology or hesitation.

I have no confidence in the government, especially not in the current Prime Minister, but I do have confidence in that man, his team and in the millions of Canadians who have had enough and are about to stand up for change. In the coming weeks and months, we will see this team put forward an alternative plan, an alternative vision to this incompetence, this lack of courage and this lack of compassion.

The Address

As the shadow minister for health, I will be holding the government to account for its failures. There will be no quarter and there will be no apologies, but there will be hope. I ask every Canadian to stand with me to join our fight in building a new vision for Canada. Giddy up.

• (1550)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague said toward the end of her speech that she thought members on this side of the House were suggesting that it was too early to start questioning the government's response, but I would actually argue that I do not think it is too early at all. I think this is an extremely appropriate time to start looking at the response and how successful it has been.

The reality of the situation is that millions of Canadians have been receiving CERB. This has helped them in their time of need and, indeed, helped to sustain what we could of our economy, so that when we come out on the other side of this, we will be so much better prepared.

There have been 106,000 small businesses that have received support, with almost a million employees, through the wage subsidy program.

Does the member not see that despite the difficult times we are in, millions of Canadians have been assisted and have been helped with the plans the government rolled out over the last several months?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I have heard a lot of myopic, elitist and vacuous responses in my time in the House, but I think that one takes the cake. There is no Canadian who wants a continued handout.

Canadians want a response to the pandemic so that they can get their jobs back and their businesses back, so that Sarah Campbell can see her fiancé, and so that they can have Christmas dinners. They do not want to be dependent on the Prime Minister and his scandals. They do not want to keep spending billions of dollars. They want the dignity of work. They want their lives back. The government has failed.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her speech.

In the introduction to her speech, she spoke about national unity and that piqued my interest. I often feel that the Conservative Party believes that national unity is predicated on the financing of the oil and gas industry. National unity is often used as a catch-all by my Conservative colleagues. I never hear them talking about forestry and Quebec's sectors, such as the aluminum sector. Our economic sectors are not acknowledged.

I would like to know if my colleague believes that national unity can only be achieved by funding the oil and gas industry.

• (1555)

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that the energy sector funds a lot of things in his

neck of the woods, so maybe he should be concerned with that and with the loss of jobs and the loss of revenue. Maybe he should have some compassion for the people who have provided this wealth and revenue instead of making it a political wedge in this place.

I am tired of this. If we are going to have a unified country, we have to stand up for every region of this country, be it Quebec or be it Calgary Nose Hill.

What we heard yesterday was a load of nothing to deflect from the fact that the Prime Minister needed to prorogue Parliament so we would not get the documents about his family's celebrity gigs with the charity he gave \$900 million to. Come on. This has to stop, and we have to do better. It starts by rejecting what the government put forward yesterday.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Calgary Nose Hill has a new critic portfolio, but on behalf of the industry committee, I want to take this opportunity to thank her for her work on industry with regard to protections against fraud.

I would like her comments about this. She and the committee did excellent work, but with prorogation we actually lost that work. This is costing Canadians, who are being taken advantage of by fraudulent activities during COVID-19.

What are my colleague's thoughts on the Liberal plan of connecting Canadians by 2030? The Speech from the Throne had a reference to speeding that up. I do not know what is meant "by 2030", or whether it would be by 2029, but the fact of the matter is that broadband is still lacking in many parts of this country. I would like her comments on that.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I did enjoy the collegial and productive relationship at the industry committee with the member. I certainly hope that my colleague from Edmonton Centre, who will be taking over that role, will have the same relationship. What the member did with the fraud report was so vital. It has been delayed for so long, and I hope the industry committee will bring that forward and the government will act on recommendations put forward by the committee.

Earlier today, the Speaker said that he expected members to be able to plug into the Internet. That is not going to happen if an MP is on reserve or in rural Canada. We cannot wait until 2030 to have a connected country. This should have been done years ago. Our party has called upon the government to do that within 18 months. The Liberals are losing time. They just lost five weeks, and there was no mention in the Speech from the Throne for this vital infrastructure.

I congratulate my colleague for his work. I ask those of us in this place to continue to work together on these issues.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to wish the member for Durham and his wife, Rebecca, a quick recovery from COVID-19.

[Translation]

I would also like to wish Mr. Blanchet and his family a speedy recovery.

[English]

I want to make a couple of points about the throne speech. The Liberal government's throne speech repeated false, previously debunked claims that its programs have helped one million people to be housed. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing) is on record in the *Toronto Star* stating, "I mean, obviously we've double counted to rhetorical advantage". This is irresponsible and the worst possible way to start a conversation addressing housing in Canada.

Second, the newly announced and light-on-detail rapid housing initiative throws \$1 billion taxpayer dollars at a band-aid solution to provide 3,000 units between now and March. That breaks down to \$333,000 per unit. With an already poor track record of getting infrastructure money out the door, how will this program be different? What will the quality of these units be?

Third, on the first-time homebuyers plan, the Liberals' only solution to address affordable home ownership is to take a share of a Canadian's mortgage. As a Conservative, I fundamentally disagree with this co-ownership model. The government should incentivize the use of RRSPs and other methods to help Canadians leverage their own funds to purchase a home, such as perhaps an increased basic personal tax exemption for young people seeking to enter the market.

Many communities across Canada are also part of the missing middle. They do not qualify for rural funding streams or urban focused initiatives and have once again been overlooked. Like many regions in Canada, my riding of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon and the District of Mission fall into this category. My office is adjacent to Haven in the Hollow, a temporary shelter that serves a permanent clientele base suffering from severe addiction and mental health issues.

The Liberal government announced a plan to reduce chronic homelessness by 50% in 2017, which they have since doubled down on in promising a complete elimination, but there has been no actual progress. The Haven is expanding because Mission's homeless population has doubled, compounded largely by the ongoing fentanyl crisis facing British Columbia. While the expansion of Haven in the Hollow is necessary, the increased homeless population is challenging for the neighbouring small businesses that are attempting to get back on their feet and move on past COVID-19. In British Columbia, we have had four times the number of deaths from fentanyl overdoses than from COVID-19.

How does this all relate back to housing, and what can and should the federal government be doing about it? As a British Columbian and as a Canadian I believe in our duty to care for our vulnerable citizens. It is a duty that governments of all stripes have missed the mark on. However, simply caring for and addressing the symptoms of homelessness is unsustainable. Real action must be taken to address the underlying causes.

For instance, we know that money laundering from the illegal drug trade has artificially inflated housing costs. The primary method criminals use is even named "the Vancouver model", for goodness' sake. Young people across British Columbia, even those making a good living with six figure salaries, can no longer afford

The Address

homes in the communities they were raised in. They have lost hope of reaching home ownership. COVID-19 has only compounded these difficulties. Jobs have been lost. Hours have been cut, and parents have been forced to make impossible health decisions.

● (1600)

[Translation]

Our homes have always been much more than just a place to relax and COVID-19 has increased the multipurpose use of these spaces. Our homes are now places where we work, study, teach our children and try to manage our busy lives.

When our living spaces do not lend themselves to these activities, we despair and feel trapped.

As the government in waiting, the Conservatives will give priority to home ownership and ensure that Canadians have more choice and can hope to achieve their goals.

[English]

Why has the Liberal government not put in place the legislative, regulatory and enforcement measures necessary to stop the money laundering through the real estate market that Vancouver has become famous for? Canadians deserve to be on a level playing field, not competing for housing with the global elite who are looking to park their millions and use our tax advantage in a safe country. While I admit trying to solve the money laundering issue will not stop all of our housing challenges, it is an important start for many British Columbians who have lost hope.

In January 2019, the Canadian Revenue Agency provided an all-party briefing where it acknowledged that, while their risk-based auditing methods had been augmented, little had changed on the front end to prevent money laundering and tax avoidance, save for the requirement to sign an attestation declaring one's primary residence and citizenship. Criminals do not follow the law, and the CRA must revise its approach to relying on the honour system. As parliamentarians, we have the responsibility to ensure government policies and programs work for our primary clients, the taxpayers and citizens of Canada.

[Translation]

The federal government must reexamine its role, particularly with regard to shared jurisdictions, such as housing.

*The Address**[English]*

There needs to be a shift as well from an Ottawa-knows-best approach to a service delivery model. I have a real-world example.

Last week I spoke to the chair of the Mission Sustainable Housing Committee about the Liberals' recently touted \$300 million housing supply challenge, which is incidentally not yet open. She does not want another application process to maybe receive some funding to further study housing gaps; she needs money now to build housing for our community, actual brick and mortar housing. The committee knows what its needs are. The province has already partnered with municipalities like Mission to complete this work because this is provincial jurisdiction.

[Translation]

Most small towns and indigenous governments simply do not have the administrative resources necessary to apply and have a chance to get federal support. They are already stretched to the limit. The federal government is taking a condescending approach when it should be communicating proactively with small towns and helping them to meet their needs.

● (1605)

[English]

I have spoken to so many mayors who have never seen a dime of federal money for housing. If the federal government cannot do it, then it should simply get out of the way and provide funding to the provinces and territories already doing this work, and without attaching all of the strings.

As a case in point, an assisted living provider in my riding shared how they received support from B.C. Housing and was encouraged to apply to CMHC as well. When they did, the approved B.C. Housing project was rejected by CMHC because the criteria were different. Why are we not streamlining our approaches between two levels of government on such a fundamental issue?

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that different levels of government, as well as members of different political parties, are able to work together for the betterment of Canadians. Admittedly, there is no simple solution to all of Canada's housing challenges, which COVID-19 has impacted and even exasperated. Let us collaborate. Let us address the systemic challenges to housing faced in Canada. Let us empower Canadians to improve their personal circumstances.

The Liberals said nothing to address the imminent financial challenges faced by those who have deferred their mortgages during COVID-19. I encourage the government to develop a plan as soon as possible to address this very real problem, which is top of mind for so many.

Second, the Liberals should also address the shortage of affordable rental housing in Canada to encourage job growth while increasing rental stock, as part of an economic recovery plan. I have heard from many in the business and development communities that government needs to incentivize purpose-built rentals. Why not consider eliminating GST on purpose-built rentals? Why not augment the existing CMHC financing programs, which seem to work pretty well?

Third, the Liberals could actually deliver the previously promised home energy retrofit program, a proven method of spurring economic growth and job creation in Canada.

In conclusion, my objective is to make sure the government is working for the people. Our systems are anachronistic and out of date, and Canadians deserve better services from us and our public service. While I await details on the throne speech and its commitments to improve outdated IT systems, I hope that a new approach to services embedded within these upgrades is both flexible and reflects the challenges people face in all regions of Canada.

Finally, I would like to recognize my colleague from Vancouver East for her important work. B.C. has been shortchanged by the federal government. From 2018 until February 2020, as it was reported, only 0.5% of \$1.46 billion was allocated through the national housing co-investment fund, a fund that accounts for one-third of the entirety of the national housing strategy. Only two projects, provincially, were approved, and only 23 across Canada.

The B.C. Non-Profit Housing Association said that the program is “arduous and painstakingly slow” and takes “an inordinate amount of time”. The B.C. government called the process “frustrating”. On an application, there is over 200 questions, and it can take over a year to even hear back.

We have to do better for our municipalities. We need to do better for Canadians.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when a member asks a bad question, they get a really bad answer. I have learned that in the House.

The question that was asked by the member for Vancouver East actually missed the mark. It was 26.8% of the funds sent to provinces and communities across the country that landed in B.C. We will have the corrected record for the member very shortly.

In terms of the reaching home program, which the member opposite complained about, I would remind him that he is part of a party that only spent \$50 million per year on that program. This year alone, the government is spending \$489 million. We have added six new communities to the designated community stream. That is a tenfold increase in direct supports to front-line homelessness services.

The party opposite, the NDP, wanted us to send that money to the provinces and have the provinces send it to the front lines. We delivered it straight to the front lines.

In terms of the new \$1-billion announcement we made this week on direct 100% capital supports to acquire new supportive housing units, I would remind the hon. member opposite that former prime minister Stephen Harper said that housing was a provincial responsibility and told me as a reporter that I should stop asking questions, that it was not a federal issue, that I did not know what I was doing and that I should read the Constitution. He was wrong.

The member opposite raises the issue of supports for supportive housing and in particular that of harm reduction. Why has his party fought harm reduction every single chance it has had on the floor of the House of Commons? Why is his party missing in action on the opioid crisis?

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, why the overbearingness from the member opposite? Why does he not apologize to British Columbia for not getting the money out the door, which the Liberals promised?

As for me and my work in my community, I am working with the homelessness sector. They are adjacent to my office. I am on the neighbourhood advisory council. This party is going to continue to stand up for Canadians to get a fair deal and to hold you guys accountable for not getting the money out the door that you said you were going to get out the door.

• (1610)

The Deputy Speaker: As a reminder to the hon. member, we try not to use the “you” word in that kind of context. Members should direct their comments through the Chair.

[Translation]

I now invite the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles to speak virtually.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate our colleague for his decidedly energetic speech.

Now that we have heard the throne speech, I would like to hear what he has to say about the following. Many speeches are focused on areas of provincial jurisdiction, for example, long-term care, and the fact that the government wants to get involved with people who live at home, access to family doctors, universal health care, pharmacare, the daycare system and so on.

How does my colleague believe that we should get involved?

Perhaps we should be asking whether the federal government is looking to take on more responsibility.

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member appears not to be wearing a tie. Is he allowed to be recognized and to speak in this chamber virtually without a tie? I would like to have an explanation.

The Deputy Speaker: As members will know, there certainly is a dress code for the chamber, to be present, and the Speaker has indicated to all hon. members that if they wish to participate in the

The Address

proceedings by virtual connection, they are recommended to bring the appropriate dress to that occasion as well. I remind all hon. members.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles asked his question.

[English]

I will invite an answer for the hon. member. In keeping with the fact that this is a new format, I will give time for all hon. members to get with the program that way.

We will now go to the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon for his response.

[Translation]

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, my grandmother is 92. She still lives at home thanks to British Columbia's health care system.

[English]

It is thanks to our great health care workers who provide the in-home care that keeps her there. I think the provinces do a relatively good job and understand the need to continue improving our in-home care. I believe our provinces should be the ones delivering that service model.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier in the exchange, I heard the parliamentary secretary for social development mislead the House by indicating that I had called only for provinces to receive funding from the federal government, with respect to the national affordable housing program.

It is simply untrue, and the member continually—

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the hon. member's point of order. In fact, I think we are getting into an area of debate here.

We have expired the time, and I appreciate the patience of all hon. members when we are doing this in this hybrid format.

We will go to the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, if he did have a response to the last intervention. It was framed as a point of order, but in light of the fact that it was in the realm of debate, I will see if he wants to take 30 seconds to respond. Then we will go to resuming debate.

• (1615)

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, let me outline that the struggles of the people suffering from the opioid crisis in British Columbia are touching so many different families, and the mental health challenges that people are facing are real. The homeless population has doubled in Mission in the last number of years. Our community is struggling to find answers to the challenges we are facing, but it does not help when we do not have the ability to access the programs that our municipal staff and provincial representatives thought were available to them.

*The Address**[Translation]*

The Deputy Speaker: I thank all members participating in this afternoon's meeting for their patience.

We will now resume debate. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services.

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sharing my time with the member for Hochelaga.

I am speaking today from my riding. I would like to acknowledge that I am on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

This is my first opportunity to speak in the House since the pandemic began and I want to start by thanking all of the front-line workers, who are truly heroes without capes in our communities.

We have been facing the greatest health crisis of our lifetime. Our government responded with a full slate of measures to support Canadians, such as the Canada emergency response benefit, which helped nine million Canadians, and the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency business account, which supported businesses in my riding and across the country.

I heard from my constituents, who thanked me for these programs. Companies like Hunter Amenities, which was uncertain about the future of the 38-year-old business when the demand from hotels for shampoo and soap dried up overnight. Its owners told me that our programs allowed them to pivot to making hand sanitizer and bring their employees back to work.

Since March, we have seen unprecedented co-operation between all levels of government. We have seen people reaching out to their neighbours and showing kindness to each other.

We continue to fight the pandemic. As numbers continue to rise and we enter the second wave, I know many Canadians are afraid. Their kids have just gone back to school and they are worried—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is rising on a point of order.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER**DECORUM**

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with great respect for my colleague from Oakville North—Burlington, it is important we follow decorum, and there are rules in the House around props and displays. The Speaker has been clear about the appropriateness of that, including in a virtual context.

The member who is speaking is using a display that prominently shows her own name and her riding name in the framing of her shot. In my view, this constitutes a prop and is inappropriate. If a member were to speak in the House with a display like that, it would be inappropriate, and the Speaker has spoken clearly about this in the context of virtual sittings as well. There needs to be a clear and consistent standard established for these virtual sittings.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, we have to respect that people are communicating from their constituency offices. In this case, the member is doing that. She is not displaying anything of a political or partisan nature. She is clearly sitting in a constituency office, which is an extension of the House of Commons as it is governed and regulated by the House of Commons and the administration of the Speaker's office.

● (1620)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank both hon. members for their interventions on this. Much like the last question that has arisen with regard to members participating from a location outside of the House of Commons, we are going to revisit and look at what specifically the directives have been in relation to dress protocol as well as the issue of what constitutes a prop. We understand what is clear here for the House and what kinds of boundaries might be in existence for members who are tuning in and/or participating from a location outside the House.

If it is acceptable to hon. members, I will take that under advisement and get back to the House as necessary in the time ahead, hopefully soon.

I thank hon. members for their interventions.

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RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also have Terry Fox behind me in photographs and I hope the hon. member does not think those are props as well.

Since March, we have been fighting the pandemic. On yesterday's throne speech, the Prime Minister said that now was "not the time for austerity" and that the government "will have your back, whatever it takes" to keep people safe.

Yesterday's Speech from the Throne laid out four broad pillars.

The first is "Protecting Canadians from COVID-19". We recently invested \$19 billion in the safe restart agreement as well as \$2 billion in a safe return to class fund. We will support provinces to increase their testing capacity. Our government has a vaccine strategy because we know the best way to end this pandemic is with a safe and effective vaccine.

The second pillar is “Helping Canadians through the pandemic”. I have talked about some of the measures we took during the first wave of the pandemic. We must continue to support those Canadians who lost their jobs, so we will be reforming the EI system to bring it into the 21st century.

The pandemic has been called a “she-cession” because of the disproportionate impact on women. That is why we cannot let the decades-long gains that have been made be rolled back because of the virus.

In the last session of Parliament, as vice-chair of the status of women committee, we tabled a report on the economic security of women. The lack of access to high-quality, affordable child care was identified as the number one barrier to women's economic security. Women bear a disproportionate responsibility for the unpaid care of children. If we are to support women coming out of the pandemic, we must recognize the need for a national accessible, affordable, inclusive and high-quality child care system. We will be expanding the women's entrepreneurs strategy.

We will extend the Canadian emergency wage subsidy to next summer. Certain industries, like travel, hospitality and cultural industries have been devastated and we will be introducing further supports for these hard-hit sectors of the economy.

The third pillar is “Building back better”. The pandemic has brought to the forefront gaps in our social systems. We must never again be in a situation where the army needs to care for our seniors.

Some time ago, I wrote to the Minister of Seniors, calling for national standards for long-term care, and was pleased to see this commitment in the throne speech. While long-term care falls under provincial jurisdiction, we must take whatever action we can to support seniors. They deserve no less.

Canadians living with disability have also been hit hard during the pandemic. We will bring forward a disability inclusion plan, which will include a new Canadian disability benefit and a robust employment strategy.

We are fortunate in Canada to have a robust health care system. The missing piece in that system has always been pharmacare. As former parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Health, I was proud to work on this issue. We remain, as a government, committed to a universal national pharmacare program.

Kids are still being diagnosed with cancer and I will continue to work with people like Sick Kids' Dr. David Malkin and survivor Helena Kirk to ensure \$30 million is directed to children's cancer research, as promised in our platform.

I have heard loud and clear from Oakville North—Burlington residents that they support taking greater action on firearms. We have already banned military-style assault rifles and we will continue to implement our commitment to protect Canadians with red flag laws and strengthening measures to control the flow of illegal guns. I am hopeful that we can treat death by firearms as a public health issue.

During the pandemic, Halton Women's Place, SAVIS of Halton and Thrive Counselling stepped up to provide a safety net for those facing gender-based violence. We cannot build back better if all

The Address

Canadians are not safe. We will accelerate investments in shelters and transitional housing and advance our national action plan on gender-based violence.

We will be investing in a vast array of infrastructure, including public transit, energy efficient retrofits and affordable housing.

We cannot lose focus on the other crisis we face: the climate crisis. Climate action will be at the cornerstone of our plan to support and create a million jobs across the country. Business owners and investors know that climate action is the key to future success.

We will make zero-emission vehicles more affordable. The news coming out of Unifor recently about EV production at Ford Canada in Oakville would indeed be great news for our community. This is an ideal opportunity to also invest in e-assist bikes as we look to support the move to electric vehicles.

We will ban single-use plastics next year and we will legislate Canada's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050 and immediately bring forward a plan to exceed our 2030 climate goal.

● (1625)

The fourth pillar is to stand up for who we are as Canadians.

I have been incredibly fortunate to work with the Minister of Indigenous Services and his team to support indigenous communities during the pandemic. Our historic investment in urban indigenous organizations like the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council is something of which I am particularly proud. We have remained committed to walk the shared path to reconciliation by accelerating work on the National Action Plan in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' calls for justice, making a number of new investments and implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, including introducing legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the end of the year.

The Address

During the pandemic, another issue came to the forefront. The violence inflicted on Chief Allan Adam and the deaths of Regis Korchinski-Paquet and Ejaz Choudry motivated many Canadians to demand police reform and an end to systemic racism in Canada.

We are at a moment when we can take concrete steps to end systemic racism that indigenous people, Black and racialized Canadians have lived with for too long. We will introduce legislation and make investments in the criminal justice system, from diversion and sentencing to rehabilitation and records.

Prior to prorogation, as a member of the public safety committee, we were studying systemic racism and policing and we heard that enhanced civilian oversight of our law enforcement agencies, including the RCMP, was required. This, along with standards around the use of force and a shift to community-led policing, as well as declaring first nations policing an essential service, are all things we are committing to in the throne speech.

The throne speech sets out an ambitious plan for unprecedented times. Together, we can achieve these goals and I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House to deliver on this plan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about Crown-indigenous relations, as well as other subjects in her speech.

A couple years ago I was at a trade show and a constituent told me something quite interesting. Apparently, with the construction of pipeline natural resource projects, it is possible to also bring in high-speed Internet access, greater broadband access, at the same time we are building that pipeline infrastructure. The constituent proposed to me that it would be great if the government worked with natural resource companies to support the development of pipeline projects and at the same time to use that opportunity to help supply greater broadband Internet access and the additional economic opportunities that would come with that.

In many cases, we have indigenous communities that want to move forward with natural resource projects and could also leverage those projects to gain vitally needed access to the Internet that would help them with all kinds of other economic and social opportunities.

Will the member agree that in cases where a majority of impacted indigenous communities support a project, the natural resource company should be able to move forward with that project and move forward with the associated economic opportunities as quickly as possible?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I would certainly agree with the member that infrastructure projects provide an excellent opportunity to bring internet into communities that otherwise do not have it. There are a number of infrastructure projects and that is something I have been working on since the pandemic started. Just down the street from me at Six Nations in the middle of an urban area, they lack Internet access and it is quite unacceptable.

We have made commitments to bringing broadband to the country and I am proud of that, but there are opportunities, whether through various infrastructure projects, to partner with the proponent in building that to include high-speed Internet in their development.

• (1630)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I found yesterday's Speech from the Throne surprising. It contained only one single, brief mention of the forestry industry.

Earlier, my colleague raised the importance of transitioning to a greener economy and talked about transportation electrification. That is a good thing, but we know that unfortunately—or fortunately, depending on one's perspective—the Liberal government thinks that transportation electrification means supporting the auto industry.

The two major pillars of the Canadian economy are Ontario's auto industry and Alberta's oil sands. There is no mention of forestry even though we know that the forestry industry likely has the greatest potential to fight greenhouse gas emissions. I would like my colleague to comment on that.

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, we need to be clear that we are not subsidizing any sectors specifically. Certainly, with Ford of Canada, it was the union that said it will be switching over to electric vehicle use. Quite frankly, industry is leading this charge. Industry is moving toward a green economy because it knows that it can be financially viable for the future if it makes that change. These kinds of changes are being led by industry, making investments in their businesses to ensure that we are moving to a greener future and that we are seeing a green recovery. The government can support that as we move forward.

In terms of the forestry industry, it is important that we support all sectors of the Canadian economy.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard a lot of rhetoric about supporting the middle class, but I did not hear a lot of support for people who have been totally left out during this pandemic: disabled persons, among whom we have seen rates of suicide rise higher and higher. The \$600 tax credit most people are unable to receive or have not received it, and there is no guaranteed livable income, which was Call for Justice 4.5 in the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. I did not see much action on that.

Where do the people who are living most rough fit in? These are people with mental health issues or suffering from addictions who are not able to work and fall outside of the margins of this middle-class discussion that the Liberals keep holding up with such pride. Where do—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, there were a lot of members of our society mentioned in that, but I cannot cover all of them. I will speak to people living with disabilities in Canada. We certainly talked about bringing in a benefit for them but, in my opinion, more importantly, a robust employment strategy. Most of the people I have met who live with disabilities want to work, but their worth is not seen as much as other people's in our society. They are not hired and they are not paid. Working on an employment strategy is something I have been committed to for five years and I cannot say how happy I was, as were people I know who are living with disabilities and who want to work, to see the government taking action on that.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to address the House today in response to the Speech from the Throne.

I would like to begin by saluting my constituents in the riding of Hochelaga who have been through a tough couple of months during this unprecedented crisis. The people of Hochelaga have been—and continue to be—resilient, united and involved. I am proud to represent them in the House.

Yesterday our government presented a plan to build a stronger, more resilient Canada guided by the following principles: fighting the pandemic, supporting people and businesses, building back better, and standing up for who we are.

The first principle is the most important of all: saving lives. That is why we need to invest in the capacity of our health care systems right across the country. We must work with the provinces and territories to increase the capacity and speed of testing by looking at new technologies and tools to ensure they are safe and accessible. We must ensure that all Canadians have access to a vaccine as soon as possible, no matter where in Canada they live.

We also provided personal protective equipment and sent the Canadian Armed Forces into long-term care facilities. In Hochelaga, three of these facilities received key support from the military, and we are extremely grateful to them.

Thousands of workers across the country answered the call put out to Canadian manufacturers to produce personal protective equipment. In my riding, Coop Couturières Pop provided hospitals and organizations in Montreal East and the citizens of Hochelaga with thousands of face masks, as did PapaMasque.

I would also like to recognize the research work of the Montreal Heart Institute and the work done by the health and social services centre, the CIUSSS, in Montreal East, one of the epicentres of the pandemic in this country.

With the start of the second wave, we need to remain vigilant, increase our testing capacity, continue physical distancing and wear a mask to protect our more vulnerable populations, our loved ones and our colleagues so that we all remain healthy. Like many of you, I am looking forward to seeing my loved ones, like my brother, who is in a long-term care facility. I have not seen him since March. I am anxious to hold my two-month-old nephew, whom I have not yet met because of the pandemic.

The Address

The second foundation of our plan is to support people and businesses in the coming months, as we have been doing since the beginning of the crisis. Our government's responsibility was to ensure a social and economic safety net for Canadians. That is what we did. The Canada emergency response benefit helped 9 million people to keep a roof over their heads, as well as food on their table, and to stay home to take care of their families. Now, we must support those who would traditionally not qualify for EI and put in place the Canada recovery benefit.

The Canada emergency wage subsidy helped more than 3 million people remain in or return to the job market. Now, in response to the economic impact, our government is working to create more than a million jobs. To this end, the Canada emergency wage subsidy will be extended until next summer, which is excellent news. For months now, many entrepreneurs have been taking advantage of the subsidy, including the Bellon Prestige Group, Lantic, La Vie en Rose and Restaurant Cabotins, as have essential organizations such as the Fondation des aveugles du Québec, Centre communautaire Hochelaga and Pavillon d'éducation communautaire. They were all able to continue their activities thanks to the CEWS.

Businesses play a key role in our economy. The government is going to extend both the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency business account. This program has helped many businesses in Hochelaga, including FMR Costumes, which got a helping hand to get through this crisis.

The business credit availability program will be improved, and we will bring in additional financial measures for the hardest-hit sectors, such as the travel, tourism and cultural industries.

Women have been severely affected by this pandemic, as they have had to take care of children while working at home, have been exposed to increased risks as health care workers, or have faced an increased risk of domestic violence compounded by the lockdown. This pandemic has had psychological, economic and physical impacts on women, and especially single mothers. Nevertheless, we women have worked too hard to earn our place in the workforce. We cannot take a step backwards.

● (1635)

That is why the government will create an action plan for women in the economy to help more women get back into the work force. The implementation of child care services will also help in this regard. Learning from Quebec's child care model, we will invest in child care and draw on the innovative measures developed in Quebec. The economic recovery must be feminist.

The Address

The vitality of our culture, our creators and our arts community is essential. We will take action to ensure that digital giants' revenue is shared more fairly, because it is more important than ever that we require them to contribute to the creation, production and distribution of Canadian, Quebec and francophone content. The cultural organizations in my riding, such as Théâtre Denise-Pelletier and Les Foutoukours, as well as hundreds of artists and creators, are waiting for government support and for a real contribution from digital giants.

The third foundation is to create a stronger, more resilient Canada by supporting strong economic growth and building safe communities for everyone, including the most vulnerable.

Seniors were particularly hard hit by the pandemic, and that is why we are committed to increasing old age security and the Canada pension plan survivor's benefit. The government must help Canadians like Mrs. St-Arnaud, a 97-year-old Hochelaga resident who recently thanked me for the \$500 cheque she had received. She said that the money was really helping people get by.

To support Canadians with disabilities, we will bring forward a disability inclusion plan with a new benefit and an employment strategy aimed directly at Canadians like Michel, a blind man in my riding who has been job searching for months, and Mrs. Auger, who is in a wheelchair and is having a hard time making ends meet.

We will also work with communities to invest in all types of infrastructure, including public transit, clean energy and affordable housing. I am very pleased that the federal government and the Quebec government have reached an agreement in principle on housing investments. This is excellent news for Quebeckers and for the people of Hochelaga, who will benefit from investments in affordable housing.

Homelessness is an especially serious issue in my riding. Right now, Notre-Dame Street hosts the largest homeless encampment in Montreal. The residents are all worried about the coming winter. It is essential that we all work together to make sure that everyone has a roof over their heads.

I would like to highlight the recently announced \$1-billion rapid housing initiative to create new affordable housing, as well as the funding for temporary emergency shelters for the homeless at the Hochelaga YMCA as part of "Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy".

When it comes to climate change, we all need to realize that it is happening now. We will introduce legislation to help us reach our goal of net-zero emissions by 2050 by helping to deliver more transit and active transit options. Transit infrastructure is a cornerstone of development in eastern Montreal. It is essential for the people of Hochelaga and for its economic recovery. Our government has already announced \$1.3 billion for the long-awaited blue line. Our government has also committed to creating more green space in urban centres. More than 25 million sites are available in eastern Montreal, including Hochelaga.

The last foundation is to continue to stand up for who we are, to stand up for our official languages and francophone minorities outside Quebec. For the first time, a federal government is recognizing that French is in the minority in Canada and that French is losing

ground in Quebec. We must take action and commit to strengthening the Official Languages Act, taking into consideration the unique reality of French.

We know that addressing systemic racism requires progress and reforms to be made throughout the policing and justice systems. It is time for things to change.

Finally, immigration remains a driver of Canada's economic growth. Canada must become a destination for talent and jobs.

I would like to highlight the extraordinary efforts of our guardian angels. We have announced measures to grant them permanent residency.

● (1640)

We have presented a Speech from the Throne that sets out and shows what we intend to do for Quebeckers and Canadians. We are in the throes of an unprecedented crisis that has turned all our lives upside down, and we will continue to address it. We must remain vigilant, united and committed in the face of this pandemic.

● (1645)

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on August 18, the Prime Minister announced the prorogation of Parliament and at that time cited that it was to help families, businesses and individuals and to relaunch our economy. The reality is that businesses, large and small, are barely hanging on. Tara, in my riding, owns a small business. Her revenue completely dropped, yet she had to pay her full commercial rent as she was not eligible for the commercial rent assistance because her landlord would not apply for it. MG, in my riding, also was not eligible because his revenue only dropped 68% not 70%.

When listening to the throne speech yesterday, there was nothing addressing any of these issues and it was extremely disappointing for business owners, in particular small business owners. Therefore, my question for the member today is this. What is the government doing to address this issue? It has been brought up many times and was not in the throne speech. What is the government doing to give business owners like Tara and MG hope and certainty?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, I thank the opposition member for her important question.

Personally, I believe it is important to remember that the government did what it had to do. It put a social and economic safety net in place during the pandemic. Had we not done that, we would not have the foundation required to go ahead with the economic recovery. Every day, I see companies in my riding being saved by the Canada emergency response benefit and the Canada emergency wage subsidy. They were able to continue offering their services because we took the necessary measures.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

She will not be surprised to hear that her statement about the government continuing to welcome newcomers and support family reunification piqued my interest. During the crisis, immigration file processing slowed down. At first, that made sense: there was a pandemic, after all. Even so, it exposed the fact that processing times are very long right now and that the system needs more funding to speed up processing times and eliminate the backlog.

Many people want to see their family members, but they cannot because their sponsorship applications have been waiting for a long time. In some cases, people have their confirmation of permanent residence but cannot return to their country to take care of their families because they do not have a permanent resident card. That is an administrative process that is now taking months to complete, unfortunately.

My question is simple: Does the member believe, as I do, that more money should be invested in immigration?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, I thank my opposition colleague for her question.

The pandemic has shown that we indeed have a great capacity for immigration, the ability to readjust in dealing with this pandemic and to take action. Even though the borders were closed, even though Government of Canada services were not available in other countries, we reinvented ourselves. For the first time, we managed to receive a number of files, some of which were received digitally. We reinvented ourselves in order to deal with immigration applications. It goes without saying that immigration remains a key part of our economic recovery.

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

Unfortunately, Immigration Canada is practically paralyzed as a department. Hundreds of cases of family reunification have been waiting for months, and this has resulted in very serious human tragedies.

Not only do the tech giants need to contribute in terms of national and local cultural production, but they must also contribute financially. In the last election campaign, the Liberals promised that they would make the tech giants pay taxes in Canada, then suddenly that all disappeared. I do not want to hear the member say the government plans to create a fair tax environment, because to me that means they will not have to pay taxes.

Will the member commit to working to ensure that the tech giants pay taxes, just as every other company in Canada must do?

The Address

• (1650)

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for this question, which is crucial to our creators and to the production and distribution of domestic content in French. This will happen through serious contributions by the tech giants to our national production.

I am committed to being an ally and to defending this issue, which, I think, is vitally important to our cultural identity.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

It is great to see you back in person, Mr. Speaker. It has been far too long and so much has changed. For one, you are the proud owner of another \$10,000 of debt. Yes, that is the per capita share of every man, woman and child in Canada. A \$380-billion deficit this year for 38 million Canadians equals \$10,000 per Canadian or \$40,000 for a family of four. I do not know about you, Mr. Speaker, but I have not met a lot of people who will tell me that their family has received \$40,000 in COVID relief benefits.

In fact, even if people received the CERB for a full 16 weeks, it works out to \$8,000, and the majority of Canadians did not even receive that CERB. Although their mortgages are \$40,000 bigger, they do not have 40 thousand dollars' worth of benefits to show for it. That is so often the case with trickle-down government. The hard-working taxpayer has to climb the bureaucratic mountain with a big bucket of water on his back, that water is then poured into the federal bureaucracy. It is sloshed around down to provincial and municipal bureaucracies and then given on to other delivery bodies. Just as he gets back to the bottom of that bureaucratic mountain, there are a few drops that trickle down back into that bucket he so laboriously took to the top of the hill in the first place.

The government will tell that taxpayer and all Canadians that we are in a crisis, thus justifying a deficit of this magnitude. It is true, we do have a crisis. We will put aside for a moment the fact that the government made the crisis worse by allowing tens of thousands of people from the most infected regions of the world to come into the country after military intelligence warned it of the danger. We will ignore the fact that many of the programs the government designed since that time punished businesses for reopening and punished workers for working. We will ignore all of those failings and grant that indeed this is a crisis, but it is not our first crisis.

The Address

Indeed we have fought world wars and had the Great Depression and the great recession. How does this deficit compare to those deficits? It would not be fair just to point out that our \$380-billion deficit is seven times the previous all-time record, because that does not adjust for GDP and inflation. To be fair, let us compare the deficit as a share of GDP in inflation-adjusted terms.

This year, the federal deficit is 17% of GDP. To compare, in the worst year of World War I, it was 8% of GDP; in the worst year of the Great Depression, it was 6% of GDP; and in the worst year of the great global recession, it was 4% of GDP. To put it in perspective, our deficit today is twice what it was in World War I, three times what it was in the Great Depression and four times what it was in the great global recession, all adjusted for the economy and inflation.

Only once in our history has the deficit been bigger as a share of our economy, and that was in 1943 when the government was selling bonds to its people so that it could fight Hitler, Mussolini and Imperial Japan. The government put those dollars to work to win the war, and yes there was a deficit of 23% of GDP that year, but do members know what was different? When our soldiers came back from battle, one might have expected that, exhausted and heartbroken from loss, they would want to take a prolonged vacation and put it on the national credit card and let future generations pay the bill, but they did exactly the opposite.

Do people know how long it took our grandparents to balance the budget after they came back from the war? It took them one year, and within two years they were running the largest budget surplus in Canadian history, 5% of GDP, which is the equivalent of \$120 billion in today's relative terms. They fought for our freedom and then they fought for our finances.

• (1655)

Imagine if we had a government today with even a modicum of the integrity, respect and honour that our grandparents had those many years ago. Would we not be in much better shape?

However, here we are today with a Prime Minister who not only effortlessly and carelessly spends our money, but tells us that money is not even a real thing anymore. Yesterday, in his bizarre address to the nation, he told us that spending more actually costs less. I am not joking. Members can look it up. That is what he actually said: Spending more money costs less. Clearly, things now mean the opposite of what they say. This is not 1947. This is 1984, and we have a government engaged in doublespeak about the meaning of money.

The Liberals tell us that we can afford all of this debt because interest rates are low, and they are right: Interest rates are incredibly low, stoked by the fact that central banks are producing an unprecedented amount of fake money through keystrokes at their bureaus. However, those rates are not going to be low forever. Unless we believe that the debt will be paid off before the rates rise, we have to believe that we will have trouble down the road. The government is not planning to pay back the debt, ever. In fact, its own projections suggest that the debt will grow every year forever. Are they really expecting us to believe that never in the future will we return to normal interest rates?

Let me put it into perspective. This year, the effective interest rate across all of our debt will be somewhere in the neighbourhood of 2%. That is not the bond yield today but the average across the entire stock of federal debt. It is about 2%. The average over the last two decades is 5%. Do members know what the difference is between 5% and 2%?

An hon. member: It's 3%.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Someone said 3%, and they would almost be right. Five per cent is more than double 2%. It is an increase of over 100%. In fact, it is a massive increase and a massive change in our budget picture. When we more than double the interest rate applying to over \$1 trillion of debt, we massively increase the amount of money diverted from social programs into the hands of wealthy and greedy bondholders, those people who lend us the money. They are not a charity; they are in it for profit.

Let us calculate what every point of increase would cost. It is very simple. At \$1 trillion of debt, it is about \$10 billion in new annual costs for the taxpayer every time interest rates go up by just one percentage point. Therefore, if they went up three percentage points to the normal average over the course of the medium term, which is four or five years, we would be paying an extra \$30 billion a year to service our debt. That is almost what we collect in GST revenues. Imagine the government, in its back pocket, keeping open the prospect of doubling the GST to pay for the cost associated with interest rates returning merely to their normal average levels. That is the risk the Liberals are taking with our future.

What could we do differently? The answer is jobs, jobs, jobs. The only way to tackle this massive debt beast that our current government is creating is by returning our mighty workers to their jobs. Right now, we have a million missing jobs relative to the number of people who were working in February before COVID began. We now have the highest unemployment rate in the G7. Our unemployment rate, at over 10%, is three percentage points higher than the OECD average.

We need a plan to unleash the free market system to hire people back. Get out of the way and let our mines, plants and factories come roaring back to life. Why do we not let our steelworkers and trade workers build pipelines that will create jobs in the energy sector in the west and in the refining sector in the east?

• (1700)

Get out of the way of small businesses by cutting red tape and lowering taxes on those entrepreneurs, so that they can bring our main streets buzzing back to life. It is only through a bigger and broader economy that we can pay the prodigious costs, associated with this government, to continue to put food on the table and provide for our vital social safety net.

That is the plan, and that is what we must do.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to see you virtually. I want to thank you and the entire staff for their work to make sure that parliamentarians outside of Ottawa can be a part of this.

I would like to thank the member for Carleton for his speech. He is very eloquent. I always make sure that I point that out as he is very strong on his feet. I have a couple of questions for him.

Economists around the world and in Canada have justified the spending that the Government of Canada has done. Indeed, at the height of the pandemic the member and his own party were pushing our government to do even more. How can he square the fact that our government has responded when the Conservatives were asking for more?

It is funny. I told my constituents that this would be how the Conservatives would play ball. They will ask us to do more, but six months later will say we have spent too much.

What program would the member for Carleton cut? Which program that we have introduced would he not have supported?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his election to this place.

Let me start off by saying that we would not have done bigger, we would have done better. We would have, for example, created an income replacement program that rewarded people for going back to work rather than punishing them for it.

These guys created a program that kicked people off the CERB the second they earned a dollar more than \$1,000. If a person commits the crime of working nine days for minimum wage, under the Liberal government he or she would be kicked from the CERB to the curb. How many people were prevented from getting back to work by that punitive, anti-work policy?

Then the government punished businesses for recuperating lost revenues by kicking them off rent and wage subsidies. All of that suppressed revenue and prevented our businesses and our workers from getting back on their feet. If it had been done differently, it would have significantly reduced the deficit cost.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the speech by my colleague, who, as we can see, is passionate about balancing the budget.

Unfortunately, when it came time to balance its budget, the Canadian government far too often did so by cutting transfer payments to the provinces. That was the case in 1996 and in 1997, to the tune of \$2.5 billion. I remember it well. It did the same thing in

The Address

1997 and 1998 by cutting \$2.5 billion in transfer payments to the provinces, especially in health.

We know that getting out of this crisis will be tough. I have two quick questions for my colleague.

Does he agree with the rather shameful strategy of reducing transfer payments to the provinces to balance the budget?

Does he agree with the request from all the provincial premiers to increase health transfers to 35%?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his questions.

First, he is right. Every time the Liberals run out of money, they make cuts to the health sector. They did it in the 1990s. In 1996, the Government of Canada had no more money. What did the Liberals do? They increased workers' taxes and cut investments in health. That is what the Liberals do every time. We can guess that they will do the exact same thing when there is no more money in the budget because of their irresponsible spending.

However, when Mr. Harper was in power, we eliminated the deficit accumulated during the global recession by increasing health transfers because we were better managers of public funds, we eliminated waste and we targeted funds sent directly to the provinces. Every year of the Harper government, we increased health spending. That is what we can do.

The only way to protect our social programs is to have a strong economy and to protect our finances.

• (1705)

[English]

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be in this place addressing Parliament for the first time in many weeks. Of course, the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament, taking away the opportunity to do so. It is great to be back here and to see my colleagues on all sides of the aisle once again.

I do not think it is any secret that the Prime Minister, we all know, decided to prorogue Parliament because of his involvement in the WE Charity scandal. Following the words of the Governor General, there was absolutely nothing in the Prime Minister's address last night on prime time that could not have been announced in any normal press briefing or even here on the floor of the House of Commons. The Prime Minister, of course, as many are saying, pulled the wool over the eyes of our network executives, claiming that it was not partisan politics but an address to the nation on COVID-19. We all know, after the fact, that the address was entirely political, providing further evidence that prorogation was all about distraction.

The Address

The nation was treated to the Liberal love for a whole bunch of words about nothing, proudly exclaiming that we are building back better. I think a more accurate slogan is building a better, or worse, bloated bureaucracy. I am sure that slogan did not run as well with focus groups.

The Prime Minister warned Canadians that we might not be able to gather for Thanksgiving dinner in just a few weeks. However, he did serve up his own turkey dinner last night, offering a throne speech overflowing with every failed Liberal promise of the last five years, and then some. Canadians love their turkey dinner, but they can only eat so much. Leftovers get tiresome after a while and they need to be thrown out. Like reheated turkey seven days later, Canadians are now telling themselves that maybe it is time to throw the Liberals out.

The throne speech contained a dizzying number of major policy commitments underwritten by ongoing deficits and debt. Indeed, the speech began with the proclamation that “This is not the time for austerity.” It seems to Liberals that anything short of massive federal spending and bureaucracy equals austerity. To quote the hon. member for Carleton on Twitter yesterday, “The truest statement in the Throne Speech was this one: ‘We owe an immense debt...’”.

Recent polling suggests that more than half the country is quite concerned about the recent run-up of deficits and debt. Canadians are asking the government to balance support for emergency pandemic measures with fiscal responsibility, a task that the Liberal government is clearly not up for, opting rather to burden future generations with a massive deficit-financed expansion of government. The throne speech outlined, or actually failed to outline, how the Liberals plan on paying for their grand ideas, which we have heard many times before: simply tax the rich.

Let me be clear to everyone, including the wealthy, that they need to pay their fair share of taxes. The problem is that when taxes are raised substantially, people stop trying to earn the amount of money that is being overtaxed. The formula the Liberals like to use is that if they raise taxes at the top, they can then transfer them to the bottom. However, the Liberals tried that already. People might remember the government increased the top tax rate on Canada's wealthiest 1%. It just happened a few years ago.

What happened? According to The Globe and Mail, high-income earners in 2016 paid \$4.6 billion less in federal taxes, despite Liberal pledges that the new top tax bracket would raise around \$3 billion in additional revenue. That means a larger burden is taken from the middle to make up for what is lost. There is no other way to do it, other than what the Liberals were doing, which was deficit financing their promises. If they simply tax businesses more, jobs are shed and the costs, if they are able to survive, are then passed on to consumers, increasing the cost of living.

Whether people are rich or otherwise, there is a certain point where they will not stick around to be bled to death. This is not to mention that most predictions about taxing the rich by the left rarely account for the large change in behaviour. They also, by that measure, end up overestimating the tax revenue. Despite the easy target they are, it is not good when wealthy people leave a jurisdiction, province or country. When the tax rate is raised to a level that

is too high, it leads to significant legal and illegal tax-avoidance strategies and lowers work effort, including labour force participation.

Liberals know they cannot balance the budget by increasing the top marginal tax rate, but they push those lines anyway. This is called the Tytler cycle by Lord Alexander Tytler. It works, or I should say does not work, by promising a growing number of gifts of largesse from the treasury, but not actually saying how they will be paid. If we think people are going to sit idly by and let the government take, take, take, we are absolutely unrealistic.

• (1710)

Do not forget, whether people are wealthy, middle class or otherwise, if they are investing in anything such as stocks, real estate, whatever, it is done with after-tax dollars.

The left usually says it has a plan for the economy. It always has a plan and it always seems to be planning. However, what it really means is that it wants to have a bunch of bureaucrats and academics lay out a gaggle of endless government programs, in other words, central planning. If one plan fails, it will make another plan. As Ronald Reagan famously said, “the more the plans fail, the more the planners plan.”

The Conservatives believe we need to cut taxes, ensure regulations are at a reasonable level and give people the freedom to judge on their own, to provide for their families, to give to charity, to protect the most vulnerable and basically give them the ability to do what is best in their situation. A one-size-fits-all situation does not work. We need freedom. We need the ability for choice.

That is why socialism always fails. There is no incentive to improve one's situation. Why would Canadians work extra hours? Why would a farmer get up at 5 a.m. to plow that field? Why does a trucker drive an extra kilometre? Why does a mechanic take an extra car in the shop at the end of the day? Why do people work a double shift? It is because people want things and things cost money.

Economic growth comes from people exchanging goods and services, for dollars in terms of employment or hours of the day in exchange for dollars. To continually grow a government, where does this money come from? If wealthy people are bad, if growth is bad, if the free market is bad, if individuals choosing between necessity and the trivial is bad, what tree does that money come from? In other words, if everything comes from government, who actually pays for government?

I will point to child care, which falls under my portfolio as the new shadow minister for families, children and social development.

I want to first thank the minister for his service to our country. Although we do not always agree on policy, I look forward to working with him to make life more affordable for Canadian families and to ensure those families get the support they need during these trying times.

Let us talk about the Liberals' child care commitment and their plan.

Let us start with the Liberals' plan. It was promised in 1993, so this is ongoing for anyone who actually believes they are finally going to get around to it.

Let us talk about child care. We want to ensure families have more money in their pockets so they are able to make a choice. We know that the one-size-fits-all, Ottawa-knows-best government institution is not going to work for a number of people. Is it going to work for shift workers? Probably not. Is it going to work for people who need variables in their situation? Probably not. People get what they are given whether they like it or not, or want it or not under this situation.

Our plan calls for freedom, the freedom for parents to make the choice that works best for them in their situation.

What the government is also doing is encroaching on provincial jurisdiction. We all know child care is a provincial jurisdiction. What will that do when the federal government tells the provinces and territories that this is what they will do or they will not get their money? It takes away competition.

We as Conservatives know that in many cases, whether it be the Internet or whatever, one of the best ways to fix a problem is competition. If Ottawa tells the provinces how to operate their child care services, how do we fix the problem? The rich will go outside the system and everyone else will take what they get. The Conservative plan encourages competition, which encourages more money back in the pockets of Canadians. We can actually gauge through competition. If what Manitoba is doing in child care works really well, maybe New Brunswick, with its few challenges, could take those best practices and incorporate them into its own provincial situation to improve the lives of those who need child care in its communities. More local and provincial control is what we are talking about in the child care conversation, rather than Ottawa telling the provinces what to do.

As we all know, the Liberals have been promising that since 1993, so the fact that we are expecting them to get it done now I find very hard to believe.

• (1715)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his new responsibilities as the critic for family services.

I want to ask the member a question and touch on something. He talked about a promise that a previous Liberal government had made to deliver on a national child care program. The program was set up and it was signed by all 10 provinces. The plan was ready to go.

The Address

As we heard earlier, we ended up in an election. The Liberals lost power at that time. It went to the Conservatives. Then, two years later, the Conservatives completely cancelled that child care plan. They left the plan on the floor. Then there were another eight years where they could have brought something else forward.

I understand the member's criticism of the previous government for taking awhile to bring forward a plan, but does the former Conservative government not bear some responsibility for dropping the entire program, cancelling it and then not bringing anything else forward in its place?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, it is good to see the member across the way back in this place.

I will address a couple of things. The deal that my friend was talking about took over 10 years to come up with in the first place, and we ran on a platform of giving more money back to people. Canadians will understand that we gave \$100 to each child, to allow parents to have the choice in their lives, to better offset the cost of child care or whatever situation they had. Maybe a parent wanted to stay home to raise their children, to teach their children. That is the essence of freedom.

To my friend who says they might make another deal, well, the Liberals have been in power for five years already, and we still have not seen that deal. That is not to mention the fact that if we are talking about inter-provincial deals, we still have many issues regarding inter-provincial trade that have not been worked out. In many cases it is easier to do business with another country than it is with another province.

How we are going to work this out is going to take many years. On *Power and Politics* last night, the minister himself said it is going to take years to get this sorted out. People need help now.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, to my hon. colleague and friend from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, let me add my congratulations on his recent ascension within his party ranks.

I will pick up on something the member for Carleton said, which the member referenced in his speech. He was using statistics of deficit to GDP ratio. It is certainly much more common to use statistics, as I am sure the member will agree, of debt to GDP ratio, deficits being more temporary. As the parliamentary budget office has reported, when we look at World War II figures, the economy recovered quite quickly.

Let us look at debt to GDP ratio. We went into this pandemic at about 30% debt to GDP ratio, much better than any other country in the G7. It is predicted that we will be at about 38% by the end of this. In 1995, we had 66% debt to GDP ratio.

The Address

I do not want to scare Canadians into a kind of sticker shock, thinking that our kids are going to pay for this. That is not true. I think we need to actually look at the world. All the major economies in the world have their central banks doing the same thing.

I am going to stop there and ask my hon. colleague for a comment on whether we could reference history more precisely so as not to alarm people.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see my friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands. I have a couple of things to say.

The current government has no plan to bring the books to balance. It has spending in perpetuity. It is going to go on forever. This is what happens when money continues to be printed, as the Bank of Canada has done in many cases, and the debt continues to be racked up, then the currency or the economy will be debauched, and probably both at the same time. If investors lose confidence and stop buying our debt, inflation will start to rise, and the Canadian dollar will drop. The Bank of Canada would then be forced to increase interest rates, and access to credit would shrink.

That is why Conservatives talk about balancing the budget, reigning in spending, controlling the costs of bureaucracy, and allowing services to be given to the people at a reasonable cost at the most effective measure. The most effective measure is allowing people more choice in their lives with more money in their pockets, and not funnelling their money to government, allowing it to go around in a cotton candy machine, going to the provinces, municipalities and to the end user, which is the taxpayer.

• (1720)

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Surrey—Newton.

I am delighted to rise after a long period of time out of the House and I want to honestly say that I missed everyone.

Canada has never faced a more serious public health crisis. We know that for folks who were already slipping through the cracks, for those who were already struggling, life is much harder. In my lifetime, I do not remember a period filled with more uncertainty, but despite this, I am certain about one thing for Canadians. It is that our government will continue to have people's back. As people stayed at home and looked out for friends and family or volunteered to fight the pandemic in their community, people have been doing their part and we will do ours.

I know that volunteers, community groups and non-profits across my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour stepped up and did what they could to help out our community. Volunteers like the late Rod Dickson, who volunteered with the Kinsmen for over 40 years, an incredible community volunteer and someone we could rely on in times like these. Organizations like Feed Nova Scotia, Meals on Wheels, the North Grove, the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia, Boys and Girls Clubs, Dartmouth Seniors Service Centre, Square Roots, Margaret's House, Kiwanis and the list goes on. The compassionate support that they and so many organizations continue to

provide throughout this pandemic has improved so many lives in our community. I want to thank them for all that they do.

Over the past six months life has been particularly difficult for Nova Scotians. We have faced a lot of loss. We have been angry, hurt, filled with heartache, but despite all of this, none of these events broke our collective spirit. We continue to support one another and this is exactly how we must face this crisis as a country. We are strong. We are compassionate. We are resilient. As we look towards addressing the challenges of today, we must recognize the incredible opportunity we have to build a more fair and equitable Canada, a cleaner and greener Canada, a stronger and more resilient Canada.

As we do everything we can to protect Canadians, companies have stepped up to produce PPE. From Dartmouth's United Sign producing face shields to Stanfield's in Truro, Nova Scotia manufacturing medical gowns, so many have stepped up to help us as we continue to build Canada's supply. Scientists and researchers at home in Dartmouth and across Canada are working on everything from rapid COVID-19 tests to vaccine candidates. Our government is working hard on our vaccine strategy to ensure that all Canadians will be able to get a vaccine once ready.

Before our government introduced the Canada emergency response benefit, I remember the fear when folks at home of all financial means lost their jobs and did not know how they would make ends meet. Whether they worked reception at a hair salon, or an airline pilot or an entrepreneur, the uncertainty was frightening. Many did not qualify for employment insurance. We knew that this was not the time for austerity. Canadians needed their government to shoulder the burden so that they could pay their rent, pay their mortgage and pay their bills.

Close to nine million Canadians were helped by the rapidly deployed CERB and many employers rehired their employees through the wage subsidy. We know that by helping Canadians get back to work we can boost the economy in the process. That is why we are launching a campaign to create more than one million jobs and we are going to invest in the social sector and in infrastructure. We know that not every industry will bounce back the same way from this pandemic, so we will immediately invest in training to quickly help workers pivot and gain new employment.

As many businesses, non-profits and charities across Dartmouth—Cole Harbour were asking, we will extend the Canada emergency wage subsidy into next summer so more workers can stay on the payroll. We will expand the Canada emergency business account to help more businesses with fixed costs like rent. Atlantic Canada relies on tourism and arts and culture. These industries have been some of the hardest hit. I want them to know that we hear them, see them and will work with them to introduce further support.

As we build back better, we need to focus on helping businesses and individuals transition to a cleaner, greener economy. Investing in climate action is a huge opportunity to not only help our environment, but to provide good paying jobs while boosting and rebuilding our economy.

• (1725)

We must exceed Canada's 2030 climate goals, and we need to entrench Canada's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050 in legislation. Seizing this incredible opportunity will provide thousands of new jobs by retrofitting homes and buildings, which will also help Canadians and businesses cut their energy bills.

We will invest in more renewable energy solutions and in public transit. Dartmouth—Cole Harbour is home to incredible clean-technology companies, and we need to use this opportunity to make Canada a world leader in clean tech. We are going to launch a new fund to attract investments in producing zero-emission products, such as vehicles and batteries, and we will cut the corporate tax rate in half for these companies. Plus, we will continue investing in charging infrastructure to make it more affordable and easier to switch to a zero-emission vehicle.

As members know, I am a strong advocate for protecting nature across Canada. I firmly believe that whether one lives in an urban environment or a rural environment, one should have easy access to parks and green spaces. Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes is a great example of the importance of federal investment in nature and parks. Moving forward, we will work with municipalities to expand on urban parks. We will help them plant more trees and find more nature solutions to fighting climate change.

These important environmental measures will provide good-paying jobs, help us reach our emissions targets, and provide a cleaner and healthier Canada.

This pandemic has exposed many gaps in our social systems. For seniors, young Canadians, individuals with disabilities, racialized Canadians, indigenous peoples and folks already experiencing poverty, we recognize that their lives were made more difficult.

As we transition away from CERB, we will launch a new transitional recovery benefit and support more Canadians through the employment insurance system. As we move forward, we are going to completely rebuild Canada's employment insurance system, and it will cover folks who would not have qualified in the past, including some self-employed Canadians.

As we help Canadians return to work, we need to make sure that parents have access to safe, inclusive and affordable child care. We

will do this by creating a Canada-wide, early learning and child care system.

The Address

We are keeping our commitments to increase old age security for seniors 75 and older, and we will boost the CPP survivors benefit. We know that Canada's seniors and long-term care residents deserve better than the unfortunate truths exposed during the pandemic. We are going to not only introduce Criminal Code amendments to act against those who neglect seniors in their care, but we will also work with the provinces and territories to set new, robust national standards to ensure that all residents in long-term care get the best support possible.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our constituency office heard from many individuals with disabilities who faced extra difficulties related to the pandemic. Soon we will deliver the extra COVID-19 payments, but I want them to know that we recognize that the current systems are simply not working for them. Moving forward and working together, we will introduce a disability inclusion plan that will include a new Canadian disability benefit similar to GIS for seniors. We will help more individuals with disabilities gain employment and create a more streamlined, fair process to help determine eligibility and access to government disability programs and benefits.

During the pandemic, emergency shelters overflowed as folks were asked to stay indoors. Too many had no place to go. Sleeping head to toe in overcrowded shelters was not and is not a safe option during COVID-19.

In closing, no one in this country should have to choose between their health and their job. No Canadian should choose between the prescription drugs they need or paying their rent. No Canadian should be forced to sleep head to toe in a crowded shelter during a pandemic. No senior should live with inadequate support in long-term care. The ambitious plan laid out in the Speech from the Throne paves the way for Canada, a Canada that leaves no one left behind.

We must seize these incredible opportunities together. Let us build a more equitable Canada. Let us build a greener, cleaner Canada. Let us build a better Canada.

The Address

• (1730)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things the Speech from the Throne noted was national urban parks, and I would like the member's opinion on that matter. I have been fighting for Ojibway Shores, as have the communities of Windsor and Essex County, which is along the Detroit River. It has thousands of special species, but over 100 endangered species. It is recognized as a hot spot because of the Carolinian forest and its uniqueness. It is actually one of the last remaining places on the Great Lakes with a natural shoreline, and on the Detroit River it is the only place.

The current position from the federal government is to have the municipality pay for this piece of property, which would be part of other properties put together to create a national urban park. It seems really odd that a government, when we are fighting a climate crisis, would want local taxpayers to pay for federal property.

What does the member think about that current policy? I am hoping the government revisits it, because we would like to have a national urban park next to the Gordie Howe bridge, which is set to open in the next couple of years, a bridge we have been fighting a couple of decades for.

Should local taxpayers have to foot the bill for federal property to unite environmentally significant properties that could lead to urban parks?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Speaker, quite a while back I was a member of the environment committee, and we had a discussion and a report on protecting the amazing spaces in our country. We worked on Rouge National Urban Park in Ontario.

I am a big supporter of protecting nature, and I worked very hard to gain some federal funding for Blue Mountain-Birch Cove in Halifax.

We are a country that is so blessed to have so many great, amazing spaces. Regardless if they are municipal, federal or provincial, we all must work together to protect these spaces. One of the recommendations in the report, which I happened to put forward, was that the federal government not only work with provincial governments but work with municipalities to be able to acquire these incredible spaces, much like the one the hon. member is speaking of.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, my question is for my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

During the Speech from the Throne, we heard a lot about how what happened in places like long-term care facilities and seniors' homes must never happen again.

However, I wonder if he acknowledges that his government, like other governments that cut health transfers in the past, is partly responsible for these tragedies.

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for the work she has done in her constituency during this pandemic, and that goes out to all members of this House. Regard-

less of what side of the House they are on, members have worked hard for their constituents.

With regard to long-term care, it was such a terrible situation. It is a provincial jurisdiction, but we have a moral authority to help. We have seen unmitigated levels of collaboration and co-operation with provincial and territorial governments. That needs to continue. We all need to look out for our most vulnerable seniors in long-term care.

This cannot continue if there is a second or third wave, if there are continuing resurgences of COVID. We must do better by our most vulnerable seniors, and it will require all levels of government to work toward that goal.

• (1735)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member hinted that the Speech from the Throne talked about no one being left behind. However, I was very disappointed when I listened to the speech that rural Canada was referred to twice out of approximately 7,000 words.

Could the member indicate how much money out of those infrastructure dollars, or what percentage, is going to go to rural Canada, like much of Atlantic Canada, which I have a lot of respect for having spent eight years of my life posted there? How much money is going to be going to rural Canada?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Speaker, as the hon. member knows, a speech from the throne is a vision for the future. A budget is where the actual dollars are spoken about and tells where that money will go. However, what we want to make sure we do is to leave no one behind, leave no community behind and continue to see urban and rural areas as absolutely equal in this country.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for the great work and for sharing his time. I would also like to thank each and every member of Parliament for the work that they have done during this pandemic in their constituencies.

I rise today to speak in support of the throne speech, which introduced our government's vision for the future of Canada. The throne speech recognized the difficult circumstances our country has faced as a result of the worst health crisis in the past century, as well as the measures that our government has taken to support Canadians over the course of this pandemic.

It is also the speech that sets out a course for the future based on what we, as members of Parliament, are seeing in our communities and with the constituents we represent from coast to coast to coast. Many of us in this chamber have stayed in our respective constituencies for the health and safety of our colleagues, our families and those whom we represent. Despite protests from some of the members, having a Parliament that relies on technology to facilitate debate and voting was and remains the right thing to do.

This has also been an opportunity for us to really get back to why we are doing this job in the first place: to represent the interests of Canadians, to aid those who need it and to assist in facilitating the opportunities for our citizens and businesses to thrive. In the case of Surrey—Newton, I have received valued input from many, including Muslim community leaders who came together, including Mr. Rahat Ali Wajid Rao, president of Canadian Muslim Advocacy. On behalf of the organization, Mr. Rao acknowledged the great work of this government and particularly the right hon. Prime Minister for being a great leader of the 21st century. It is this ongoing information from my constituents that I have relayed back to my colleagues in the caucus and in the cabinet so that we can shape our policies and programs for the next stage of Canada: the stage in which we, as Canadians, forge a new path forward amid the oncoming second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am pleased to report that so many of the measures outlined in yesterday's throne speech are going to address the various concerns that I have heard while listening to my constituents in Surrey—Newton. Today, I would like to briefly touch on the measures that will make a real impact on people's lives.

We have seen the challenges that families face when children are displaced without school or proper child care. These can be crippling and affect one of our country's most important economic drivers. This is why our government is committed to giving families access to affordable, inclusive and high-quality child care and creating a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. This is going to be a vital component of a flourishing economy in Canada, and we are going to work closely with our provincial and territorial counterparts to ensure it becomes a reality for families across the country.

• (1740)

Surrey—Newton is a riding that is fuelled by small and medium-sized businesses. The COVID-19 pandemic has stretched many of these businesses to their limits in terms of survival. As our economy continues to emerge from this pandemic, it is critical that we continue to provide the range of support that we have offered to businesses across Canada. This is why we are extending the Canada emergency wage subsidy program until the summer of 2021, expanding the Canada emergency business account to assist with fixed costs, improving the business credit availability program to allow our businesses to expand operations and make new investments, and introducing targeted support for industries that have been hit hardest, like travel and tourism, hospitality, and the performing arts.

COVID-19 exposed the vulnerability that many of our seniors face, and in Surrey—Newton I have heard how many constituents had to take extraordinary measures to support their senior family members. Accordingly, this throne speech outlines a number of actions that we will be introducing to protect our elderly population. We are going to be increasing the old age security benefit once an individual turns 75 as well as boosting the Canada pension plan survivor benefit. We are going to work with provinces to set strong national standards for long-term care facilities. We are also going to introduce a series of programs and measures to help people stay in their homes longer, which leads me into what continues to be the

The Address

number one priority of many Canadians. Of course, I am talking about health care.

The government is going to launch new initiatives that are going to take steps toward a universal pharmacare program so we can keep drug prices low for Canadians. We will further increase access to treatment and services for mental health and ensure that virtual health care access is expanded across the country, particularly for rural areas.

I could go on about our many bold announcements that were contained in this throne speech, but what I want to emphasize is that, at its core, this is a vision that has been inspired by people and for the people. It is a vision that was crafted from the work of our MPs who have taken the time throughout this pandemic to listen to their constituents and to ensure that our next steps in Canada's recovery are informed by what is happening on the ground. It is critical, particularly at the juncture we face right now, that our choices are responsive to situations that Canadians of all stripes, all regions and all backgrounds are facing.

I am confident in saying that at its core, this throne speech does exactly that. It responds to needs above all else. With that in mind, I encourage all members of this House to vote in favour of the throne speech, so that we can continue to ensure all Canadians are kept safe, while being provided with ample opportunity to emerge from this challenging period stronger than ever.

I wish all Canadians from coast to coast to coast the best for their health and safety.

I am thankful for the opportunity to share my thoughts with the members and Canadians.

• (1745)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member's good wishes, as I am from British Columbia, but I do take issue with his always praising the government.

Largely because of the work of the member for Vancouver East, we know that the government is spending less than 1% on housing issues in British Columbia, when compared with other provinces. We have residents in places such as Vancouver, around Strathcona Park, who are publicly complaining constantly about the crime, property damage, chronic homelessness and drug addictions that are happening in that area. Yet, when the member for Vancouver Centre went on *The Lynda Steele Show*, all she said was that they are consulting and engaging with the provinces. Well, they have not gotten it done.

Will the member agree that his government needs to do more to help the property owners and residents who surround that park to deal with the situation? This is intolerable. I would like to hear from the member on this specific issue.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the hon. member for his thoughts.

The Address

When it comes to a housing strategy, our government has brought in a landmark plan, whether it is to have affordable housing or to help reduce homelessness by 25%, which we are going to keep working on until we bring it down by 50%.

I can certainly give the member an example. In my own constituency, when it came to building affordable housing, particularly for indigenous peoples, I was there at the groundbreaking ceremony. I have seen this project go through, and people are very happy.

We are committed to working with other members in the future to make sure that we are able to achieve the goals we set.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and for talking about the economy and regional prosperity with respect to small and medium-sized businesses. My riding of Shefford has a very strong entrepreneurial spirit and its vitality depends largely on SMEs in industries that will be adversely affected for a long time to come, particularly in the tourism and cultural sectors. Sugar shacks, for which Quebec is known, also come to mind. All of these businesses will need additional assistance.

My colleague touched on the Canada emergency business account. Is that really the way to help businesses? For many of them this is just an added debt. It might help to increase the subsidy portion from \$10,000 to \$20,000.

The Bloc Qu  b  cois is considering the appropriateness of tax credits in a program to help with fixed costs. For example, there could be a 50% refundable tax credit for fixed costs. This is about finding solutions for our businesses. I would like my colleague to comment on this issue, because there is still a lot of uncertainty for many businesses in our region right now.

• (1750)

[English]

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member from the Bloc Qu  b  cois for raising the issue of small and medium-sized businesses. I myself have been a small business owner in my constituency for the last 25-some years, and I totally understand the needs of small businesses.

Our government introduced the \$40,000 bank loans and gave a 75% wage subsidy to employers. Those programs have helped small businesses survive. We have also extended the emergency wage subsidy program to the summer of 2021 to help employers retain employees and bring those one million people back into the workforce.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, in the previous throne speech the government had said that it was going to plant two billion trees. It is in this throne speech as well. The government has had more ethics scandals and conflict of interest scandals than it has planted trees. I would like to ask the member opposite about this.

During the pandemic would have been the perfect time to get people back to work planting trees. They would have been outdoors, socially distancing. When will the Liberals be planting their first tree?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This was resuming debate, so I wonder if the member is willing to continue her speech.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, it was a question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, I did recognize the hon. member for a speech. Does she wish to continue with a speech?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, I will not be resuming.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Given the fact that the hon. member for Calgary Skyview stood as did the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country, there was some confusion. I did call resuming debate and I assumed the hon. member wanted to speak. I will now go to the hon. member for Calgary Skyview.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Skyview.

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this hallowed and historic chamber, the bastion of our democracy, to deliver my first address as the shadow minister for women and gender equality. I thank the people of Calgary Skyview for the confidence they have shown in sending me here. It is a great privilege, and I do not take their trust lightly. I love this place, and I love Canada. I love our values of freedom, democracy, equality, inclusiveness and tolerance.

My remarks today, however, are tinged with disappointment and apprehension. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen an erosion of Parliament and thus, our democracy. The pandemic has been a crisis the likes of which few, if any, of us have previously seen. This extraordinary circumstance called for an extraordinary response from our government to shepherd us through the crisis to recovery.

However, it did not require the abuse and undermining of our democracy. That is what we saw this summer. I speak from my personal experience on the status of women parliamentary committee. We knew that the pandemic was having a different and more dramatic effect on women and girls. Last July I called, supported by all parties, for the return to work of the status of women committee. The disproportionate impact on women and girls was exacerbated by the government's failure to apply a gender-based analysis lens to the CERB, a serious error that our committee was to study and make recommendations to address.

Our committee heard from witnesses who explained that many women were forced out of the workforce or their education programs to meet the increased workload and pressure from their domestic and care responsibilities. We heard that the risk of gender-based violence, domestic violence and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation may be aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on the testimony, we were preparing recommendations to guide the government in addressing this inequity. However, we were shut down before we could finish the work. The work, which we hoped would help the government address the disproportionate stress and hardship faced by women during this crisis, was stopped cold. So far, the government has not addressed the issues identified by our work, and Canadian women and girls continue to face these disproportionate pressures and risks.

Before I go any further, I would like to advise that I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Calgary Midnapore.

Why was our democratic process cut off? Why were Canadian women and girls left to fall through the cracks? It was simply so the Prime Minister could avoid the increasing scrutiny and demands for accountability that were the natural consequence of his flagrant ethical lapses in relation to the awarding of a contract to the WE Charity.

We lost a great Canadian this week. John Turner made many contributions to Canadian life, both in his public and private roles. One of his greatest contributions to our country was as a parliamentarian. He had a deep intellectual and emotional attachment to our democracy and our parliamentary system. He went back to its roots in the Magna Carta, which established that the ruler's will is not arbitrary and that the privileges of Parliament had to be protected.

He lamented the erosion of the independence of the standing committees and their increasing irrelevance under the continual centralization of power in the Prime Minister's Office. He once said, "What we have in this country didn't happen by accident, democracy doesn't happen by accident. Let's fight for the restoration of the supremacy of Parliament in our democratic life."

Why is our Parliament so important? It is not because any one of us happens to be here, or happens to sit on any committee, or serve in cabinet, or oppose the government. It is because we are sent here by the people. It is because, since 1215 under the parliamentary system, we do not allow ourselves to be governed arbitrarily without our consent.

• (1755)

It is not because my work was cut off that I am concerned. If it was not me, somebody else would be here doing the work. It is our job to work on behalf of the people of this country. We were doing that work on behalf of women and girls in this country, at a time when they were under attack and a time when they needed their government to acknowledge this reality and act to address it.

That work is too important to fall to the arbitrary whims of a Prime Minister feeling the well-deserved heat of his own actions. In not standing up to the Prime Minister and saying to him that this is not how our democratic system works, the members opposite turned their backs on the people who sent them to Ottawa as their representatives, not as the Prime Minister's representatives in their ridings.

They certainly turned their backs on women and girls in Canada in the midst of a crisis. It is ironic to me that I deliver these remarks during Gender Equality Week, a week that reminds us of the work

The Address

we have left to do to address gender equity gaps in our country. The government extols its work protecting vulnerable women from increased violence and exploitation in the midst of the pandemic, but we are hearing from front-line workers and services that they are overwhelmed and do not have sufficient resources.

I heard from the London Abused Women's Centre, which has seen an increase in trafficking during COVID, particularly into pornography and webcams. Devastatingly, some of the girls are as young as 12 years of age. The London Abused Women's Centre, like other agencies across the country, has received no federal funding since its previous grant expired on March 31, 2020. The program has temporarily continued only because of the generosity of the people in London, Ontario.

The requests for proposals issued by WAGE and Public Safety are for significantly less funding, making it more difficult for trafficked and exploited women and girls to seek services and exit. This is shameful. Neither the throne speech nor the Prime Minister's political posturing mentioned trafficking, despite the devastating impact it has on Canadian women and girls, their families and communities. Women and girls continue to suffer disproportionate hardship from the COVID-19 crisis.

I call on the government to mitigate the error of its decision to shut down Parliament this summer. I call for the important work of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women to be allowed to continue as soon as possible and include the previously heard testimony, so that we can complete the task that was arbitrarily halted at a time when women and girls in Canada needed us.

We are here for no other reason than it is the pleasure of our constituents that we be here. What a gift they have given us; what an opportunity to do something to improve the lives of Canadians. Our time here is too precious not to use it to the greatest of our ability and effort. The Prime Minister and his functionaries should never tell us when to do that work or when to stop that work. The people will tell us.

In the meantime, we are back. Let us get back to work. There is much to do.

• (1800)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to the proroguing of Parliament. I can and will articulate in the coming days just how important it was that we did, in fact, prorogue.

The Address

In terms of the type of abuse the member is referencing, I would have her reflect back to when Stephen Harper was prime minister and his government was going down in defeat. Had the House resumed, the government would have fallen. What the government did was it prorogued Parliament in order to avoid a confidence vote. That is quite different from what is taking place today.

We have seen a Prime Minister who is very much committed to the principles of transparency, accountability and democracy. That is the reality of the situation. Would the member not agree that the pandemic and the impact it is having on today's society needed to see a throne speech, which is a confidence vote, to reaffirm that the government is going in the right direction and for members of Parliament of all political parties to base their votes on?

Ms. Jag Sahota: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for what appear to be statements rather than questions.

I was not here when Stephen Harper was here, but it seems like what I have been hearing for the last nine or 10 months is that if it rains or snows outside it is Stephen Harper's fault. Maybe we should start living in today's day and age and focus on the future, as the Liberals have been saying.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech especially since we spent time together this summer studying the impact of the pandemic on women. We were in committee for a day and a half.

We found that the time we spent was much too short. I must therefore deplore the fact that Parliament was prorogued because we only had the time to write one letter. We were to resume the work and prepare a much more complete report, which was to be submitted to the minister. I find that regrettable, because it had major repercussions for women. When we met with the minister, I asked her why one of the CALACS in my riding, like many others in Quebec, was unable to obtain the funds needed for projects that directly support women who are victims of domestic violence. That is essential during a pandemic. We know what can happen to many women cooped up at home with their abusers. I did not get an answer.

I had some questions for the minister, because in the last throne speech, in December 2019, the government had already talked about an action plan to address violence against women. I asked the minister when we might see this action plan. I asked her what concrete ideas she wanted to include in the plan. Once again, I got no response. I was left wanting more.

That is another reason why I am eager to get the Standing Committee on the Status of Women back up and running. A lot of work remains to be done. Now more than ever, we need to apply a gender lens to the recovery, with concrete measures to support women as entrepreneurs and help them get back to work.

• (1805)

[English]

Ms. Jag Sahota: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for her question and her participation this summer on our status of women committee. As she said, we heard a lot of stories where women are stuck with their abusers. There is no deadline on

when the funding will be provided to these organizations. In fact, the funding is being cut or taken away from these organizations. At a time when the Liberal government is saying it has everybody's back, you do not have the backs of the girls and women of this country.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that she is to address all questions and comments to the Chair.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

[Translation]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, unfortunately, my headphones are not working so I will not use them. I will carry on anyway. First, I would like to say that I am pleased to be here in the House, even virtually. I am also pleased to respond to the throne speech, even if it is virtually. I am pleased to be responsible for the transport portfolio as the official opposition's transport critic. It is a portfolio that has an incredible history here in Canada.

In fact, the Hon. James Moore told me that transport was the only portfolio in the Canadian Constitution, so it really is something special.

[English]

It is in the Constitution because the railroad is in the Constitution, so transport is just an incredible part of Canadian history.

I will add that what is incredible is the number of individuals who have held this portfolio both as the minister as well as the critic.

[Translation]

That includes the Hon. John Baird, the Hon. Lisa Raitt, the Hon. James Moore and the Hon. Don Mazankowski. As a woman from western Canada, it is very special to share a portfolio with the Hon. Don Mazankowski.

[English]

When Canadians think of transport they have beautiful visions, I know I do, of grain rolling across the Prairies in railcars, as well as my favourite commodity, which is oil. That really is a beautiful picture for Canadians to have.

[Translation]

I remember a trip that I made to the United States.

[English]

While I was there I saw a CP or a CN railcar.

[Translation]

All of a sudden, it was like I was at home in Canada when I saw that.

[English]

I remember, as a young girl, lying in my bed at night, falling asleep in my house in Lake Bonavista, with the rails just a kilometre away from my home, and listening to the sound of the trains going across the tracks and the sound of the horn. Everyone can see that transport has an incredible history here in Canada, as well as for me personally.

● (1810)

[Translation]

Transport is unity.

[English]

Transport is the actual physical network that ties Canadians together all across this incredible country of ours. Transport brings people together. There is not a single Canadian who cannot think of the joy of going to the airport and seeing a friend or relative that he or she has not seen in a long time. Transport allows people to put food on their tables because of all the commodities that are carried all across this great nation.

[Translation]

That is why I was so disappointed with yesterday's throne speech.

[English]

It was very disappointing that yesterday's speech was not about unity.

[Translation]

There was nothing in it about unity, nothing at all.

[English]

Unfortunately, it has never been about unity with the Liberal government, because for five long years now we have seen region pitted against region.

[Translation]

We have seen province pitted against province and sector pitted against sector.

[English]

Unfortunately as well, we have seen scandal after scandal, a refusal to recognize the crisis of the pandemic that was on the horizon. The official opposition tried so hard to bring this to the attention of the government, to show it the doom that was ahead for Canadians, for our well-being and for our economy, but it refused to listen. Now we see the incompetence of the government to get us out of this slump, to get us on the path to economic recovery, to take us to a better place. In the words of the leader of the official opposition, Canada has never been more divided.

In the transport file, I see tens of thousands of people without work. People contact me who are desperate. People from the airline sector are barely hanging on as a result of the government's inability to develop a plan for safe skies or obtain the access to rapid testing that so many other nations around the globe have managed to obtain at this time. My own YYC airport authority has seen a loss of 20,000 jobs.

The Address

I hear from people all across the country. People write to me, such as Michael, who wrote, "I am an airline pilot and I've been laid off since March. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for standing up for our industry within Parliament." I hear from people like Shanna in Manitoba, who wrote, "I don't need a reply, but I just wanted to let you know thank you for your letter to Parliament. It seems our present government is giving away the farm, so to speak, and forgets about transportation and how we are going to recover. But then again, what do I know? I'm just a furloughed flight attendant who is volunteering in schools to help make this transition as smooth as possible in my community."

[Translation]

I hear from people like Philippe, who wrote me the following:

[English]

"I read your news release regarding the absence of a plan regarding airlines. You seem to be one of the rare persons who understands the plague of the aviation sector. The federal government is currently squandering away decades of work by thousands of talented people. If they don't want to throw money at the aviation sector, at least allow us the conditions to do our jobs."

People are worried about food not making it to the table. Chad, from the transport industry, wrote, "Please help. Freight capacity is a real problem. The government is even facing it with personal protective equipment. The government needs a plan to help transition supply chains to the new reality."

I hear from people who are so tired of the government choosing winners and losers and being on the losing end of that equation. I hear from energy workers in my riding, like John and Linda, who have lost not only their truck but now their home because of the government's abandonment of the west.

● (1815)

For six weeks Canadians went without Parliament, we went without committees, Canadians were without a voice. They were left void of a plan for economic recovery and no hope for families across the nation, which so desperately need hope at this time. This is not unity. Unity is not turning our back on an entire region of Canada. Unity is not leaving thousands of people without work, to lose their homes and their dignity. Unity is not omitting an entire sector from the Speech from the Throne, one that is so desperately needed in the restart of this economy. This is not unity at all.

Unity is the Rocky Mountaineer chugging through the majestic mountains. Unity is the first glimpse of Lake Ontario on Via Rail from Ottawa to Toronto. Unity is Alex Colville's painting *To Prince Edward Island*. Unity is looking out over Vancouver port from Canada Place in British Columbia. Unity is the good people of Windsor West who I talked to last night. Unity is using the words such as oil, gas and pipelines in the Speech from the Throne.

The Address

How committed is my leader to unity? He is so committed that he went to la belle province, the province of Quebec, and had a conversation with the premier to discuss solutions to unity. He left the front steps of his house. He had the courage to do that, forsaking his health and the health of his family. This is the courage and the leadership we need at this time.

I am so proud to stand behind and beside our leader to get our people and our goods moving again. The only way we are going to come out of the pandemic is together and together with unity.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, unity is a government that understands and appreciates the diversity of our nation and the many different regions in our nation and works to better the lives of all. A good example of unity is that when we hit the pandemic from nothing, we created a program called CERB. Through that program, close to nine million Canadians were served. That is with a population base of 37 million. That is a government that understands the reality and the importance not only of unity, but being there in a real tangible way for Canadians. That is but one way to demonstrate the importance of unity on which this government was very clear.

Would the member agree that it did not matter where people lived in our beautiful country, that the program was there to serve Canadians first and foremost at a time in which it was needed?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, unity is the constant recognition of all Canadians from all regions all across the country. This is something that we have not seen in five years. My home in the west has been completely ignored as well as thousands of other Canadians. It is never more important than right now that this economy fire on all cylinders, with all hands on deck, with all Canadians being united for the future of this great nation.

We did not see this in the throne speech yesterday. The government was slow to respond. We have discussed this over and over again in the House of Commons, the closing of our borders, allowing people to suffer, giving away personal protective equipment. Now the very least that the Liberals can do is include all Canadians in the solution and they are not doing that.

• (1820)

[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to salute all of my colleagues here in the House, who have kept working and serving their constituents very well during the pandemic.

The member talked about transportation, so I would like to take this opportunity to point out that Trois-Rivières has no train service. We are waiting for the high-frequency train that Mr. Trudeau's government promised years ago.

I would like to know if my colleague supports taking action on that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the hon. member that she is not allowed to refer to a member by name. I hope that, next time, she will use the member's title, not his name.

The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague.

Indeed, that is another example of one of the Prime Minister's forgotten projects. That is actually why the leader of the official opposition went to Quebec City. He sat down with the Premier of Quebec in order to learn more about issues and projects such as that one.

I think that if we had a new government and a new leader, we would be able to dedicate more time to conversations on the projects and issues that the current Prime Minister has forgotten.

[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with my hon. colleague and friend, the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

It is with great privilege and humility that I rise today in the House of Commons in this most unique and extraordinary time in our country and the world's history with the onset of COVID-19.

The Speech from the Throne, I believe, is aptly called "A stronger and more resilient Canada". Why do I say "aptly"? Frankly, it is because Canadians, like those living in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, individual Canadians, families, seniors and businesses from coast to coast to coast, through COVID-19 have demonstrated time and again their resiliency by helping their neighbours, by helping those less fortunate. For example, Canadians have been delivering groceries to seniors, and businesses and their employees have shown resiliency by retooling quickly to ensure that our essential and front-line workers have access to the personal protective equipment they need to ensure their safety.

I wish to offer my gratitude and sincere thanks to the brave men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces who were called upon to assist in the crisis in our long-term care facilities caused by COVID-19, including locally in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge at the Woodbridge Vista long-term care facility. My heart goes out to those families who lost loved ones at these long-term care facilities. We must do better. I fully support our government working with the provinces to establish pertinent, national standards to ensure all our seniors the ability to live with dignity, respect and safety in a long-term care facility. On behalf of the residents in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, I wish to thank members of the CAF for their ongoing service to Canada and for their assistance to our seniors who sacrificed so much to help build this country.

My riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge and the city of Vaughan is home to a dynamic business community, and I would argue one of the most entrepreneurial in this country. Many of these businesses and their workers, in response to COVID-19, quickly retooled and produced the much-needed PPE, including masks, protective shields and hand sanitizer. A big thanks to the Woodbridge Foam Company, Magnotta Winery, Last Straw Distillery, Campio Group and Ben Machine Products, to name a few.

The throne speech pledges to build a more resilient Canada, a Canada that we know is blessed, diverse and inclusive, but remains a work in progress. Our government will ramp up significantly the ongoing investments in infrastructure, be it in the areas of public transit, building retrofits, clean energy and affordable housing. These investments will create jobs, grow our economy and ensure a more competitive economy.

My riding is home to the training facilities of the leading and largest construction unions in the province of Ontario. Those unions, such as LiUNA Local 183, Local 27 of the Carpenters & Allied Workers Union and all the building and trade unions and their members I know will be there, as they always are, to train the workforce needed to build a resilient and inclusive Canada. Men and women working in the trades across this country through COVID-19 have continued day in and day out to build the communities we call home, and I thank them.

We all know of the economic toll of COVID-19. At the height of the initial stages of the pandemic, nearly 5.5 million Canadian workers were impacted, with three million losing their jobs. An additional 2.5 million workers were required to be absent from work. Our government responded quickly and firmly. Close to nine million Canadians were helped through the Canada emergency response benefit. An additional 3.5 million Canadians were supported and continue to be supported by the Canada emergency wage subsidy, CEWS.

The Governor of the Bank of Canada commented on September 10, 2020 that:

Measures like CERB and wage-support programs have replaced lost incomes, providing a cushion for many families, especially low-income households. To help during the reopening of the economy, the government has extended its wage subsidy program and is changing CERB into an expanded employment insurance program. These programs are keeping workers connected to employers and the unemployed connected to the labour force, supporting our recovery.

He goes on to further state that:

The economy is benefiting from considerable fiscal support to protect the most vulnerable, replace lost income and subsidize wages.

● (1825)

We know much work remains and needs to be done, particularly with the 1.1 million Canadians whose livelihoods remain impacted by COVID-19. Canadian workers and their families know that our government has their backs, full stop. We will continue to fully support workers and businesses through the crisis, as indicated in the throne speech, as long as it lasts and whatever it takes.

I reject the notion from the other side that we must put in place measures for austerity and that we must not invest in Canadians and Canada at this time when we face a pandemic, a unique and extraordinary time both here in Canada and in the world. For the short

The Address

term, we must strengthen Canada's social safety net and ensure proper investment in our health care system, and we continue to do that in partnership with the provinces. In the medium and longer term we need to focus on implementing policies that drive economic growth and job creation.

As someone who worked in the financial markets, I believe in the private sector and the wonders of economic growth. Before COVID, we in Canada had generated over a million jobs and driven the unemployment rate to record low levels. We will get there again. With that, it is constructive to see the support from both business and labour organizations for the announcement in the throne speech that the CEWS will be extended through next summer. Perrin Beatty, the president and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, applauded the extension of the CEWS and other measures, including national leadership on child care funding to enable women to more fully participate in the labour force and the government's focused campaign to create one million jobs, restoring employment to previous levels.

The city of Vaughan is home to over 12,000 SMEs, employing tens of thousands of Canadians, and every day these business owners place all their efforts into the success of their businesses. I applaud them. These entrepreneurs and their employees know that they have a strong voice in Ottawa and that their concerns and ideas are being heard, much like the introduction of the CEBA, the CE-CRA, the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the CERB.

With the remaining time, I would like to comment on our government's plans to strengthen our social fabric so that all Canadians have an equality of opportunity and are able to achieve their full potential. Whether it is investments empowering Black entrepreneurs, whom we know face hurdles in accessing capital and unleashing their full potential; making significant long-term sustained investments to create a Canada-wide early learning and child care system; or investing in skills training, our government is there to move our economy forward and to ensure a brighter future for all Canadians across this blessed country.

The Address

We need a system of child care and options available for parents that ensure and achieve social and economic equality for women. The labour force participation rate for women was impacted profoundly by COVID-19 and we need to repair that damage. We know our full economic potential is only achieved when all Canadians are able to participate in the workforce and not held back by barriers, such as child care availability or affordability. I applaud la belle province on its child care program. As indicated in the throne speech, we need to learn from it.

As noted in a report today by Scotiabank:

The Quebec experience has demonstrated that universal, low-cost childcare removes a substantial barrier to workforce participation for many women, paying economic (and fiscal) dividends. It can also increase household disposable income and indirectly alleviate housing affordability pressures.

Now I would like to speak about seniors.

Over the first session of Parliament, we helped our seniors. We restored the age of eligibility for OAS and GIS, which the Conservatives had raised from 65 to 67. We brought it back to 65. That is nearly \$15,000 more in the pockets of future retirees. We increased the guaranteed income supplement by 10% for our most vulnerable seniors, lifting thousands of them out of poverty. Now we have again committed to introducing old age security, increasing it by 10% for those seniors when they hit 75. We know that when seniors age and get to 75, or in and around that mark, they face increased pressures and costs, and we are there to help them.

We have done much over the decades, and all parties have, to lower poverty in seniors across Canada. We know that those who are still in poverty tend to be widowed or single seniors, most of them women. We have promised to work with our provinces to strengthen the CPP survivor benefit. That is a measure that I applaud the government in undertaking. These, along with other measures that were implemented, have driven poverty levels to record low levels for our seniors.

● (1830)

We will be there to assist them. They are my parents, and they are, to me, the greatest generation that helped build this country.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member opposite and his speech today. He is not just a member of Parliament, he is also the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of National Revenue. I worked with him previously on the finance committee, and I miss his interventions on that committee. Again, this is directed to him in that capacity as the parliamentary secretary.

Many constituents in my riding have had the issue where their identity has been stolen, benefits were claimed and, when they inquired with CRA, the blame was put on them. They were told that their password was not good enough, and that it was their fault for not having secured their CRA account. The whole purpose of CRA is to have a secure way for people to pay the government what is owed for their taxes, and the idea is that CRA will protect their information.

The minister has been nowhere on this, so I would like to ask the member, in his role as parliamentary secretary, these questions: Why is the government content to allow CRA to put in place a pro-

cess that is not secure and that does not protect people? Why is the government allowing the CRA to blame individual taxpayers, rather than helping them with this issue?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would like to remind members to limit their questions to a minute to allow for others to be able to ask questions. This was mentioned earlier on today.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I would like to tell my hon. colleague that I will visit Penticton soon. I will say that if the member has constituents who have been impacted by cyber-attacks on their accounts, please let us connect and chat about that.

The officials and individuals at the CRA are great. They are hard-working folks who have implemented the CERB and many other programs. They would not have indicated that it was the responsibility of the taxpayer. I do not agree with the member's statement.

Let us work together and solve this for any of those constituents facing this issue. They are not responsible. These are activities that were done illegally. We are there for the constituents. We are there for them and with them. I am more than happy to help you and assist you and your constituents in your office on this matter.

● (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate that the member wants to come to my constituency to help my constituents, but I do want to remind the member to address questions and comments through the chair.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Jonquière.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank our colleague for his optimistic speech.

Beyond good intentions, there is a reality. My colleague had a lot to say about a harmonious partnership with the provinces in the Speech from the Throne. The reality is that this is a missed opportunity. I think the government did not respond to the provincial premiers' clear message on health care funding, the infamous 35% that we may never see.

My colleague had a lot to say about a public child care system. I would like some assurances from my colleague that if that comes to fruition, Quebec could get compensation, no strings attached.

What does my colleague say to that?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Jonquière for his question.

[English]

When we look at our government's actions to date with the safe restart agreement, we see that \$19 billion has been given to the provinces to utilize. When the provinces of Quebec and Ontario needed assistance in their long-term care facilities, we responded immediately. With that, we will continue to work constructively with all provinces in this beautiful country of ours.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Protecting our seniors is and always will be a priority for our government. We have shown that seniors are extremely important to us. We need to give them the comfort and security they deserve.

Since the creation of the ministry of seniors in 2018 and the appointment of the member for King—Vaughan as minister in 2019, our government has shown unprecedented levels of involvement and a willingness to take care of our seniors. By creating a ministry dedicated to seniors, our government has shown just how important seniors are and has made it possible to implement special measures tailored to their needs.

I am thinking about new horizons for seniors, a grants and contributions program. The aim of this ambitious program is to support projects that make a difference in the lives of seniors from coast to coast. The program promotes volunteerism among seniors and supports their social participation through the mentoring of others. It also supports the inclusion of seniors in society in order to prevent the isolation and exclusion they all too often experience.

This innovative program provided \$25,000 in funding over one year for eligible projects. In my riding, we secured almost \$25,000 in grants for two seniors' centres. Age d'or St-Ferdinand—Fabreville used the money to buy tables, a bingo cage and bingo accessories for seniors' card and bingo nights. The Manoir Thérèse-Casgrain's seniors' club replaced their carts with safer ones for their evening activities.

This program is so popular with Canadians that it is being renewed this year, and the application period runs from September 9 to October 20. The value of this program is clear from the sheer number of applications. These investments are necessary, since they allow seniors' centres to continue organizing activities during these difficult times. They also help combat isolation and create mentorship roles for seniors so that we can benefit from their wisdom.

Most importantly, they address seniors' special needs, which are a major modern concern in our society. Our seniors' safety is our top priority, so replacing old equipment is crucial.

I am also thinking about the caregiver credit, which is aimed at providing financial support for those who help and care for our seniors. Caregiving is a calling that deserves to be valued, and the government has recognized this and will continue to do so.

On a related subject, the guaranteed income supplement gives lower-income seniors an additional monthly allowance to help them meet their specific needs. Furthermore, we must not underestimate the pandemic's effects on our mental health, and we must continue supporting programs that address this problem. We also need to rec-

The Address

ognize the importance of assistance for veterans, to ensure that they are not left behind as we tackle the challenges of the pandemic.

The throne speech made it clear that the government is once again committed to helping seniors during this long Parliament. Concrete measures were announced yesterday, such as increasing old age security for Canadians over the age of 75 and boosting the Canada pension plan survivor's benefit. The government is also committed to taking additional action to help seniors stay in their homes and live independently. We will work with our provincial and territorial partners to set new, national standards so that seniors get the best support possible.

● (1840)

We will also amend the Criminal Code to explicitly penalize those who neglect seniors and put them in danger.

In addition, we will bring forward a disability inclusion plan, which will include a new Canadian disability benefit modelled after the guaranteed income supplement for seniors; a robust employment strategy for Canadians with disabilities; and a better process to determine eligibility for government disability programs and benefits. In these uncertain times, we owe it to them to keep taking care of our seniors.

COVID-19 has further isolated seniors from their families because they are vulnerable to this virus. We must continue to protect them during this pandemic, by following health guidelines and visitation rules. I know it is hard to not be able to see loved ones, parents, grandparents and friends, but we must come together to keep them safe.

I want to tip my hat to our hardworking health care workers for the outstanding job they are doing protecting us every day. It is our responsibility to ensure that their work will not be in vain.

I have a special place in my heart for the staff at the Sainte-Rose CLSC and CHSLD, who fight this virus day after day.

I also want to acknowledge the incredible resiliency of our food banks, which, despite the circumstances, continue to support those most in need. I want to remind members that their operations depend primarily on our individual donations.

The Address

The next few months will be crucial in the fight against the pandemic, and it is up to every one of us to ensure that the situation improves. Every day all of us wage our own battle against this vicious virus, and we must battle it every day.

We are in constant contact with the municipal, provincial and federal authorities to reassure our fellow citizens and to help them get through this crisis.

• (1845)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague spent a lot of time talking about seniors. I know the government wants to take a lot of credit for what it has done for seniors, but if you talk to the seniors themselves, they are not very happy at all.

You can talk about all of these little programs, but they are wondering about the benefits they need for surviving and living without having to go to food banks. With all of the increased costs, they are wondering when it will happen. You said it in 2015, you said it in 2019 and you are saying it again.

Seniors want to know when their benefits will be increased so that they can live with dignity and no longer have to go to a food bank to survive.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I know that it has been a little while and we are just starting to get warmed up to being back in the House, but I want to remind the member to address the questions and comments to the Chair.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

Our government has demonstrated its commitment to supporting seniors through concrete measures. By increasing old age security at age 75 and increasing the CPP survivor's pension, the government has demonstrated its commitment to supporting our seniors.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to continue in the same vein as the question posed by my colleague. During the last election, his party's electoral platform included an increase in old age security payments for those 75 and older, if I am not mistaken.

Five weeks ago, the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament saying that the government would deliver a masterful Speech from the Throne. Then it came back with a promise to increase old age security for those 75 and older. Shutting down Parliament for five weeks to make this type of promise is a little disappointing.

My question for my colleague, however, is this: Why create two classes of seniors, those 65 to 75, and those 75 and older?

Why make this distinction? What is the 75-and-under set missing according to the Liberal Party of Canada to be entitled to increased support in their purchasing power?

Mr. Yves Robillard: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague.

We will have a lot of time in the House to discuss these measures because this affects pretty much everyone, both in the opposition and the government.

I would like to say that our government is committed to supporting our seniors, as evidenced by the new horizons for seniors program, which provides grants and contributions for projects that benefit seniors, no matter what their age. It also encourages the greater inclusion of seniors in our society in order to prevent the loneliness and social exclusion that all too often befall seniors.

• (1850)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Seniors in my riding, especially those in long-term care facilities in Sainte-Dorothée and others across Quebec, experienced tragedy and devastation due to a lack of medical care and unsound management even though elder care is wholly under provincial jurisdiction.

Would my colleague tell the House what the government has done to improve the situation in long-term care facilities in Quebec and across the country?

Will the government be doing more to protect our seniors, keep them healthy, and preserve their dignity?

Mr. Yves Robillard: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Laval—Les Îles, for his hard work and his tireless efforts.

COVID-19 has seriously contributed to seniors' isolation by cutting them off from their loved ones. That is why our government has announced plans to develop our capacity to provide virtual care.

In addition, I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that our government will continue to work tirelessly to improve the health, dignity and safety of our seniors.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we all leave, I would like to remind hon. members that we hope everyone will take part in the vote simulation this evening at 7 p.m.

That is just a reminder and what I wanted to announce for this evening.

[*English*]

It being 6:50 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:50 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, September 24, 2020

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Lamoureux 25

COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act

Ms. Qualtrough 25

Bill C-2. Introduction and first reading 25

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) 25

Hon. John Turner

Mr. Trudeau 25

Ms. Bergen 26

Mrs. DeBellefeuille 26

Mr. Julian 27

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 27

Petitions

Hong Kong

Mr. Chiu 28

Human Organ Trafficking

Mr. Genuis 28

Physician-Assisted Dying

Mr. Genuis 29

Maternity Leave

Ms. Kwan 29

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Ms. Kwan 29

Opioids

Mr. Johns 29

The Environment

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 29

Health Care

Mr. Manly 29

Privilege

Provision of Documents to the Standing Committee on Finance

Mr. Barrett 30

Mr. Lamoureux 34

Mr. Therrien 34

Mr. Julian 34

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Resumption of Debate on Address in Reply

Ms. Bergen 35

Mr. Lamoureux 37

Mr. Perron 37

Mr. Deltell 37

Amendment 39

Mr. Easter 39

Mr. Johns 39

Ms. Chabot 40

Mr. Trudeau 40

Mr. Deltell 45

Mr. Bergeron 45

Mr. Bachrach 46

Mr. Gerretsen 46

Mr. Therrien 47

Amendment to the amendment 49

Mr. Lamoureux 49

Mr. Boulerice 50

Ms. Pauzé 50

Mr. Amos 50

Mr. Boulerice 50

Ms. Michaud 52

Mr. Berthold 52

Mr. Johns 53

Mr. Vaughan 54

Mr. Genuis 55

Mr. Casey 55

Mr. Genuis 57

Mr. Fortin 57

Mr. Bachrach 57

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mohamed-Aslim Zafis

Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North) 58

Tourism Industry

Ms. Hutchings 58

Roger Guertin

Mr. Perron 58

Long-Term Care Facilities

Mr. Serré 58

Internet Services

Mr. Aitchison 59

Speech from the Throne

Ms. Ratansi 59

John Napier Wyndham Turner

Mr. Fergus 59

Forestry Industry

Mr. Albas 59

Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Ms. Khalid 59

2020 New Brunswick Election

Mr. Moore 60

COVID-19 Testing		Mr. Paul-Hus	64
Ms. Rempel Garner	60	Mr. Bains	65
The Environment		Health	
Mr. Boulerice	60	Mr. Thériault	65
50th Anniversary of Saint-Jérôme CEGEP		Mr. Rodriguez	65
Mr. Fortin	60	Mr. Thériault	65
COVID-19 Testing		Mr. Rodriguez	65
Mr. Paul-Hus	60	Mr. Ste-Marie	65
Aline Chrétien		Mr. Rodriguez	65
Ms. Petitpas Taylor	61	The Environment	
Agriculture in Edmonton Manning		Mr. Cumming	65
Mr. Aboultaif	61	Mr. Wilkinson	65
		Mr. Cumming	65
		Mr. Wilkinson	66
		Mr. Albas	66
		Mr. Wilkinson	66
ORAL QUESTIONS		Housing	
COVID-19 Emergency Response		Ms. Kwan	66
Ms. Bergen	61	Mr. Hussen	66
Mr. Trudeau	61	Pharmacare	
Ms. Bergen	61	Mr. Davies	66
Mr. Trudeau	62	Ms. Hajdu	66
Natural Resources		The Environment	
Ms. Bergen	62	Mr. Easter	66
Mr. Trudeau	62	Mr. Wilkinson	67
Intergovernmental Relations		Fisheries and Oceans	
Mr. Deltell	62	Mr. d'Entremont	67
Mr. Trudeau	62	Mrs. Jordan	67
Mr. Deltell	62	Mr. d'Entremont	67
Mr. Trudeau	62	Mrs. Jordan	67
Health		Speech from the Throne	
Mr. Therrien	62	Mr. Berthold	67
Mr. Trudeau	63	Ms. Freeland	67
Mr. Therrien	63	Mr. Berthold	67
Mr. Trudeau	63	Mr. Rodriguez	67
COVID-19 Emergency Response		Seniors	
Mr. Singh	63	Ms. Larouche	68
Mr. Trudeau	63	Mrs. Schulte	68
Mr. Singh	63	Ms. Larouche	68
Mr. Trudeau	63	Mrs. Schulte	68
Health		Agriculture	
Ms. Rempel Garner	63	Ms. Rood	68
Ms. Hajdu	63	Ms. Bibeau	68
Ms. Rempel Garner	64	Ms. Rood	68
Ms. Hajdu	64	Ms. Bibeau	68
Public Safety		Telecommunications	
Mrs. Stubbs	64	Mr. Nater	68
Mr. Blair	64	Ms. Monsef	69
Mrs. Stubbs	64	Status of Women	
Mr. Blair	64	Ms. Dzerowicz	69
Ethics		Ms. Monsef	69
Mr. Paul-Hus	64		
Ms. Anand	64		

Public Safety	
Mr. Kent	69
Mr. Blair	69

International Trade	
Mrs. Gray	69
Ms. Ng	69

Health	
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	70
Ms. Hajdu	70
Ms. Lambropoulos	70
Mr. Bains	70

The Environment	
Ms. Collins	70
Mr. Wilkinson	70

Fisheries	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	70
Mrs. Jordan	70

Points of Order

Oral Questions

Mr. Deltell	71
Mr. Paul-Hus	71
Ms. Anand	71

Statements by Members

Mr. Perron	71
------------------	----

Business of the House

Mr. Deltell	71
Mr. Rodriguez	72

Privilege

Response by Parliamentary Secretary to Order Paper Question

Mr. Barrett	72
-------------------	----

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Resumption of Debate on Address in Reply

Mrs. Brière	74
Ms. Rempel Garner	75
Mr. Davies	76
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	76
Ms. Rempel Garner	76
Mr. Gerretsen	78
Mr. Simard	78

Mr. Masse	78
Mr. Vis	78
Mr. Vaughan	80
Mr. Desilets	81
Ms. Damoff	82

Points of Order

Decorum

Mr. Genuis	82
Mr. Gerretsen	82

Resumption of Debate on Address in Reply

Ms. Damoff	82
Mr. Genuis	84
Mr. Simard	84
Ms. Gazan	84
Ms. Martinez Ferrada	85
Mrs. Gray	86
Ms. Normandin	87
Mr. Boulerice	87
Mr. Poilievre	87
Mr. Blois	89
Mr. Simard	89
Mr. Schmale	89
Mr. Gerretsen	91
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	91
Mr. Fisher	92
Mr. Masse	94
Ms. Normandin	94
Mr. Ruff	94
Mr. Dhaliwal	94
Mr. Albas	95
Ms. Larouche	96
Mrs. Gray	96
Ms. Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	96
Mr. Lamoureux	97
Ms. Larouche	98
Mrs. Kusie	98
Mr. Lamoureux	100
Mrs. Charbonneau	100
Mr. Sorbara	100
Mr. Albas	102
Mr. Simard	102
Mr. Robillard	103
Mr. Duvall	104
Mr. Ste-Marie	104
Mr. El-Khoury	104

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