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Thursday, November 5, 2020

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 5, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1005)

[*English*]

VETERANS' WEEK

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 18, 1943, squadron leader Alfred Brenner of Toronto was flying off the coast of the Netherlands when he and his crew spotted an enemy convoy consisting of five destroyers. Rather than peeling away and calling for reinforcements, squadron leader Brenner attacked low over the waves, dropping a torpedo that successfully hit a 5,000-tonne enemy vessel. Facing heavy fire, their plane was shot down, but not before they sent an SOS. Alone in dangerous waters with a life raft and few resources, Alfred and his crew sent another call for rescue by sending a messenger pigeon that they had taken from their aircraft. After two long days at sea, Allied forces picked them up in a daring rescue mission. For his bravery, squadron leader Brenner received Britain's Distinguished Flying Cross.

In the face of danger, Alfred and his crew chose to be brave. They chose to put their own lives on the line for the greater good. It is no wonder his citation reads, "this officer has displayed the greatest keenness and devotion to duty."

[*Translation*]

At the beginning of this Veterans' Week, we remember heroes like Squadron Leader Brenner whose actions reflect the courage of so many men and women in uniform. We pay tribute to all those who risked their lives for our freedom, including the eight brave members of the Canadian Armed Forces who lost their lives in the line of duty this year. We honour their memory and we will always remember them.

This year, on the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, we recognize how lucky we are to live in a country like ours because of the sacrifice, service and perseverance of those who lived through this terrible war. They endured the loss of brothers, sisters and friends but, even so, they found hope and compassion for one another.

Over the decades, they continued to pave the way for building a better world and serving the common good. It is that same sense of duty and sacrifice that led our armed forces to participate in multiple peacekeeping missions, particularly in Korea and Afghanistan.

When we need them, our men and women in uniform are always ready to come to the rescue. Recently, they showed their selflessness by protecting and helping our most vulnerable citizens, seniors living in long-term care facilities.

Their action and their commitment to Canadian values are a reflection of the best of our country.

[*English*]

Our veterans served Canada with honour and valour right across this country and all around the world. They stepped up for us, and now it is time for us to do the same for them.

We do not need to wonder how we will rise to the moment, because we need only look around Canada to see the answer. We see it in young people getting groceries for older veterans to keep them safe. We see it in front-line workers, who, after hours of standing on tired feet, never give up as they care for our parents and grandparents, the last members of the greatest generation. We have seen it in the crew of the HMCS *Fredericton* and the members of the Snowbirds, brave women and men who, even after tragedy, continue to show us what service and sacrifice mean.

[*Translation*]

As we mark Veterans' Week, we will be thinking of those who have served with honour and courage. May we be inspired by the ideals they held dear, and let us all work together, alongside our veterans, to build a better world.

[*English*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today as both a veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces and a parliamentarian to speak for a moment about Veterans' Week and our collective duty to remember the service and sacrifice of our fellow citizens. It is an honour because Canada's Parliament is both literally and figuratively built upon the sacrifice of the generations who came before us.

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Many Canadians recognize the iconic tower of Parliament as the Peace Tower, but its full name is the Tower of Victory and Peace. It was rebuilt following a fire during the Great War, and it was built to honour our fallen. Now, being Canadians, over the years we modestly omitted the “victory” part, but let us never forget that the peace symbolized in this building came as a result of tremendous Canadian sacrifice, achieving victories far from our shores.

The Tower of Victory and Peace is the physical body of our parliamentary democracy, but Canada's soul can be found inside the tower, in the Memorial Chamber.

The Memorial Chamber contains stones from all of the major battlefields of Europe. It has brass plaques and markings forged from battlefield artillery casings. It also contains our most hallowed library: the Books of Remembrance. Each day, pages of the Books of Remembrance are gently and respectfully turned in a ceremony that honours our fallen. These are pages with thousands of names of Canadians who most of us will have never met but to whom all of us owe so much.

If it seems as though I am giving a guided virtual tour of Parliament Hill on some of the ways that Parliament commemorates the service and sacrifice of Canada's veterans, it is because I am giving a virtual tour in a year that we are living virtually.

• (1010)

[Translation]

Our commemorations will be different this year. They will show greater solidarity, while being more personal. The places we normally gather to remember will be closed, and we will be far from our brothers in arms and their military family. We shall remember the courage shown by these men and women who sacrificed so much to ensure we could live in a country at peace.

[English]

Across the nation, for the first time in a century, there will be no parades of remembrance. Many cenotaphs will not have ceremonies, and others may only have 10 participants where we once saw hundreds or thousands. From the National War Memorial in Ottawa to the smallest cenotaphs in the towns and hamlets of this country, services of remembrance will not look or feel the same this year.

Therefore, I am challenging Canadians to show their commitment to remembering our veterans and those who serve in new ways: memory, remembrance and respect. These are not physical actions anyway; they are emotional acts that we can dedicate ourselves to upholding during a year when Canadians have dedicated themselves to adapting and persevering through very challenging times

Canadians can remember a fallen relative or Canadian hero in their prayers, reflections or on social media. They can respect the sacrifice of those who came before us by wearing a poppy, even if they are the only people who see it. They can learn about our history, our military heritage and the incredible stories of bravery of our men and women in uniform. They should think about the thousands of Canadians serving in uniform today at home and abroad. They

are serving for the same reasons Canadians have served for more than a century: They believe in this country and what it represents.

I will use my remaining time to remember and honour one name in the Memorial Chamber that I think of each November 11 and some other Canadians whose names will soon be inscribed on Canada's soul, our Books of Remembrance, when it reopens after the pandemic.

On page 214 of the book *In the Service of Canada* is the name of a woman from Weyburn, Saskatchewan, who I met on my first full day in the military at boot camp in Chilliwack in 1991. Juli-Ann MacKenzie was an exceptional Canadian and was loved by all who met her. She was a piper, a patriot. As a kid, Juli-Ann dreamed of becoming a pilot and that is exactly what she did. She became a great pilot. She served on Sea King helicopters before being posted to fly in the Griffon out of Goose Bay, Labrador.

She was on a search-and-rescue mission on July 18, 2002, when her Griffon crashed. The crew in the back survived because of the dedicated actions of the pilot, Juli-Ann. While I cannot physically view her name in the Books of Remembrance this week because of the pandemic, I can tell her story and make sure more Canadians learn the story of service and sacrifice of my friend Juli-Ann MacKenzie. Memory is an emotion; it is not an action.

We have lost Canadians to service during this pandemic, and while their names are not yet in the Memorial Chamber, I can honour them in this chamber.

Canadians remember, as the Prime Minister said, those who died in the tragic Cyclone helicopter crash in the Mediterranean: Captain Maxime Miron-Morin, from Trois-Rivières, Quebec; Captain Kevin Hagen, from Nanaimo, British Columbia; Captain Brenden Ian MacDonald, from New Glasgow, Nova Scotia; Sub-Lieutenant Abbigail Cowbrough, from Toronto, Ontario; Master Corporal Matthew Cousins, from Guelph, Ontario; and Sub-Lieutenant Matthew Pyke, from Truro, Nova Scotia.

Tragedy struck when Canada's iconic Snowbirds were performing Operation Inspiration across our country to lift our spirits. An accident led to the loss of Captain Jennifer Casey, from Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Just last week, Canadians mourned the loss of Corporal James Choi from Vancouver, British Columbia.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

As a veteran, I always felt that the next verse of this poem personalized the loss of our fallen so much more. They are the sons and daughters of Canada, and for those in the military they are the friends we trust our lives with, the comrades we laugh loudest with, the brothers and sisters we love and hope desperately to return home safe with. The next verse evokes those feelings:

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

I know there are veterans across Canada who may be struggling with the invisible wounds of service during this unique remembrance week. I know they may feel alone when thinking of their laughing comrades. This pandemic has put a pause to the traditions that bind us. It has robbed us of our capacity to see our friends who suffer from operational stress injuries. I know that families feel hollow looking at the empty seats at their dinner tables.

• (1015)

[Translation]

I know there are veterans across Canada who are suffering from service-related invisible injuries.

I know many of you might feel as though you are alone, but you are never alone. We are with you. Your country is with you.

[English]

I want veterans to know that they are not alone. They have a grateful nation with them. They have friends and comrades that want them to reach out. They have supports. They are loved and we are all here for them. They are going to get through this week, just as our country is going to get through this pandemic.

They should know that on Remembrance Day and on every day, the country will never forget our veterans' service and sacrifice. Lest we forget.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my thoughts go out to the people in my riding, Beloeil—Chambly, my home region of Mauricie and throughout Quebec and Canada who will be experiencing commemorations and moments of remembrance in a very different context. Although we cannot physically be together, we can certainly spare a thought for each other.

This morning, I was interviewed in Mauricie. In Mauricie, Shawinigan and Trois-Rivières, there are monuments dedicated to war heroes who never came home. Their spouses, children or fiancées remained hopeful, but they never saw them again. Without giving it much thought, I said that I missed my wife. Shortly after, I realized that that was nothing compared to all these people who left and never came back. These people went through war, many of them in the trenches, living in despair, without even the slightest prospect of seeing those they loved more than anything in the world ever again.

History holds a special place for those whose decisions may have saved our values and upheld a certain vision of the world. Next to my desk in Gatineau, I have a quote from Churchill that reads,

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“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.” However, very few people win such historical recognition and glorification, next to the many men and women who went to war and never came back. That is why Remembrance Day is necessary and essential. People are still on the front lines today, and often, albeit in different ways, they take up arms and go into battle. Sometimes, they do not return.

Civilians are also among the victims of the new forms of violence shaping our world. They are people who have done nothing but express their values and share knowledge, but they pay with their lives. We should also remember them. The men and women who went to war did not necessarily go to uphold the lofty values we extol here in Parliament. Often, the only value motivating them was protecting their families and loved ones. Today, there are battles being waged for our freedoms, in all their forms.

Mr. Speaker, dear friends, I want to say to all those people from every era, “Lest we forget”.

• (1020)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this year has been incredibly difficult for so many Canadians. COVID-19 has devastated so many communities across Canada. In many regions, Canadians are going to spend what is likely to be their first Remembrance Day at home instead of at their local cenotaphs with their neighbours.

[English]

These ceremonies are an important part of life. They are an important part of our community's civic life. They bring us together and remind us that in the end what brings Canadians together is far more powerful than what divides us.

This year we will be observing our moments of silence from home. That is going to be especially hard, not just because we are eager to reunite and connect with friends, family and neighbours but because this day requires us to come together to remember people. It is hard to do that alone.

[Translation]

This year is going to be especially hard, since we will be observing our moments of silence from home.

[English]

This year, Canadians are observing a significant milestone: the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Canadians from coast to coast to coast did their duty to fight fascism in Europe and brought us to victory in 1945. We all owe our veterans an incredible debt of gratitude for what they did and what they continue to do for Canada, and for peace and stability around the world.

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They left a mark on the world. Canada's relationship with the Netherlands, which was liberated by Canadian troops 75 years ago, is still defined by what those brave Canadians did during their push to free that country from the Nazis.

● (1025)

[Translation]

We all owe our veterans an incredible debt of gratitude for what they did and what they continue to do for Canada, and for peace and stability around the world.

[English]

Closer to home, we enjoy our democratic freedoms and our civil liberties thanks to the veterans who fought to defend Canada. This year, soldiers kept our seniors and loved ones safe, and gave a much-needed hand to the overwhelmed workers in long-term care homes in Ontario and Quebec in Operation LASER. They deployed into an incredibly difficult situation that no one could have prepared for. They saved lives, and we owe them an enormous debt of gratitude.

They were there for Canadians when we needed them. We also tragically saw the loss of brave young men and women in the Mediterranean, who were there to protect peace in a fragile region. We remember them too.

[Translation]

This year, soldiers kept our seniors safe and gave a much-needed hand to the overwhelmed workers in long-term care homes in Ontario and Quebec.

This year is not like other years, but it is on us, as Canadians, to observe Remembrance Day in spirit from home how we always do, with an enormous sense of appreciation for everything our active-duty service members and veterans do and have done for us.

[English]

I also want to mark the passage of National Aboriginal Veterans Day, which was just three days ago. Between 7,000 and 12,000 indigenous people fought for Canada in the world wars and in the Korean War. Canada has not always done right by indigenous veterans. They fought courageously for this country and returned to face discrimination, racism and indifference to their service. That was wrong. They made the same sacrifice as the veterans who returned to the hero's welcome they deserved. We still have a long road to walk with indigenous people to make it right. To them, I say thanks. From these traditional lands, I say *meegwetch* for their sacrifices and service. Canada can and will do better for their children and their grandchildren.

On Remembrance Day, we mark the sacrifices made by veterans in serving their country in war. This year, we are able to thank them for their service in peace time, as well. I want to highlight the importance of our role as parliamentarians to ensure that when Canadians soldiers deploy to fight a war, it is for a just cause. They deploy to protect lives and freedom, and to ensure that as often as possible we push for peaceful resolution of a problem on the global stage before we put them in harm's way. This is our sacred obligation to the men and women who fight for Canada. We owe them that.

[Translation]

Too often Canada is not doing right by veterans. Both nationally or internationally, the Canadian Forces stand up for us. We must as parliamentarians stand up for them.

[English]

Too often Canada is not doing right by veterans. They experience long wait times, denials and other barriers to the services and supports they need. This is not or should not be a partisan issue. We can always improve and we will continue to ensure we do. Veterans need to know that Canadians have their backs. Both nationally or internationally, the Canadian Forces stand up for us. We must as parliamentarians stand up for them.

Lest we forget.

● (1030)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask for unanimous consent to be allowed to say a few words on behalf of the Green Party of Canada.

The Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask those who are opposed to the request for unanimous consent to express their disagreement.

There being no dissenting voice, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

[Translation]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank all my colleagues.

It is a great honour for me to say a few words in tribute to our veterans.

[English]

As other hon. colleagues have said, this year Remembrance Day will not be as others have been. Our most vulnerable citizens are those we honour the most.

In my own community, if we did not have COVID, I would be standing by the cenotaph in Sidney with extraordinary Canadians, like retired Commander Peter Chance, who will turn 100, I think in a couple of days or weeks. We were planning a big celebration. Peter Chance is a war hero of our Canadian navy. He served with distinction throughout the Battle of the Atlantic, and still has a devilish twinkle in his eye and a zest for life, as he tells us the stories of the enormous bravery and courage of those with whom he served.

Another friend in Sidney, Charles “Chic” Goodman, was one of those who liberated prisoner of war camps in the Netherlands. He also served at the Normandy invasion and came home to live a full life.

More recently, we must not forget those veterans of other places of conflict, throughout the Second World War of course, but also in Korea and Afghanistan. I think, particularly today, of the extraordinary courage of Lieutenant Trevor Greene. I think all colleagues will remember the attack on a young Canadian soldier in Kandahar. He had taken his helmet off to show respect toward village leaders and was attacked from behind by a young man with an axe. Extraordinarily and miraculously Trevor Greene survived. He works every day in physiotherapy to walk again. He has turned his considerable genius and talents to becoming an activist, fighting for real action on the climate crisis.

Veterans come in all shapes and sizes and we all owe them our thanks every single day. Remembrance Day gives us the opportunity to to honour our veterans and to not forget their sacrifice and why they sacrificed. The hon. Leader of the Opposition reminded us so beautifully of the Book of Remembrance and of our Peace Tower, which is fully called, he is quite right, the Tower of Victory and Peace.

There were thoughts back in the day, when that tower was being completed, that it would be called the “War Tower”. It is significant that Canadians at that time thought, no, that this tower so symbolized our parliamentary democracy, in the centre of our Parliament, Centre Block, the Peace Tower, with its extraordinary carillon bells that still ring out. They rang out 75 times on the 75th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That tower was determined to be called the Peace Tower.

The veterans I have mentioned by name this morning have all called for peace. We all must dedicate ourselves in the memory of all we lost and the memory that so many of us have. My dad and uncle who survived. A whole generation served and so many people were lost: first, in the First World War; then the Second World War; and on and on. We commit ourselves to war no more.

“At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.”

• (1035)

The Speaker: To mark the start of Veterans' Week, I invite the House to rise and observe a moment of silence.

[A moment of silence observed]

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on International Trade entitled “Main Estimates 2020-21: Vote 1 under Invest in Canada Hub” in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, and reports the same.

Routine Proceedings

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights about the main estimates, 2020-21, and its third report about the supplementary estimates (B), 2020-21.

Our committee has considered the estimates referred by the House and reports the same.

* * *

VIA RAIL CANADA ACT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-251, An Act to continue VIA Rail Canada Inc. under the name VIA Rail Canada and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

She said: Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time I have risen at first reading to present this private member's bill, and I will continue to try. I would be so grateful if government members would see fit to make this a government bill.

Unlike the United States, our national public rail system has no statutory foundation. To explain how significant that is, in the United States, Amtrak has its own legislation that requires it to provide passenger rail service to Americans. VIA Rail exists as a Crown corporation, but it has no statutory mandate that requires it to provide transportation services by rail, passenger rail service to Canadians.

It is particularly important that we do so at a time when so many private sector bus companies have withdrawn service from remote areas of Canada. The legislation lists, in a schedule, all the existing routes that VIA Rail services and ensure that they not be suspended or abandoned.

We need passenger rail service. We need to know that it extends from coast to coast. Ideally, we need to invest to ensure it continues to do so for all Canadians now and into the future.

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

Routine Proceedings

● (1040)

PETITIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have one petition to present today. The petition is in respect of the human rights situation of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China. Petitioners highlight an Associated Press report from July that, in particular, provided evidence of a systemic effort to repress births within the Uighur community. Recent evidence has come out as well about systemic sexual violence, trying effectively to wipe out the Uighur community through repressed births.

In response to these and other horrific abuses of human rights, petitioners call upon the government to use the Magnitsky act to impose sanctions against the individuals who are responsible for these gross violations of human rights.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents across Canada who are concerned about the human rights violations against the Uighur Muslim people in China. The petitioners are calling on the government to use the Magnitsky act provisions to punish those who are involved in these systemic human rights violations.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to present two petitions today.

The first petition draws attention to what is happening in China by the Communist government against the Uighur population. The human rights violations by the Communist government, as reported by the Canadian press, need to be dealt with. The Magnitsky act is one way to do this. This needs to be brought to the government's attention so that we can deal with those human rights violations.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition is in regard to illegal trade in human organs from people who do not understand what is happening. That illegal trade in organs that is going on in the world needs to be stopped. Therefore, the petitioners are petitioning against the trade and illegal transport of organs and donations.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am introducing petition e-2712 on behalf of 2,500 residents of Canada who are members of Canadian faith communities, who have come together united under the banner "For the Love of Creation".

The petitioners call on the government to commit to reducing GHG emissions by 60% below 2005 levels by 2030; to honour the rights of indigenous people through free, prior and informed consent; to commit equal support to international climate action to provide a fair share of \$4 billion per year; and, last, to respond to the pandemic in the global south through multilateral debt cancellation and increased grants to international NGOs.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I rise to present a petition regarding the ongoing human rights abuses in China toward the Uighur Muslims. The petitioners call on the government to use provisions in the Magnitsky act to stop these human rights abuses.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud to present a petition on behalf of hundreds of residents from Don Valley North and across Toronto.

The petitioners are concerned about the amendments made to the citizenship act by the Government of India that makes religion a criterion of nationality and discriminates against religious minorities, such as Muslims. The petitioners are also concerned that the criteria of the national register of citizenship may make marginalized minorities stateless, as they are more likely to be unable to prove their identity and status.

The petitioners call upon the House to condemn these measures, to demand their withdrawal and to condemn the excessive use of force by the police against the peaceful citizens of India.

● (1045)

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am happy to present a petition today from residents of Oromo descent in my riding. They are warning of a potential civil war in Ethiopia and drawing the attention of the House of Commons to the current political violence targeting Oromos in Ethiopia.

Specifically, the petitioners are calling on the Canadian government to stand up for human rights and press Ethiopia to stop its brutal crimes against humanity, to examine Canada's foreign aid to Ethiopia, to press Ethiopia to hold the elections that it postponed and to press Ethiopia to stop torture, free political prisoners and bring perpetrators to justice.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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 ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I wish to inform the House that, because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by 31 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—TAX MEASURES TO SUPPORT CANADIANS

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP) moved:

That, given that since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canadian billionaires are \$37 billion richer while the most vulnerable are struggling, the House call upon the government to put in place a new one percent tax on wealth over \$20 million and an excess profit tax on big corporations that have been profiteering from the pandemic, and to re-invest the billions of dollars recouped from these measures to: (a) expand income security programs to ensure all individuals residing in Canada have a guaranteed livable basic income; (b) expand health care, including by putting in place a national dental care program and a universal, single-payer, public pharmacare program; and (c) meaningfully implement the right to housing with the full plan set out in the Recovery for All campaign and immediately fund a "For Indigenous, By Indigenous" urban, rural and Northern housing strategy delivered by Indigenous housing providers.

He said: Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the very eloquent member of Parliament for Burnaby South.

It is really an honour at this time in our nation's history to lead off on the NDP's action plan to ensure no one is left behind in our country. The context at this period of time is so important. We have just paid tribute to Remembrance Day in the House of Commons. In a few days' time in cities and towns and villages right across this country, we will remember on November 11.

It is clear that it will not be like previous years' ceremonies. Normally in New Westminster, just a few blocks from my home, over 5,000 people gather in front of the cenotaph and thousands more watch on local community television to ensure we remember and pay tribute.

There was, during the Second World War, a real notion of shared sacrifice and that we were all in this together. My family, like so many others, paid the ultimate sacrifice. The names of my uncle and my grandfather are inscribed on the cenotaph before the city hall.

My elderly parents are just a few homes away from mine, where I am speaking from. They are now 97 and 98 years old. They tell us about that period of time during the Second World War and that notion of shared sacrifice and that we are all in this together. At that time, as the House well knows, there was rationing in place to ensure everybody received what was essential. There were strict laws against excess profits and profiteering to ensure the resources of our nation were marshalled to fight against the threat and to ensure we made it through that period with no one left behind.

I raise all of these points because we can learn lessons from how we responded as a nation to that crisis and how, as a result of that, following the Second World War, because we had marshalled those resources together and ensured no one was left behind, we were able to put into place the famous peace dividend.

Following the Second World War, we were able to build 300,000 homes across this country for returning men and women in the service to ensure their right to housing. The home I speaking from, 109 Glover Avenue in New Westminster, is one of those 300,000 homes built by the federal government following the Second World War.

Business of Supply

With the peace dividend, we were able to build schools as well and expand our health care system. It is during this time in the post-war period that Tommy Douglas, judged by Canadians from coast to coast to coast as the greatest Canadian in our history, was able to undertake the fight to ensure we put in place a universal medicare system.

At that same time, we started to put into place some income supports as well. They were full of holes, but there was a sense that we were all in this together and that in the post-war period we could make those investments to ensure nobody was left behind. I raise that because it is very illustrative of the direction we need to take as a country. I know the national leader of the NDP, who will follow me, will outline the importance of putting into place in a very real sense a society where nobody is left behind and where we are all in this together.

That is why the NDP is bringing forward this action plan to ensure no one is left behind today. We have seen, in this pandemic, no laws against excess profits and no discouragement of profiteering. In fact, we have seen quite the opposite. What we have seen is an unbelievable concentration of wealth, with Canada's billionaires adding \$37 billion to their profits, and the banking sector, with incredible federal government largesse, being able to increase their profits as well. Unlike other countries, prosperous countries like Norway and Switzerland, we have not put in place a simple wealth tax that would allow the resources of the nation to be marshalled to ensure nobody is left behind.

● (1050)

The stories that have emerged through this pandemic are very compelling. We pay tribute to our front-line workers and first responders. It is vitally important to pay tribute to them so that we make the investments, so that no one is left behind.

I mentioned the banking sector earlier. It is important to note that the federal government stepped up within days to ensure an unbelievable amount of liquidity support: \$750 billion. Three-quarters of a trillion dollars, within days, was put in place to ensure that the profits of the banking sector were maintained and enhanced. At the same time, we have seen people with disabilities in our country struggle over the course of seven months before even some Canadians with disabilities received some modicum of support from the federal government.

Business of Supply

Imagine, people with disabilities who often barely have the wherewithal to put food on the table or keep a roof over their head, because of the paucity of income supports, are now struggling to pay for additional expenses, such as masks, gloves and cleaning supplies that are needed to get through this pandemic and to keep themselves safe and healthy. Yet, the federal government waited over seven months, after many months of struggle by the NDP caucus, to finally put into place a basic emergency support of a one-time payment, which does not go to everybody with a disability. This is why we need to see put into place a guaranteed livable basic income to ensure that poor Canadians no longer have to struggle all the time just to make sure they can make ends meet.

If nothing else through this pandemic, we have seen the importance of having a robust health care system in place. I mentioned earlier Tommy Douglas, and his fight in the post-war period with the peace dividend to put in place universal medicare. Tommy Douglas always envisioned that health care would not just be hospital stays and doctor visits, but would also include the medication that doctors prescribed, a universal pharmacare system, and dental care.

Finally, during this pandemic we are seeing that Canadians are often struggling for affordable housing. That right to housing that we certainly saw after the Second World War with the peace dividend is something that now must be extended to all Canadians. Particularly, indigenous communities have seen the crisis that exists with the shortage of affordable housing. Indigenous housing providers need to be provided that support so that they can start building the housing that will make a difference in indigenous communities. As we build housing right across this country, we ensure that the right to housing is entrenched in this country.

The message of the pandemic is that we are all in this together, that we must work together. The plan to leave no one behind allows us to ensure that there is an effective approach, both through the pandemic and in the aftermath. We can rebuild better and ensure that the gaping holes we have seen in our safety net as we go through this pandemic are addressed, and that the net is repaired and fully restored.

• (1055)

[Translation]

The Second World War showed us how important it was to set up a system that left nobody behind. During Remembrance Day week, we must remember lessons learned from previous crises Canadians lived through. We should take this opportunity to institute a national guaranteed income, implement the right to housing, and expand our health care system.

All these things can be done if we tax wealth and excess profits.

[English]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the motion in a number of respects. I think we have to tackle wealth inequality. Of course I would like to see a social safety net, akin to a basic income that leaves nobody behind. The math does not work directly, so the money generated from an excess profits tax and wealth tax together would not even address the first issue of a minimum income, let alone the other noble objectives.

I want to narrow in specifically on the excess profits tax. I see specificity when it comes to the wealth tax; I do not see the same specificity when it comes to the excess profits tax. I wonder what the specific thresholds are and how much the member thinks it might generate.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I would disagree with the member. The math does add up. The Parliamentary Budget Officer tells us that we would save \$4 billion as Canadians by putting in place universal pharmacare. The issue of homelessness that has been growing under the current government, as it did under the previous government, can be addressed by making those investments. We have to remember that when people live on the streets it costs \$50,000 on annual basis in emergency and other supports that need to be brought to bear. It is far more expensive to us as a society to leave people homeless rather than providing that right to housing.

As the Parliamentary Budget Officer has pointed out, the price of the patchwork of income supports and the army of public servants designed to keep people from getting that universal basic livable income is far more than the costs of putting in place a universal program. This is the reality. When the member for Burnaby South talked about an emergency benefit that went to all, as the PBO pointed out, it would be more cost-effective and help more people than what the Prime Minister put in place in the end.

• (1100)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the points about the need for solidarity and sacrifice during this time at a level of principle. One of the things people have been asking for is to see politicians and leaders in the public sector be willing to express solidarity and make sacrifices as well. I put that in parenthetically.

The question I want to ask the member is about technological change in the midst of this pandemic. I think we are seeing a lot of it. We see businesses trying to adapt and do business in different ways. Those who are behind technological changes will no doubt profit from driving some of those changes. If people owned stock in Zoom, for example, a year ago, they are probably benefiting as a result of the increasing use of Zoom.

Of course we want to emphasize community solidarity, but we also want to have the maximum incentives to encourage the development and deployment of new technology. Is the member concerned that a punitive profits tax could really undermine the kind of innovation that we especially need now, in the midst of the rapidly evolving situation this pandemic puts us in?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, let us take each of these elements individually. Some of the most innovative countries in the world have a wealth tax. If we look at Norway and Switzerland, no one would object to painting both countries as some of the most innovative on the planet, yet they have in place a wealth tax.

As far as excess profits is concerned, this is a lesson we learned from the Second World War. There were strict laws against profiteering and excess profits. Instead, what we have seen as a government is policies that welcome this, and \$37 billion in wealth growth among Canada's billionaires while people with disabilities have been struggling even to have the wherewithal to put food on the table.

I think Canadians are saying it is time now that we put into place a real recognition that when we rebuild society coming out of the pandemic, it needs to be built better and on a basis where no one is left behind.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to follow the powerful words of the member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

We always have choices and those choices say a lot about what our priorities are. Right now, we are faced with a pandemic. It has been incredibly difficult. It has caused a lot of pain. People have lost their jobs. We know small businesses, mom-and-pop shops, and stores on main streets across Canada, are worried that they might have to shut their doors forever.

People have felt pain in this time. Parents have struggled with finding child care for their kids. Parents have worried about their kids going to school and whether they are safe or not. Seniors have had to bear the brunt of COVID-19 with massive outbreaks in long-term care homes that could have been avoided.

While all those people have felt pain, in this pandemic the wealthiest have increased their wealth. They have not felt the pain. In fact, they have made profits. Since March 2020, Canadian billionaires, the richest Canadians, are \$37 billion richer.

We are talking about choices today. The Liberal government and the Conservatives are going to put a choice to Canadians. They are going to raise concerns about debt and deficit. While these are very legitimate concerns, the next step is problematic. They are going to use concern about debt and deficit and then ask everyday people, who have already sacrificed so much, to sacrifice even more.

On October 28, the Minister of Finance tweeted, "Our fiscally expansive approach to fighting the coronavirus cannot and will not be infinite. It is limited and temporary." Let me translate what the Minister of Finance is saying: Cuts are coming. She also cited Paul Martin, who orchestrated some of the most devastating cuts to health care and social programs in Canada's history. She lauded Paul Martin.

I want to put to all members and Canadians that whenever there are difficult times, people are struggling and our economy is struggling, it seems that Liberals and Conservatives have one response. It is always the same response: Let us cut the help that people get, cut health care and cut the supports to people. However, they never say, let us ask those who are the wealthiest to contribute more.

Why is it so natural and easy that when people are hurting and times are tough, the first thing that jumps to the minds of Liberals and Conservatives is, let us cut the help that people who are struggling need? Let us make it harder for them, cut health care and cut

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the things people need. Why is it that Liberals and Conservatives jump to that? Why is it so hard to imagine another way?

Absolutely, someone is going to have to pay. Times are tough and we are spending a lot to support people in a pandemic and someone is going to have to pay. There is no question about it. If someone is going to pay, should it not be the people who can afford to pay, the wealthiest and those who have made massive profits?

I am not just talking about normal profits. There are companies that make billions of dollars in profits every year. There are corporations that do that on a regular basis. Then we have companies like Amazon, Walmart, Netflix and Facebook that have made record profits during this pandemic off the pandemic and off the backs of the same people who have sacrificed and are struggling.

If we are going to make a choice, should it not be to choose to help people who need help and ask those who have the ability to contribute more, to contribute more? That is what we are asking to do.

There are always choices we have to make and those choices are difficult, but this choice is not difficult. This is a very straightforward, easy choice. How are the Liberals and Conservatives going to look into the eyes of people who are struggling and cut the help they need now? How can they justify that?

• (1105)

How much better would it be if we said, just as we did during the First and Second World Wars, that when companies are making massive and record profits because they are in the right place at the right time, they are in a good position to contribute more? That is really the choice we are setting up.

[Translation]

We are proposing a choice. To me, it is an easy choice to make, but the Liberals and Conservatives still have a hard time understanding it. During hard times, such as what we are going through right now with COVID-19, many people make huge sacrifices. We have observed the negative impact that has had on workers who have lost their jobs and on small businesses that have had to close their doors.

These are indeed tough times, but should we be telling people who have already made sacrifices that they need to make more?

Instead, we could tell people who have made enormous profits, excessive, record profits, that they need to pay their fair share. The New Democrats and I believe that we need to make sure the wealthy pay their fair share. The rich are the ones who should foot the bill for the economic recovery. That should not fall to ordinary people. That is the choice we are proposing today.

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[English]

We are saying to let us invest in what people need. People need health care. They need to know, if they or their loved ones are sick, they can get the help they need. They need to know they can get the medication they need. They need to know they can get the dental care they need, so they can take care of their teeth.

We need to make sure that when people are struggling and cannot work, there is income support for them, and there is a livable guaranteed income, like what we fought for with the CERB. Again, to point out the differences here, it seems as though every couple months throughout this pandemic the Liberal government was threatening to cut help to people. We had to fight back and say, "No. Why are you cutting help to people?"

It seems a bit bizarre that the government would propose this, but every single time the choice came up to side with the people or to side with the wealthy, it continued to say to cut help to people, cut CERB and cut income supports, while letting the wealthiest get away with using massive tax loopholes, making record profits and paying no money into Canada.

There are so many companies that make profits off of Canadians here in Canada and then take those profits and put them in a bank in another jurisdiction in another country, and they pay no tax in Canada. They make money off of Canadians, but pay no taxes here. Liberals and Conservatives have allowed this to happen. They have been in government in this country, and they have allowed this to happen.

The CRA has even taken companies to court. Judges found that profits were entirely made in Canada off of Canadians, and those profits were taken to another bank in another country. However, that is legal. They are allowed to do that, and the CRA was not able to recover the taxes that were owed to this country.

There is a cost to doing that. That is a choice that the government is making, and that is a choice that Conservatives have made, to allow the wealthiest to continue to exploit our system. That hurts Canadians. Everyday people pay their fair share. We are asking the wealthiest to pay their fair share as well and fund the programs we need.

• (1110)

[Translation]

We are suggesting that the wealthiest pay their fair share so that we can fund the social programs people need. We could also better fund health care. We could support people who cannot work. We could create a fairer society, and that is exactly what we are proposing to do.

[English]

I want to point out the choice here, and there are going to be difficult choices to be made. In my last moments I want to say to Canadians that they are going to hear the Liberal government talking about having to cut the help that they need, and they are going to hear the Conservatives try to talk about being their allies. None of that is true, unless they are willing to make sure that the richest in this country, who are enjoying massive loopholes, pay their fair share to afford the programs we need.

We are going to do that. We have always had Canadians' back during this pandemic. We will continue to fight for them, and they can trust us to make sure that we build a Canada where no one is left behind, the richest pay their share and Canadians can live their brightest lives.

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, since day one back in 2015, as a government we have been focused on looking at discrepancies and taking actions against income inequalities. I will get into that when it comes time for me to provide comments.

From day one of the pandemic, the government has moved forward with a whole suite of different types of programs to ensure that, no matter what region we are talking about, the Government of Canada was there, working with others, to be there for Canadians. The Prime Minister and the government have also been very clear that through this process we do believe that we can build back better.

One of the issues is the national pharmacare program, which is what my question is in regard to. The leader of the New Democratic Party was a provincial legislator. He understands the important role of health care under the provinces. Does he not agree that to get the best pharmacare program for Canadians, we need to get support from and work with the provinces in order to make that happen?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, of course we have to work with the provinces, but let us talk about building back better. If nothing is done right now, what we will continue to see is a K-shaped recovery, meaning that for a lot of people things are getting worse. It is hard for them to find work. They have lost their jobs. Small businesses are shutting down. For a lot of people, times are getting worse and worse.

For a select group of people, things have gotten better. They are making more money. They are becoming wealthier and wealthier, so the gap is broadening. The only way to address that broadening gap is with a concrete measure to tax excess wealth and excess profits, and to ask those who have the means to pay their fair share.

That is what we are asking for, and that is what the Liberals and the Conservatives have been afraid to either propose or support.

• (1115)

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I live close to the member for Burnaby South's riding. A big problem that his constituents face in Burnaby relates to the role of foreign buyers in the real estate sector. In the member's speech today he talked a lot about taxing Canadians, but what about taxing foreign purchasers of real estate who have exploited Canadian laws? This has led to a situation where the labour market is detached from the housing market and Canadian workers cannot purchase a home.

Would the member for Burnaby South support taxing foreign buyers of real estate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, that is something we proposed in our last campaign. We absolutely believe that a tax, such as that put in place by the B.C. NDP on foreign ownership of real estate property, is an important measure to control the cost of housing.

To be very clear, I am not asking for everyday Canadians to pay more. In fact, I am saying that they should not have to pay more. People worry about the deficit because they think governments are going to tell them that they will have to pay more. I am saying that the wealthiest, those at the very top, those who have made record profits, those who have fortunes of over \$20 million, should pay their fair share.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, we have heard from the government time and time again the ways in which it wishes to support the middle class or those working hard to join it. That is a line we have heard over and over again. Instead, Canada has some of the highest unemployment rates in the G7. We know that there is lots of concern. People are still continuing to struggle.

How might this bill actually help people join the middle class and end up better financially? I would like to hear the member's comments on that.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, we need to give people the supports they need with some of the biggest costs in their lives. Some people do not go to see a dentist because it costs too much. People cannot get the health care they need, and that has an extra cost.

We know that if we do not invest in the programs that people need, people will not be able to live their best lives. People are stuck in jobs where they cannot improve or go further because they are stuck to those benefits.

We are saying that people should not be tied to their job for their benefits. They should be able to have all the health care they need as a part of our universal health care system. That would allow people to pursue what they want and have the supports they need to then live a better life. That is the basis of our proposal to make the wealthiest pay their fair share, so we can invest in people in a meaningful way.

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, it is always a pleasure to rise and speak in the House. To-

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day is a very special day. I appreciated the opening remarks by the Prime Minister, the leader of the official opposition, the leader of the NDP and the leader of the Green Party recognizing the importance of our veterans.

Having had the opportunity to serve in our Canadian Armed Forces, there are a couple of things I am reflecting on. One is the honour and privilege of having the opportunity to march alongside World War II veterans in parades and having the further opportunity to have some discussions with them. What a privilege that was.

A number of years later I was a member of the Manitoba legislature, and one of the most touching moments I can recall was when we had war veterans sitting right behind the members of the legislature. I was in the back row of members, and I could literally turn my chair and have a face-to-face discussion with a war vet. I reflect on that because of the significant contributions our men and women make to our forces, both in the past and today. To echo many of the comments made previously by the leaders, on behalf of Winnipeg North, I wish to recognize and wish the very best to those who are serving today.

Having said all that, I want to get right into the discussion we are having today with respect to the NDP motion. There are a few things that come to mind, and I would like to share with members a number of those thoughts.

I posed this in the preamble to my question for the leader of the New Democratic Party. When we look at what has taken place over the last eight months, virtually from day one the Government of Canada under the Prime Minister has taken a very proactive approach to ensuring we could be there to support Canadians in all areas of our wonderful nation.

We have seen a team Canada approach, which was joined by other levels of government, whether provincial or municipal, of different political stripes. We have seen individuals, businesses, the non-profit sector and everyone in society come together and recognize how important it was that we unify and work collaboratively in order to deal with the pandemic.

We have had very successful moments. What we learned in the first three to four months of the pandemic has assisted us to be able to minimize the negatives of the second wave. It is through those experiences that we were able to prevent lives from being lost, not to mention the thousands of lives that have been saved because we worked collaboratively across this nation to make a difference in fighting the pandemic.

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When we look at the national government here in Ottawa, what we have been able to achieve is very significant. I will get into that, but I want to pick up on something that was made reference to already in some of the discussions. I know there are 156 Liberal MPs who genuinely believe that not only was it important that we be there in real and tangible ways for Canadians through this pandemic, but also that we can build back better. If we want to get a sense of that, take a look at the document that was brought forward in the form of a throne speech not that long ago in September.

● (1120)

It gives a very clear vision to Canadians of how we as a government will build back better. That is a message that we need to continue to say, going forward. Yes, there are still going to be some difficult times. People in my province of Manitoba are having a very difficult time in this second wave, but we will overcome it.

As an elected official, I believe in and will work on building back better. That is the reason I posed my question to the leader of the New Democratic Party. Within this motion, the New Democrats talk about the pharmacare program. I have worked with my daughter, Cindy, for the last few years, and even prior to that, on the importance of pharmacare and medications. I worked on it even before the standing committee in the House four or five years ago went to study the issue, and before there was a commission to look at how we could implement it. The government has invested considerable resources to look at ways to incorporate a pharmacare program. That is why I was encouraged when the leader of the New Democratic Party said that we need to work with provincial governments.

In the throne speech is an ongoing commitment that states that we need to work with provincial governments in order to achieve better on the pharmacare file. I believe that a good majority of Canadians would like to see us move forward on that file. It is an excellent example of building back better. In the last number of years, this government, and particularly ministers of health, have worked with other jurisdictions and stakeholders to drastically reduce the costs of medications, literally saving hundreds of millions of dollars for consumers over the years. However, we can still do better.

When we talk about the pandemic, I often make reference to why the government needs to engage. I have said on many occasions that close to nine million people have been assisted through the CERB program. That program came from absolutely nowhere. It did not exist prior to the pandemic, yet it has assisted millions of Canadians in a very real, tangible way by allowing them to have the disposable income that is essential for a basic standard of living, to buy groceries and do other necessary things.

We helped Canadians through the wage subsidy program. An estimated three and a half million-plus jobs were saved by the wage subsidy program. These jobs would have been at risk had the government not engaged and provided that program.

It goes well beyond that. We identified certain sectors or areas in our communities and our society that needed to get extra financial resources.

● (1125)

That is why I was happy to see the support given to our seniors in the form of one-time payments. Through support for the GIS and OAS, well over six million seniors received a direct benefit, and the poorest seniors received even more.

Recently there was a disability payout. I am very grateful for it, especially with the second wave hitting, which, in my province, has been more severe than the first wave by far. There are those who have criticized why it took as long as it did, but we need to look at what had to take place to get it distributed. It is not like the federal government had a data bank that told us who we could send money to. It is not like the GIS or the OAS. We had to work with the civil service and different stakeholders to come up with a mechanism to deliver finances to people with disabilities who needed support.

When we read the resolution, the government has taken significant action, and not just during the pandemic. In 2015 with the change in government, some immediate policy decisions were made by the Prime Minister and the government to deal with income inequality. One was the tax break to Canada's middle class, putting hundreds of millions of dollars into the pockets of Canadians in all regions of our country.

The resolution talks about a tax on the wealthiest. It is interesting to see that now. When the NDP had a chance to support the Liberal government's initiative of putting an extra tax on Canada's wealthiest 1%, the NDP voted against it. It had the opportunity to support the tax break for the middle class and the tax increase on Canada's wealthiest 1% and chose to vote against it.

We often hear the phrase referenced earlier, that as a government, since 2015 we have had a strong focus on building Canada's middle class, making the middle class a priority and assisting individuals in whatever way we can to get them into the middle class. That is the reason we developed the Canada child benefit program. There were major changes, with an influx, a term I have used several times already in my speech, of hundreds of millions of dollars into that program. We also prevented cheques being mailed out to millionaires under that program. These are the types of initiatives that have had a very positive impact on Canadians as a whole.

The resolution says we should be doing more on housing and health care and we should be putting a higher tax on the wealthiest.

• (1130)

I have always wondered why the NDP seems to have a different approach when it is in a different position. Let me give an example. For many of the years when I was serving in the Manitoba Legislature, the NDP was in government. I think most colleagues in the House would be surprised to know that between 2003 and 2009, I believe, the provincial NDP government reduced corporate taxes seven times. I remember standing up in the Manitoba Legislature and challenging that issue.

Here is something a little more relevant to the House of Commons. How many of us remember Thomas Mulcair? It was not that long ago. When he was leader of the New Democratic Party the NDP was the official opposition, and at the time the NDP was pretty confident it was going to be the government, replacing Stephen Harper. One of the NDP's most significant policy announcements, and some of my colleagues could probably guess what I am about to say, was on a balanced budget.

My colleague from Spadina—Fort York is one of the most ably minded individuals in this country when it comes to housing, and is a very powerful and strong advocate.

The NDP, in this resolution, is saying that we need to do more. We came up with a multi-billion dollar housing strategy in 2015 that would profoundly, positively affect literally hundreds of thousands of Canadians in all the different regions of the country, and the NDP was critical that we were not doing enough.

I have learned a lot from my colleague. Thomas Mulcair made a commitment for a fraction of what we committed to do in that national housing strategy. As I have said in the past, really, truly, politically, there is no pleasing the New Democrats. For example, as a national government, if we said we were going to build 1,000 homes in Manitoba, the NDP would say, "No, build 10,000 homes." If we said we were going to build 10,000 homes, the NDP would say, "No, give everyone a home."

I look at the resolution that my New Democratic friends have brought forward today and I hear them talking about income redistribution, but where were they when it came time to actually vote on the issue? They were on the opposite side of what they are challenging us on today.

I would like to think that going forward we could do better. We have a lot to lose if we, as a government, do not recognize how important it is for us to not only work with Canada's civil servants and other stakeholders to develop programs, but to always monitor and look at them for ways we could improve them.

We have made modifications to programs. I made reference to the wage subsidy program. It has been hugely successful, saving many jobs in all regions of our country. That program is now being extended into 2021.

My time has expired, but hopefully I will get a question and be able to expand a little more.

• (1135)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague's comments were quite shocking. One would think the hon. colleague would be fighting for these programs con-

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sidering he represents a riding with one of the highest child apprehension rates in the country. He spoke about a tax cut to the middle class that would benefit people earning over \$100,000 a year and nothing for people earning less than \$47,000, which is certainly reflective of the gross level of poverty in his riding.

Is my hon. colleague willing to uphold his obligations as a member of Parliament to uphold the charter and the Constitution and ensure everybody has what they need to live in dignity and with human rights, as is offered through our motion, or is he going to continue fighting that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is so wrong. I made reference to the Canada child benefit, which has taken hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. In my own riding of Winnipeg North, close to \$10 million comes in every month, and it is helping and assisting. The increases to the GIS have taken hundreds of thousands of seniors out of poverty, some of the poorest seniors in the country.

The NDP can talk the lines. As a government, we have acted. We have a plan that is being implemented and it is making a positive difference. That is the reality on the ground.

• (1140)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the member relating to the tax side of the motion to increase not only a wealth tax but also a tax on wealthy corporations. Under our current progressive tax method, the more one makes the more one pays; the higher one's tax rate goes. At some point, the reverse happens. If people are taxed too much, then government revenues decrease. That is probably what the NDP in the Manitoba legislature were thinking. I would like the member's comments on that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is important to look in defence of the NDP's when it decreased corporate taxes. There was concern and it felt the best way to ensure businesses continued to invest and create jobs was to decrease corporate taxes. The only reason I brought it up as an example earlier was to point out that sometimes when the NDP is in different positions of responsibility, its attitude toward policy seems to be somewhat different.

It is easy and wonderful to say to people that we are going to tax the wealthiest and we are going to do this, do that and take all that money and give it to the poor. At the end of the day, we need to spend time focusing on Canada's middle class and, yes, those striving to become a part of it. We have to look at ways we can best have taxation policy that would be to their benefit.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am not sure the member has actually read the motion yet. He is very busy speaking in the House and may not have had the time to do that yet.

The government has had five years to deal with tax evasion and tax havens and has done almost nothing during that time. Will the member finally support our plan for real, concrete steps to ensure the rich pay their fair share, not middle-class Canadians but the ultra-rich, rich Canadians?

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, over those years we implemented financial resources to the tune of close to \$1 billion so the CRA would be in a much better position to go after people trying to avoid paying taxes, which the NDP voted against.

Yes, I did read the entire resolution. One of the nice things about it is that it looks at the dental aspect of health care. I was really pleased to hear that the Standing Committee on Health would be conducting a study on that very issue.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the components of the motion is a contemplation of the tax on the equity or the assets of the super wealthy. If that were to come about, what impact would that have on capital flows coming into Canada and, more important, potentially leaving Canada? In his opinion, would that require legislation to stem that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, not being a financial actuary, it is difficult for me to say exactly what the impact would be.

I have full confidence in our Minister of Finance and feel very comfortable knowing that the taxation policies that the government does present have been well thought out. If history has anything to do with what we will be doing tomorrow, I am sure one can take a look at how government has been there to support Canadians in a very real and tangible way—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Don Valley North.

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was listening to the questions and answers. My NDP colleagues have talked a lot about their big plans to change the world and solutions for everything, but without any details or substance. If they are the party for fighting, we are the party for delivering results and solutions.

Could the member for Winnipeg North give some details about some of our achievements in the last five years?

• (1145)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the problem is that you will not allow me the opportunity to speak very long in answering the question, so I will highlight a few things that have made a profoundly positive difference.

In particular, as I have referenced, is the Canada child benefit, which has lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. I can talk about the increases to the OAS and the GIS. Something that I did not reference, but is really important, is the investment in Canada's infrastructure. Record amounts of money have been invested in Canada's infrastructure, and that goes a long way. I could also talk about the investment in student programs, particularly during the pandemic.

A number of policy announcements have been made by the government over the years that have really contributed to the number of jobs that have been created. During the pandemic, a number of people have been able to return to work, or about 75% to pre-pandemic levels. By the government working with the stakeholders we have been able to get it right.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, the salaries of those who earn over \$450,000 has increase ten-fold over the average Canadian. Does my colleague not agree that the tax rate on the super wealthy is clearly not adequate? These earners are increasing their wealth at a skyrocketing rate. Surely those who have over \$20 million or \$30 million worth of wealth can afford to pay \$100,000 in taxes to help support those in need, to build affordable housing, to support treatment centres, to build a healthier Canada as we move forward and build back better.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, when the NDP had the opportunity to vote in favour of having a tax increase for Canada's 1% wealthiest, and the proof is in the pudding, they voted no.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kootenay—Columbia.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge a big change in your life. Since the last time I spoke to you, you have taken on \$10,000 in personal debt. That is your share of the national debt incurred by the government since March. Every Canadian is another \$10,000 in debt, including you, Madam Speaker.

Our deficit this year will be \$380 billion. Since there are around 38 million Canadians, that means every Canadian is another \$10,000 in debt, or \$40,000 for a family of four. Sure, the government sent a bunch of cheques to a lot of families and businesses, but I have yet to meet a family that got \$40,000 in benefits from the government.

We certainly support the benefits for people who lost their jobs and the wage subsidies and loans for small businesses. The total spent on these programs that directly support families and businesses is around \$180 billion. The deficit is \$380 billion, though. We are missing \$200 billion. How is it possible to lose \$200 billion? Perhaps we will find out later on in the debate.

Each family of four has this new debt of \$40,000. If these families are listening to my speech, they can look at the benefits they have received from the government to see whether or not they add up to \$40,000. In fact, most of the spending is being lost in bureaucracy and in payments to interest groups with government ties, seeing as wealthy people can afford to hire lobbyists to cash in on this massive spending.

Where does that leave us as a country? We now have a country that is much deeper in debt, where ordinary people have not been able to take advantage of most of the available programs.

Let us look at the numbers. Right now, our national debt is equal to 50% of the value of our economy. In March, it was 30%. In 1996, we had a debt crisis when Canada was almost unable to borrow money on the markets. This forced the federal government to cut tens of millions of dollars from health care and other programs.

In 1996, during this crisis, our debt represented 66.6% of our GDP. In March 2020, that percentage was 30%. Six months later, we have lost half of our breathing room, because our debt now represents 50% of our GDP. This means that in six months, we wiped out more than half of our margin of safety compared to our situation during the historic crisis we went through. This is one of the subjects that the member for Kootenay—Columbia will address in his speech.

• (1150)

True, the current crisis does not quite rise to the level of the one in the 1970s, but we are heading straight for that. This is just government debt. Canada has other debts in the private sector. To that must be added the debt of families, which is now greater than our total GDP, not to mention corporate debt. If we combine these three sources, our debt amounts to 384% of the GDP. This is by far a record for Canada.

Among G7 countries, this is by far the highest percentage, apart from Japan. With a debt equivalent to almost 400% of our economy, that means that an increase in effective interest rates on our economy of 1% would equal 4% of our cost savings.

Consider this. We are talking about \$80 billion. Each year, for every 1% increase in the interest rate, the additional cost would be \$2,000 per year for every person living in Canada—man, woman or child—or \$4,000 for a family of four people.

I know a lot of families in this middle class we keep hearing about, and I do not know many in that group who would be able to pay \$8,000 more in interest on their family or government debt, if interest rates went up by 1%. That is the vulnerability that threatens our families and our economy.

The government claims that personal and government borrowing can continue because interest rates are low. Will all these debts be paid off before interest rates rise? I suspect not.

Now we are presented with a plan for recovery. According to the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bank of Canada, it is the credit card strategy. The idea is for individuals and taxpayers to go into debt to finance the recovery. It is not realistic to rebuild an economy on debt, especially when the debt level is already the highest in our history. The only way to restart our economy is through wealth production, and the only sector capable of producing that wealth is our workers.

We need a plan to help our workers generate income to pay for their personal and family needs, but also to provide revenue to the government, to protect our social programs. That means that the governments have to approve private sector projects to build pipelines, natural gas centres, mines and other projects that would generate billions of dollars in personal and public revenue. We also need to get rid of penalties on benefits and income tax to allow people to get ahead by working. It is by working and being productive

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that we can pay our bills and contribute to our country, not by accumulating debt. We have to start right away. We have work to do.

• (1155)

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague with a lot of interest. He mentioned he has never met a constituent in Carleton who has received \$40,000 in benefits. My cousin lives in California and does not have access to the kind of universal health care that Tommy Douglas brought into Canada. A week in hospital cost him \$100,000. It almost ruined him financially.

Is the member for Carleton saying he has never met anybody in Carleton who has spent one week in the hospital and, in other words, has saved the \$100,000 it would have cost without the universal health care system we have in Canada?

My second question is also very specific, and I would like a clear answer to it. In the First World War and Second World War, the Conservatives took a very clear stand against profiteering and excess profits. I did not hear the member respond to the issue of putting in place measures that countermeasures the excess profits and profiteering we have seen during this pandemic.

Is he suggesting the Conservatives have changed their orientation from the way they were in the First World War and Second World War, when they took clear stands against profiteering and excess profits?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

Let me first respond to his question about health care.

Despite the increased government spending this year—dozens and dozens of billions of dollars, a 70% increase in spending—not a single penny more has been spent on health care. All that money has been spent on other things. The member is therefore wrong to suggest that the additional spending has contributed to advancing our health care system. The fact is, the percentage of the federal budget earmarked for health care has been declining since this government came to power.

Second, the other thing my colleague should know is that we are currently accumulating so much debt that we will wind up paying more for the interest on our debt than we spend on health transfers. If he is truly in favour of public health, he should be in favour of careful and transparent spending.

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As for his other question, we are indeed against excessive profits associated with government procurement. That is why government procurement should be subject to a competitive process. That would allow all marketplace participants to reduce their prices to get contracts, rather than contracts automatically being awarded to friends of the Liberals.

• (1200)

[English]

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 must say, the member is very good at manipulating stats and numbers. The reality is that since 2015, not only has this government been successful at negotiating something Stephen Harper could not do, which is health care agreements in all the provinces and territories, but we have seen an annual increase, dollar for dollar, in health care ever since, as per the agreements. Plus, there has been a tremendous top-up during the pandemic to deal with expanding needs, whether for personal protective items, for issues related to mental health or for home care.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, during the Harper years, health care expenditures increased by 6% a year. Now they are increasing by about 3% or 4%. Increased spending under the Liberal government is not related to health care but other things.

In the future, in three, four or five years, when interest rates get back to normal, the biggest spending increases will go toward paying the interest on the debt that the government is racking up. The biggest threat to our health is this government's out-of-control spending and debt.

We know what the Liberals do when they are short of money. They did it in the 1990s. They made budget cuts in health care because they were in an unsustainable financial situation. That is why the Conservatives want to protect the financial books. We want to get the finances in order to protect our health. Our party is the only one that is capable of doing that.

[English]

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise virtually, as we say.

I would like to start off by thanking my colleague from Carleton, on behalf of the constituents of Kootenay—Columbia, for his continued work to ensure there is accountability with the government. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this issue of the proposed wealth tax and believe it will ultimately yield a negative impact on hard-working, middle-class Canadians.

Our Prime Minister thinks of successful middle-class business owners as tax cheats. The Conservatives understand there is no Canadian economy without business and a hard-working middle class. It is really as simple as that. In fact, 45.1% of the GDP is what these hard-working, middle-class businesses provide to the Canadian economy every year.

Under the official opposition leader, we will continue to stand up for these entrepreneurs, and the workers they employ across

Canada, to ensure they get the support they need to weather this health crisis.

As a condition of their ongoing support for the Liberals, the New Democrats have now demanded a super wealth tax of 1% annually on the net worth of Canadians worth more than \$20 million. Why am I talking about the middle class? Let us review recent history.

In the 1990s, for instance, 12 of the 14 members of the European Union had wealth taxes. Now all but three have abandoned the idea. Why have they abandoned the idea of a wealth tax? They abandoned the idea because wealth taxes almost always fail, and when they do, governments turn to the middle class to solve their fiscal problems. Besides being ineffective, wealth taxes have proven to dampen savings and investments, which slows economic recovery and long-term growth. This impacts the middle class directly. This is the wrong move at a time when Canada is struggling as a result of the health crisis.

There are several reasons wealth taxes prove ineffective in raising tax revenues. The wealth tax is challenging to define and measure, which makes it difficult and expensive to administer. In fact, other countries have proven that at least half the money collected is used to administer the program. That is 50%, or up to \$3 billion annually, according to the Parliamentary Budget Office, that will be used not to help Canadians who need it, but to allow the Prime Minister to pay for bigger government. Wealth taxes almost never raise the amount of money they are estimated to earn, and we know they are expensive to run, so I ask this question: What has more value to Canadian charities, the dollar provided by the philanthropist or 50¢ provided by the Prime Minister?

A wealth tax would be punitive to Canadian success stories and would only serve to restrict the flow of donated money to the very charities that are in need of the support. The fact is that people in need, who these charities serve, are already not getting the same level of service because of the health crisis. This tax would make the problem worse.

Charities across the country are suffering, and that is surely the case in my riding. Donations are down and many charities do not know where they will find the funds to continue. These organizations and businesses are passionate about the charity organizations they support, especially in their communities.

What this government is proposing is that somehow it knows better than philanthropists when it comes to how to redistribute wealth. I respectfully submit that the government does not. There are not too many examples where the government does a better job of running a business than the business itself.

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On the surface, a wealth tax appears ideal and almost has a “Robin Hood” ring to it. Unfortunately, the examples that history has for us show otherwise and produce unintended consequences. Rather than putting money into creating jobs here in Canada, and thereby risking an increase in Canadian taxes, it is common for those impacted by a wealth tax to move their assets outside the country. The idea that a single wealth tax will provide the government with a silver-bullet solution to expand and pay for its spending is not rational.

A wealth tax is similar to a property tax, but instead of taxing real estate, it covers wealth in all forms: stocks, jewellery, artwork, cars, houses, boats, retirement savings, antique collectible guns, horses and hockey cards. The list goes on. It includes any asset of monetary value that could be appraised, which in itself raises questions.

The reality is a wealth tax will drive investment out of the country. How can we possibly expect to bring investment into Canada when the government is working through a wealth tax to chase away investors we already have?

• (1205)

Let us look at the numbers. The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates the NDP wealth tax could raise \$5.6 billion a year. The Liberals have pledged to add another \$150 billion in deficit spending to the \$350 billion already assigned. Even if the wealth tax did generate \$5.6 billion in revenues every year, which other examples show it would not, it still leaves \$490 billion that has to be raised elsewhere. Where will that come from? I am sure Canadians across the country would like to know how the government intends to cover the difference of \$490 billion. The reality is that the differential, in one way or another, will be placed squarely in the hard-working hands of the middle class.

Middle-class Canadians cannot afford the current government. They cannot afford a financial decision-making Prime Minister who has never had to wonder how to pay a \$300 utility bill with only \$20 remaining in their account. Canadians are already struggling to get by. We need to start delivering meaningful solutions that will move our country forward, and the Conservatives are here to assist in that effort.

The current government and its approach to taxation transparency with Canadians reminds me of that story of the taxpayer who fell into the pot of hot Liberal taxation water. The government turned up the taxes slowly, starting with the wealthiest so as not to alarm the masses. In the end, what they were left with were soaring deficits, failed taxation policies and no option but to turn up the taxation temperature on the middle class.

There are times when we need to face a situation head-on and take the appropriate action when we have the ability to do so before it is too late. A fundamental difference of opinion exists in this House. The Liberals and the NDP want to tax our way out of the economic crisis, where the Conservatives want to harness Canada's most powerful economic tool: the Canadian worker. Winston Churchill, a British statesman, said, “Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it”. Well, here we are again. We know wealth taxes have failed across the pond, and yet despite all the evidence that history would have us learn from, the current govern-

ment, with the support of the NDP, is working to allow history to repeat itself.

My Conservative colleagues and I have been providing solutions to the government since the onset of this crisis. This week, with the passage of our motion in the House of Commons, Conservatives have secured more help for Canadians harmed by a health crisis. As a result of our efforts, the Liberals will have to pause their punishing audits on small and medium-sized businesses until June 2021 and provide additional flexibility in the Canada emergency rent subsidy, the Canada emergency wage subsidy and other programs that support Canadian families and workers.

This builds on a Conservative track record of standing up for the working class and making the government's emergency programs better for all Canadians. This includes increasing the wage subsidy from 10% to 75%, advocating for changes to the Liberals' failed rent subsidy program and, now, postponing Liberal audits on small and medium-sized businesses.

It is shameful the Liberals failed to support our motion and instead voted for punitive audits on hard-working Canadians. While the Liberals think small business owners are tax cheats, Conservatives know they are the backbone of our economy. Conservatives understand that there is no Canadian economy without our middle class, many of whom are business owners and employers. It is as simple as that. Punishing success does not encourage investment.

We are at a fork in the road. We could choose to tax more and punish successful businesses or we could encourage economic investment, which would result in a safe economic recovery. Conservative leadership will stand up for the workers and the middle class across Canada and ensure they get the support they need to weather this health crisis. Let me be very clear: Conservatives will continue to stand in this House for the working family who needs help. We have been here for them since the onset of this health and economic crisis. We will continue to work on their behalf to refine and improve the current government's programs.

• (1210)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know the Conservatives have, forever, stood up for protecting CEO stock option loopholes and for helping create more tax havens to help the wealthy not pay their fair share of taxes in this country. We have seen the median income grow to \$2.7 million for the 0.01%, according to Statistics Canada. That is a 27% increase, versus that for the average Canadian, whose income grew at 2.5%. When the member talks about the middle class, who does he actually believe this tax system is working for?

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We know that the Conservatives, when they were in power for 10 years, reduced taxes for Canada's largest corporations by 6%, and taxes for the super wealthy. Small business owners got a tax break of only 1%. If the tax system is working and these tax cuts are working, why are they not working for the middle class? Does the member not think that somebody in the 0.01%, earning tenfold the wage increase over the average Canadian, cannot afford to pay more, especially at a time like this?

Mr. Rob Morrison: Madam Speaker, right now we are at a fork in the road where we have to look forward at how to stimulate our economy and get it going. I do not believe taxing the 1% a super rich tax is going to stimulate our economy. I think we have to start looking forward to paying back the debt we have right now.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, what are the member's comments on how important it is for a modern economy to have profitable companies, a vibrant stock market and a place for pension funds, like the Canada pension fund, to invest in profitable companies?

Mr. Rob Morrison: Madam Speaker, we have to start encouraging economic growth and to encourage economic growth we need to show profits. Economic growth will supply jobs for our middle class, get people back to work and pay back the debt. It will also secure income for people who are investing in programs, such as pension plans.

• (1215)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am utterly astonished by the fact that the member would say that asking the ultra-wealthy to pay a bit more is going to hurt charities. I have worked in the charitable sector for over 20 years and that is an absurd statement to make.

Throughout the pandemic, Jeff Bezos became the first man to amass over \$200 billion. Jim Pattison's grocery chains cut pandemic pay while his wealth increased by \$1.7 billion. Galen Weston's wealth went up by \$1.6 billion. We are talking about the ultra-wealthy; we are not talking about the middle class. We should be supporting our charities and our middle class so they do not need to depend on the charities that the member so incorrectly said this will hurt.

Mr. Rob Morrison: Madam Speaker, I respectfully totally disagree with my colleague's comments. There are a lot of people I talked to who are now donating to charities, and they would leave Canada. We are at a point where charities are assisting our different programs, such as health care and hospitals, for example, one charity donation of \$27 million was made in Vancouver. I can go on about the different companies that have donated. Right now we need those donations and we also need economic growth. We cannot do it without the economy growing.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madame Speaker, I take some comfort in your presence because I was feeling very lonely in my corner and I want you to know that you are my favourite speaker.

As I was reading my colleagues' motion yesterday, I wondered what the intention behind it was. When you look at it, there is more

form than substance, but what are they trying to prove and what are they trying to accomplish with these measures?

During the pandemic, as the government responded extensively with the Canada emergency response benefit or CERB, and the Canada emergency wage subsidy or CEWS, it seems to me that this contrasts with the narrative that the NDP wants to develop as a progressive party in this assembly. To reinforce this image of a progressive party, the NDP moved a rushed, flashy motion.

I do not know whether my NDP colleagues truly stand behind the motion that they have moved, but judging by their high turnout, I figure that their conviction must not be as strong as it should be. I am simply putting that out there.

The motion contains references such as “the wealthiest one per cent” and social measures. When we talk about that, generally speaking, we are talking about progressivism.

Since I am talking about progressivism, I would like to try to define what it means to be progressive. We often hear these words. For me, one of the most obvious examples of progressivism is certainly feminism, the struggle of women to define by themselves, for themselves, what their future will be. Women have succeeded in doing this. It is not up to men to define female identity. This is a clear example of what progressivism is over the course of history.

Another essential example is the struggle of labour movements. Workers managed to change the course of society so that attention is paid to their particular status. It is somewhat similar. I see a progressive as someone who says that someone's social standing should not be set in advance. There should not be pre-assigned positions that people cannot get out of. That is the case for people from modest backgrounds. If education and health care were not universally accessible, these people could be stuck in advance in a position.

I see a progressive as someone who is aware of this situation. Not having much capital usually makes it harder to thrive.

Earlier, I was listening to my colleague from Carleton, who is a staunch defender of wealth creation. However, that wealth must be distributed. Personally, I do not believe in trickle-down economics—the theory that when wealth is created, it is passed along to others. I do not believe in meritocracy either. Progressives do not buy into the idea that working hard necessarily means we will thrive or succeed in this business world. We know full well that Bill Gates's son probably has it much easier than the son of a single mom. Progressives know that being “the son of” helps a lot. I say this sincerely; I am not talking about the Prime Minister. I am not that mischievous.

Another essential example to help define what it means to be a progressive is the Quiet Revolution. That marked the moment when Quebecers realized that religion had too big a role in our society because it limited our horizons and defined for us what we should be. There was a broad push for secularism, which gave rise to a new society. In short, being a progressive means struggling to decide your own future and striving to empower each and every individual to do the same, according to what makes them unique.

I remember, last week, we were talking about the War Measures Act. There is a wonderful poem by Miron called *La route que nous suivons*, or the road we take, in which he writes, “And through our efforts, our hatred of all forms of servitude, we will have become ferocious beasts of hope.” For me, progressives are ferocious beasts of hope.

• (1220)

I think my friend from Timmins—James Bay did not quite understand, since he abstained from voting on our motion regarding the War Measures Act, but that is okay.

In my view, a progressive is someone who understands that there are groups of people who may have difficulties in society, and that they need to be given opportunities that will help them overcome those difficulties.

I think one group the NDP often overlooks is national minorities. There are several in Canada, including indigenous peoples, but there is one that is constantly written off by the NDP in its proposals, namely the Quebec national minority.

In my view, it is clear that the Quebec national minority is constantly seeking greater political autonomy. The New Democrats seem to think “nationalism” is a bad word. However, Quebec nationalism is not combative; it merely seeks to allow Quebec society to thrive.

I would like to come back to an essential notion of federalism, which is respect for areas of jurisdiction. Under the principles of the Canadian federation, if an issue directly affects people and the way they organize themselves in society, it is under provincial jurisdiction. We are familiar with this division and immediately think of social programs, health care, the organization of society in general and cultural issues.

Conversely, if an issue does not directly affect people, but the internal organization of society, it may fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Examples include monetary policy, international trade and the regulation of industry in general. This division is specified under the Constitution.

I would like to come back to the Sherbrooke declaration that my NDP colleagues adopted in 2005. They presented themselves as people who wanted to respect Quebec's jurisdiction to the letter. I do not know what has happened since then, but the motion the NDP is proposing today is very far from respecting Quebec's jurisdiction to the letter. Is that because the NDP has only one member left in Quebec?

This motion infringes on provincial jurisdiction. For example, the implementation of a dental care system is not at all within fed-

eral jurisdiction. None of the measures set out in today's motion fall primarily under federal jurisdiction.

What does that mean for me as a person who would describe himself as progressive? It means that there are valid concerns for left-wingers. I completely agree that we need to stand up for the less fortunate. However, there are other subjects that my NDP friends will not speak out about that surprisingly still affect the national minority in Quebec.

We know very well why this distinction was made in the Constitution. It was to ensure that the francophone minority was not swallowed up by the anglophone majority because we are a francophone minority in a sea of anglophones. We need these types of safeguards. If a society is not defined by its social programs, then I do not know what defines it.

When I was a teacher, a major study was conducted that asked Canadians what differences they saw between Canadian and American identity. The first things francophones said were culture and language, which goes without saying, and the fact that Canada favours multiculturalism while the United States takes more of a melting pot approach. However, the answer that English Canadians gave was very different. Most of them said that the health care system is what makes Canada different from the United States.

What does this tell us? It is true that a social measure shapes the identity of individuals. However, I sometimes get the feeling that the NDP takes issue with Quebec's identity since it is proposing federal social measures that do not respect provincial jurisdictions.

Quebec is a progressive society and it has demonstrated that on many occasions. What was the first level of government to implement a child care system? It was the Government of Quebec. The Government of Quebec also grants much more generous parental leave than what is offered under the employment insurance program.

• (1225)

Who instituted the pharmacare our NDP colleagues are talking about? Wait for it: the Government of Quebec.

Over time, Quebec has proven itself to be a progressive society. We have shown that we are a progressive society. Let me share a classic example of how the federal government's actions can create imbalances in social policy and how this has happened in the past. Some progressives, even some in Quebec, promptly condemned Lucien Bouchard. Why? Because, in their view, the birth of neo-liberalism in Quebec happened when Lucien Bouchard made the shift to ambulatory care.

We need to put things into perspective. Why did Lucien Bouchard initiate that shift to ambulatory care? Because at that time in the House, in 1996-97 and 1997-98, Paul Martin repeatedly cut \$2.5 billion from health transfers. The Government of Quebec therefore had no choice but to cut costs. What did Lucien Bouchard do during those years? He created \$7-a-day child care.

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The federal government has created an imbalance. We do not have adequate health care funding, but we are making choices that are consistent with Quebec's identity. We can develop our own programs that will enable us to emancipate ourselves. Earlier I talked about what I believe a progressive is. What bothers me is that our NDP colleagues do not seem to understand it.

Getting back to the motion now, it mentions a guaranteed livable basic income. I said in my introduction that this is more form than substance. It is something we need to think about, but the issue is figuring out how to implement it.

The devil is in the details, as they say. How will this be implemented? What does that entail? Quebec already has livable basic income programs. For example, social assistance is a livable basic income. The support provided by the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail is a livable basic income. The Quebec pension plan is a livable basic income. Parents of children with disabilities have access to other types of livable basic income programs. What happens to those? Do they all get thrown out? How would that work?

I am not trying to be mean, but I think the NDP presented this motion because they see the Liberals swerving to the left and looking a bit more progressive than them. This is what we would call a dog and pony show. The NDP figured they would put on a show and move a motion. That way, they could say that the Liberals and the Bloc voted against it and that the NDP is the only leftist party.

They make unrealistic proposals and claim to be the only ones on the left. Not only are these proposals unrealistic, they do not respect the constitutional rights of one of the core minorities in Quebec, the Quebec minority. This falls under the jurisdiction of the Government of Quebec.

To me it goes without saying that on the issue of a guaranteed livable basic income, the motion is a bit irresponsible. How can they move such a motion in the middle of a pandemic? Do they think that everyone is going to vote in favour of this in the middle of a pandemic when there are a tonne of issues to resolve? They want to shuffle the deck and completely change the social support system without conducting a comprehensive study or asking Quebecers what they think. I often hear my friends in the NDP claim to be champions of the national indigenous minority, but they did not ask the first nations what they thought about this. That shows that this is just a charade.

Let's be honest: It will take years to get a basic livable income up and running. It will certainly take a lot more than moving a simple flashy motion.

The other element is the national dental care and pharmacare programs. That is the epitome of a centralist vision. It is the epitome of the NDP's centralist vision. It is up to the Government of Quebec to decide if it will establish a dental care plan, not the federal government. Those who are progressive and left-leaning—that is how I view myself—prefer a top-down, or bottom-up, approach.

• (1230)

It must come from the bottom, the social movements and the people. Therefore, a measure such as a national dental care program

must come from Quebec. If it decides to have one, it will. It must come from the bottom and not the top. A centralist, "Ottawa knows best" approach will not define how services will be provided by the Government of Quebec to society. That also applies to pharmacare. The Quebec government already has its own system.

I was getting somewhere earlier when I said that we must see how people define their identity. Some Canadians say their identity is defined by the fact that they have a public health care system. We know very well that that is powerful and that we have something powerful when we talk about it. When we talk about something that affects individuals politically, it is easier to talk with them and define their identity.

I think that this practice is not unrelated to the fact that the NDP is trying to be more closely connected to the issue of health care; they may be trying to get more votes. If that is what they want to do, let them run for a provincial legislature, because here is not the right place. If they are truly concerned about health care, let them focus on the fundamental issue of health care funding. Funding is a disaster. In 2018-19, if I remember correctly, 44% of the Quebec government's budget went to health care. The federal government's share was barely 20%. That is what needs to be addressed. When money is transferred to the provinces, then that will yield results. Funding is indexed at 3% when we know that the cost of delivering health care is growing by 5%. Once again, this is not in Quebec's interest and is a bit of window dressing.

On housing, the motion calls for the government to "immediately fund a 'For Indigenous, By Indigenous' urban, rural and Northern housing strategy delivered by Indigenous housing providers."

It is a proposal, but nowhere is it stated how it will be done. If an indigenous housing strategy is to be developed and funded, perhaps they should be consulted beforehand. Were consultations mentioned at all? We have not heard anything about consultations. Have they mentioned the issue before? Do they want to implement it? This is more of the rhetoric I was talking about earlier regarding some of the flashy measures. I do not think that a national initiative involving first nations can be proposed without talking to them first.

Another part refers to taxing the most wealthy. I tend to agree with that. Adding "one per cent" tends to be a flashy move. The "wealthiest one per cent" is a well-understood figure of speech. It is a good communication pitch. Maybe I am for it. We should look into this, but is there not some work to be done first on tax avoidance and tax havens?

With this measure, the NDP is hoping to bring in some \$5 billion, when we know that, in Canada, tax avoidance and tax havens costs us collectively between \$9 billion and \$48 billion. If we want to revive the Canadian economy after the crisis, adjusting public finances and ensuring robust health care funding are perhaps things that we should look into.

Lastly, one thing in this motion bothered me greatly and clearly shows that the NDP is not thinking of Quebec. The motion mentions the recovery for all campaign, which is only in English. That clearly shows that they are not thinking of Quebec. I was even wondering if it was admissible here but, since I am not a petty person, I did not mention it.

To conclude, I am a great admirer of Albert Camus. The NDP will say that the Bloc Québécois is not a progressive party, which makes me think of the quarrel between Camus and Sartre in the 1950s. Camus responded beautifully in the book *The Fall* with the “judge-penitent” character. He is the one who sometimes confounds others with his inability to intervene.

• (1235)

In this case, the “judge-penitent” is the NDP, who will say that the Bloc Québécois is not a progressive party because it is not voting in favour of the motion.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a lot of sympathy for my colleague. Clearly, he did not read the motion and did not have time to prepare his speech.

He believes that the NDP would say that the Bloc is not a progressive party. What I would actually say is that the Bloc is not prepared for today's debate, which is too bad.

I feel no need to defend the NDP's history or our positions on bilingualism in Canada, Quebec's right to self-determination and the War Measures Act. In every province where the NDP has been elected, we have advanced francophone rights. These principles are well known.

What worries me is that the Bloc is undermining every opportunity Quebecers may have for progress. It says that health care, a provincial jurisdiction, is underfunded, and it is right. However, it is opposing the possibility of access to dental care and a pharmacare program that is not as badly flawed as the one in Quebec currently is.

I travel all over Quebec and speak with Quebecers. The need for dental care and a universal pharmacare program comes up again and again. Why does my colleague want to attack programs funded by the federal government but administered by the provinces that could benefit Quebecers who are struggling when it comes to dental care—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Jonquière.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I come from an academic background, and it is facile to tell someone that they have not read what was written just because they do not agree with our comments. That is the most facile response I have ever heard.

If I did not read the NDP motion and am not prepared, I apologize. However, if I am not prepared, my colleague clearly did not listen to me. I stated that the majority of NDP proposals are about things that are not the jurisdiction of the House, but are the realm of the provinces. It is not up to the House of Commons to dictate to the National Assembly of Quebec how to establish the social safety net it is responsible for. That is all I have to say to him.

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• (1240)

[English]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I take it the member is concerned about a number of the priority areas for spending identified in the motion, but I take the principal thrust of the motion to be a revenue tool, a new wealth tax. The member suggested that we could look to other areas first and that this is symbolic, but if we look at the PBO's work, it is certainly more than symbolic. There would be billions of new dollars. Now the PBO's work has changed and the estimates have changed significantly, in some cases, over time, but even the most modest estimates I have seen were over \$5 billion a year.

I wonder, specifically on the question of a wealth tax, given the problematic wealth inequality we see, what the member would say about a wealth tax.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, this is certainly something worth studying. I added that tax avoidance is one hell of a problem. I fully understand that the House is responsible for tax issues, and this is fine with me.

However, I am not a tax expert. I often criticize some of my colleagues in the House who pretend to be experts on everything. I am not a tax expert, but as a self-described progressive politician, I do believe that the wealthiest could be playing a bigger role. I could support this proposal.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's speech. He spoke about what it is to be a progressive.

I did find his description of Quebec society, though, to be very conservative. I see Quebec society as representing this kind of conservative preservative nationalism, a desire to preserve language, preserve identity, preserve culture. That is a Burkean vision of society that conservatives are very enthusiastic about: the desire to preserve the goods of history and pass them on untainted to the next generation. I would submit that to my colleague for his consideration, that conservative principles are very much aligned with Quebec's emphasis on culture and tradition.

I want to ask him about this idea of subsidiarity that he alluded to in his speech, the importance of bottom up instead of top down when it comes to social change and programs and these sorts of things. One of the challenges I have with the Bloc Québécois is that they quite rightly emphasize subsidiarity in the sense of respect for provincial jurisdiction, but we do not see the same respect for minorities within minorities, the recognition that, yes, the federal government must leave appropriate space to the provinces but provinces must also respect the proper space of minorities within those provinces in terms of the practice of their own traditions and so forth. I am curious to hear his comments on that.

*Business of Supply**[Translation]*

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the last part of my colleague's speech, where he talked about minorities. If he wants to talk about conservatism, I would be glad to speak with him afterward.

One of the best-off minorities in the world is the anglophone minority in Quebec. Although the anglophone minority accounts for 8% of Quebec's population, it receives 30% of the education budget. If francophones ever receive the same treatment in other provinces, we can revisit this issue. Until then, I have nothing else to add.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I really liked that he mentioned the social movements, the women's movement and the labour movement. I especially appreciate his ability to tie in Camus, Sartre, Miron, no matter what he is talking about.

What really stood out to me in his argument is the way the NDP motion overlooks the Quebec national minority. What is more, the motion does not respect Quebec's jurisdiction.

I would like to know why the hon. member thinks the NDP, which claims to be a great defender of minorities, is unable to recognize the Quebec national minority in its motion.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, the perennial problem with the Canadian federation is that the Quebec national minority is often viewed as contrasting with ethnic minorities and first nations minorities. However, they all have one thing in common, a minority identity. I get the impression that the NDP is happy to erase the Quebec minority identity at times.

We have to make the NDP members aware of what the Quebec identity entails, because I think there is quite a bit of misunderstanding.

• (1245)

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's comments. He stated that the "recovery for all" campaign is actually not bilingual. In fact, I have a House of Commons petition that is bilingual, if the member cares to check into that.

The other issue that the member raised was on the indigenous housing side. The call for a "for indigenous, by indigenous" national housing strategy is in fact something that the indigenous community is calling for.

I wonder if the member knows that, in the indigenous community, people are more likely to be homeless, 11 times more than non-indigenous peoples. In the national housing strategy that was introduced back in 2017, the Liberal government did not actually put forward a measure to address the indigenous housing crisis. In fact, in the throne speech, there is nothing, no strategy, no specific plan, to address this crisis. Is it not time that we get on with it in this new nation-to-nation relationship?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, with respect to the recovery for all campaign, I do not know if there is a French petition. If yes, all the better. What I saw was in English only. In my opinion, when someone drafts a document in English only, they are not addressing Quebecers. That goes without saying.

With regard to indigenous nations, it is obvious that they are facing challenges. We must be honest. It is true that housing is a very serious problem among indigenous nations. They will deal with it. It will not be up to just the federal government. It will not happen as a result of a motion that was scribbled on the back of a napkin and that we are required to decide on today, because they want to appear to be a little more to the left than the Liberal Party is at present.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am sharing my time with the member for St. John's East.

I am very honoured to join in the debate today in support of the NDP motion that calls on the Liberals to put in place a new 1% tax on wealth over \$20 million and an excess profit tax on big corporations that have been profiteering from the pandemic, so that we can reinvest billions of dollars to support Canadians.

The pandemic has exposed deep inequities and massive failures in our economic system, leaving 1.8 million people out of work. The people hardest hit are low-income workers in the service industries, the agricultural workers and the migrant workers. Too often they are women, they are young and they are a visible minority. Even before the pandemic, more than half of Canadians were living from paycheck to paycheck, and 10 million workers had no workplace retirement plans.

The median retirement savings for households close to retirement without a pension is \$3,000, and nearly four out of 10 Canadians have no retirement savings at all. Meanwhile, over 10,000 families have a net worth of over \$30 million with their total wealth valued at over \$1 trillion. Worse still, the income gap is continuing to grow exponentially.

Successive governments know the system is rigged to benefit the ultra-rich and they have done nothing about it. Budget 2019 continues with a blanket tax break for the richest corporations. Tax havens are still in place and will continue to take over \$16 billion every year from much-needed programs for all Canadians. As workers struggle to get by, Canada's top 20 richest people profited \$40 billion from the pandemic, yet despite earning record profits, some of these families who own the largest grocery chains in Canada decided to end their "hero pay" programs for their workers. It is as though they are blind to the second wave and that the lives of their workers are not continually at risk. This is just obscene.

The time has come to bring in strong measures to restore some balance to such inequities. In the last election, the NDP campaigned on a wealth tax. In this minority government, the NDP is calling on the Liberals to put in place a new 1% tax on wealth over \$20 million and an excess profit tax on big corporations that have been profiteering from the pandemic. This is so that we can reinvest billions of dollars in a guaranteed livable basic income, a universal single-payer pharmacare and a national dental care program, and then truly treat adequate housing as a basic human right.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer reports that applying a 1% annual wealth tax to families with fortunes over \$20 million would generate \$5.6 billion in 2020-21. Over the course of 10 years, it would generate \$70 billion in revenue. This wealth tax would apply to only 13,800 Canadians. There is no good reason why web giants like Amazon, Google and Facebook should not pay their fair share of taxes, as has been done by other countries.

Without a doubt, we should also crack down on tax havens and close tax loopholes. We need to pair these programs with tough enforcement against tax evasion and penalties for millionaires and big corporations who try to avoid paying their fair share.

By introducing a COVID-19 excess profit tax, we could at least double the tax rate on excess profits. We need to prepare these programs so that we can make sure that people do what is right by Canadians. It is time that we prioritize the needs of everyday Canadians over billionaires. By bringing in a guaranteed livable income, we can eradicate poverty and ensure the respect, dignity and security of all persons in Canada now and for future generations.

• (1250)

Nearly five million people in Canada, one out of every seven, live in poverty. In most urban centres, a family of four would need to have a total income in excess of \$60,000 to escape poverty. In my own riding of Vancouver East, Downtown Eastside, is one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the country. The median income there is under \$18,000, while across the country, the bottom 90% have an average income of \$28,000. Vancouver has the highest rate of poverty at 20.4%, followed by Toronto at 20%.

Who are the faces of poverty? These are not just numbers. They represent real people. They are people living with disabilities. They are children. They are single moms. They are indigenous peoples, who are overrepresented among the homeless population in virtually all urban centres in Canada. They are racialized peoples. They are the elderly. They are veterans. They are our friends and our neighbours.

I am a parent, and I love my children to the moon and back. There is nothing that I would not do for them. However, in Canada, one in five children live in poverty. That is 1.3 million children. In the indigenous community, one in two children live in poverty. Indigenous peoples are 11 times more likely to be homeless. Just take that in for a minute.

What do these numbers mean? They mean that people cannot afford to fill their medical prescriptions. It means they cannot have food on the table. It means they cannot put a roof over their heads. It means that children are being ripped away from their families and put into the child welfare system. It means people are forced to

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break the law to try and survive. It means that their life expectancy is much shorter than those who do not live in poverty. The cost of poverty to our overall economy is staggering and to our humanity it is immeasurable.

It does not have to be this way. We can choose better. We can allow ourselves to realize a better Canada; a Canada where children are not going hungry; a Canada where seniors and people living with a disability live in dignity; a Canada where veterans are treated with the respect that they deserve; a Canada where people do not have to worry about how they will pay for their medicine; a Canada where adequate housing is not just a dream but a reality; a Canada without homeless encampments such as the one we have right now in my community.

A guaranteed basic livable income can help build a better Canada. A universal single-payer pharmacare program and a national dental care can help build a better Canada. A true national housing strategy, as outlined in recovery for all's six-point plan, is a good start to end homelessness.

Homelessness is a policy choice fuelled by both the Liberals and Conservatives. A commitment of immediately building 3,000 new permanent affordable and supportive housing is a good start. We can limit the ability of large capital funds to purchase distressed rental housing assets. We can develop a "for indigenous, by indigenous" national housing centre and immediately construct 73,000 units of affordable housing, led by indigenous housing providers for urban, rural and northern communities.

Those are the kinds of initiatives that will create jobs and help the people who need it the most. A better Canada is possible. To quote greatest Canadian, Tommy Douglas, "Courage my friends, it is not too late to build a better world".

Let us get on with it. I call on all members of this House to support this motion. This is the path for the future, this is a just recovery and this is telling the world that Canada will not leave people behind. This is saying that we stand with people in a tangible way and not just in words. This is a test of all of us, where we stand and the value that we bring to the House.

I hope all members will support this motion.

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• (1255)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, many people know that my father and I were journalists at Queen's Park at the same time. He once said to me, "You want to know how to make a New Democrat angry? Agree with them." I have to tell members that as someone who has now run against the New Democrats, I think about three to six times, nothing could be further from the truth. There is nothing in the motion that someone can disagree with on principle. The question is how do we get it done practically and how do we sequence it, pay for it and structured it.

The member opposite listed pharmacare and now added dental care, which is not in the NDP platform or its costing. She has gone from universal income to basic income, but has not explained what that would look like. She talked about and indigenous urban and northern housing strategy. She knows that we are working on it and are very close to delivering it. We have accommodated it within the new national housing strategy. Now she has added a couple of other things, but I will not go into the long list.

The NDP is proposing one tax to solve this problem. The dollars attached to that tax address one part of that list, but not all of it. Where are the additional tax dollars coming from and where is the program structure on how to accomplish these? Why is that not a part of the NDP proposal? Why is it just a bunch of slogans and a simplistic solution, with no practical process to actually address the issues that have been raised?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, my question for the Liberals and the parliamentary secretary is this. Why is it always the Liberals who make promises and never deliver?

Does the member realize that the promise for universal pharmacare has been in the Liberal red book for decades now, and still we do not have it? The excuse has always been that the government cannot afford for it. We have outlined some measures on how we can pay for it. If the member looked at some of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's reports, the universal pharmacare program would save Canadians money, and so, too, would a national housing strategy.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate and share the genuine passion of the member for social justice and for helping vulnerable people. However, on this side of the House, we would particularly emphasize the need to produce it before we can redistribute it. If we want to help people in vulnerable situations, we have to pay significant attention to economic development, to growing opportunity to create wealth, so we can then help vulnerable people.

We are in a situation right now where many businesses are not able to operate the way they normally would. We have significant government spending, well beyond the taxes we take in, and the NDP has no plan to address that enormous deficit.

Would the member agree, in principle, that if we want to help vulnerable people, we need to focus on allowing people to get back to work, creating the conditions for the creation of jobs and opportunity and opening up innovation and new industries, which is a

critical piece if we are to achieve the objectives about which the member has talked?

• (1300)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, what the pandemic has shown us is that we have a huge inequality in our economic system. We have a situation where people are in fact left behind. We all talk about it, say that we are going to build back better, that we need to come out of the pandemic better, why not start with a wealth tax? One per cent on wealth over \$20 million is not out of this universe. How about saying to the people who profited from the pandemic that they could pay a bit more to support Canadians through this rough patch?

For both the Liberals and Conservatives, there never is a good time to do what is right, there is never a good time to support the people who are the most vulnerable.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, as it is my first opportunity to enter the debate on the opposition day motion, I want to put on the record that I absolutely support a wealth tax of 1% on wealth over \$20 million. In fact, it was in my party's platform in 2019.

One of the most interesting comments in the Parliamentary Budget Office's report was how this tax would work. It put what it called a "band of uncertainty" around it, which some people took to mean the people in the Green Party of the NDP could not add because the PBO had said there was a band of uncertainty. However, it meant that the Parliamentary Budget Office thought, as we approached taxing the wealthiest in the country, that they would figure out ways not to pay the tax. That is the band of uncertainty. The money is there, tax is applied and we should have the amount of money the PBO has estimated.

I wonder if the NDP has turned its mind, or whether the hon. member for Vancouver East has, to how we account for the tax—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): A very short answer from the member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, we can begin by closing the tax loopholes, closing the tax havens and ending the subsidies for big oil.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to join the debate on the motion by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby on tax measures to support vulnerable Canadians.

We have been going through the most horrific health crisis in our country over the last eight or nine months. There has been the terrible, sad loss of over 10,000 Canadians, and we are still enduring the health consequences in the second wave in our most populous areas. We also know it has been a great burden to a lot of people whose vulnerability in our society has been greatly exposed by the loss of income, employment and opportunities during this pandemic because of the response to the necessary lockdowns.

More than a million more Canadians are unemployed today than were at the beginning of the pandemic. We are concerned about the consequences of the inequality that has been exposed by that. We knew about it. The New Democrats have been talking about it for many years, but now it is time for the rest of the country to realize that something must be done about the fundamental inequality in our country. The consequences for people are too great for us not to act now.

This is an opportunity to recognize that some of this inequality can be addressed by looking at where the significant money is and where it is not being shared equally. We do not want to see big corporations profiteer from a pandemic. We have seen responses to that in the past.

As the member for New Westminster—Burnaby pointed out in his most excellent speech, an excess profit tax was imposed during the Second World War. It was believed by all parties that companies making an excess amount of money, profiteering during the war, should have that excess profit taxed. The regular profit was not taxed. That is what we are calling for in this situation. Big corporations that have received excess profits during the pandemic should pay an excess tax on that.

The second thing we talked about in our platform, which was costed, was a wealth tax on the super wealthy, not an income tax. A lot of people have mused over that. I know the Prime Minister has in response to questions. This would be a tax on people's wealth in excess of \$20 million, not on the first \$20 million but a tax of 1% on anything in excess of that.

These huge fortunes keep growing more than 1% every year and are not properly taxed. Those individuals do not pay their fair contribution to the rest of society. We want to use that tax to deal with some of the serious inequalities we have regarding income, health care and housing. Those are the three main issues that would be dealt with in the proposal we have to expand income security programs to ensure all individuals residing in Canada have a guaranteed liveable basic income.

We want to see health care expanded to include a national dental care program and a universal pharmacare program, which has been promised by the Liberals for more than 27 years. They still have not delivered on that. We want to see a meaningful implementation of the right to housing, with a significant plan known as "recovery for all", as well as a special indigenous, urban and rural and northern strategy delivered by indigenous people.

These items make up the essence of the motion. We are looking for support from the other parties in the House for that.

I am going to speak specifically to one aspect of our plan, which is the dental care plan. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, the member for Spadina—Fort York, talked about the NDP not having it in our platform or having costed it. He is wrong on both counts. It was in our platform last year and it was costed by the Parliamentary Budget Officer. It was a very doable and important measure that would make a significant change in the lives of millions of Canadians.

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● (1305)

In fact, we also had it costed again this year in February and gave members of Parliament an opportunity to actually implement it by a change in the so-called middle-class tax cut, by taking the benefit of about \$300 from the top of that of people earning over \$90,000 and directing that money to provide a national dental care program, which would provide free dental care for families with an income of less than \$70,000 per year.

That program is very important. Anyone who reflects on the situation of people in this country who do not have access to dental care knows that it is a major area of inequality in health care, in lifestyle and in getting a job. It comes with a stigma and affects their overall health. It is a shocking gap in the health care system.

We have a situation where if one has a bone broken, a fall or an illness, they go to the hospital or doctor and that is covered by medicare. However, if someone has an oral health problem, a toothache, a cavity or a lost tooth, it is not covered in most cases by our health care system.

We have people living all their lives, in many cases, from birth to death without adequate health care or with a patchwork of government programs here and there to help along the way. It is a significant inequality for rural and indigenous communities throughout the country in terms of lack of access to health care. It causes significant problems.

We are talking about a program that would cost \$1.4 billion per year. It has been costed by the Parliamentary Budget Officer. It would benefit over six million Canadians. The cost is actually up from last year's analysis because of the increase in the number of people who do not have access to health and dental care programs because they are no longer working in places that have a program for employees.

It affects the most vulnerable Canadians. It affects part-time workers who do not have access to programs. It affects young people who age out of existing programs when they turn 21 or, for students, when they turn 25. It is a situation that cries out for action by government. This calls out for redress.

I spoke about the opportunity we gave to all hon. members on February 25 of this year on an opposition day motion to make a change in the tax regime that would give every single person in Canada without a dental care plan an opportunity to have a basic plan available to them. Every single Conservative in the House and every single Liberal in the House voted against that plan. Of course, they all benefit from the same plan I do, which is a plan for dental care as part of the regime of benefits for members of Parliament.

This plan would guarantee that all Canadians would have access to a dental care plan. It is something that is doable and that can be done for the kind of money that the Parliamentary Budget Officer talks about. It ought to be put in place in the interest of all Canadians and in the interests of equality.

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• (1310)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the nice thing about having an iPad on my desk is I can read the NDP platform from the last election. I just went through the three chapters that cover health care and dental care is not mentioned once. We know the program was not costed, and dental care was never mentioned. It is not that we should not provide it or look for ways to provide it, but members should not make up facts on the floor of the House of Commons, even if doing it remotely.

I want to talk about the right to housing. An NDP candidate stood on my sister's porch in Victoria and claimed Liberals had not legislated it and furthermore, that we have never made an investment in Victoria. My sister said, "Yes, they have. My brother is the parliamentary secretary and every time he comes to Victoria, he stays at my house."

We have made those investments. We did legislate the right to housing. We are in the process of constructing the advisory council. Does the NDP want us to move faster or is it that they do not understand what we have done?

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is repeating something that is incorrect. It is mentioned in our platform as published and was costed by the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Those numbers were released by the NDP on September 18 during the election campaign, so he cannot have his own facts. He can repeat something that is incorrect as long as he wants, but it does not change the fact that it was costed by the Parliamentary Budget Officer and was part of our campaign. The people who came up to me in the streets during the campaign talked about our platform and the importance of dental care to them—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask my friend from the NDP a few questions regarding his speech.

My first is with respect to something he talked about often in his speech, which is taxing those who are wealthy and ensuring they continue to pay even more during this pandemic, as well as taxing corporations.

I have a couple of comments first. Sooner or later, this is not great policy because, at some point, it pushes people over the edge, whether it is an individual or a corporation. Individuals will not stick around to be bled to death. I am no defender of those who are rich, at times they are their own worst enemy, however, we as Canadians want them to keep their money here. We want them to put their money in the banks to allow them to lend money out so someone can get a student loan, buy a house or a car, or continue the progression up the economic ladder, to give those opportunities, but we also want the businesses to be here as well.

My question is this. If we continue to raise taxes, the products or services will stop because those businesses have hit a certain level and decided it is not worth producing or selling here. When we run the manufacturers out, the oil and gas companies out, and the ener-

gy producers out, and the gravitational pull of the economy goes elsewhere, who pays for all the programs that have been promised?

• (1315)

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, as one of my colleagues pointed out earlier, there was a time when the Conservative Party was very concerned about profiteering in times of crisis during and after the Second World War. The Conservatives were some of the biggest supporters of an extra tax on those who profited excessively from the war. We are not talking about ordinary profits or that kind of thing. In the case of the wealthy, we are not talking about everybody who has money, we are talking about people who have probably benefited from all kinds of tax loopholes along the way, but someone who has in excess of \$20 million in wealth should be taxed 1% on anything in excess of that. That would be over some 13,000 people. There would be significant revenue from that to help us solve some of these inequality problems that are extremely important to Canadians.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to share my time with the member for Spadina—Fort York.

The NDP motion to tax 1% on wealth over \$20 million is so fundamentally wrong, I do not even know how to describe it. There is a basic misunderstanding of the concept of wealth with the NDP.

The New Democrats think \$20 million in wealth is something that is cash hidden in the closet that they can tax every single year. They forget that this wealth is actually deployed in creating economic activity. It is deployed to create employment that, in turn, pays tax. It is deployed in enterprises that pay sales tax and corporate tax. The wealth the New Democrats are trying to tax is actually deployed in creating economic activity that continues to provide income so that all Canadians can be supported in terms of their needs.

I am new to politics. I entered politics only in 2014. I stood for election in 2015, and am a member of this august House. I came with three objectives.

The first objective was that we need affordable housing for all. That is not a left-leaning progressive objective. It is not a right-leaning conservative objective. It is an objective shared by almost all Canadians. We, as a society, should provide affordable housing for all. I am proud to say that we have invested quite large amounts into ensuring that we meet this objective.

My second objective was to ensure we have adequate retirement income for 11 million working Canadians who do not have workplace pension plans. There are 11 million working Canadians with no workplace pension plan and, when they retire, it is possible that most of them will retire into poverty. We need to take action and I am proud that we have actually taken action on that front. We have reformed the Canada pension plan. We still need to take much more action so that the seniors who retire have adequate income to have a decent living in their retirement.

The third objective was to ensure that the Canadian society and economy would continue to be robust and prosperous even in the new knowledge-based economy, so that prosperity could continue to be available to our children and grandchildren. To achieve this objective, we need successful entrepreneurs to invest in the knowledge-based economy. Any government can only facilitate. We can pass legislation and we can promote policies to promote the knowledge-based economy, but at the end of the day the knowledge-based economy can only come from entrepreneurs who take risks and invest in new capital enterprises in the knowledge-based economy. The new economy we are talking of means the areas of artificial intelligence, robotics, automation, genomics and the new 5G technologies. In all of these areas, the government cannot create employment on its own, so we need successful entrepreneurs to do that and we need them to invest their wealth, which the NDP proposes to tax. We need that investment.

I am a person who would never be affected by this motion, never in my life. Forget \$20 million, Madam Speaker. I do not think I will go into six or seven digits in wealth. However, I happen to know the people whom the NDP is targeting with this wealth tax.

• (1320)

Let me give an example of a couple who, a long time back, graduated from Carleton University in Ottawa and set up their own businesses. The first business failed. The second business failed, as did the third business. At the time they were investing, with no money in their pockets, whatever little amount they could get. When they were investing and developing the businesses, they lived by eating tomato sandwiches. They worked hard, month after month, year after year. For 15, 20 and then 25 years they worked, creating a company. Finally, they were able to sell it to a big multinational company for about \$50 million, which the NDP wants to tax.

What did the couple do with the \$50 million they gained? They took a risk and reinvested in new technologies, creating high-paying jobs. They knew very well the money they were investing in these new capital enterprises might be lost entirely. They took that risk. They deployed the wealth back into a technology business creating high-paying jobs, which provided income tax for us to provide support to all Canadians. They created an enterprise that paid corporate tax. They created an enterprise that paid sales tax. They rented premises that paid sales tax on the rent they paid. They reinvested. If they had lost money on that investment, nobody would have compensated them.

The very idea that we have to tax this wealth is creating a disincentive for entrepreneurs to reinvest. It is very wrong.

Business of Supply

Let me give another example of a great Canadian: a South African national who is also a Canadian citizen and now a U.S. citizen. Elon Musk has singlehandedly done more to fight climate change than all of us sitting here. He is a great entrepreneur who invested his wealth into electric vehicles through battery technology with the goal of having a sustainable world and fighting climate change, and actually delivering it in the process of making wealth.

This person, 10 years ago, was weeks away from bankruptcy. He did not have money to pay rent. The company he founded was almost on the doorstep of closure. However, he persevered. He continued to work hard. Today he has created wealth, not only for himself but for his tens of thousands of employees across the world. That is the kind of wealth the NDP is proposing to tax.

It is easy for us to sit here and say, let the wealthy pay tax and let us spend it on things we feel are noble. Under the noble objectives, I think we are losing our focus.

Our focus should be on things that can create economic activity, economic development and employment, and can increase the income with which people pay personal income tax. We can focus on economic development that pays more sales tax, and we can focus on economic development that pays more corporate tax, instead of focusing on taxing the wealthy.

I know time is limited. I would like to answer any questions.

• (1325)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, 87 Canadian families have the same amount of wealth as 12 million Canadians. On average, they have \$3 billion in wealth. In fact, nine of the top 20 wealth carriers in that classification are CEOs. There are 4.8 million Canadians living in absolute poverty, and 25 per cent of them are children.

Why do the Liberals continue to protect CEO stock option loopholes and tax havens for the wealthy? This is an opportunity to give everybody a guaranteed livable income so they can put food on the table, provide child care for their children and have a roof over their heads.

Why are the Liberals opposed to doing the right thing, and taxing those who could afford to pay for it and who benefited the most during this pandemic? I hope the member can explain.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, what the hon. member did not mention is the portion of tax revenue collected from the wealthy individuals he talked about. That is one of the things he has to answer.

Business of Supply

He talked about helping Canadians. We have taken measures to go after the tax havens that the member mentioned. We have created special cells within the CRA and we have invested more. We know that when we go after tax havens, the returns we get are much more than we get from normal audits.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, if Open Parliament serves me correctly, I would like to congratulate the member on his first speech in this Parliament. I really liked the real-world examples he gave of entrepreneurs creating wealth and good jobs in Canada. I hope in the future he stands and shares those types of stories more often instead of us hearing all the time from the member for Winnipeg North.

What can we do in Canada to create more competitiveness in the technology sector, since that was an example he gave, to create jobs and see people flourish with small businesses?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, you may have noticed that I do not speak much. In fact, as the member pointed out, this is the first time. Usually I leave the speaking to the people who have more knowledge, better expertise and better communication skills than me. I am happy to sit back, listen and try to understand.

On the question of investing in the new economy, new technologies and competitiveness, one of the key things I hear from entrepreneurs in Ottawa, where there are 1,700 knowledge-based companies, and as a former board member of Invest Ottawa, is that the talent is missing. We need to increase the immigration of skilled entrepreneurs from across the world so that we can get the best brains in the world to come to work in our new economy.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what the member is getting at is we can all agree that it is a good thing to try to support individuals by having those with the most resources distribute their wealth, but as I read the motion, it is full of ambiguity. I want to point some things out and see if maybe he can find out about them.

What is the definition of a big corporation? Does that include businesses in my riding of Kings—Hants such as Apple Valley Foods, which employs about 500 people? Would that be defined as a big corporation or are we thinking bigger? The Parliamentary Budget Officer has mentioned that this proposed motion would garner \$5.6 billion a year. All the measures on the table are much more than that.

Can he comment on whether he thinks this is a reasonable motion? It is certainly good in principle, but in practice, how would it play out?

• (1330)

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, as the member pointed out, the motion is quite ambiguous. It talks about national housing, pharmacare and supporting indigenous people. These are good and noble objectives, with which we all agree, but what the NDP is proposing is not acceptable.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to stand and speak in the House, especially when the motion in front of us involves housing, in particular the proposal to try to get us to do the work we need to

do, which is actually work the Liberal government is already engaged in doing.

I referenced my father in an earlier comment. I will reference my mother now, who once told me that if people want to make a point, they vote NDP; if people want to make a difference, they vote Liberal; and if people want to make a mistake, they vote Conservative. I raise that issue because, while the theory behind what the NDP is proposing is good as it reflects our throne speech, our campaign commitments and the record of this Liberal government, it is the practicality of it that I do not understand.

I asked members a question earlier. During a campaign debate with my opponent, I said that they had referenced one tax seven different ways, and it was all spent on pharmacare, but it also promised to deal with different housing programs. Dental care was added into the program, and other things, but the same dollar kept getting spent over and over again, even though it was only one dollar. The Conservatives like to say there is only one taxpayer, but I think the NDP needs to be reminded that its tax increase is only one tax increase. It has layered several different programs on top of this, claiming that there are savings that will flow from these investments. Those savings, I would remind the NDP, are downstream. There are upfront costs to all of the NDP's proposals, which the Parliamentary Budget Office identified. There are also unintended risks to what the New Democrats are proposing, and if there is no plan to put their theory into place, then they are just words.

The NDP is great on slogans. All of these slogans are good. All of these ideas have value, but what is not there is the practical plan to achieve them, and without a practical plan to achieve them, they are just empty words. I will give the House a couple of examples. Finally the NDP has talked about the issue of urban, rural and northern housing. Finally the New Democrats are beginning to address one of the most critical housing issues in the country, and they say we have done nothing to address it.

That is just wrong. We identified it in the national housing strategy as the chapter that we are currently working on, and we are about to deliver on that. The throne speech makes that commitment, and the work is already under way, but in the interim we created an indigenous stream and increased funding in the indigenous stream in reaching home. We made all of the programs eligible to northern, rural and urban communities for indigenous-led housing providers. Additionally, we put carve-outs into the northern housing strategy, specifically for northern housing accomplishments, because we knew that previous programs had a gap there. On top of all of that, we also made sure that our investments into things like the rapid housing initiative are focused on, and eligible to, indigenous housing providers.

In the interim we have actually invested in those programs while we pull together and work with urban indigenous, rural indigenous and northern indigenous leadership to make sure we set up a by-and-for-indigenous housing program. That work is under way. Those investments are coming. When I ask the member for Vancouver East to give me a dollar amount, a housing target or strategy, or to say who she is working with, and we have asked these questions repeatedly, the NDP just says, “Do it now and do more.”

I appreciate doing more. It is a great political slogan. I have no problem with trying to do more, working to accomplish more and actually delivering more, which this government has done. However, just jumping up and down and saying, “Do more!” is not governing. It is a chant in a protest, and as my mother said, if one wants to protest, one has a party. If one wants to get things done, one has a government.

On the issue of recovery for all, I invite the members of the NDP to look at that campaign and see which member of Parliament appears in the campaign. They should check the video for it. They can tell me whether they see my face there, or their leader's face there. They should check the video, because that campaign is being put forth by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness: an organization we work with day in and day out to get better strategies in place to support homeless individuals. This is not just during COVID. We have been doing this since we first got elected.

The rapid housing initiative, the reprofiling of reaching home and the advancement of the legislation to achieve the right to housing were all done with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. If members read all six points of the recovery for all program, they will see our government has already started to respond to those six calls to action with investments such as the billion-dollar rapid housing initiative, and the almost half-billion dollars invested into reaching home to protect people during COVID and to build a stronger network of organizations to fight homelessness across the country.

When members talk about the urban, rural and northern housing strategy, they can talk to the member for Winnipeg Centre. We have been working very closely together, not only to get a study done in Parliament, but also simultaneously with urban indigenous housing providers, and their allies in rural and northern communities, to formulate what the receiving side of that program would look like and how we would work with housing providers across the country to achieve what we need to. All of this is being worked on.

Business of Supply

When it comes to the right to housing, I recall a story I heard from my sister in Victoria. The NDP candidate came to her house, knocked on the door and said the government had done nothing about the right to housing. They laid into the national housing strategy as if it did not exist and said there had not been a penny invested in Victoria. This simply is not true.

● (1335)

Mayor Helps and I have met dozens of times, formally and informally, to talk about Victoria's progress in getting to functional zero. Without COVID, we are pretty sure we would have gotten there this year. Why? It is because we steered a \$3 million block-funding initiative right into the greater Victoria area, with the provincial government and the regional housing authority. When they ran into a wall, we topped it up by \$10 million.

I have opened programs and buildings in Victoria, yet the candidate went to my sister's house, stood on her porch and said the government had not even been there. My sister's response was, “Every time he comes to Victoria he stays with me. I know he comes to Victoria to make those announcements.”

Can we do more? Absolutely. We are working hard on that. Are we delivering more dollars in real time in a real way? Of course we are.

I invite the NDP to stop screaming “more” and start talking about “how”, because that is the way results will end up landing in people's lives. It is not by protesting in front of Parliament Hill. It is by working on Parliament Hill. It is not by talking about more money for housing. It is by building, subsidizing and repairing more housing.

I remind the House leader of the NDP that last term he said repairing housing is not part of a national housing strategy. What a ridiculous claim to make. The next week I was in Burnaby giving money to a co-op to fix housing so that people did not have to move out. Good housing systems will repair housing, subsidize housing and build housing. That is how we build a national housing strategy. We do not just chant “do more”; we actually get more done.

Business of Supply

I have no problem supporting the concept of the motion before us. In our throne speech, we talked about exploring ways to make the tax system more fair by looking at the way wealthy Canadians may be able to pay more of their fair share, because the system has changed over time and is no longer as fair as it could be. On page 19 and 20, we said we would end chronic homelessness, that there would be a northern and indigenous housing strategy and that we were going to invest in social and co-op housing. Those programs are currently being constructed and will be in front of the House in short order.

As for the right to housing, we are halfway through the appointments process. We have moved the legislation through the House and we are moments away from signing off on the advisory council. The housing advocate will be constructed with the housing advisory panel, which will include people with lived experience. All of these things are part of what the UN rapporteur for housing, who helped us draft the legislation, told us we needed for achieving on those files.

I am not going to stand here and be told by the NDP to get back to work when I am doing the work. I will tell the NDP to stop chanting “more” and start showing us how, because the lack of practical application of their ideas is why they are in fourth place. It is why they fail to take government. The chants, protests and slogans remind me of somebody: the Premier of Ontario. They can govern with slogans if they want, but they do not deliver results. We have to be practical, we have to be real, we have to achieve concrete budgetary items and then we have to work with partners to deliver.

As for housing, things are getting better and better. Is there more work to do? Yes. Do I push our government to do better? Absolutely. Do my constituents demand it of me? They do, every day I am in the riding.

I cannot get past this proclivity to chant slogans and chant “more”. I see this motion as a chance for the NDP to say there are five things the government has said it is going to deliver and then demand the government does this now. Then, when it does, they can try to take credit.

The number of times NDP members referenced Tommy Douglas is quite interesting, and I will tell members something about Tommy Douglas that I really respect. He built the health care system before he came to Ottawa and then scaled it across the country. He did not land in Ottawa with an idea and just screamed, “Do it, do it, do it.” He got it done first and then shared it with the rest of the Canada.

That is the practicality I look for in the NDP, but I never see it in that party anymore. It disappoints me, and it is why I ran for the Liberals. It is why I beat the NDP in my riding. It is why we will continue to do the good work we are doing. We are getting it done, not just talking about it.

• (1340)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to respond to a few things the member said.

He mentioned a conversation I had with his sister on her doorstep. What I said in the conversation is that the Parliamentary

Budget Officer's report on the Liberals' national housing strategy said that it left people in core housing need worse off. This is what we have seen from the Liberal government again and again. Yes, there are great promises in its throne speech, but when it comes to follow-through and delivery, people in my riding are still struggling.

There is a housing crisis. People are struggling to make ends meet and pay their bills. This is an opportunity for us to invest in a guaranteed liveable income, which would make a huge difference for millions of people across the country.

Does the member not think the families, workers and small business owners who are struggling should not have to pay for these investments, and that they should be paid by the people who have profited off this pandemic? It should be the ultrawealthy, who can—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, as I said, I do not disagree with the theory. It is the practice and application that I am concerned about.

The member referenced the Parliamentary Budget Office. The Parliamentary Budget Office only looked at a very, very narrow component of the national housing strategy. It did not include provincial transfers, which we doubled. It did not include the Canada housing benefit, a \$4-billion program. It also did not include the money we advanced in financing to non-profit parties to build housing, saying it did not understand this.

If we discount almost \$15 billion in spending, the Parliamentary Budget Office says we are not spending enough money. However, when we add the \$15 billion in spending, which is real spending on real housing for real people, we suddenly start to see results. If someone asks the wrong question or studies the wrong part of the national housing strategy, they come up with an incomplete answer.

The truth of the matter is that the national housing strategy is delivering new housing every single day, repairing housing, subsidizing housing and supporting homelessness activists right across the country.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary was somewhat critical in his view of chanting slogans, but I think we just listened to 10 minutes of slogans and more hollow ideas from the Liberals.

He raised the topic of the rapid housing initiative. Saskatoon is, in our view, a major city, but apparently it does not rank in the major city category in the rapid housing initiative. I was with community leaders on the day it was announced and they were quite excited, but I had to tell them that unfortunately Saskatoon did not rate in that announcement. We were left in the second stream, trying to fight for the rest of the money like everybody else.

Does the parliamentary secretary think Saskatoon is a major market for this? Why did we not get any money from the rapid housing initiative?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, Charlie Clark, the mayor of Saskatoon, has been a great ally in building this program. I have talked to Robert Byers of Namerind Housing Corporation too, one of the organizations that will hopefully access this money through one of the other streams.

There are two streams to this initiative. There is block funding for the 15 cities with the fiscal capacity, structural capacity, and population and data to support block funding. They can move very quickly in different ways simultaneously without having to do things project by project. Then there is the other half of the stream, which is open to all communities across this country. It targets the smaller projects in smaller communities, which can access it more than once for more than one project.

As I said, Namerind in particular has a really good project on the docket, and if the member has a project he is interested in pursuing, I would be more than happy to sit down and work through it. I would be happy to talk to Mayor Charlie Clark as well.

Solving homelessness everywhere requires us to invest everywhere. We will do it differently in differently sized cities because of their fiscal capacity, but no city, no community and no project will go unreviewed by this government. There is a 30-day turnaround. I am happy to work with the member opposite to realize this. It is not a slogan. It is a real policy with real money for real people to end the housing crisis.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary, in his rant about slogans and the NDP, said we never talk about the “how”. However, he did not see page 58 of our platform. He apparently also did not see the costing by the Parliamentary Budget Officer last September and again in February, when he was given an opportunity to vote in favour of how to implement a national dental care plan for people who did not have one.

Why did the minister not support the practical plan for a national dental care program? Why does he not support this practical way of getting money—

• (1345)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary has 10 seconds to respond.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, I acknowledge that while there was a press release from the NDP platform, the platform that is online does not include it. That is my mistake, not theirs. I take responsibility for that.

Business of Supply

As for why we voted against it, we cannot just move into areas of provincial jurisdiction unilaterally without consequence. We do not do this on the fly in the House. It has to be negotiated, and it has to be done carefully. That is why medicare took the time it did back in 1965 with Tommy Douglas.

I acknowledge my mistake with—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to speak in support of our motion.

Today we have heard that we are all in this together. However, prior to the pandemic many groups were already left behind, and their situation has been exacerbated by the pandemic. We know that our current social security programs are a patchwork and are insufficient. People are being left behind. These are disabled persons, people with complex mental health issues and trauma, people who are unhoused and living rough, unpaid workers, care workers, seniors, veterans and students.

Today we have talked a lot about taxes and saving Canadians money. Some have said we cannot afford this. However, it costs a lot of money to keep people poor, so let us talk about how much money it takes.

The World Health Organization has declared poverty to be the single largest determinant of health, and there is a direct link between poverty and high rates of incarceration. In fact, the John Howard Society noted that according to federal data, the annual cost per incarcerated person is \$115,000. This is the high cost of poverty. The Parliamentary Budget Officer did a study between 2011 and 2012, and it showed that each Canadian pays \$550 in taxes per year on criminal justice spending. This is the high cost of poverty.

I therefore find it peculiar that we are talking about the high cost of ensuring people are afforded human rights and dignity, something we are obliged to uphold according to our oaths of office and our charter obligations, rather than talking about the high cost of poverty. We need to create lasting and meaningful plans that use a human rights framework to address poverty. It would not be as costly as what we are doing now. There is a high cost to poverty.

This is about how we choose to spend money when we are in the worst global pandemic since the Spanish flu. We are in an economic, human rights and health crisis. According to an International Monetary Fund report—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There is a point of order from the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I have been listening extremely closely to what my colleague has said. I am not quite sure if I heard it at the beginning, but I thought she said she was splitting her time with the member for Elmwood—Transcona. I would like her to clarify that.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, yes, I will be splitting my time. I thank my hon. colleague.

Business of Supply

I will continue speaking about how we choose to spend money. The International Monetary Fund reported that Canada subsidized the fossil fuel industry to the tune of almost \$60 billion in 2015, which is approximately \$1,650 per Canadian. I have heard a lot of rhetoric from my Liberal and Conservative colleagues on trying to save money for Canadians. I think many Canadians would agree with me. They would rather see that \$1,650 invested in a guaranteed liveable basic income, a dental care program, an aggressive housing strategy, an indigenous-led housing strategy or a pharmaceutical program. It is unacceptable.

In fact, we know keeping women poorer keeps them in violence. It is not surprising that call to justice 4.5 of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls calls for a guaranteed basic income for all Canadians and indigenous peoples as a way to protect women from violence. Women have been some of the hardest hit during the pandemic. We have seen an increase in the rate of domestic violence go up 400% in some areas.

It is also not acceptable that the ultrawealthy in this country have made \$37 billion in profits since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis while families and individuals across the country have been forced deeper into poverty. There are more people than ever who are experiencing homelessness for the first time, yet we hear Conservatives and Liberals aggressively trying to protect their wealthy friends and their interests in big corporations.

We need to legislate a long-term and permanent plan that prioritizes people over corporations. It is time the ultrawealthy pay their fair share and that everybody living in Canada has access to housing, health care and a guaranteed liveable basic income. We are obliged as members of Parliament to ensure everybody is afforded human rights and dignity. That includes the right to a house, the right to safety and the right to security, yet I hear Liberals and Conservatives aggressively fight against that.

A guaranteed liveable basic income is not a new concept. We actually have guaranteed income programs in Canada. The OAS is an example of a guaranteed income security program. The CCB is another example. However, these are not liveable and they need to be extended. People are being left behind. Disabled persons, students, veterans and seniors living in poverty are being left behind, to name a few. Some people are living with severe mental health and trauma issues. We know programs have been successful as a lot of research has been done.

In 1970, the Dauphin mincome study was put forward by an NDP government. It was one of the most ambitious social science experiments ever in Canada. What it found was a decrease in hospitalizations and savings in health care. If we want to save taxes, we need improvements in mental health.

If we want to save taxes, we need to look after people and increase the number of children completing high school. We know there is a direct correlation between high school completion rates and levels of income. If we want to save taxes, we need to look after people. Participants in the Ontario basic income pilot project were happier, healthier and even continued working.

On the notion that when we look after people they will not work, I have to go with the research, which shows that is a totally false

and erroneous statement. Looking after people is a cost-saving, tax-saving measure, and it is wildly popular. It has cross-party support. I put up a petition that garnered over 43,000 signatures. As well, Angus Reid noted this summer that the majority of Canadians, 59%, supports a guaranteed liveable basic income and 60% of Albertans support a guaranteed income.

• (1350)

We need to look after the people who have been most impacted. Through research, we know that has been women, disabled persons, Black people, indigenous people and people of colour. We must, and we are obliged to, uphold our oath of office, which means upholding our charter and the Canadian Constitution, ensuring that all people can live with human rights and dignity.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I said, I do not disagree with the theory, and I do not disagree with the ideas contained in the motion. It is the practicality and the details that concern me because I want the system to deliver on the very goals that the member for Winnipeg Centre spoke to.

We have a dilemma when we start talking about indigenous housing and indigenous housing programs, insofar as representatives of the three national indigenous organizations have spoken to us about their concerns about creating a fourth stream that they do not run. I would be curious to hear from the member opposite whether she would support letting, for example, the AFN run the program in Winnipeg, or if indigenous leadership in Winnipeg should run the program by and for themselves.

• (1355)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, as we know, indigenous people have some of the highest rates of homelessness across the country. Housing initiatives need to be indigenous led, as put forward in our motion. Indigenous peoples need to decide how they want to facilitate that program. As members know, we have signed agreements and treaties nation to nation. It needs to happen on a nation-to-nation basis and at a nation-to-nation level.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, reflecting back on the comments from an earlier speaker, the member for Spadina—Fort York stated what I would say is an obvious statement. The government cannot spend one additional dollar of tax revenue in seven different ways. I would take it a step further as the New Democrats have done in this motion.

It looks like the motion is drafted as if it were a one-time COVID-related profiteering tax. Is this a permanent new tax, or just a COVID-related tax?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, it is time that we adjust our tax system so that people are paying their fair share. There is the fact that the ultrarich are getting wealthier and the fact that we have had consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments willfully choose not to go after offshore tax havens. We need to see a permanent shift.

We see a growing divide between the poor and the ultrawealthy in this country. We see a huge investment into what I call “corporate welfare” in this country. We need to change that. We need to ensure that people making the most are paying more and it is not put on the backs of the people who are struggling to even stay alive during COVID-19.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would agree with the parliamentary secretary. The principles and the theory behind the motion are not the problem. The problem is the practicality. Looking at the motion, I am going to ask the member two or three questions quickly, and maybe she can decide which ones she wants to answer.

What is the definition of a big corporation? Does that include businesses such as Apple Valley Foods in my riding of Kings—Hants?

The definition of “profiteering” in front of me is the practice of making or seeking to make an excessive or unfair profit, especially illegally or in a black market. Can the member give examples of companies that have done that during the pandemic?

Regarding the social spending the member is talking about, the PBO has said that this would cost \$5.6 billion. How do we pay for all the spending that she is talking about?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I find it quite peculiar that the Liberals will talk about how complicated it is to uphold human rights in this country, which is what this motion provides, yet it was not complicated to pull \$14 million out of a hat to subsidize the pipeline companies. It was not complicated to find \$50 million to give to credit card companies or \$12 million to Loblaw's, and it was not complicated that the first bailout when COVID hit was not for people, but for big oil.

If we want to talk about complicated, I will question why we find it so complicated to uphold our charter in this country and ensure that everybody lives with human rights and dignity.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

TOURISM IN KOOTENAY—COLUMBIA

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Madam Speaker, four national parks, four mountain ranges and two time zones span 64,000 square kilometres of the Kootenay and Columbia valley regions. Golfing, hiking and whitewater rafting drive the summer tourism, and a powder highway consisting of ski hills, heli-skiing operations and snowmobile tours sustain our tourism sector in the winter.

Statements by Members

Unfortunately, the health crisis continues to have a negative impact on our workers as these tourism businesses depend on income from international visitors. Further, without these visitors, sales at our duty-free stores like Kingsgate, Osoyoos and Tobacco Plains remain near zero.

However, there is good news. Countries around the world have begun to utilize rapid tests to secure safe passage for healthy tourists. Health Canada-approved rapid testing technologies will provide a safe way forward. There are healthy visitors looking to support our tourism businesses and the workers they employ. It is time for a safe economic recovery.

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, there is an increasing number of extensive studies from Quebec that show that French is losing more and more ground in the greater Montreal area, whereas English is gaining ground, and that this decline will accelerate and impact the whole of Quebec.

Until now, the federal government's language policy for Quebec has solely focused on strengthening the use of English, financing English-language organizations and lobby groups, and weakening Bill 101. However, for the first time since the adoption of the Official Languages Act 51 years ago, the Canadian government has admitted in its Speech from the Throne that it is also responsible for protecting and promoting French in Quebec.

The coming months will show us whether this government, which represents the Canadian English-speaking majority, truly wants to move toward a—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

[English]

YEAR OF THE NURSE AND THE MIDWIFE

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Madam Speaker, nurse practitioners began in northern Canada over 100 years ago as outpost nurses. In 1967, education programs in Canada began training midwives and outpost nurses at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Today, there are nurse practitioner programs across Canada, with over 7,100 nurse practitioners providing exceptional care to Canadians. There are advanced practice nurses who integrate clinical skills associated with nursing and medicine to assess, diagnose and manage patients.

Statements by Members

MPs value our publicly funded health care system and support the ongoing commitment of our government to uphold this. In these extraordinary times, in a world pandemic, we must recognize them and the WHO designation of 2020 as the international Year of the Nurse and the Midwife.

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POPPY CAMPAIGN

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as Remembrance Day draws near, members of my community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges join Canadians from coast to coast to coast in proudly wearing a poppy in recognition of the millions who have served and continue to serve our country.

As we do so, we not only acknowledge their sacrifices but also support the invaluable work carried out by our local Legion branches, for whom the poppy campaign serves as a primary fundraiser.

This holds true for my local branch, Local 115, Hudson, which works tirelessly to provide support and a place to gather for service men and women in my community. This year, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will not see our veterans selling them and we will not have the privilege of having them pin the poppies on us.

However, they need our support now more than ever. I invite all members of my community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges to buy a poppy at one of the many grocery stores and retail stores across our community until Remembrance Day.

[Translation]

On behalf of the community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges, I wish to express my sincere gratitude for all those who have served and continue to serve our country. Let us forget.

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[English]

DIWALI AND BANDI CHHOR DIVAS

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I wish everyone celebrating in Etobicoke North and across Canada a very happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

During this joyous holiday, also known as the Festival of Lights, families celebrate the triumph of light over darkness, of right over wrong, and the power of hope and knowledge. Normally loved ones gather to enjoy food together, exchange gifts, light their homes with candles and pray. We usually visit BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Sringeri Foundation, Sikh Spiritual Centre Toronto and Nanaksar Gurdwara.

These celebrations are a reminder of the diversity and inclusion that make our Etobicoke North community a very special place to live. They are also an opportunity to recognize the important contributions that Canadians of Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist faiths make to our country every day.

I wish our wonderful families a happy and safe Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

• (1405)

ANITA STEWART

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has lost one of the greats, Anita Stewart. A member of the Order of Canada and University of Guelph food laureate, she was an incredible advocate for Canadian food and farmers.

Carrie and I first met Anita 18 years ago in Elora. While planning our wedding dinner, Carrie was inspired by a cookbook on her grandmother's coffee table, *Great Canadian Cuisine* by Anita Stewart. One thing led to another and Anita's son, Paul Stewart, prepared the most amazing wedding meal.

Anita produced over a dozen Canadian cookbooks and was a tireless champion of Canadian food and Canadian farmers, always looking for new cuisine and connecting that to the farmers who produced it.

To her sons, Jeff, Brad, Mark and Paul, while your mother left us far too early, her contribution to Canadian cuisine and Canadian agriculture will live on. Rest in peace, Anita Stewart.

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GRADUATING CLASS OF 2020

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I was proud to attend St. Mother Teresa Catholic Academy's graduation ceremony, virtually, in my riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park.

From facing the greatest health pandemic in our generation to systemic racism against Black and indigenous people and the growing effects of climate change, the graduates persevered through so many obstacles to finish their high school year. Although the world they graduated into may not be perfect, this special cohort of students hold the key to shaping our world for the better. I am certain this graduating class will step up to the challenge.

I want to take a moment to thank all those who supported these graduates: the proud parents and siblings, the teachers, the support staff and principal Jose Flores for his leadership. I give a special shout-out to the keynote speaker, Jason Bogle, for his inspiring words.

We know that better days are ahead and I encourage all of our grads to live up to their dreams and to reach their highest mountains. Congratulations to the graduating class of 2020.

INDIGENOUS VETERANS DAY

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of Veterans' Week, Indigenous Veterans Day is celebrated on November 8.

It is a day for us to reflect on the enormous sacrifices made by the indigenous people who have contributed to Canadian military efforts over the years. As many as 12,000 served in the First World War, Second World War and in Korea. Many others supported these war efforts on the home front. All of them are owed an enormous debt of gratitude for what they did for us, as are first nations, Inuit and Métis people who still today continue to build on the long tradition of indigenous military service as proud members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Today, I ask that Canadians join me in thanking indigenous veterans for their service and remembering those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Let's not forget.

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GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everything in Canada is not okay. Our Conservative leader recently outlined a clear vision for Canada's future that builds a stronger, smarter and more inclusive Canada, a future that will provide certainty and stability for Canadians.

Children and youth of today need hope and opportunity, but this can only be achieved by Canada changing direction with a new government. Current policies put stock prices ahead of our country's long-term prosperity, our national interests and our economic security. It puts Bay Street ahead of Main Street.

Instead of the current economic experiment, we propose policies that drive economic growth across all sectors and re-establish investment in Canada, while still reducing emissions, policies that build solidarity, not just wealth and division. Families and community are core units of our society and must be strengthened. The well-being of Canadian families is a critical driver of a strong and prosperous country. The new goal of Canada must be the common good of all Canadians.

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[Translation]

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November 11 is Remembrance Day.

[English]

On Remembrance Day, we honour those who served Canada in uniform. Often we think about those who served during World War I and World War II. It is a day to reflect upon the sacrifices made by so many Canadians for the freedoms we enjoy today.

This year, I want to honour the role of those who continue to serve here domestically. In Pierrefonds—Dollard, in 2017 and 2019, and in our long-term care homes, we had soldiers serve here locally.

Statements by Members

• (1410)

[Translation]

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, La Presse and Le Figaro both quoted the Prime Minister saying that freedom of expression is not without limits. I am not trying to mislead the House. History shows that, unfortunately, limits to freedom of expression lead down a slippery slope to other things, such as sanctions, control and censorship.

Our democracy is a product of the Enlightenment, and freedom of expression was at the core of this movement. The French, with philosophers like Voltaire, were among the pioneers.

When I hear the Prime Minister say that freedom of expression is not without limits, I cannot help but think of those, all around the world, who fought and risked their lives for this freedom. Let's not forget.

I urge my colleagues and all Canadians to vigorously defend their ideas, in the name of freedom of thought and freedom of expression. A society needs these freedoms if it is to move forward and have meaningful and democratic debates.

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[English]

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Prime Minister a question about the challenges facing the airline industry. Not only did he ignore my question, but he chose to mansplain the issue to me.

Since I was appointed shadow minister for transport, I have met with over 70 stakeholders and I continue to hear from countless affected workers that the government has not been there for them. They feel abandoned and hopeless. In the throne speech, the Liberals promised to help by addressing suspended regional air routes, but we have yet to see any significant progress.

It is my job to ask tough questions and hold the Prime Minister to account for his inaction. The Prime Minister has never liked being challenged by strong women. When we ask him tough questions in this House, it is not because we are difficult to work with, it is because we are advocating for real people with real problems.

In the future, I ask the Prime Minister to put aside his condescending partisanship and treat women in this House with the respect that they deserve.

*Oral Questions***OPIOIDS**

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again I rise in this House to confront the silence of this Parliament about the killers that are on our streets. Those killers are fentanyl, carfentanyl, purple H, crystal meth and, of course, that demon pharmaceutical OxyContin that seeded this pandemic of heart-break and addiction across this country.

The city of Timmins now has a death rate from opioids that, per capita, is five times higher than the city of Toronto. I talk to communities across this country that are dealing with overdoses on the main street, rising crime rates and overworked staff. They look to the federal government for help and it is not there. Parliament needs to get serious about this pandemic that is ripping the heart out of our communities.

We need support for harm reduction, supports for mental health and addiction services and a willingness to go hard after the fentanyl labs. How many deaths will it take before the government starts to act?

* * *

*[Translation]***VETERANS WEEK**

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we mark the start of Veterans Week, which will culminate on Remembrance Day. This year's theme is the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. We must never forget that 150,000 Quebecers served in that conflict.

Today, my thoughts turn especially to my uncle, Private George Desilets, who was killed in action during the Korean War. He was a 21-year-old man in the prime of life, a man who would never know the joys of being a father or a husband. He answered his nation's call and went to fight in lands he knew nothing about. This was the epitome of courage, the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom and our democracy.

It is our duty to remember. On behalf of all Quebecers, all those who live in our Quebec, and the Bloc Québécois, I thank all veterans, men and women alike, for their service. They deserve our homage and our respect.

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*[English]***REMEMBRANCE DAY**

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we mark the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, we honour those who served and those who made the ultimate sacrifice and we reflect on "why". Why did these young Canadians leave their homes, their families and their country to fight overseas?

They did so for a greater cause. They did so for people like David Kilberg, a young Polish man sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp where he survived by hiding between walls and among dead bodies. His mother, father, sister and brother were all murdered at Auschwitz.

When he was liberated, he found his way to Canada where he built a successful business and would later serve as the mayor of

Listowel. Only in Canada could a young Jewish man, found emaciated between the walls of a Nazi death camp, go on to find such success in his adopted country.

On Remembrance Day and always, we remember.

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● (1415)

FERRUCCIO "FRED" FAZZOLARI

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege for me to pay tribute to Ferruccio "Fred" Fazzolari, owner of Fred's Bar and Grill. Fred tragically passed away with COVID this past week. He always strove to be the best he could be: family man, entrepreneur, brother, friend and champion to others.

Arriving in Canada in 1956 from Marina di Gioiosa Ionica, Italy, he was always an entrepreneur at heart and he saw opportunity and made the most of it. He wanted to see his name in lights, which is what led him to open the very successful Fred's Bar and Grill in Mississauga. Over the past 50 years, Fred's hard work, long hours, devotion and sacrifice were key to his success. He always went above and beyond to treat his customers, staff and our community like family.

Some of his best qualities were storytelling, engaging conversation and great sense of humour, which will forever be cherished by not only his family, but everyone he met. Fred leaves an amazing legacy behind. To his loving wife, Susanne and children, Richard, Lisa, Juliana and his six grandchildren, Fred has passed away, but he leaves our community and world a better place. My thanks to Fred.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[English]***COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister repeated that there had been no funding or staffing changes to Canada's pandemic early warning system. However, officials at the Public Health Agency say that is not correct. Staff were redirected to other departments. The system went silent for 440 days without any alerts after having operated seven days a week for 20 years.

Why is the Prime Minister misleading Canadians on the decision to close Canada's early pandemic warning system?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, our response to the pandemic has been guided by science, evidence and public health advice. In fact, in early January when Dr. Tam first understood the risk that COVID-19 placed on Canada, she convened the group of other public health officials from across the country. What I understood is that scientists in the Public Health Agency of Canada did not feel we were using the global public health information network to its best purpose. I have ordered an external review and I will have more to say about that in days to come.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister said that every step of the way they were seeking advice from experts, but these public health professionals say the government was too slow to respond. The government waited weeks after news of a virus out of China before it asked the pandemic health care professionals for advice.

In the meantime, Canadians were given the wrong advice on the border, on human-to-human transmission and on mask usage, including by that minister. Can the government now admit that shutting down Canada's early pandemic warning system has left us playing catch-up on COVID-19?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, every step of the way we have responded to science and evolved our advice to Canadians as the science has evolved. As all members in this House know, COVID-19 is a new pathogen and so much about the pathogen is still to be discovered. As we have learned through research, science and the development of evidence across the country, we have revised our advice to Canadians because we know that Canadians understand that science does evolve and that we will provide them information as soon as it becomes available.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister said they evolved their advice throughout the pandemic. Their answers are evolving to tough questions, as well. The pandemic warning system was shut down by what health officials describe as shifting government priorities. That is political-speak for "it was a political decision". Professionals dedicated to protecting Canadians from the pandemic were told to instead focus on vaping. The government has said that a review is going to be under way, but it has never said who is doing it. The minister has the chance to say that to the House today.

Who is examining the decision to close the pandemic warning system and will the investigation be made public?

• (1420)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that as soon as I heard concerns from scientists within the Public Health Agency of Canada, I ordered an external review. That external review is being planned as we speak. This House will know as soon as I do the names of the people we will appoint to conduct that external review. Of course, Canadians will have full access to the information uncovered by that review.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HEALTH

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are worried. Day in, day out, the Liberal government keeps telling them that everything is fine and that the Minister of Health has the situation under control. Some control. The Public Health Agency of Canada has announced that it can only do one-third of the tests it promised.

Can the Minister of Health admit that she does not have the situation under control?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over 9.7 million Canadians have been tested for COVID-19 to date. That is with, in great part, the contribution by the federal government of \$4.2 billion toward testing in provinces and territories so they can deliver on their responsibilities and health care systems. We are also supporting with direct lab assistance. Four federal labs are up and running to support provincial capacity, especially in case of a surge.

We will be there for Canadians on testing and all other aspects of responding to COVID—19.

[Translation]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a lot of money, but no action.

The Prime Minister promised rapid testing, but it took months and pressure from the Conservatives for him to finally act. Now the Prime Minister has promised more tests, but he has only delivered 30% of them. This delay is making the second wave worse day after day.

Can the government admit that it is all talk and no action?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since October 21, over 2.4 million rapid tests have been delivered to provinces and territories: 890,000 to Ontario; 577,000 to Quebec; 345,000 to B.C.; and 303,000 to Alberta. We will continue to approve tests as they are proven safe and accurate. We will ensure the provinces and territories have access to the most current technology.

* * *

[Translation]

TERRORISM

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I hope the Prime Minister took advantage of his conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron to offer his condolences, albeit a few weeks late, for the attack on Samuel Paty and the attack in Lyon.

Oral Questions

Members will recall that the National Assembly of Quebec and the Premier of Quebec strongly defended freedom of expression. The Prime Minister was the only one who tried to put this horrific tragedy into perspective and partly blamed the victim by saying, and I quote, “We must be aware of the impact of our words, of our actions”.

Did the Prime Minister use his call with the French President this morning as an opportunity to apologize for his unfortunate remarks?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really our colleague who should apologize for comments that seem to be presenting a different truth to Canadians.

The reality is that all of us in Canada and in the House were appalled by the attacks in France. We have said that we stand in solidarity with our French friends, and we do.

Today, the Prime Minister of Canada had a very good discussion with President Macron. Of course, we offered our condolences to the families of the victims. Let's not forget that Canada is one of the great defenders of freedom of expression around the world.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, two weeks to the day after the savage attack on Samuel Paty, the Prime Minister had this to say about freedom of expression, and I quote: “I think there is always an extremely important, extremely sensitive debate to be had on possible exceptions”.

As we saw with his position on academic freedom, the Prime Minister supports a limited, naive and inoffensive form of free speech. When exactly does the Prime Minister intend to launch the great debate that he wholeheartedly called for last week on exceptions to freedom of expression?

• (1425)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to remember that it was not 11 days. It was just one day.

That is exactly how long it took for Canada to react, to express its solidarity with the people of France. That is what I did the next day by expressing, on behalf of all Canadians, the horror that we felt towards the attacks and by stating that we would work together to fight terror and intolerance.

The Prime Minister of Canada made it clear that Canada will always be one of the great defenders of freedom of expression around the world.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken with workers in Quebec. They have told me about their challenges and the fact that they are struggling to make ends meet. Meanwhile, web giants are making record profits.

On one side, web giants are making record profits, and on the other, workers are struggling to make ends meet.

I am fighting for people. Why is the Prime Minister working for the web giants?

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

As recently as Tuesday, our government, the first in the country's history, decided to take on the web giants and have them contribute to the same degree as Canadian companies in the area of culture, audiovisual production and music.

The web giants will invest over \$800 million more in Canadian culture each year.

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, I spoke with Jennifer and Kane, Dominion grocery store workers who barely earn a minimum wage. They are front-line workers who are fighting for a living wage, all while the owner of Dominion grocers and others have increased their wealth, like Galen Weston who increased his wealth by \$1.6 billion during the pandemic.

On one hand, we have billionaires making record profits. On the other hand, workers are struggling to get by. Why does the Liberal government want people like Kane and Jennifer to pay for the cost of the pandemic and not people like Galen Weston?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that the front-line workers in retail and groceries have been heroes over the course of this pandemic. We will be there to support ordinary middle-class workers and do whatever it takes to be there for them.

We have not come lately to the debate around supporting middle-class Canadians. The very first thing we did when we came into office in 2015 was to raise taxes on the wealthiest 1% and cut them for the middle class. The NDP voted against that motion.

Over the course of this pandemic, we have extended record supports that have landed on the kitchen tables of nine million Canadian households.

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, the Prime Minister said, “Canada is back”.

Note that Canada did not get a seat on the Security Council. The Prime Minister does not inspire confidence on the international stage. After showing poor judgment on the issue of freedom of expression, the Prime Minister now has to grovel before the President of France to clean up the mess.

Why does the Prime Minister have to call the President of France, and not the other way around, as we saw with the Premier of Quebec?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform my hon. colleague, for whom I have a great deal of respect, that, in matters of international relations, it is perfectly normal for one to call the other. This morning in fact, I was in contact with my German counterpart.

The transatlantic relationship has never been stronger than it is today. At every opportunity, the Prime Minister and myself speak with our European counterparts and coordinate our positions with them. We will continue to do so, because in the world we live in today, we need to work with countries that share the same values and principles. That is exactly what we are doing and what we will continue to do.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know the Prime Minister will be calling the French President today. That is called playing catch-up, like when a team is bringing up the rear. The Liberal Party likes talking about “Team Canada”. Team Canada is bringing up the rear internationally.

Will the Prime Minister explain to the French President why his defence of free speech was so limp, or will he tell him what he really thinks, which is that free speech is not without limits?

• (1430)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving me an opportunity to tell Canadians how Canada has been playing a leadership role around the world.

We stepped up for Nagorno-Karabakh, we stepped up in Belarus, we stepped up for the Uighurs. We have stepped up for human rights and freedom of expression.

I challenge parliamentarians to look at Canada's record on working with its partners to advance human rights and the values and principles that matter to Canadians across the country.

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[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has blamed COVID-19 for its failure to deliver on an action plan for murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. Do those members not realize that domestic violence is increasing during this pandemic and lives are at risk every day?

Chief Constance Big Eagle has asked “How many more women need to die until Canada recognizes that something needs to be done and this can’t be put on the backburner any longer?”

Will the minister answer her poignant question?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hearts are with the families and survivors of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, two-spirited and gender-diverse people every day. We know that women,

girls and two-spirited people are still dying and that we need a national action plan.

I was pleased to speak with Chief Big Eagle yesterday. I think she is feeling that the working of the core working group and the ways that we will deliver a regionally relevant and distinctions-based approach and will—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a parliamentary committee of all parties called for an action plan way back in 2015.

Charlotte Gliddy-Murray, a family member who testified during the national inquiry hearing three years ago, stated, “After the inquiry was done, I feel that the government just dropped us. By us, I mean my family members. There was no follow-up whatsoever after we gave our testimonies, and that is not right.”

It has been three years with no follow up, no plan. Enough talk, when will Charlotte see action?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do find it a bit rich that a member of a government that fought against having a national inquiry, and that the prime minister of the day said that it was not even on his radar, is now finally listening to the families.

For the families, Hilda Anderson-Pyrz is organizing with the families, the Manitoba coalition and the family liaison units. We are working very hard to deliver a national action plan that will stop this tragedy—

An hon. member: When?

The Speaker: I will remind hon. members that heckling via video is not a good thing. We know who you are, we just do not want to point it out right away.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned yesterday that a prospective buyer has been found for the Come By Chance refinery in Newfoundland and Labrador. We know that the steelworkers union has been working hard to make sure that the refinery and its workers have a future, definitely a lot harder than this government has been.

Will the minister commit to an expedited regulatory approval if a sale is finalized?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are thinking about the Come By Chance workers who are facing uncertainty and worried about their jobs and their future.

Oral Questions

The Competition Bureau is looking at the situation and monitoring it closely. Certainly, the acquisition will go through the process it has to go through. We are monitoring this acquisition closely. We are looking at whatever ways we can support, and we will do so.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while this government is monitoring, the union is working hard to secure staffing and capacity numbers at the site so that if the sale is finalized, jobs will be protected in eastern Newfoundland and Labrador. However, we have seen that this government drags its heels on regulatory approvals, especially when it comes to energy projects.

Come By Chance is more than 500 jobs at the refinery and 1,400 jobs in the province. Will the minister, today, commit to expediting all approvals so that workers in Newfoundland and Labrador will have their jobs protected?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member very well knows, this is an independent transaction by independent parties. We are certainly there to support, and whatever actions we can take to support that transaction, we will be there.

Our focus is to support the workers of Come By Chance and to make sure that there is a future for them in all the projects that they are involved in.

* * *

• (1435)

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals tell us that they do not interfere in judicial appointments, but we are seeing some curious coincidences. For example, in 2019, the Minister of Justice appointed Robert M. Dysart and Arthur T. Doyle to the bench in New Brunswick. Both are donors in the riding of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. They also helped that same minister to repay a \$31,000 debt that he incurred in a Liberal leadership race.

Did the Minister of Justice have any discussions with the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs before recommending his friends and generous donors for appointment?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the process we have put in place for judicial appointments. We are currently appointing competent judges who reflect Canada's diversity.

The judicial advisory committees operate in a non-partisan way and make their decisions based on merit. We conduct checks afterwards, but I am the one who makes the recommendations to cabinet.

I am very proud of the results. We have appointed people of every political stripe.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I ask the question because the coincidences are very odd.

The Minister of Justice also appointed Charles LeBlond and Jacques Pinet to the bench in 2019, again in New Brunswick. Curiously,

they too helped the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to repay his \$31,000 debt. We then have four people from the same province who helped the same minister repay the same debt and are appointed to the bench in the same year.

Does one have to know the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs in order to be appointed to the bench in New Brunswick?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, our appointments are made based on merit after they are studied by an independent judicial advisory committee. In their work, JACs follow a transparent process based on the quality of the candidates and diversity. I am very proud of the results. We have appointed judges of all political stripes.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to the day that the Minister of Justice appoints a Bloc judge, but we will get back to that.

Speaking of coincidence, the neighbour of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs was appointed as a judge in 2019. The year before, it was his brother-in-law's wife. There comes a point where this all becomes too much of a stretch.

It reminds me of the time when Jean Charest was appointing judges in Quebec based on whether or not they were Liberals. He would be given a list of candidates with a Post-it note beside each name indicating how the candidate voted. Is the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs the federal government's new Mr. Post-it?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have introduced a transparent process that aims for quality and diversity. We have a process that enables us to appoint competent judges who reflect Canadian diversity. All appointments are based on merit. I am very proud of the results. We have appointed very high-quality judges everywhere in Canada.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to immigration, work permits are backlogged for immigrants who are already in the country. There are spousal and family sponsorship cases that date back to long before the pandemic. Sometimes it takes more than two years. Red tape is causing labour shortages in my riding and across Canada.

Instead of talking about 2023, could the government focus and prioritize the applications we already have?

• (1440)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we acted quickly to bring in a family reunification process for several families in June, families still navigating the immigration system.

I am pleased to have announced new measures to process applications more quickly. These efforts will contribute to reducing wait times and processing 6,000 spousal applications a month, leading to roughly 49,000 decisions by the end of the year.

JUSTICE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the Prime Minister's new judicial appointment process, the list of recommended and highly recommended candidates is shortened by the Prime Minister's Office prior to final selection.

Does the office of the Minister of Justice provide the initial long list, yes or no?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the process we have put in place to appoint competent judges who reflect Canada's diversity.

All appointments are merit based. Recommendations are made by advisory committees. Yes, we do due diligence, which is carried out to ensure the integrity, credibility and reputation of candidates in the legal community, but I am the one who makes recommendations to cabinet.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once the list of appointments has been shortened by the Prime Minister's Office, it continues through the process and is returned to the Minister of Justice for the appointments.

Can the Minister of Justice tell us if there are any recommended candidates who have replaced highly recommended candidates from the initial list of potential appointments? If so, why?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is describing a process that does not exist. We have a clear and transparent process that focuses on quality. The judicial advisory committee does the work and recommends individuals. We do checks on candidates, and I alone make the recommendations to cabinet.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has been told again by the Canadian Human Rights Commission that it is discriminating against indigenous children. Every time indigenous people are faced with injustice in this country, a Liberal stands up in this House and claims that they care, but when the Liberals are given a direct order to fix systemic racism, they fight indigenous kids in court instead. When will the government do not only the legal thing but the right thing, and start funding indigenous child and family services fairly?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the overrepresentation of indigenous children in care is a fact, and a dark part of our shared history that we must address.

This government has been crystal clear: We intend to compensate first nations children harmed by the discriminatory child and family services policies. Throughout this process, our focus remains on advancing a plan that prioritizes the best interest of the individual child and puts the safety, well-being and security of that child at the forefront. We worked closely with all the parties involved, and found consensus on a number of key areas and a safe compensation process as part of, in particular, the joint framework for the payment of compensation. We will continue with that good work.

Oral Questions

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the survivors of the St. Anne's residential school won yet another huge victory in court this week. The court threw out the arguments of the Liberal government lawyers who had done everything to try to deny the survivors justice. Even the attorney general in Doug Ford's Ontario was standing with the survivors.

The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations' lawyers suppressed the evidence of horrific crimes. She has spent millions in a mean-spirited legal war. When will the minister end this toxic campaign, and agree to sit down with Edmund Metatawabin and the survivors, and negotiate a just solution?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, to ensure the expeditious and efficient administration of the IRSSA, two administrative judges, one from the west and one from the east, were designated to hear all the requests.

As he knows, Ms. Brunning appealed to the administrative judge's decision to have the St. Anne's request for direction to be heard by the western administrator. The court decided to have the matter heard by another Ontario superior court because of the eastern administrative judge's decision to recuse himself.

We are absolutely committed to reconciliation, healing and justice for all former students of St. Anne's and all residential schools.

* * *

● (1445)

FINANCE

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know COVID-19 has affected all aspects of Canadians' lives, from their health to their livelihoods.

This month is the 10th annual Financial Literacy Month, and it is notably different than years past. Financial literacy can help Canadians navigate these uncertain times and access the resources that are available to them.

[Translation]

Can the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance speak to the House about the importance of financial literacy in these unprecedented times?

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Orléans for her question and for all the hard work she does on behalf of her constituents in Orléans.

Oral Questions

As we continue to implement our emergency support measures and look toward the recovery, it is important that every Canadian has the information they need to make decisions about their future.

[English]

Financial literacy also offers the important skills for well-being, from learning to protect against fraud to planning for one's future. Whether one is a young student setting financial plans in motion or a senior planning for a safe and dignified retirement, financial literacy tools can help ensure everyone has the support they need. Together we can continue—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nearly two million Canadians are employed in the charitable and not-for-profit sectors. As we all know, almost all of these organizations have been impacted by the pandemic and are hurting. In many cases donations have dried up, but yet their staff workload is increasing. We have all seen examples in our communities of how they have stepped up in unprecedented ways at a time of national crisis.

When can critical front-line charities and not-for-profits expect to receive support to help them bridge through the pandemic?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proud of the record that we have achieved with respect to being there for the organizations that are serving Canada's most vulnerable people. They are facing tremendous challenges. That is why we moved ahead with the emergency community support fund, with \$350 million provided to the Canadian Red Cross, the United Way Centraide Canada and the Community Foundations of Canada to act as agents to disperse that money to all the community-based organizations that are serving the most vulnerable people in this pandemic.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there must be a better plan in place as we begin the post-COVID recovery process.

Charities and not-for-profits will be integral in this process, yet as the service sector charities reopen, financial hardships will still be significant. However, major organizations that I am meeting with tell me that proposals before the government now are being ignored.

Will the minister tell us how he will ensure that these charities, which are right now providing child care, housing, food and clothing to Canadians, will be there in the months and years to come?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, providing \$350 million so organizations can continue to do their important work is certainly not ignoring them, as the hon. member suggests. In fact, we have been there from the beginning to ensure that the organizations we rely on to serve the most vulnerable in our communities continue to do that and increase that. That is why not only have we provided

the emergency community support, we provided assistance to food banks and community food programs.

We will continue to be there for the charitable sector. We know they are stepping up even more than they usually do at a time when Canadians need them the most.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Alaska to Alberta railway will create 28,000 jobs, provide another route out of landlocked Saskatchewan and Alberta for our exports and lower the cost of groceries in the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

Will the government join the Conservatives in supporting this \$17-billion private sector infrastructure project or will the Prime Minister let the application sit on his desk for six months, as he did with Teck Frontier?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a government, we are fully committed to ensuring that good, sustainable projects get built in Canada and that they are assessed in a timely, fair and rigorous way.

With respect to this project, as I said a couple of weeks ago, when this question was posed by the opposition, we had not received an initial project description. However, like with all projects, if we receive it and when we receive it, we will certainly assess it and do so in an expeditious manner.

● (1450)

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cancellation of pipelines has been felt across Alberta and Canada. With major capacity backlogs, railways cannot ship both Canada's oil and food production. Mismanagement and Liberal ideology imposed on infrastructure will hurt us for generations.

With ports clogged, railway backlogs and pipelines cancelled, the government needs to act or finally admit it is dividing our country by crushing Alberta's resource economy.

Will the government commit to a fulsome and expedited review of the Alaska to Alberta railway and not just more red tape and dithering excuses?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is essentially exactly the same question as was posed a minute ago.

As I said, we are certainly committed to ensuring that projects, as they come forward, irrespective of where they come forward, are assessed through a rigorous, timely and fair process. That is exactly what we put into place through the Impact Assessment Act, which is important improvement on the way we actually assess projects in the country.

With respect to this project, we have not yet received an initial project description, but if and when that is actually provided by the proponent, we will certainly assess it through the process in a fair, rigorous and timely way.

* * *

[Translation]

SENIORS

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, more than 60,000 seniors are in danger of having their guaranteed income supplements cut off if their federal tax returns are not received by November 29. We are talking about 60,000 low-income seniors whose life has been hugely complicated by the pandemic. Let us recall that, today still, those over 70 are being told to limit their outings to the bare minimum. For months, all in-person services have been closed and it is almost impossible to get any help from the Canada Revenue Agency.

Can the government reassure us that no seniors in need will have their guaranteed income supplements cut off in the middle of the pandemic?

[English]

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for raising this issue. I really appreciate her bringing it forward.

Right now our focus is on supporting seniors during this pandemic. We are focused on providing the direct financial supports that seniors need to help cope with added costs and work closely with our community support organizations.

The direct financial support, as the member knows, provides more than \$1,500 for low-income couples. We will continue to work to ensure seniors have the supports they need and to be there for seniors.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am being told about direct support for seniors, but I am going to talk about other cuts in assistance to seniors.

All over Quebec, messages are being received from new GIS beneficiaries who, in the spring, applied for the \$200 COVID-19 payment. They applied in time, but, since then, the silence has been deafening. The Canada Revenue Agency takes months to process files. The result is that, two months later, seniors have been denied the \$200 they were promised with the excuse that they missed the deadline. The government is cutting money from the most disadvantaged seniors because of pure incompetence.

What is it going to do to correct the situation?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, providing supports to seniors during this difficult time has been a priority for this government. We provided a special one-time payment to seniors on old age security of \$300 and an additional amount of \$200 for seniors on the guaranteed income supplement. That went to all seniors who were already receiving the guaranteed income supplement.

I appreciate the member raising this issue. I will look into it further and will have more to say soon.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been hearing testimony at committee from sectors that have had little to no engagement with the minister over the ongoing fisheries crisis in Nova Scotia. No peaceful resolution will come if the minister continues to refuse meaningful engagement with all stakeholders by shifting responsibility to a third party. The minister needs to take the lead on this. It is her responsibility.

When will the minister be meeting with all stakeholders to come to a peaceful resolution?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been meeting with all stakeholders since the very start of this issue. I meet with commercial harvesters on a regular basis as well as with first nation communities.

We know the first nations have the right to fish for a moderate livelihood. We will continue to work with them to ensure we implement this right.

• (1455)

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the community of Saulnierville has been ground zero for the fisheries crisis in Nova Scotia and the wharf is still being occupied by indigenous fishers. The district 34 lobster season will be under way in a few weeks and the fishers who pay DFO to dock at the Saulnierville wharf are wondering when they will finally be able to get back into preparation mode.

Could the minister explain how the port authority can get the wharf back so fishers can prepare for and start their season on time?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that these ongoing tensions have been very difficult for everybody involved. We are working diligently to make sure that we have a solution. We are working with first nations communities to make sure they are able to implement their moderate livelihood right. We are also listening to commercial harvesters with regard to the concerns they have, and making sure we are doing everything we can to address those. We will continue to have those conversations and we will continue to move forward to find a peaceful resolution to this ongoing challenge.

Oral Questions

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fisheries minister has been MIA when indigenous and commercial fishers are relying on her for answers. The motion passed unanimously at the fisheries committee gives the minister until November 20 to appear and explain herself to fishing communities and all Canadians. Nearly every witness we heard from has said the minister dropped the ball. She has been hiding for far too long when Canadians deserve answers.

Committee members want to meet with the Minister of Fisheries. When will she be ready to meet with the committee and fulfill her duties? Will she respect the November 20 deadline?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe I am scheduled to appear before the committee in November. I am happy to do that. I have been engaged in this file since day one. I have met with the commercial harvesters, as well as with indigenous communities. We know how important it is to find a peaceful resolution to this ongoing issue. I will continue to work with all parties involved to make sure we get to that point.

* * *

VETERANS

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as chair of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, it is an honour to stand and remind Canadians that from November 5 to November 11, Canada will be marking Veterans Week across the country. The pandemic has certainly changed things, but through virtual ceremonies, social media and more, Canadians will still have the opportunity to pay their respects to our veterans.

Can the minister speak more on the importance of Veterans Week?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Veterans Week is vitally important as it provides us with the opportunity to remember and honour all those who have worn the uniform. From the battlefields of Ypres to the mountains of Afghanistan and beyond, the service and sacrifice of our veterans will never be forgotten. This year, things look a bit different, but all Canadians are encouraged to wear the poppy, take part in virtual ceremonies and make sure we remember our veterans. To all veterans, we say thanks. Lest we forget.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Fort McMurray—Cold Lake has experienced many challenges over the past five years, including the collapse of oil prices, cancellation of Energy East and Northern Gateway, the horrific fire of 2016, the pandemic and floods of 2020, and now the upcoming clean fuel standard which may add up to 11¢ per litre.

Does the Prime Minister think it is wise to levy this new tax scheme in the middle of a pandemic in a failing economy?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, using cleaner fuels in our build-

ings, vehicles and industries is one of the biggest steps we can take to reduce emissions.

The clean fuel standard will cut pollution by up to 30 million tonnes in 2030, which is the equivalent of taking seven million cars off the road. It will concurrently create enormous opportunities for farmers and for companies producing renewable fuels. It will encourage investments in energy efficiency that will help Canadians save money, and it will promote the faster deployment of electric vehicles. It is an important enabler for economic opportunity and an important part of fighting climate change.

● (1500)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, a white paper entitled “Incentivizing Large-Scale CCS in Canada” was released, indicating ways to encourage investment. Construction of three projects could see \$2.7 billion in GDP across Canada and support over 6,100 jobs. These three large-scale CCS projects, such as Boundary Dam in my riding, could see over five million tonnes of CO₂ being captured annually.

The minister says nice things about CCS, but does nothing to encourage investment. When will he put his words into action?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly, CCS is an important part of technologies addressing climate change, and the Boundary Dam is a very good example of taking action to reduce emissions from coal-fired power plants.

Carbon capture and storage, as well as a range of other technologies, including hydrogen technologies, are going to be a critical part of ensuring that Canada can exceed its 2030 targets and can move to achieving net-zero by 2050. It will be part of the plan that we will be bringing forward to discuss with Canadians as to how we enhance our ambition, with respect to climate change.

Certainly, I look forward to talking to the—

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no one in the world more committed to clean energy production than Canadians working in the oil and gas sector, yet because the Liberal government has made it impossible for the private sector to build a pipeline in this country, we continue to import hundreds of thousands of barrels a day. After the U.S., the top source countries in recent years are Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Algeria.

Could the minister tell us if oil imported to Canada from Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Algeria is subject to the same rigorous regulation on upstream and downstream emissions as oil coming from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been there since day one. We approved the Line 3 pipeline with 7,000 jobs created. We approved, as well, support to Keystone XL unwaveringly, with 1,500 jobs created right now. We are building LNG Canada and creating thousands of jobs. TMX was approved. We are getting it built and 5,600 jobs have been created so far. NGTL 2021 was approved, with thousands of jobs created. Orphaned and inactive wells received \$1.7 billion, with thousands of jobs created, and the wage subsidy went to more than 16,000 resource workers and their jobs in a pandemic in Alberta alone. We will be there for workers. We will continue to be there for workers.

* * *

LABOUR

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us all the importance of supporting workers and businesses in communities across Canada. Ensuring safe workplaces for all, from coast to coast to coast, is vital as we rebuild our economy. In my community of Brampton Centre, businesses like Tandoori Flame and Taro Pharmaceutical Industries are focal points for our recovery and my constituents want to know what steps are being taken. Could the Minister of Labour update the House on how the government is—

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend all partners, labour, industry, and my provincial and territorial counterparts for working collaboratively to keep workers safe. In addition, I wish to extend my gratitude to the hard-working team at the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. They have worked tirelessly and quickly to help employers have the health and safety resources they need. These resources have helped guide employers as they live up to their responsibility to provide safe and healthy workplaces. Our government has invested \$2.5 million to assist CCOHS in this very important work.

* * *

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, due to massive cuts and total disregard by Jason Kenney's government, the Campus Saint-Jean, the only francophone campus in western Canada, is at risk of shutting down. The campus prepares many of western Canada's French immersion teachers. With-

Oral Questions

out it, kids like my daughter, Keltie, might lose the opportunity to learn French in school. Knowing that the Alberta government is refusing to support our vital francophone community, will the minister step in to make sure that people in western Canada, people like my daughter and others, have the ability to learn French?

● (1505)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her advocacy on the issue. Of course I want her daughter to have the chance to study at Campus Saint-Jean. We, as a government, want to make sure that we work across party lines to support Campus Saint-Jean, make sure that Franco-Albertans have access to post-secondary education in French and ensure all western Canadians have access to post-secondary education in French.

We really hope that the Conservatives will join us in making sure that Jason Kenney and the Conservatives in Alberta live up to their end of the deal and save Campus Saint-Jean.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I raised this issue on October 2, and again I ask the Prime Minister this: Will Canada stand up to protect our whales?

Recently, on the coast of Scotland, whales were stranded and found dead. It was connected to a NATO training exercise offshore. Exactly the same kind of U.S. naval training of bombs and torpedoes is planned for the coast off the Pacific northwest. The U.S. government plans to go ahead. The State of Washington has done more to protest this than our own government.

When will we stand up and say we do not accept incidental takings of southern resident killer whales?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands knows, our government is committed to the protection and the recovery of the southern resident killer whales.

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is leading the review of the U.S. Navy proposal. DFO is engaging with NOAA on this matter to ensure a common understanding of the proposed activities and the need to mitigate any potential impacts to whales and whale habitats. We will continue to work closely with our U.S. partners on actions we can take to protect this species.

*Points of Order***POINTS OF ORDER**

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

During question period we had both the member for North Island—Powell River and the member for Edmonton Strathcona interrupted in their questions by members speaking out virtually. Could the Speaker remind members and take serious action, so that heckling during question period is curbed?

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member. He does have a good point. I did bring it up, and I just want to remind the hon. members that when they heckle online it cuts everything else out and their picture comes on the screen. We know who they are. We do not want to name hon. members and embarrass them, but we may have to resort to that if this continues. I remind everyone to please mind their mute.

[*Translation*]

It is very important.

[*English*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I was informed following my member's statement that half of my statement was unheard. There was a technical difficulty. It is an important member's statement honouring veterans, and I am hopeful the House will provide me with an opportunity to restate my 60-second member's statement.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent in the chamber and online?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, as Remembrance Day draws near, members of my community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges join Canadians from coast to coast in proudly wearing a poppy in recognition of the millions who have served, and continue to serve, our country.

As we do so, we not only acknowledge their sacrifices but we also support the invaluable work carried out by our local Legion branches, for which the poppy campaign serves as primary fundraiser.

This holds true for my local branch, Local 115, Hudson, which works tirelessly to support our veterans and provide a place to gather for service men and women in my community. This year, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will not see our veterans offering them, and we will not have the privilege of having them pin the poppies on us.

However, they need our support now more than ever, and I invite all members of our community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges to buy a poppy at one of the many grocery stores and retail stores across our community until Remembrance Day.

[*Translation*]

On behalf of our community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges, I would like to express my profound gratitude to those who have served, and who continue to serve, our country. Lest we forget.

● (1510)

[*English*]

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I am in the same boat as my friend and colleague, and I would ask the House if I, too, might be able to deliver my statement to the House.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, today I wish everyone celebrating in Etobicoke North and across Canada a very happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

During this joyous holiday, also known as the Festival of Lights, families celebrate the triumph of light over darkness, of right over wrong, and the power of hope and knowledge. Normally loved ones gather to enjoy food together, exchange gifts, light their homes with candles and pray. We usually visit BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Sringeri Foundation, Sikh Spiritual Centre Toronto and Nanaksar Gurdwara.

These celebrations are a reminder of the diversity and inclusion that make our Etobicoke North community a very special place to live. They are also an important opportunity to recognize the contributions that Canadians of Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist faiths make to our country every day.

I wish our wonderful families a happy and safe Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

As we have had the opportunity for second takes, I would like to refer you back to the original point of order, which was that our members were also interrupted through the online heckling. I am wondering if, through you, we could find unanimous consent to allow them to do a retake of their statements.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: I want to remind all the members how important it is not to interrupt. That includes when I am speaking. I want to remind members not to interrupt in this chamber, but more importantly, in a hybrid situation not to interrupt. Taking the mute function off cuts somebody off and really makes it difficult.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

INCOME TAX ACT

The House resumed from November 4 consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy), be read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

The Speaker: It being 3:12 p.m., pursuant to order made on Wednesday, September 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-9.

Call in the members.

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

● (1515)

[English]

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for Calgary Midnapore had to leave the chamber prior to the vote concluding, so we would ask that her vote not be recorded.

● (1550)

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

(Division No. 20)

YEAS

Members

Aboultiaf	Aitchison
Albas	Alghabra
Alleslev	Allison
Amos	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Benzen
Bergen	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bessette
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Blois	Boudrias
Boulerice	Bragdon
Brassard	Bratina
Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Carr	Carrie
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Champagne
Champoux	Charbonneau
Chen	Chiu
Chong	Collins
Cooper	Cormier
Cumming	Dabrusin

Government Orders

Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desbiens	Desilets
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diotte	Doherty
Dong	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duval
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fergus	Fillmore
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gallant	Garneau
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Généreux
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Gould
Gourde	Gray
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hallan
Harder	Hardie
Harris	Hoback
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Jaczek	Jansen
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kelloway	Kelly
Kent	Khalid
Khera	Kitchen
Kmiec	Koutrakis
Kram	Kurek
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lake	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lawrence	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Lukiwski	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKenzie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Maloney	Manly
Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
McPherson	Melillo
Mendès	Mendicino

Business of Supply

Michaud	Miller
Monsef	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Morrissey	Motz
Murray	Nater
Ng	Normandin
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Toole	Patzner
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Poilievre
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rayes
Redekopp	Regan
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rood
Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Sahota (Brampton North)	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schmale
Schulte	Seeback
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shin
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Simms	Singh
Sloan	Sorbara
Soroka	Spengemann
Stanton	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tabbara	Tassi
Thériault	Tochor
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Van Bynen	van Koevorden
Van Popta	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vignola
Virani	Vis
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williamson
Wilson-Raybould	Wong
Yip	Young
Yurdiga	Zahid
Zann	Zimmer
Zuberi— 323	

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Wednesday, November 4, 2020, the bill stands referred to a committee of the whole.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 37 minutes.

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (House Leader of the Official Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to express this very important point of view on this Thursday afternoon. We will all have noted that the vote went very well and we intend to do so for all subsequent votes.

I would like to remind Canadians who may be listening to us that next week we will not be on vacation, but we will instead be working in our ridings.

I invite the Leader of the Government to tell us what is on the agenda of parliamentary business.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question.

This afternoon, as planned, we are continuing with the NDP opposition day debate.

[English]

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the parties for their collaboration and co-operation on this very important bill for all Canadians.

Tomorrow we will take up and complete the report stage and third reading of this bill.

[Translation]

Next week, as my colleague said, we will not be on vacation, but rather working hard in our ridings across Canada.

When we return on November 16, we will begin report stage and third reading of Bill C-3, which deals with training for judges.

The Wednesday and Thursday of that week will be devoted to Bill C-10, the important broadcasting bill that we really like.

Lastly, my colleague will be pleased to know that Tuesday, November 17, 2020, will be an opposition day.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—TAX MEASURES TO SUPPORT CANADIANS

(The House resumed consideration of the motion)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. During the debate on the opposition motion from the NDP, in my speech I meant to say, “Homelessness is a policy choice fuelled by both the Liberals and Conservatives. A commitment of building 300,000 new, permanent affordable and supportive housing units is a good start.” I might have misspoken, where, instead of saying “300,000” it might have registered as “3,000”. I just wanted to correct the record to make sure that the sentence reads, “A commitment of building 300,000 new, permanent affordable and supportive housing units is a good start.”

• (1555)

The Speaker: We will take that into consideration and check that out.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be in the House today to speak to the NDP motion, which is drawing a straight line from the inequalities that existed before the pandemic, the situation that so many Canadians find themselves in now and exacerbated by different issues, whether that be poverty or people living with disabilities, seniors or indigenous people who face particular challenges in the pandemic context, right through to the question of how we build a better Canada on the other side. All these things are connected.

I have had occasion to talk in the House before about some of the very real challenges that Canadians are facing right now in the midst of this pandemic. Some of those challenges come from before the pandemic and have just been made worse by the pandemic. Some of them are new problems. When we are trying to solve those problems, we should be thinking about how we emerge from this on the other side in a much better state and with much less inequality between Canadians.

One of the groups I want to speak about I have not had the opportunity to speak about in the House so far, but I want to raise them as an example of how we can respond to a current crisis and then build for better on the other side. It is the example of independent travel agents, who have faced real challenges through this pandemic because a lot of their income is earned on commission and, of course, that commission does not get paid until their clients take their trip.

They found themselves without income, supporting a lot of clients who have had to make alternative arrangements or, mostly, cancellations of their travel, and have been frustrated at the fact that they cannot get the airlines to reimburse their money. Now, in some cases, airlines are offering reimbursements, but contingent on the travel agents' sending their commission back to the airlines so that it can be returned to the customers.

Here we have a situation where there is a lot of hard-working people who are very frustrated, continuing to do work and getting by on CERB and now the CRB. They are looking to have extended coverage because they know that, even when they go back to work and when people start booking travel again, they are not going to see money for a very long time. It is not until those trips are taken that the commissions start coming in.

What is the significance of this? First of all, they are calling for a special extension on their part, because of their circumstances, for the CRB to apply to them. That is something that makes a lot of sense, given the nature of their industry. We want to make sure that Canadians get through this and come out on the other side without losing their homes, so that the economy can get back up and going as quickly as possible and with a minimum of disruption.

If we had in place, already, a policy for a guaranteed basic livable income for every Canadian, this transition would have been a lot smoother. It is something that we should be looking at doing because, before the pandemic, there were far too many Canadians liv-

Business of Supply

ing in poverty and after the pandemic there will continue to be Canadians who have need of assistance in order to be able to live with the dignity that every human being deserves.

When we look at responding to the current challenges of the pandemic, and I gave one small example of where there is serious need, and we talk about building for a better future, there is no question that a guaranteed livable basic income has to be a part of that solution. That is part of the motion today.

Another important problem that the pandemic has highlighted is the trouble that so many Canadians have in getting access to pharmaceutical drugs. That has been exacerbated by the pandemic because many people who were able to get that access by way of a benefit plan at work, when they lost their job as a result of the pandemic, they also lost their drug coverage.

I think that is another example of one of the real needs of the pandemic. All of those Canadians who had drug coverage and now do not because of a loss of employment, that is a problem we need to address. Many Canadians did not have drug coverage prior to the pandemic and continue to live through this pandemic without drug coverage. That is a problem that needs to be addressed as well.

• (1600)

The way to do that is not a temporary fix, but building a proper public universal national pharmacare plan that will cover everybody irrespective of their employment status, so that when there are large economic upheavals, whether they are because of a pandemic or the result of some other kind of economic downturn, people could rely on their national pharmacare plan in order to get the medication they need and would not be beholden to economic circumstances in order to get basic health care. This is something that has been the case with respect to pharmaceutical drugs for far too long here in Canada, and something that we absolutely need to change.

One of the other problems that, again, existed before the pandemic but has gotten worse, and I think threatens to get even worse yet, is the question of affordable housing in Canada and ensuring that everybody can put a roof over their heads. That has something to do with income. A guaranteed livable basic income could help with that, in terms of ensuring that people have income to pay rent, but the other piece of that puzzle is meaningful investment in public housing, of the kind that we saw in the post-war years and really have not seen since the 1990s.

There has been some new investment in public housing in the last five years, but it has not gotten us back to the point where provinces and organizations could engage in a consistent planning cycle over the long term. Restoring that capacity is something that is very important.

I want to make sure that I reserve time for what I think is probably the most important part of this motion. We can talk about all the things and all the ways we want to support Canadians in living a good life and living with dignity, but we do have to address the question of how it is that those things get paid for.

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I want members of the House to recall what my colleague from Winnipeg Centre, who spoke just before me, had to say. If we want to save money, the way to do that is to look after people and to care for people. I want to remind members of the House that, actually, we already pay a huge cost for not doing these things up front. We pay for them later. We pay those costs in emergency rooms and we pay them in jails, because people who are not well looked after end up interacting with the justice system and they end up interacting with the health care system. Instead of proactively, with their family doctor, they do it reactively in the emergency room once the problem has gotten so bad they have no choice but to present to the emergency room.

First of all, I want to say, and this is not just an article of faith, there is a lot of evidence to show that when these kinds of investments are made, serious cost savings can be realized to the public purse over time if the investments are made up front.

However, the really critical piece about this motion is to say that one of the ways we can pay for these things is, first of all, to recognize that since the pandemic began, Canada's billionaires are \$37 billion richer than they were in March 2020. These are people who can afford to pay more in order to ensure that the rest of Canada is able to get the support that it needs. Asking those folks to pay more is not a stretch. It is not too much to ask. Not only is there nothing wrong with that, there is something deeply wrong with a situation where we do not ask them to pay their fair share.

For far too long, Canada's richest families and largest corporations have been assessed at lower tax rates. They have been given options to funnel their money out of the country, and not illegally. They can do this legally, investing their money in tax havens. It is why the NDP has proposed a wealth tax on fortunes of over \$20 million. It is why we have proposed a temporary excess profit tax for the pandemic, looking at corporations that have made vastly more money since the pandemic began than they did last year, to say that they should pay a larger share of tax on those profits, over and above what they made in previous years.

That is how we are going to go from addressing the inequalities that existed before the pandemic, which were exacerbated by the pandemic, and land ourselves in a Canada that is more fair and better to live in for everybody on the other side.

• (1605)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to narrow in specifically on how the revenues generated from the two proposed taxation measures square with the spending priorities.

Is the idea here, and is it the assumption of the NDP, that all of these things can be paid for by these two measures, or is the idea more reasonably that these would generate over \$5.6 billion, because we know that would be from the wealth tax and obviously some more from the excess profits tax, and that this would then go to these measures but, eyes wide open, would not pay for these measures in full because these measures certainly would cost more than that?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, Canada is spending a lot of money right now, and I do not think there is a way, in this moment, to raise the money we would need to pay for all of the things

that we need to do. However, we are in a time that demands a serious response by government. I believe these are things that, once we are operating in a normal economy, if it is a meaningful priority of the government, we can find ways to pay for, and I think we have a lot of suggestions as to how we can go about doing that.

We are not suggesting today that there is a silver bullet to pay for the entire pandemic relief. Like all governments across the globe, we are spending a lot of money right now to keep our basic economic system afloat so that we can hope to come out on the other side. When we do, some of these things, like a national pharmacare plan, for instance, are all about saving money. It would not cost a dime more than we already spend as a country on prescription drugs. Some of these things do not actually cost money. It is just about organizing the way we purchase them in a different way in order to realize savings, and that would be \$4 billion a year in the case of a national pharmacare plan.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, to carry on in that same line of thinking, I am a little confused that these things do not cost us anything. I am a numbers guy, and to put numbers to this, we have \$5.6 billion of revenue that would come from this tax. On dental care, I believe the PBO has costed the program at \$1.5 billion. On pharmacare, the PBO said \$19 billion. The universal basic income is a big number; the Fraser Institute said at least \$131 billion.

These are big numbers, and you do not create money out of nothing. Your motion seems to assume that the revenues generated would allow you to pay for these programs plus the right to housing, which I did not add in here.

I would like you to comment on where this is money is supposed to come from.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member that he is to address questions and comments to the Chair, and I am not the one that will respond. I ask him to be careful of the language in which the question is being asked.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I would encourage the member to read the rest of the PBO report. It says that the program would cost the federal government \$19 billion. It also says that Canadians as a whole are already paying \$24 billion a year on prescription drugs, and the Conservatives like to remind people all the time that there is only one taxpayer.

This would go from the system we are currently in, where we pay \$24 billion for the prescription drug needs of the entire country, to a system where we pay \$19 billion or \$20 billion a year. As the member said he was a numbers guy, if he does that simple subtraction, he will find that it is actually a far cheaper way of providing prescription drugs to everybody. As well, we would be doing it in a way would not require Canadians to have a job with an employer that has a prescription drug plan, which would be far superior. I encourage the member not just to do the superficial scan of the Fraser Institute numbers on these things but to actually do some homework.

Business of Supply

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there has been a lot of talk in the House comparing this to World War II and some of the measures that the government put in place at that time.

It was a different time, when the economy was booming. There were industries that were certainly benefiting from massive government investment, but this is a time when government is putting out lots of money to try to stabilize the situation. In terms of the profiteering, what particular industries does the member and his party think we need to put further regulations on?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I do not think it has the same moral dimension as people who were profiteering from the war, but I do think there are industries that, if we look at their profits from last year to this year, they are much higher. There are some grocery companies, for instance. Galen Weston's fortune has increased substantially since the beginning of the pandemic and his company has done very well.

The question is in terms of what these companies have made extra this year that they likely would not have made without the pandemic. Do they get to take all that home, or do we say, wow, the country is really struggling, we are looking for ways to pay for the supports we need in order to keep the economy on track and these are companies that can afford to pay a larger share in these times? That is the real question.

• (1610)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is great to be here today speaking virtually to all my colleagues from coast to coast to coast.

I read the information kit for the opposition day motion put forward by the New Democratic Party, and I would like to start my remarks today by referencing an announcement that reflects where Canada is going during this very unique time that our country is wading through, as the whole world is combatting COVID-19.

We all know how the New Democrats view corporations. The connotation they have used within the motion and in their commentary puts them in a negative light. However, today, General Motors, a corporation, said it is investing in Canada. Along with its great partner Unifor, it announced a \$1.3-billion investment in reopening the Oshawa plant, which would create over 2,000 jobs.

We as political representatives often talk about corporations and ask questions. What is a corporation? Who are the people who work for them? In Oshawa—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately I have to interrupt. The hon. parliamentary secretary has a point of order.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, I know all of us are eagerly looking forward to hearing the rest of my hon. colleague's speech, but I think he may have omitted that he is sharing his time with the member for Halifax. I thought I heard him say this, but I am not sure.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the friendly reminder. Yes, I will be sharing my time with the member for Halifax.

As I was saying, the great folks in Oshawa received some wonderful news today from a corporation: Over 2,000 people will be hired back at the Oshawa plant. That is where the direction of the Canadian economy is going as we recover. It is great news for all of Ontario and all of Canada, and particularly for suppliers, for the main street in Oshawa and for the supply base of our tier one, tier two and tier three suppliers in the auto parts sector. It sets us up in a really positive way. This comes after the announcements by Ford, another corporation, and by FCA, another corporation.

When we talk about these corporations, we must remember they are people. The interesting thing is that a lot of pension funds manage money for nurses, front-line workers and teachers. They invest in these corporations. They hold their shares, they hold their bonds and they hold real assets. They are corporations of people.

Sometimes I hear rhetoric on the other side of the aisle, and it is frankly disappointing. I find it unrealistic. I find it shameful, to be honest. Yes, corporations across this country and across the world need to pay their fair share of taxes and be good corporate citizens. I very much dislike corporate cronyism, as I call it. However, at the end of the day, they employ Canadians. Small mom-and-pop shops depend on corporations. We depend on them. It is a beautiful virtuous circle.

I ask the members opposite, when we talk about corporations, to remember that these are people. These are people who create good middle-class jobs and employ millions of Canadians.

I will now move on to the main area I want to focus on: pharmacare.

The Government of Canada recognizes Canadians should not have to choose between buying groceries and paying for medication. That is why the government is committed to implementing a national pharmacare program to ensure that all Canadians have access to the prescription drugs they need. It is a goal we have been working toward since we first formed government in 2015. It remains our goal, as clearly stated in September's Speech from the Throne.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us all how important it is that Canadians have access to the medicines they need for keeping themselves and their families healthy. This is particularly true for Canadians who have lost coverage, or are at risk of losing coverage, during the pandemic. In response, our government is ramping up efforts to implement a national pharmacare plan that gets Canadians the drug coverage they need.

Our actions to date are concrete. The government is already acting on key recommendations from the advisory council on the implementation of national pharmacare, and our approach is in line with the council's advice.

Business of Supply

Given the scope of the transformation required to achieve national universal pharmacare, the council suggested it would be practical to adopt a phased approach to implementation. Guided by the council's recommendations, budget 2019 outlined foundational elements to help Canada move forward on implementing national pharmacare, including developing a strategy for high-cost drugs for rare diseases.

We recognize that for many Canadians who require prescription drugs to treat rare diseases, the costs of medications can be astronomically high. That is why budget 2019 proposed to invest up to \$500 million per year, starting in 2022-23, to help Canadians with rare diseases access the drugs they need.

Working with the provinces, territories and other partners will be key to developing a national strategy for high-cost drugs for rare diseases that allows us to gather and evaluate evidence, improve consistency of decision-making, and access and negotiate prices to ensure that effective treatments reach the patients who need them. In the recent Speech from the Throne, we committed to accelerating work on this strategy and expect to begin consultations very soon.

Budget 2019 also set aside \$35 million over four years to create a Canadian drug agency transition office. This office will set the stage for the creation of a Canadian drug agency, which will enable a more coordinated approach to assessing effectiveness and negotiating prescription drug prices.

We will also accelerate work on the development of a national formulary, with a comprehensive, evidence-based list of prescribed drugs. This will promote more consistent coverage and patient access across the country and help keep drug prices low.

• (1615)

All these initiatives must be done in close collaboration with the provinces and territories. They are responsible for health care design and delivery in this country, and their collaboration will be key to the success of national universal pharmacare.

However, before we can implement a national pharmacare program in Canada, we need to address the rising cost of drugs in this country.

As the use of higher-cost specialty drugs, or personalized medicine, increased, Canadians could not afford to pay higher-than-average prices for drugs. This was not sustainable. What could we do? The answer was not that we should spend more. We already spend more per capita on pharmaceuticals than nearly every other country in the world. We needed a solution to bring fair prices and sustainable drug costs to Canada.

Part of the problem was that Canada's approach to patented drug price regulations was outdated. Our previous pricing regulations were established in the 1980s. We have more than 100 different public drug plans and thousands of private drug plans, which means that drug coverage is provided by a patchwork of payers. It was well past time to bring these regulations into the 21st century.

To make drugs more affordable, Canada needed a modernized approach to regulating patented drug prices that would protect Canadians from excessive prices. That is why last summer the gov-

ernment modernized the patented medicines regulations that provide the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board with the tools and information it needs to protect Canadians from excessive prices of patented medicines.

We will now benchmark prices against countries that are economically similar to Canada from a consumer protection standpoint. This is known commonly as benchmarking. Previously, the price ceilings for patented drugs in Canada were set by comparing our prices against prices in seven predetermined countries: France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. As a result of this benchmarking exercise, the list of countries has now been updated to remove the United States and Switzerland, and to add Australia, Belgium, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain, for a total of 11 countries. Now we must deal with drug value and affordability.

We must also consider the value the drug offers and its overall affordability. Most other countries with a national pharmacare program already do this.

When setting a price we need to consider three things. The first is value for money. Does the drug offer a therapeutic benefit that justifies its cost? Second is the size of the market. How many people will it benefit? Third is Canada's GDP and GDP per capita. Can we afford to pay for it? These changes will provide the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board, commonly known as the PMPRB, with the tools it needs to protect Canadians from excessive drug prices, and this will bring us in line with the policies and practices of most other developed countries.

These regulatory changes were critical steps toward improving the affordability and accessibility of prescription drugs. Along with other consumer protection initiatives at the PMPRB, we anticipate these changes will save roughly \$13 billion over the next 10 years. This is a significant savings for Canadians. From the savings, public and private drug plans will have greater capacity to improve benefits for plan members and to consider new therapies that are not currently covered. All Canadians, including those with drug plans and those paying out of pocket, will benefit from lower prices of prescription drugs.

Modernizing pricing regulations complements the work already under way at Health Canada to streamline the regulatory review process for drugs by enabling priority drugs to reach market more quickly, and it supports—

• (1620)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately the member's time is up. He will be able to add anything else he wishes during the questions and comments.

The hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

Business of Supply

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I recall that back in August, the hon. parliamentary secretary laughed at Denmark's proposal to tax the most wealthy. Today, he wants to dismiss our plan to tax the most wealthy among us, the 87 families that have more wealth than the bottom half of this country. He defended them with the very tired assertion that corporations are people. Let us talk about those people. Let us talk about the Bezos-es, the Zuckerbergs and the Westons, all the people who have profited off this pandemic.

What does the parliamentary secretary have to say to the people on the front lines who we declared essential and who had their pandemic days rolled back, while the wealthy people he is defending right now have made record profits during this pandemic?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I have been in Parliament now for five years, and the first thing our government did when we were elected was raise taxes on the wealthiest Canadians and cut taxes for middle-class Canadians. We introduced the Canada child benefit, which lifted hundreds of thousands of kids across this country out of poverty. We created over a million jobs before COVID-19, and our economy is recovering faster than the economy of the United States, according to nearly all experts.

We are on the path to recovery. We are doing the right thing. We are going to keep lifting children and families out of poverty. We are going to provide housing. We are going to do the great things that people sent us here to do and voted for us to do.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned the PMPRB quite often. On that subject, one of the things we have heard a lot about is that is drugs like Trikafta, which treats cystic fibrosis, and many drugs for rare diseases have been unable to enter Canada.

Could the member speak about what his government is doing to ensure these life-changing drugs can come to Canada?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, to be frank, I have a nephew who has a rare condition, one of five in Canada. Rare diseases and rare disease drugs are so important too, especially for my family.

There is a special process for Canadians to access rare disease drugs. There is an application process they can go through. On Trikafta, I believe over 200 Canadians, if I am not mistaken, have applied for that drug and have received it. We are investing \$500 million into a rare disease drug strategy. We will be there for Canadians, especially our most vulnerable Canadians who are afflicted with a rare disease.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was appreciative of the member's preamble about General Motors investing again in Canada, bringing jobs in the manufacturing sector back to us.

The opportunity for all strategy to reduce poverty includes employment and pay equity. The member was just getting into the pharmacare and the fact that our government was saving over \$13 billion in drug costs for Canadians. We are working on dental care, but we need the provincial partners to be at the table with us.

Could the member comment on the complexity of getting pharmacare and our commitment to getting the job done?

• (1625)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely right. I am blessed to have Martinrea, a facility in my riding, employing almost 600 people in the auto parts plant.

With regard to pharmacare in our beautiful country in which we are blessed to live, we must deal with a fiscal federation. We must deal with the provinces on pharmacare. Each province has its own plan currently in place. We must negotiate with them. We have been doing so and we need to come to the table with a lot of good will, which we have. Our concrete actions in the last several years, including budget 2019, speak to the investment we will be making to ensure Canadians have access to affordable prescription drugs.

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to speak to the motion before the House today put forward by our colleagues in the NDP.

I believe there is much good in the motion and there is an opportunity for the government and NDP to reach common ground on many of the issues that it seeks to address.

In 2019, when voters elected a minority government, the clear message was that Canadians wanted us to work together on their behalf, to reach across the aisle and find a way to work together for all Canadians. I have appreciated the occasions on which the NDP has agreed to work with our government and on the side of Canadians to advance a number of key measures. I want to thank New Democrats for that.

I also know my colleagues in the NDP will remember just how quickly the government acted during the early days of the pandemic, in partnership with them, to pass legislation and get crucial supports to Canadians and to the businesses where they worked and relied upon. The pace of that effort was truly unprecedented, with parliamentarians and bureaucrats alike working around the clock.

Understanding the breathtaking complexity of getting that help to Canadians, it was astonishing to me that the NDP would pack an opposition day motion, a motion that is granted but a single day of debate in the House, with proposals and programs that would necessarily require far more time and far more consideration, and I would remind the NDP, proposals that would require the agreement of provincial and territorial governments.

In a single paragraph of fewer than 150 words to be considered for a single day in Parliament, the NDP is seeking to establish a wealth tax, a universal basic income, a dental care program, a pharmacare program and to immediately fund a housing program. All of this is in a single paragraph, fewer than 150 words, to be debated for a single day.

Business of Supply

The lack of substance in the NDP motion makes it an unserious proposal on matters that are of profound seriousness. In fact, the motion is much more of a slogan than an action plan. It is a good thing, then, that the government is already executing an action plan on a number of these measures and making substantial progress.

Let us call the motion for what it is. It is a motion designed to grab a headline and perhaps to win social media likes. However, for the benefit of the record and for the benefit of those watching from home, let us stick to the facts instead.

This government has a strong, demonstrable record on fighting income inequality and on fighting poverty. As I have already said, there are areas where the government and the NDP share common ground and where I believe we could reach a positive outcome for the people who sent us here.

This government has a clear plan to implement national pharmacare. Since the very beginning of this Parliament, we have told the New Democrats that we are here to work with them on a national dental care program. After decades of inaction on housing at the federal level, our government has introduced Canada's first-ever national housing strategy, which has already helped over one million Canadians find a home, and that is just a start. These active Liberal programs are the major sound bites of the NDP motion.

Therefore, let us address each in greater detail now, beginning with income inequality.

Income inequality is a real issue in Canada. It is exactly why our government made as its central focus, supporting the middle class and those working hard to join it. We were elected on that very promise not once but twice, and it remains a key priority.

Since forming government, we have improved tax fairness by closing loopholes, eliminating tax breaks put in by the Conservatives that disproportionately benefited the wealthy and investing heavily to crack down on tax evasion and tax avoidance. Perhaps most significant is that one of our very first acts was to cut taxes for the middle class and raise them on the top 1%. That was a measure, by the way, that not only did the Conservatives vote against it but so too did the NDP.

Of course, there is more to do to build a more inclusive economy and make Canada a fairer, more equitable place. That is why the recent Speech from the Throne announced, among other initiatives, limiting the stock option deduction for wealthy individuals at large established corporations and fighting corporate tax avoidance by digital giants. Surely, this time around the NDP will find it can support the government on these ongoing efforts to fight income inequality.

Now I will turn to poverty reduction. I am on the record stating that I believe a universal basic income is something that the government ought to consider. I have worked diligently with my stakeholders in my riding of Halifax to bring the case to the relevant ministers. Our government has shown that it is committed to ensuring that Canadians have the financial support they need to keep food on the table and put a roof over their head.

For example, we introduced the Canada child benefit, which has since been celebrated as one of the most successful supports for

low and middle-income families, putting more money, tax free, into the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadian families that need it most. Inexplicably, it was yet another measure that both the Conservatives and the NDP voted against.

● (1630)

As another example, we increased the guaranteed income supplement for low-income single seniors, improving the financial security of almost 900,000 seniors. We introduced the Canada housing benefit in partnership with provinces to provide direct financial support to help tenants cover their monthly rent.

Then in the depths of the pandemic, we came through for Canadians again. Nearly nine million Canadians received the Canada emergency response benefit, or CERB. Over 3.7 million workers were supported by the wage subsidy. Over 700,000 students received the Canada emergency student benefit. Millions of seniors and persons with disabilities received a special one-time payment to help them cover increased costs related to the pandemic.

Looking ahead, we still have the backs of Canadians as we forge a strong pandemic recovery. We have expanded EI, making it more generous and more accessible. We have introduced new benefits for those who will not qualify for EI but still need income support.

The Speech from the Throne announced our intention to introduce a Canadian disability benefit modelled after the guaranteed income supplement for seniors.

This government has been there for Canadians from the very start. We were by their side through the depths of the pandemic and we will continue to be there for them in the days ahead.

Let us turn now to national pharmacare and dental care as raised in today's motion.

Leaving aside the fact that this accounts for just 21 words in the motion, I remain puzzled as to why the NDP members would think this motion is a suitable vehicle to develop such programs. Of course, their leader has never fully grasped the constitutional division of power, as health care remains under the authority of provinces. This means we must work with our provincial partners on such programs.

To that end, we have been perfectly clear through the 2019 campaign and in the Speech from the Throne that we will implement national pharmacare. This remains a priority of the government and we will get it done.

A dental care program is also important. As I mentioned, we have already signalled to the NDP, from the very outset of this Parliament, that we will work with it on this program. These are important measures—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. I want to ask the members in the House to hold onto their thoughts and ideas as opposed to shouting them out at this point. There is going to be five minutes for questions and answers, so I suggest members jot those down so they do not forget them.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I was not shouting out. I was trying to explain to the member for Hamilton Centre that the member for Halifax was making absolutely no sense. I could not hear him. I was actually trying to do your work—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is not a point of order. I would again ask the members to hold onto their thoughts. If they are not in agreement, they can raise that during questions and comments.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member for Timmins—James Bay ensuring I can be heard in the House.

These are important measures. We have alignment, but there is a proper course of action that accommodates the complexity of these programs and the constitutional duty we have with the other orders of government to respect their jurisdiction.

Finally, I want to speak about housing and indigenous housing in particular.

I began my tenure in the House as the chair of the Indigenous and Northern Affairs committee. I know that first nation communities feature some of the worst housing conditions in the country. Nearly 20% of indigenous people live in housing that needs major repairs and 20% live in housing that is overcrowded.

We took action right from the start. Our 2016 budget included nearly \$600 million in new funding over three years to address pressing needs on reserve. These investments benefited hundreds of first nations, allowing the repair and renovation of thousands of housing units, while building housing knowledge, skills and expertise in those communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made indigenous people living in poor housing conditions even more vulnerable. Therefore, our government took action, boosting investment in shelter spaces for indigenous women with \$44.8 million over five years to build new shelters across the country. The recently launched rapid housing initiative is investing \$1 billion to create up to 3,000 permanent affordable units for vulnerable populations across Canada, including indigenous people. First nations, Inuit and Métis organizations have already codeveloped with the government distinctions-based housing strategies that meet their unique housing needs and these are backed by total federal investments of \$1.5 billion.

Business of Supply

However, we need housing strategies that are for indigenous people by indigenous people. Our government is now focused on working with indigenous partners and housing providers to develop an urban indigenous housing strategy that will advance reconciliation and self-determination.

I close as I began. There is common ground on these important issues, but slogans disguised as motions do not get the job done; action does. It is my sincere hope that the NDP will support the action we are already taking and will be taking for the people of Canada who are counting on all of us to get it right.

• (1635)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for talking about indigenous housing. Right now we have a crisis going on, especially when it comes to urban indigenous housing. In the Alberni Valley, where I live, over a third of homeless people are indigenous.

The member cited creating a for indigenous by indigenous program, an urban, rural and northern housing strategy. Liberals have not been moving forward on that. We have been hearing from grassroots organizations that they want this plan to be developed.

We are also hearing from people who are living the experience. Alice Sam from Ahousaht was just quoted in the newspaper saying that a lot of these people are coming from a place of trauma and not from a place of wanting to disrupt. Therefore, those who are hard to house are not getting the support they need. This is outlined in both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action and call to justice 4.7 of the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

The government has not followed through with its commitments for a plan or strategy, whether they are to the TRC or the calls to justice. It needs to do this. It needs to do this quickly. Lives are being lost and many people are vulnerable. In fact, many of them are ending up on the street, becoming prey to mental illness, addiction and the opioid crisis. Lives are being lost.

The government needs to stop talking. We need real action. The member talked about action. Let us see action.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his tremendous passion. It is a passion that I have great respect for and that I share on the matter of indigenous housing, and reconciliation overall.

Business of Supply

One thing we learned at the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs is that the crisis we are facing today took generations and generations to create. We are not going to be able to fix it in two or three years. It is going to take time to build trust. It is going to take time to have the required dialogue, and it is going to take time to get into the fine details of design, tendering and construction. These things all take time, and they cannot be accomplished with a snap of the fingers.

Discussions with first nations are under way in earnest, and the national housing strategy, which will be putting \$55 billion into this over 10 years, is going to go a long way.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member across the way mentioned the rapid housing initiative and has been speaking of housing in the north more broadly.

In my riding of Kenora in northwestern Ontario, we see many of these issues day after day. One of the things that concerned me when the rapid housing initiative was announced is that there seems to be a specific focus on urban centres when, meanwhile, northern rural regions and indigenous communities seem to have to fight for the rest of the funds.

I would ask the member why northern Canada and indigenous communities, more specifically, weren't offered a specific stream as part of this initiative.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, I appreciate very much that this is my first opportunity to have an interaction with the member for Kenora in the House, and I am grateful for that.

The rapid housing initiative is a \$1-billion fund that has two main streams of \$500 million each. The first \$500 million is going to 15 Canadian cities, as the member suggested. Those cities were identified based on their high levels of homelessness, the high level of precarious housing among renters and other factors. That is where the pain was being felt the most.

The other \$500 million is available throughout the country. Any community or housing organization has access to those funds in the project stream.

● (1640)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, we heard the member talk about and plead for, actually, the New Democrats to work with Liberals, yet every step of the way their policies have been a dream deferred.

What does the member for Halifax have to say to folks from Gottingen or Uniacke Square, the people who are waiting for housing and these types of social programs, when he and his government decide to vote against universal pharmacare, universal dental care and housing?

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, I am honoured that the member has taken the care and time to get to know some of the African Nova Scotian communities that I have the privilege to represent.

I can tell the member what I tell them, because I speak to them every week, and oftentimes more than once a week. I tell them that I am there to listen to them. I am here to connect them with the programs, which we have worked so hard to create, that will benefit

their communities and that have already benefited communities in Halifax.

There is more work to be done. I continue to spend a great deal of time and energy with those in the African Nova Scotian community in Halifax to help them be the very best they can be in terms of the economy, cultural recognition and all they aspire to be.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will start off by saying I will be splitting my time with the member for Timmins—James Bay.

I am really here today to talk about the issue of fairness. It is a bit disheartening to listen to some of the speeches from the government members right now. For example, in the last speech the member talked about housing. We know that over 90% of the funding for housing has gone specifically to Ontario, and B.C., the province I represent, got less than 1% of that funding. I can tell members that in British Columbia, the issues around housing are dire.

Today we are talking about a motion that is a vision to move forward. It is about fairness. If nothing else, COVID—19 has revealed, in a new and terrible way, the vulnerability of so many people in all of our communities. In my office we receive phone calls daily from people who are struggling. They are small business owners doing everything they can to survive, seniors, single parents, persons living with disabilities, families, single people and so many more.

When I talk to those people they are worried. They are fearful of the future and not feeling very hopeful because there is just not enough for them to get by on.

This is not the reality for everyone in Canada. I think when we look at what we are talking about today, that is what we need to focus on. This is about fairness and addressing the disparity between the very wealthy in this country and everyone else. We now know that over this period very wealthy people have become \$37 billion richer. They are making record profits during this pandemic.

We think of Galen Weston, the owner of Loblaws. His wealth went up by \$1.6 billion while his company cancelled hazard pay benefits to grocery store workers in June. These workers, who are, as so many in this place have said today, the unsung heroes of the pandemic, have some of the lowest incomes. They are being paid at a wage they cannot even survive on.

Jim Pattison's grocery store chains cut back pandemic pay while his wealth increased by \$1.7 billion during the pandemic. Chip Wilson, Vancouver real estate investor and Lululemon founder, saw his fortune stretch another \$2.8 billion. This is while so many are struggling just to make ends meet, to pay rent, to put a bit of food on the table for their family, and when people are running out of housing.

In August, the owner of Amazon became the first person to amass a net worth of over \$200 billion. That was up from a mere \$113 billion back in March. Amazon is not even paying taxes in Canada, but its workers are being exploited, and the benefits to that company are fundamentally huge.

This is a story of injustice that the NDP wants to start addressing. If we can find \$12 million to help Loblaw's purchase fridges, maybe we could find some money to actually invest in programs and supports that are going to take the most vulnerable Canadians and give them a hand-up, because they definitely need that.

I also want to address something I heard from members of the government today. Again, they were talking about how the NDP did not support the tax cut to the middle class. Let us be really clear. The motion that was made in this House made sure that people making \$47,000 or less would get zero, and people making above that, up to \$100,000 a year, got some tax money back.

I do not know how the Liberals experience the world, but the majority of the people in my riding feel that \$47,000 is a good income, and they deserve to get a little back because they work hard every single day to support our communities. There are a lot of very wealthy companies making a lot of money from the hard work they put in every day. It is my opinion we should be in this place fighting for their rights and their justice and making sure they have a fundamental right to move forward in their lives without all of these barriers.

I represent a rural and remote riding. In my area, fisheries and forestry have been the backbones of our economy for a very long time, and they are struggling. Fisheries are struggling because there are so many decisions made by DFO and the minister without any meaningful consultation or joint problem solving. Then we have the forestry sector, which is incredibly strong, but just before COVID started it went through a long and painful strike.

• (1645)

All of these communities in my riding that took a breath in, thinking, "Oh, thank goodness, the strike is over" were immediately hit with COVID. Resource communities work really hard. They built this country, and they are always left behind.

As I watch these big companies grow richer and richer off the backs of the people working every day in my riding, members better believe I am going to stand up and talk about fairness and justice for my constituents.

Looking at pharmacare, I want to remind the government members who are getting up to talk about their great dedication and how these things take time that 23 years ago the Liberals promised they would move forward with the pharmacare program. They have still not done it.

One in five Canadians, that is 7.5 million people in this country, have either no prescription drug insurance at all or inadequate insurance to cover their medication needs. What that means is one in five Canadian households, just in this past year, report a family member who did not take their prescribed medication because they simply could not afford it.

Business of Supply

I was recently contacted by a constituent in my riding. She earns a low income, and she has worked hard her whole life. She has just been diagnosed with diabetes and cannot afford her medication. Another constituent just contacted my office and his partner has just been diagnosed with terminal cancer. The medication, even with his insurance, is over \$1,000 a month.

When I look at what has happened in the last few months with COVID, dispensing fees have increased because people are not able to take the full amount of medication they are used to. Instead of three months, it is down to one month. That means seniors and low-income families are really struggling, because they cannot afford those extra dispensing fees. Some of us have the privilege of thinking that is a small fee, that we can pay that. However, for low-income families, that is not a small fee.

Canada should not be a country where a doctor can take someone into their office and diagnose them with something, and they walk out of the office not being able to afford that medication.

Let us talk about dental care. Let us talk about a vision where people actually get the dental care they deserve. The PBO costed out our dental care program, and it would save money. It would be reasonable to cost. I think about how many people contacted me when we put forward this idea. I was actually shocked. I knew it was an issue, but until we actually started talking about it, I did not know to what degree.

In one of my communities, a local dentist organized a bunch of dentists to come together one day a year, to work on people's teeth. The lineup starts at 6:00 a.m. and is so long they have yet to get through it. The need is dire, and this is a matter of justice.

When we talk about a guaranteed basic livable income, which is another very important issue because it really targets the people who need it. Yesterday I had the pleasure to host a virtual town hall on seniors with Laura Tamblyn Watts from CanAge and Isobel Mackenzie, the B.C. seniors advocate.

What we heard, again and again, is that poverty for seniors is increasing. The government gave a one-time payment of \$300 for seniors who are receiving OAS, and an extra \$200 for those receiving GIS. The members of our community, the seniors of our community receiving the guarantee income supplement desperately need more than just a one-time payment of \$200. I would even recommend a full \$500 should be given to help these people, just to have a common sense of dignity.

Business of Supply

I look at housing for seniors. We just had a new homeless bridging house set up in our community in Campbell River. There are only 20 beds and over 70 applications. The majority of the applicants are seniors who are begging for a place to stay. I think about Port Hardy in my riding, which is working so hard to get some housing for seniors so it can keep them in the northern part of the riding. All of that work is being done independently of any support.

I think of the poverty law advocacy program in Powell River that let us know they have seniors coming in again and again because they cannot fight the system. This is unacceptable in our country.

I hope that the people in this House understand that this is a vision for moving forward that will give absolute supports to the people who deserve it. We will hold to account those big corporations that are making profits from a pandemic. It is the right thing to do. I hope people will stand up for it, because it is certainly time.

• (1650)

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 appreciate some of the comments the member has put on the record.

I, too, would like to see a lot of things happen. It does become a bit of a challenge at times, in terms of being able to make it happen. Let me give a specific example and follow it with a question.

I am sure the member is fully aware that in order to maximize the benefits of a national pharmacare program, the provinces have to be onside. If the provinces are not onside, the benefits of a pharmacare program cannot be maximized.

Does the member believe, as I do, that there is a responsibility for Ottawa to work with provinces to try to develop the best national pharmacare program possible for Canadians?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I think it is absolutely imperative. My problem is it has been 23 years. I am sure the Liberals could have worked it out with the provinces if they had started when they promised it.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I applaud the member opposite's passion for her community and for her citizens, but I have come to one of the revenue provisions that has been contemplated: the taxation of excess profits.

My question is twofold. First, is there a working definition that has been embedded in the motion, or is there one that is being contemplated? Second, what would that cover? Would it cover something like an item being sold for \$10,000 more than its \$13,000 value, such as something like ventilators? Is that what is being contemplated?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that very interesting and important question.

I outlined fairly clearly at the beginning of my speech the \$37 billion made by some of these very wealthy corporations, distinctly off the pandemic. We have to separate people who are working hard, who have successful businesses of various sizes, and who understand that we are asking the most wealthy to pay their fair share.

We are also asking the government to be accountable for the decisions that it makes: \$12 million on refrigerators for Loblaws, or maybe, as one constituent in my riding said, a little something for their small business that would take them to the next level and allow them to provide more jobs in my riding. I come from a rural and remote riding. I would like to see the government pitching in and making sure that those businesses get the support that they need to grow and support regions like ours.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated hearing my hon. colleague. She did a fantastic job of outlining what is at stake here for people. As the NDP status of women critic, I am constantly hearing about the struggles of women and how this pandemic has hurt women, in particular. We hear about the amount of work they do that is unpaid and how they struggle, often as single mothers, just trying to keep food on the table and roofs over their families' heads.

I would like to ask the hon. member about the gender discrimination of poverty, how it is impacting women in her riding, and how this motion could specifically help some of those women.

• (1655)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, this is such an important reality that women face. I remember knocking on a door and having one woman say to me, "I really want to work, but by the time I get my pay I get \$20 because everything else goes to child care costs, so I am not working because it is cheaper in many ways for me to not work." Women are making decisions that are not decisions. They are forced into positions that they should not be.

I think of a message that I just got from Jen in my riding. She said to me, "I am a single mom, and my kids cannot go to school and I cannot get child care, so I am saving up to pay back the \$2,000 I get every month." I am going to make sure she knows she does not have to, but this is the reality.

They are hard-working women who are totally put in a place where they cannot make the best decisions for themselves and their families, and they are often left. That is invisible work that should be valued better, and this is a motion that would start moving us in a direction where justice would be in place for women across Canada.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am proud, as always, to stand in the House and represent the great people of Timmins—James Bay. What we have learned during this pandemic is that the pandemic has been a very hard teacher, but it has made things very clear.

Business of Supply

For decades, we have seen growing inequality in Canada and a growing split across the economies of North America and Europe. When our veteran grandparents came back from the Second World War, they built the middle class, but we have watched their gains be chipped away by Liberal and Conservative policies favouring the movement of capital and the undermining of basic worker rights, such as pensions and security. When COVID hit, millions of Canadians suddenly did not have enough money to pay rent at the end of the month. That is how precarious people were.

We are dealing with small businesses that are not able to get by. My problem with the Liberals is they have some of the best policies in the world, in terms of what they say, but they do not deliver on them. We hear the government talking about rent support and how it is supporting people, but I am getting calls from businesses asking where that support is because they cannot survive this week. Our Prime Minister had all the time to prorogue to get away from the Kielburger brother scandal because he does not know what it is like to try to get by as a small business.

This motion is about the two Canadas that have emerged. We know that while some people lost their businesses, struggled to get by and had to rely on the payments we forced the government to provide to get people to the end of each month, other people made out like bandits.

The pandemic has been great for billionaires. We look at Galen Weston, with \$1.6 billion in extra profits, while Dominion workers who were barely getting by on minimum wage in Newfoundland are now out on strike, getting nothing. This is the same Galen Weston who lives in a gated community and who the Prime Minister gave \$12 million to fix his fridges. My mother calls me complaining that Galen Weston got \$12 million to fix fridges, when seniors have nothing. I tell her I know, but that is what the Liberals do. Chip Wilson, a Vancouver billionaire, made \$2.8 billion during the pandemic. Jim Pattison made \$1.7 billion. They are making a level of income that is far beyond anything we have seen in the past.

Our motion has made the Liberals and Conservatives flip their biscuit. They think it is outrageous socialism, this 1% tax on those making over \$20 million. The PBO costed it out, saying it would bring in \$5.6 billion. An enormous amount of money will need to go out from the federal government to get people through the pandemic, so it is fairly reasonable to say those who are making massive excess profits in the billions could pay their fair share. I would say that 1% is not even fair. That is a steal.

What we have to talk about is breaking down this myth of the middle class and those wanting to join it, which is what the Prime Minister says all the time. If the Prime Minister's speeches were a Liberal drinking game, we would be bombed after four minutes because every time we turn around he says something about the middle class and those wanting to join it. The reality is that I grew up, and my dad grew up, in a really different middle class from the one the Prime Minister grew up in. Maybe the Prime Minister does not know what built the middle class.

What we have seen from the Parliamentary Budget Office is that the top 1% in Canada now own over 25% of the wealth. That is a staggering disconnect. What is even more frightening is that the bottom 40% of Canadians have only 1.2% of the wealth. There is

something wrong in our society. This society was built on hard work, going to school, getting an education, building a business, accumulating savings and getting kids to university, but the bottom 40% of Canada only have 1.2% of the wealth.

● (1700)

That is not a natural state of affairs, although Bill Morneau thought it was natural. He told all the young people who are facing massive levels of student debt and precarious work, "Hey, it is the new normal." It is not normal. It is the result of policies.

What we need to look at is how we actually recalibrate the tax policies in this country. I ran a small business. We spent most of our time just trying to figure out our taxes. It was a nightmare, yet Amazon pays no tax.

I raise the issue of Amazon because that was a line-in-the-sand moment for me. I realize there was talk and a time when it was really amazing how all of us, as parliamentarians, were coming together and working together in the pandemic, but that moment was when the Prime Minister came out and said that Canada's partner in fighting the pandemic was going to be Jeff Bezos and Amazon. Amazon is one of the most rotten companies on the planet. It made \$11 billion in profit in the United States and paid no tax. It does not pay taxes in Canada. Amazon's vice-president, Tim Bray, quit because of the horrific, abusive conditions that workers were facing in Amazon warehouses during the COVID pandemic, and the Prime Minister said we should make Amazon our partner. I say that because Jeff Bezos is so far beyond billionaire status, it is hard to even classify what planet he lives on.

Amazon has been ripping the heart out of small business, and small downtown Canada. Its business model has been to underprice everything, so that during the pandemic it has been making that kind of money. However, it was the Prime Minister who reached out to Jeff Bezos and said, "Hey, you don't pay taxes in Canada." While 19,000 Amazon workers suffered through COVID illnesses because of crappy working conditions, our Prime Minister reached out his hand to Jeff Bezos to say that was the company that Canada wanted to work with instead of local Canadian businesses, instead of local Canadian support. It is this disconnect with the billionaire class that we need to start taking on.

We talk about the issue of precarious work, with people not having savings and being stuck in debt. The crisis of workers in Canada is no longer simply working class. There is a new working class in Canada, and it is very much white collar.

Business of Supply

My father was a miner's son. He had to quit school at 16 to go to work. My mom was a miner's daughter. She quit school at 15. My dad was really good at mathematics, so instead of getting him to go underground they got him a job at a brokerage office. When my dad was 40, he made enough money to go to university. That was our trip into the middle class. With my dad getting an education, he became a professor of economics and because he had an education, he got a job. He bought a little house. He bought one car and when it died, it stayed in the driveway for about 15 years until the local high school came and asked if it could have the car for parts. That was my dad. He was not going to buy anything else. He saved everything, so that when he died, my mom would have a proper pension. That was the middle class.

My neighbours, when we moved to Toronto, had one income, but their family went to university. They owned their home.

I look at the precarious nature of work today, and how students go to university and come out with \$100,000 worth of debt. Twenty-two percent of Canadian professionals are in precarious work situations. I have talked to people who want to become professors. They make less money than they would at McDonald's. It is the new business model. The problem with that business model is without having a society where people have stability in their income and in their savings, they end up being in situations where they cannot retire and where they live in poverty.

We have a government that makes all kinds of promises. God almighty, when it told us about rapid indigenous housing, what a scam it was to say it would be rapid. I have never seen a rapid indigenous housing plan, ever, from the Liberals. They are now saying they are taxing the web giants. That is not true. They are not going near the web giants.

Pharmacare was one of the greatest hits of 1997. Was that not during the years of the Spice Girls? I will tell my colleagues what I want, what I really, really want: I want to hear the Liberals stop saying they are serious about pharmacare and actually deliver it.

We are hearing a lot from the government, but it is not taking action. This is a simple thing to do: 1% tax on income over \$20 million. That would help to pay, so that we can have a fair, and a better, society.

• (1705)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite certainly raised a number of very interesting points. One thing I want to key in on is that he talked about Liberal and Conservative policies having allowed for the movement of capital, and I assume he means the movement of global capital. He mentioned the fact that his father was a professor of economics and had worked in the mining industry, which I know is so important in the Timmins area.

I do not know the Timmins mining industry as well as he would, but I believe Newmont and Pan American Silver would have that free moving capital from other places of jurisdiction that help employ individuals in his area. Surely he is not suggesting that the movement of capital in foreign direct investment is a problem in this country.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, what the Liberals do not seem to understand is what happens if one does not have capital that has some kind of obligation to invest. For example, in the 2008 economic downturn, we put billions into companies like Bombardier, which turned around and started shipping their jobs to Mexico. That is a problem. That is a serious problem.

I forgot to mention the Liberal housing plan. The member for Spadina—Fort York, wherever the member is, has been telling us all about the work the Liberals have done. He is the guy who said they helped a million people, but then the Toronto Star debunked it and he said that it was rhetorical advantage.

I want to bring members to page 4 of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report. Never let it be said that I said a nice thing about Stephen Harper, but it said that the government's spending on affordable housing is 19% less than under Stephen Harper's plan. Imagine, it is 19% less than the Harper government, which did nothing on housing. I just thought it would be good to get that on the record.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, there are 900 Canadians in the Panama papers. When we talk about capital flight, this money is already going offshore.

I know the hon. member's riding is hundreds of kilometres away from mine, yet the miners in his constituency would have fed the steel-working industry in my city. In a lot of ways, I feel like we are comrades on that. I know he has seen the kind of suffering in his community I have seen in mine.

When we talk about things that are actually evidence-based and go to the social determinants of health, I would like the hon. member to talk a bit about what a guaranteed basic liveable income, housing, dental care and pharmacare would look like for people who get caught up in the pandemic of the opioid crisis we are seeing today.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, speaking of the movement of capital, Timmins has been a powerhouse in the natural resource economy since 1909. It has some of the biggest gold mines in the world. We have fuelled massive corporations that have built and moved around the globe. That expertise is really important, but we have nearly 1,000 homeless people in a community of 45,000.

I hear the Liberals talk about rapid housing, but I do not know what rapid they are building. We have an opioid death rate that is twice per capita what it is in downtown Vancouver. Yes, we have a natural resource superpower that is built through the work of families who are willing to go work underground to 7,000 and 10,000 feet, yet our infrastructure is failing us.

The infrastructure in northern communities across rural northern Canada is failing because of lack of investment, and it makes it very hard for families to stay in these communities without those kinds of investments. The Liberals promised them, but we are not getting them delivered.

• (1710)

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague is very knowledgeable in the area of housing, and I am not as knowledgeable. My understanding from the Siksika Nation is that they talk about 2,500 housing units being built across Canada per year. He has mentioned this a number of times.

How would the member envision the numbers and what would he advise?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, a housing strategy is an investment strategy. We keep talking about Toronto, and I get Toronto, but let us take a look at northern communities. If they do not have proper housing, seniors are not going to stay and will move down south with their kids, and workers are going to fly in and fly out because they cannot get housing.

When we talk about a national housing strategy, we are talking about building sustainability in rural and northern Canada so that we can build better lives, the kinds of lives my parents and grandparents built through the building of the middle class that we knew in the 20th century.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Gatineau this evening.

It is a privilege to be here in the House, albeit virtually, to speak to this particular motion that has been raised by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

I will give a little context to my colleagues of how I come to see this issue, and I will get into some of the specific text of the motion in a moment.

I grew up in a rural community, not unlike some colleagues I heard speak earlier. My father was a truck driver and my mom is an administrative assistant at the local school. The type of family I grew up in could be best described as paycheque to paycheque. We did not have a whole lot. I was fortunate that my parents worked very hard so I did not want for anything, but I can certainly appreciate the essence of the motion of trying to support Canadians and making sure those who are struggling have the support they need.

I will explain why I decided to run for the Liberal Party. Of course, I was not part of the last Parliament from 2015 to 2019, but when the member for Papineau became Prime Minister in 2015, it was on a campaign of helping support middle-income Canadians and helping support Canadians in need, which was something that really resonated with me.

When I look at the results of what was achieved over the last four years, which certainly has been continued in this Parliament, one million Canadians were lifted out of poverty. There was significant investment in things like the Canada child benefit, and I have heard and spoken in the House about what that has meant for my constituents and I am sure Canadians across the country. We have moved forward with a national housing strategy and made massive

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investments across the country to help support Canadians with affordable housing, and the parliamentary secretary made a number of remarks on that today in the House.

There has been a lot done. This has been one of the most progressive governments in Canadian history in terms of helping support Canadians who need the help the most. Frankly, I could have an entire speech just on that, but I want to go the COVID-19 global pandemic, as we are now faced with one of the most pressing times that Canadians have faced in recent memory.

I am proud of the efforts that our government has made to make sure that Canadians who are most vulnerable are taken care of, whether that was through the Canada emergency response benefit, which has benefited, I believe, eight million to nine million Canadians at the height of the pandemic, or the Canada emergency business account, a \$40,000 loan, which has been extended to provide an additional \$20,000 for businesses that need it. That is not going to big business. It is going to small businesses in rural communities and communities across the country. I can tell members first-hand that this has been benefiting small businesses and individuals who need it.

On the wage subsidy, I will admit that it has benefited larger companies as well, but it has protected Canadian jobs and that has been the focus for our government. Our government has focused on supporting Canadians, jobs and small businesses throughout this pandemic. It is a record that I am proud of, and I know that the work will continue in the days ahead.

I will now go to the actual text of the motion that has been put forward.

The idea of a wealth tax on individuals who are high-income earners is, frankly, a good idea, but in practicality, how this plays out is where I have some questions that perhaps some of my NDP colleagues or other colleagues, if they have had the chance to listen all day on this particular motion, could answer.

The member for Timmins—James Bay, who was speaking before me, talked about the movement of capital. We are in a globalized world, and I worry about a policy like this without international co-operation where we have other jurisdictions in the world following suit in an international framework.

How do we prevent the movement of capital and wealth outside the country?

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I have not heard a whole lot from the NDP members on how we avoid something like that. France, for example, a G7 country that has comparable economics and obviously progressive politics as well, introduced a wealth tax previously, which has since been repealed. In fact, there were 12 countries in the European Union back in the 1990s that had a wealth tax at one point. We are now down to three. Inherently, yes, the idea has merit and could benefit Canadians in helping to pay for programs, but if it results in a flight of capital and we are not co-operating with other jurisdictions, how is that going to be effective in supporting Canada's long-term growth and prosperity?

• (1715)

I want to go now to the profiteering aspect. There has been a lot of comparison in the House today with World War II, comparing COVID-19 with the fact that the Government of Canada at that time had introduced significant measures to try to pay for the war effort. The minister of finance, who was a Liberal minister at the time, was actually a member of Parliament from the same area that I represent. It was J.L. Hsley. When I went back and looked at the history, there was no wealth tax as part of the legislation to pay for the government expenditure during the war. There was a significant increase in personal income taxes, and obviously a progressive rate for those who were making large amounts of money.

However, from day one, one of the first moves of the government in 2015 was to increase taxes on the richest 1% in this country to help pay for tax cuts for other Canadians. This was not a measure back in World War II and really the focus for the government at the time during the war was to put some type of measure in place to support those companies that were making profits as a result of the booming economy and the investments that the government was making.

For my NDP colleagues or others who might have thoughts, I wonder if this motion should not be structured more perhaps to companies that are making those profits. I know grocers have been mentioned. As a member who sits on the agriculture committee, I believe there is work to be done in exploring a code of conduct in working with provinces to try to help regulate or ensure that there are equitable relationships between food producers, consumers, processors and the largest retailers in this country.

However, what is the definition of profiteering? What is the definition of a big corporation? Does that include something like the Apple Valley Foods company in my riding? Does that include Michelin? We have mentioned Amazon. We have mentioned some of the global giants, but where does that threshold end? That is the problem I have with this particular motion. It is the ambiguity involved.

I am going to read the definition of “profiteering”. It is in front of me right now on my computer. It comes from the Oxford dictionary. According to Google at this point, profiteering is “the practice of making or seeking to make an excessive or unfair profit, especially illegally or in a black market”.

The New Democrats have done a great job of illustrating the money that is being made by some of the richest people in the world. Yes, there is income inequality around the world. Can we point to an example or a number of examples in Canada where

companies have been price gouging, perhaps with the grocers? I would genuinely be interested to know what some of those examples are. Loblaw's has been used as an example, but I would like to know others and whether the New Democrats share that definition of profiteering or if they have a more concrete one. I know the member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington asked a similar question, not too long ago, on that.

As it relates to social spending, we all agree that spending to help support Canadians, especially those who are most vulnerable, is certainly laudable and it is something that this government has been doing since day one, as I have already mentioned.

When I look at basic income I would ask the New Democrats if this is a basic income, above and beyond the existing social programming in Canada, or if we would be trying to find a way to lump that together to give individuals dignity and have almost a negative income tax or one basic payout. That would be my question on that.

In terms of health care, we are a government that has put \$11 billion in additional funding on top of the Canada Health Act and the transfers to the provinces to support specific health initiatives.

The next point is around housing. We do have a national housing strategy, and the parliamentary secretary earlier was talking about those investments. We do have the rapid housing investment. I have seen in my own community of Kings—Hants the investments that this government has made.

My final point would be that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that the measures the NDP is proposing would raise about \$5.6 billion over the course of one year. Everything that I see in front of me on this motion would probably be close to about \$100 billion. How do we go about paying for that when we have probably a \$400-billion deficit at this point? Do the New Democrats have some suggestions on that?

• (1720)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things that the member pointed out in his informative speech was the increase of taxes on the wealthiest that the Liberals moved forward with and how that meant there was an ability to do a tax cut for the middle-income earners. I am just wondering if the member could speak to why that did not include any Canadian making \$47,000 or less.

I know that, in my riding, the median household income is about \$62,000. I looked up the median household income in the member's riding and it is around \$60,000. I would say that means a vast majority of people in our ridings did not benefit at all from this wonderful tax benefit that he keeps talking about. I wonder if the member could talk to all of us about why he would make that decision and brag about it in Parliament.

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I was not in the last Parliament when that decision was made. I was referencing 2015.

The member is trying to shoehorn some of the tax cuts that were made without really giving any credence to the other policies that our government has introduced over the last five years, and even in the 12 and a half months that I have been a member of Parliament, aimed at supporting individuals. One is the Canada child benefit. It has meant \$17 million for my riding of Kings—Hants to help support parents and individuals who are of lower socio-economic status, allowing them to pay for groceries and activities.

Frankly, I could go on. There have been massive investments beyond this one point.

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 want to pick up on the topic of pharmacare, because I believe it has a great deal of merit. It was mentioned in the throne speech. I have been asking questions along the lines of how important it is that we work with the provinces to achieve the best pharmacare program we can for Canadians.

I wonder if the member could share his thoughts on this, as I am sure many of his constituents believe in a national pharmacare program.

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that improving pharmacare and working with the provinces and territories is something I heard on doorsteps last October, and have continued to hear, from my constituents. I was pleased to see it in the Speech from the Throne. Obviously there are a lot of competing priorities right now for the government as a result of COVID-19, but I hope we will see it again.

I would like to take a moment to talk about the essence of the NDP motion. I think the motion could be restructured to look at international collaboration. The policy in the motion as it is written right now would lead to the exodus of capital. If we could get other jurisdictions to work collaboratively, we could find ways to pay for things above and beyond what is in the motion right now.

• (1725)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is very learned. He spoke a bit about the economics of this and referenced the Parliamentary Budget Officer. We have heard Liberals time and time again talk about a national pharmacare strategy, but they refuse to say it will be public.

What does the member have to say about the government's own reports from former Ontario minister Dr. Eric Hoskins, who identified that our national public pharmacare project will actually save Canadians dollars, unlike the wasteful privatization plan the Liberals are proposing?

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, speaking as the member for Kings—Hants and not necessarily on behalf of the government, as I am not part of the Privy Council, I certainly think there is merit to increasing the amount of access for those who do not have access to prescription drugs. Creating a national formulary is also important.

Right now, certain systems through employers have these programs available for individuals. They are meeting the demand and allowing this to happen through the private sector. Is there room for increased involvement from the public sector in making sure that

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we support Canadians who do not have those privileges and benefits through their employers? Absolutely.

That is my position as a parliamentarian.

[Translation]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, I want to reiterate my appreciation and my deep gratitude to the residents of Gatineau for the honour they have conferred upon me by sending me here to represent them. I try each day to be worthy of it.

In the midst of this pandemic, which is not easy for anyone anywhere in Canada, I want to specifically highlight the work of the Government of Canada's public servants. They are working hard day and night to serve Canadians, often in difficult conditions that are less than ideal.

In the department I work for, Public Services and Procurement Canada, employees are working day and night on the purchase and procurement of PPE, vaccines and treatments for the pandemic. Other departments are taking on important roles, like the Canada Revenue Agency, or Statistics Canada, which is making contact tracing calls, or Employment and Social Development Canada, which is putting income support programs in place, as I will discuss in my speech. These employees are great public servants, and we can be very proud of the efforts they are making, in Gatineau, in the national capital region, and all across Canada. I must thank them.

Since the spring, we have been dealing with an unprecedented challenge, the COVID-19 pandemic. This remains a very difficult situation that definitely will continue throughout the fall and winter. However, our government is there for Canadians. We promised to do whatever it took to support Canadians. That is what we are doing today, and that is what we will continue to do.

We all worked together to flatten the curve by practising physical distancing and following public health guidance. Although these health measures are the key to flattening the curve, they are having an unintended and disproportionate impact on vulnerable people, both in Gatineau and elsewhere in Canada.

Millions of Canadians have lost their jobs, worked fewer hours or had their wages cut. These job losses may be the most serious and most obvious consequence of the global economic disruption we are all facing.

Day by day, as the situation evolves, the number of vulnerable people is growing. This means our approach must also be constantly evolving in order to support Canadians. To strengthen the middle class, we announced a tax cut for the middle class five years ago that reduced their personal income tax rate from 22% to 20.5% in order to put more money into Canadians' pockets. We made a promise, and we delivered.

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As a result, single individuals who benefited from this tax cut paid on average \$330 less in taxes each year, and couples who received it paid on average \$540 less in taxes each year.

Last year, we proposed to amend the Income Tax Act to lower taxes for the middle class and those working hard to join it by increasing the basic personal amount to \$15,000 by 2023.

When we talk about the middle class, we are talking about the people in Gatineau, my riding, whose average income is slightly higher than the Canadian average. Measures to help the middle class are aimed directly at the people of Gatineau, and I am proud to be part of a government that puts the economic and other needs of the middle class first.

• (1730)

Increasing the basic personal exemption would mean that Canadians would pay no federal tax on the first \$15,000 they earn. Almost 20 million Canadians would pay less taxes thanks to this measure, which would be phased in over four years, starting in 2020. It would put \$3 billion in the pockets of Canadian households in 2020, rising to \$6 billion by 2023.

Unlike what is being proposed in the motion we are debating today, here is a concrete, feasible, achievable measure, even in the context of a pandemic, that we can propose to middle-class Canadians and that we will implement.

In 2015, our government committed to investing to grow our economy, to strengthen the middle class and to help hard-working people become part of it. We also committed to providing more direct assistance to those who need it most. Five years later, our commitment still stands and is even more important than ever. We are all in this together, and that is why the government has introduced many programs and enhanced existing ones.

Through Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan, these programs are providing assistance to Canadians, to Canadian businesses, and to those who need it the most, particularly seniors. This year has been difficult for Canada's many seniors. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of them unfortunately had to deal with health challenges, as well as with economic and social impacts. The disease has disproportionately affected seniors, particularly those living in long-term care facilities. Incidentally, if the people in the Chartwell Cité-Jardin residence, in Campus 3, or in long-term care homes in my riding are watching right now, I want to assure them that we are here every day fighting to make their lives better and to provide additional assistance to seniors in Gatineau and across Canada.

That is why, this spring, we announced \$2.5 billion in additional financial support for a one-time tax-free payment of \$300 for seniors eligible for the old age security pension and an additional \$200 for seniors eligible for the guaranteed income supplement.

In Canada, like everywhere else in the world, the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted certain flaws in how our societies are organized and what they prioritize, especially with regard to income inequality. The measures I mentioned earlier have made a real difference in the lives of Canadians, and we must continue to prioritize Canadians if we wish to ensure a lasting, resilient recovery. For that reason,

in September, we stated our intention to strengthen the middle class, build resiliency and generate growth through targeted investments.

We will also identify additional ways to tax extreme wealth inequalities, including by concluding work to limit the stock option deduction for wealthy individuals at large and established corporations, and addressing tax avoidance by multinational companies.

Together, we can build a fairer, more resilient world where everyone has an equal chance to succeed. We must remember that the pandemic is the most serious public health crisis Canada has ever faced. Canadians of all ages across the country have been hit hard. COVID-19 has taken the lives of over 10,000 Canadians. Our government is there for Canadians. We will make it through this crisis together. We can and will do everything in our power to limit job losses and the impact of COVID-19 on Canadians. When this crisis finally comes to an end, we will be better positioned to recover and build a safer and fairer future for everyone, together.

• (1735)

[English]

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 motion we have before us calls upon the government to do things that, it appears, have not been costed out in any fashion whatsoever. It is almost like a wish list, and I am wondering if my colleague could provide his thoughts on how he interprets the motion.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague. Too often proposals coming from over there, notably from the New Democratic Party, come without a price tag.

We know there is only one taxpayer. We know things must be costed and paid for. I will take, as an example, the PBO report that NDP members often talk about to justify a wealth tax. The PBO said, and I am not quoting directly, that it was functionally impossible to implement a tax like that because of the many difficulties in collecting the said tax.

Often what we see coming from across the aisle are ill-defined, certainly non-costed proposals that cannot be entertained all at once.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member's speech was intriguing.

I was having a conversation with a chief in my riding. He said that one of the challenges of working with Canada was that it believed in only incremental justice for indigenous people. He talked about his concern with housing and the significant lack of it in indigenous communities.

Another community in my riding, Kingcome Inlet, is seeing a lot of changes to the area, which increases flooding. They are building their houses higher and higher. They do not have a safe route out of their community. There are multiple challenges with housing and it is becoming very unsafe.

Could the member talk about the government's promise to have an indigenous housing strategy, a national housing strategy for indigenous communities, both urban and rural, which still has not been put in place? How long do indigenous people have to wait? Does the member agree that incremental justice is the only way forward for indigenous communities?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, I listened attentively to my colleague's question and want to make it very clear that the government has every intention of delivering on its promises to indigenous people.

On the promises we made, a \$55 billion national housing strategy over 10 years will get the federal government back in the housing business generally and specifically target the needs of indigenous peoples throughout Canada. I am very confident that our response on indigenous housing will be comprehensive.

The member mentioned flooding. I know something about that, living in Gatineau, Quebec. It has had two 100-year floods in the last two years. I want to assure the member that she has a fellow soldier in the fight to build more durable and resilient communities, indigenous and indeed all communities, as we combat climate change.

● (1740)

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is some irony in the Liberals' calling out the NDP members for not costing this properly, that the math does not work out.

I am looking at a report from the C.D. Howe Institute in relation to the Liberals' tax hike on high income earners. It said that the government actually lost revenue. There were \$1.3 billion raised for the federal government, but then there was a \$1.4 billion loss for provincial governments.

I wonder if the member could comment on how the the Liberals' tax policies did not have the math right.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, I always find it very interesting to hear Conservative members discuss fiscal measures. They always complain about taxes, but they never talk about the devastating cuts that they would propose, whether it be to indigenous housing, which we were just discussing. The member and I serve on the government operations committee, where the spectre of cuts to the public service is always bandied about in veiled terms.

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The Conservatives never get specific about what they would cut. I would encourage the member to encourage his party to be a little more transparent about that.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am proud to be splitting my time tonight with the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Just over a year ago, I was elected to the House. I earned the trust of the people of London—Fanshawe to represent them. Over that campaign and every single day, I heard from them. They feel disheartened. They feel that ultimately those with the most power continue to use it to protect those who have the most money. They have seen it in tax cuts, subsidies and handouts that go to the well-connected while they, the workers, are asked to do more with less.

It is hard to blame them for thinking and feeling that way. There was a time in the country, admittedly before my generation, when people could find jobs that would become a career. They could count on a workplace pension and workplace benefits that included coverage for medications and dental care.

There was a time when the federal government built affordable housing and made sure that everyone could afford a place to live. It was not that long ago that the wealthy and large corporations paid their fair share for the benefit of all Canadians. There was a sense that we were all in it together. In the summer, I truly believed there was a greater sense of that, that we were all in it together, at least the Prime Minister said so, but he says a lot of things.

There are many reasons and ways we got here today. Changes have happened over the years because of the choices made, such as trade policies that hollowed out our manufacturing sector, something that the people in southwestern Ontario see whenever they drive by large empty factory sites like Ford Talbotville. Good well-paying jobs have been replaced by minimum wage precarious employment. Those now entering the workforce with massive student debt have no job security and are jumping from job to job in the 2020 gig economy.

Liberal and Conservative governments have both rigged the system to favour their corporate friends and the richest of Canadians, who take full advantage of tax havens, while our governments turn a blind eye.

When I ran for office, it was on the idea that we needed to tip the scales back in favour of everyday Canadians. That is why we are calling for a wealth tax on the richest Canadians as well as creating a World War II-style excess profits tax on companies that are making a killing off the pandemic to pay for the services on which Canadian families count.

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While families struggle, the super rich and the biggest corporations make billions off this pandemic. While people struggle to pay their bills, Canadian billionaires are \$37 billion richer. I have no concept of what that would even look like, and most other Canadians cannot either. These billionaires are not struggling; they are profiting.

Of course, we know this pandemic is not over and we have to make important choices on how we define our future. Instead of cutting services that people need, the government needs to make the wealthiest and the pandemic profiteers pay their fair share so we can ensure people, businesses and families that need that help get it.

The NDP is calling on the Liberals to put in place a new 1% tax on wealth over \$20 million and an excess profit tax on big corporations that have profited from this pandemic. We must reinvest billions of dollars gained from these measures to meet the needs of the most vulnerable Canadians.

In the last election, the New Democrats had the courage to put big ideas on the table. We committed to a pilot on a guaranteed livable basic income that could pave the way to ensuring that no one in Canada would live in poverty. I consistently hear from people in London who are stuck in those cycles of poverty. They are constantly struggling and working to break free, but the systems are built to police poverty. Poverty reduction strategies across Canada have largely failed in their objective of lifting people up, if that was ever truly their purpose.

Some current social assistance programs are focused around employment readiness and training initiatives under the assumption that incentives are needed to compel people to work.

In my province, those on Ontario works and Ontario disability are asked to constantly jump through hoops and file reports, but are not offered a chance to achieve a liveable income. That is why we need a guaranteed livable basic income system that offers a predictable payment provided unconditionally by the government to all individuals in Canada who need it. This will afford all persons in Canada the respect, dignity, security and human rights affirmed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We believe that no one should live in poverty and that everyone who needs it should have a liveable income. The New Democrats have been saying for so long that we need to end poverty in Canada once and for all.

● (1745)

In 1989, the House unanimously passed the motion put forward by former NDP leader, Ed Broadbent, to end child poverty by 2000. It is 31 years later, well past that 2000 date, and we are still seeing alarming child poverty rates across Canada. Canadians need a government that will take serious action to ensure that we do not have yet another generation of children suffering the pain of growing up in poverty.

Canada's housing crisis is something that families feel every day as well, and it is rooted in the Liberal's cancellation of the national affordable housing program in 1993. Everyone should have the right to a safe and affordable place to call home, but for far too many families, affordable housing is increasingly out of reach. The average cost of a two bedroom apartment in London—Fanshawe is

over \$1,500 a month, and that is well over 30% of the average median household income of a family in my riding. There is also a waiting list of more than 5,000 households in need of affordable housing right now.

While the city is doing good work in trying to fill the gap in funding, it needs federal leadership. The government must adopt an NDP plan to build 500,000 units of quality, affordable housing, including the construction of co-ops, social and not-for-profit housing.

Three years ago, the Liberals' plan was to reduce homelessness by 50% but failed to acknowledge that this did not meaningfully implement the right to housing. In the throne speech, they had a recent change of heart and used pretty words to say that they were looking to eliminate chronic homelessness but within an unknown timeline.

The cost of housing has only increased under the Liberals and it is currently at record high levels. The housing crisis is getting worse and encampments are growing in communities across the country, including in London, Ontario. The Prime Minister is failing to live up to his 2017 declaration that adequate housing is a basic human right.

I support the motion today because it provides a way forward to truly tackle the housing crisis and to ensure everyone can afford a place he or she can call home.

I have constituents come into my office consistently who also cannot afford the necessary medications they need. I think of the many people who are on ODSP and are stuck. If they make too much money, then they are cut off support. Therefore, they have to stay in poverty or risk losing their medications. It is an impossible choice that we force thousands of people to make every day.

That is why the establishment of a universal pharmacare program is so vital. New Democrats have always understood that health care must be a right in Canada, not a privilege, and we have been calling for universal public drug coverage since our founding convention in 1961.

On clinical, ethical and economic grounds, universal public drug coverage has been recommended by commissions, committees and advisory councils dating as far back as the 1940s. Health policy experts are clear. The U.S.-style private patchwork approach costs far more and delivers far less access to prescription drugs.

Today, Canada is the only wealthy country in the world with a universal health care system that lacks universal prescription coverage, and we pay the third highest prices for prescription drugs in the world. We force people to deal with a patchwork of programs and coverage, if they are lucky enough to have coverage at all.

When we consider the average median household income in London—Fanshawe is under \$60,000 a year, well below the Ontario average, this would be a huge boost to people in my riding. I think of the many seniors in my riding who tell me daily how the cost of those everyday items are increasing while their incomes remain the same. The cost of drugs continues to be the fastest growing of those expenses and the average drug costs are increasing by 4% every year.

On average, Canadian households spend \$450 a year on prescription drugs and \$550 on private health care premiums. Private premiums have risen rapidly in years, thanks largely to escalating drug prices, and they are taking a growing bite out of seniors' fixed incomes and workers' take-home pay.

I said this before, but it bears repeating. Now is the time to decide how we wish to move forward in this pandemic. The finance minister has already hinted at a retreat to more cuts and austerity. As parliamentarians, there are always choices that we have to make, and sometimes they are hard choices but we need to do the right thing.

Does the government continue to help well-connected billionaires and millionaires or do we actually invest in our people? Do we cut direct income supports for the most vulnerable or do we commit to establishing a livable income? Do we continue to let families struggle or do we build housing to avoid this affordability crisis? Do we let big pharma continue to make record profits while seniors cut their bills in half? These are the choices that we need to make and we need to make the right ones now.

• (1750)

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate and admire the member's passion. She was saying that income security and expanded health care are issues we should be talking about in the House. We are talking about them in the House, but we need to talk about them in a measured, responsible way. She said she does not know what \$37 billion looks like. I can assure the member the price tag on items listed in this motion would create a number she would have no idea what it would look like.

Money is going to be raised by taxing excess profit. What does excess profit mean, and how much excess profit would be taxed as a result of this motion?

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Speaker, in terms of my response regarding what \$37 billion looks like, it is what we have personally. It is that wealth that only a few have. Those few have been consistently protected by the Liberal government, by the former government and all the governments before that. That \$1.6 billion in profit, all that excess profit made by Galen Weston, and the \$1.7 billion of excess profit made by Jim Pattison, is what I am talking about. That is what we need to focus on in terms of the redistribution of wealth in this country to ensure that when those people have so much, the people in our ridings who have nothing and

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are desperate to feed their kids and pay their bills, have far more. Everyone deserves equality.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, this is a motion the Green Party supports. We support all of these programs and we think this is a matter of priorities. When we are talking about this extreme wealth, the member mentioned Jim Pattison. We have a coastal defence vessel that shows up every year, the HMCS Nanaimo. It has a crew of 36 people. It is 55 metres long. Sometimes when it is gone, Jim Pattison's yacht shows up. It is a \$25-million yacht. It has room for nine crew, 12 guests and a helicopter launch pad. This is a man who has \$7.4 billion worth of wealth and gained \$1.7 billion during this pandemic. He should be paying his fair share for our health care system, our roads, our water, our sewers and our education systems that help his workers earn him those big bucks.

Does the hon. member think taxing 1% is enough? Should we not tax more?

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the passion the member brings to this, and I really appreciate his support on this motion. This is a start. This is one of the many things we want to do, to try and get at that income disparity and that disproportionate wealth distribution I was talking about before. I do not think the Jim Pattisons of this world need other yachts. I do not think he needs to buy a bigger house. The people in my riding need affordable houses, and they would gawk at the fact that the Galen Westons of this world pay so little and have so much. I used to work as a cashier at Loblaws. I worked with a lot of students at that time who were just trying to pay their student loans, get by and save a little. When we juxtapose extreme wealth to those people who are struggling, it is simply unfair. We need a different path forward, and making those different choices is what New Democrats will continue to do.

• (1755)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a real honour to sit in my constituency office today and join you virtually to speak on this important motion that was brought forward by my colleague, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

I have been listening to the speeches today, and I can see that the Liberals and the Conservatives are most likely going to vote against our motion. That is fine, because those two parties are very much the defenders of the status quo. They are fine with little incremental changes and tinkering around the edges, but they will never, as individual parties, bring forward the substantive change that we need to get progress in our country.

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Of course they are going to oppose our motion, because if they were to support our motion, they would in fact be admitting that their records in government have gotten us to precisely the point that we are at today. This is a blemish on their records, because Canada has been ruled by a succession of Conservative and Liberal governments, and we still have these vast systems of inequality that exist in our society. We need to only look outside our constituency offices to see it every day. It is certainly true for the people here in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

They may come at us, as New Democrat members of Parliament, and they may come at me, but I do not need their approval. I am here for the people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. I am here to suggest and implement policies that are actually going to make their lives better.

There is a real consequence, if the people of this great country do not see their politicians echoing the struggles they face each and every day in their lives. That consequence can be seen just to the south of us in the United States of America, where the American people have looked to the Republicans and the Democrats. The real problem of their political system is that those two parties have become so out of touch in so many ways with the struggles that Americans are facing that it has led to a form of extremism, and we would be kidding ourselves in Canada if we did not recognize that very real threat.

It is time for the politicians of this country, especially at the federal level, to recognize the struggle that so many Canadians are going through and to actually bring forward policies that are going to make a real mark on that. That is why I am very happy to see this motion.

We can look at the statistics, and the fact that Canada's billionaires, during this pandemic, have made out like bandits and seen their profits increase by multiple amounts, while everyday Canadians are struggling. They have seen their jobs disappear. They have seen their small businesses shut down, and those who have been lucky enough to keep their jobs have either seen their hours reduced or the benefits attached to them completely wiped out. This is a huge moment in our country. A lot of people use the word "unprecedented". We do have precedence. We have not seen this level of struggle since the Great Depression, and we absolutely must take the opportunity that we find ourselves in right now to actually bring forward measures that are going to make a difference.

What are we suggesting as New Democrats? We are suggesting that those at the top, those who have made these kinds of profits, pay a little more, and that those who have made excess profits find those excess profits taxed, as we did in the Second World War, so that those with fortunes of \$20 million or more are subjected to a 1% tax. If someone is lucky enough to find her or himself in that position, a 1% tax amounts to little more than a rounding error. This is really to put a sense of fairness and a sense of balance back into our tax system.

The Liberals and Conservatives have been talking in their speeches, giving excuses about why this system would not work or asking about the specifics. The specifics really can be worked out at a later time. What we want to see through this motion is intent: an intent by the government to actually get serious and formally ac-

knowledge, to the people of Canada, that they agree there is a problem, that this motion should be supported and that the specifics should be worked out at a later time.

I talked about the statistics of Canada's billionaires and millionaires. There is also the fact that during this pandemic, when Canada's big banks went looking for money the government immediately offered \$750 billion in liquidity supports.

● (1800)

However, we have Canadians, persons with disabilities, who are still waiting or have just received their first payout and we are in the month November. That goes to show the discrepancy that exists in the government's priorities.

I talked a bit about the tax, but let us talk about some of the social programs these tax dollars could pay for. It is quite clearly laid out in our motion. First of all, I want to talk about a guaranteed liveable basic income. The entire New Democratic caucus and I have to give kudos to our very hon. colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, for her Motion No. 46 and the amazing grassroots campaign she has launched right across the country.

A guaranteed liveable basic income would make sure a predictable cash payment was provided by the government to all individuals who need it. We would bolster our current social safety net, tackle poverty at the source and make sure people have enough income each month to meet the basic human necessities of finding shelter, paying the utilities and putting good, quality food on the table.

I got into politics because I used to work as a constituency assistant. I was sitting across the table from people who were making those difficult decisions of whether they could pay the rent or put good, quality food on the table. We have been having these conversations in Canada for decades now, and here we are in the year 2020 still talking about them. Forgive New Democrats if we feel impatient about this, but we have been talking about this for decades now and feel it is now time to act.

Another thing mentioned is dental care. Dental care, as we know, is obviously a very big class distinction. One can almost tell a person's status in life by the quality of their teeth. It is also a health issue, because we know good oral health is linked to good personal health. So many people have lost dental coverage and many Canadians have to skip dental appointments because they cannot afford them. This would make a measurable difference in people's lives, as would pharmacare.

Again, our frustration with the Liberals comes from the fact that Liberals have been talking about pharmacare since the 1990s. They love to blame the NDP for it not being brought in, conveniently forgetting all the majority governments they had during that time to bring in a system. Do we need to work with the provinces? Of course we do, but the fact that we have had to wait for so long is a big source of our frustration. We feel that now is the time to put in these kinds of taxes to pay for programs like pharmacare so we can make those measurable increases in people's lives: the huge benefits.

Why are we having these specific conversations on these things? I know people are going to talk about the costs in the questions that come up afterward. Let us talk about the costs of ongoing poverty. Let us talk about the costs when people are unable to look after their health because they cannot afford prescription medications or dentist's visits. Just imagine the billions of dollars we would save in our health care system if we were to address these two gaping areas where people do not have coverage.

Similarly, with the ongoing costs of poverty and the costs that come with increased crime, here in my community of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford we are dealing with an opioid crisis and the amount of money people have had to spend to try to fend that off. These all have very real and ongoing associated costs. When Liberals and Conservatives come forward and talk about the costs, they are being extremely short-sighted. They are not looking at the benefits of implementing these programs that we will realize in later years.

I will end there. I really appreciate the opportunity to once again stand up for the amazing people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, and I welcome any questions my colleagues might have.

● (1805)

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member is well versed in many things, and I would like to ask him about indigenous housing. It has come up a number of times. I have visited with the Siksika Nation in my riding, and they talk about the housing issues they face and the 2,500 homes that will be built across the country.

Given how the member approaches this topic and speaks about this issue, what would he envision for indigenous housing in this country? As 2,500 units are now being built Canada-wide, what would he envision for indigenous people under this piece of legislation?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I will correct the record. What we have before us is a motion, not a piece of legislation.

To answer his question, whenever I speak to Cowichan Tribes, Halalt, Penelakut, Lyackson and the many other first nations whose traditional territory my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford falls upon, one of the top issues that always comes to mind is the state of housing. There are overcrowding issues, and houses need a tremendous amount of renovation. As we state in our motion, change has to be led by indigenous people in Canada. They have been telling us for some time now that we need to have a housing strategy in place and we need to get those units built.

My simple answer to the member is that we should listen to the communities within our ridings and let them lead the way. However, we need a federal government that is prepared to act and put forward a strategy in the first place.

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question regarding pharmacare. We all believe in universal pharmacare. We are heading in that direction and hope to introduce it.

How do we bring people from the large pharmaceutical companies to the table? They are not coming to the table to negotiate with the government so we can get the prices down. Sadly, they are us-

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ing families to do the lobbying for them to try to soften up government so that when they go to the table, they will be able to make more money, rather than trying to do a good deal so that all Canadians can afford life-saving drugs. What does the member suggest we need to do?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, the federal government already has tremendous regulatory power at its disposal to bring these big companies to the table. The power the federal government has when it works out a plan with the provinces is in its ability to purchase in bulk. It has an economy of scale that individuals can only dream of. That is how we bring prices down.

No drug company is going to ignore a market like Canada, which has a population of over 35 million people. This is really about coordinating a response and making sure we have the will to implement it. I simply wish the Liberals had acted on this when they made their promise back in the 1990s. It is sad that we are in the year 2020 and still do not have such a plan in place.

● (1810)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has said that 30% of senior women living alone are living in poverty. This is compared with 22% of senior men living alone.

I got a message from Joyce Christopher-Thomas from Qualicum Beach. She stated that she has worked hard her whole life and has a university education but cannot afford to live on OAS and GIS. Seniors are facing many challenges and an increased cost of living. She says they are expected to live year after year below the poverty line.

How important is a guaranteed annual livable income to people like Joyce and seniors across the country, who deserve to retire with dignity? I would like my colleague to speak to that.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate questions from my friend, the member for Courtenay—Alberni.

He is right. Even before the pandemic struck us, single women, especially senior women, were always living on the margins. I think this pandemic has exacerbated that, only now it has moved to women who used to be part of the workforce.

That is precisely why the New Democrats are putting this proposal forward. We want to make sure that we are taxing the wealthy and excess profits so that we can help senior women and women who have been shunted out of the workforce. We must make sure that we have programs in place like a guaranteed basic livable income. It is absolutely high time that we start addressing this critical issue as a nation right now.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to split my time with the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

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I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak to the NDP motion today in order to offer an alternative perspective and, hopefully, some clarity on the matter at hand.

Let me begin by commending Canadians for being resilient, extremely hopeful and dedicated to the betterment of our country. Many are like Michael, who runs a small, local coffee shop in my riding of Lethbridge. He faithfully serves the community despite the personal hits he is taking right now. Others are like Jamie, who is balancing her job at a salon with home-schooling her daughter.

There are others who sadly have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Many restaurants have had to close their doors, gyms have had to fold and many employees, sadly, have lost their livelihoods altogether. No doubt, the government's response to the pandemic has hurt many people.

The country is facing challenging times because countless individuals are having to deal with significant and unexpected obstacles. Where appropriate, it is important that we as parliamentarians work to give small businesses, workers and industries the help they need to make it through this pandemic.

That is the why Conservatives have consistently put forward amendments that would strengthen the programs that are being offered to Canadians. A few of these suggestions have been taken, but other times, as with the failed rent subsidy program, for example, our suggestions have been altogether ignored. Now, six months later, the government is willing to come back to the table to take up our amendments and implement them, because it knows they are good ideas that will serve Canadians well. Sadly, when the government puts its ego before the people, Canadians get hurt.

That said, even though the government can play a role that is helpful for a short time, it is important that historic events like the pandemic are not exploited by entrenching policies that would actually harm society down the road, post-pandemic. I am talking specifically about the socialist policies that the NDP have put forward and that are being discussed here today.

Allow me to elaborate. If we look at countries that have enforced equalization policies and societal restructuring for the common good, or so said, we can easily see that these types of initiatives should not be replicated. Think of the Soviet Union, Cuba, China and North Korea, just to name a few. It is important that we take a comparative look at other societies that have been governed by socialist regimes. They have never been successful. The very definition of insanity is trying the same thing over and over again in the hopes that a different outcome will be accomplished.

Though socialism might seem idyllic at the beginning, after a period of time, people end up suffering at the hands of their so-called caregiver, the government. They end up in breadlines, they end up with food stamps and they end up dependent on the government for almost everything. Their dignity is robbed from them. They are turned into victims, dependent on their exploiter. These people are promised free social programs, free education, free health care and government paycheques, but they end up impoverished and with very little freedom, while simultaneously those in the upper class, government leaders, remain fat, well-fed and living in luxury.

These are the facts, and we must not overlook them when we discuss matters like the motion at hand.

One of the main features of this motion is that it aims to crack down on those who have been profiting from the pandemic. There is an irony here, however, and we must all tap into it.

For months, Conservative members have been trying to get to the bottom of a scandal that includes the friends and family members of the Prime Minister. They were set up to profit from the pandemic, until they were caught, of course. The Prime Minister's friends at WE Charity were to be given more than half a billion dollars, while his mother, wife and brother collected almost half a million dollars in speaking fees from that same organization.

At the ethics committee, when a Conservative motion calling for an investigation into these pandemic profiteers was put on the table, guess who voted with the Liberals to kill the motion? It was a member of the NDP. If the NDP really wants to stop those who are profiting from the pandemic, would they not want to investigate the Prime Minister himself, who is actually benefiting—

• (1815)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay, on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, people have to tell the truth in the House. I am kind of glad the member is no longer chair of the ethics committee, but if she were, she would know that she is debating my NDP motion to investigate WE. Rather than committing the falsehood she is committing point after point, she should be truthful with the House. Maybe that is why she is no longer chair of the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: I think we would put that in the category of debate. We will leave that to the House to take up in the course of the debate before the House.

The hon. member for Lethbridge.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, while the NDP and the Liberals love to talk about giving and receiving, I wish to talk about the value of earning, because it is essential. I am talking about the very privilege of work, the honour of work, the dignity of work. It is an incredible thing to earn what one receives. Studies show that individuals who receive money without earning it are more likely to be depressed and less likely to feel fulfilled.

Whenever we discuss permanently increasing government handouts, we must look at the potential negative ramifications not just for our economy, but for society, which is people. I am always leery when I hear politicians talk about removing burdens from the people and claiming that the government can solve all problems. Clinical psychologists have long said that it is important for people to take responsibility for their lives and to try to make things better. To live does include struggles, because life is hard and there are challenges. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing. If we choose to avoid the challenges in life and the pain that often accompanies it, we end up living a life void of meaning and hope.

Work is part of enjoying a meaningful life. It is a path to growth, to human development and to personal fulfillment. This is just a fact.

I am convinced that government programs are not the answer to getting Canada back on track. Canadians themselves are the answer. It is Canadians who have the ingenuity, the work ethic and the ability to come up with solutions to the problems our country faces. Canadians must be free to use their gifts, their talents and their abilities to further themselves, to benefit their local communities and to get our country back in order. By enshrining policies that could disincentivize earnings, such as the ones that are being proposed today, we are actually robbing people of the opportunity to succeed independent of governments. It would be a shame for Canada to go in that direction.

Ronald Reagan once said, “The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things.” That is true leadership.

Instead of putting the government in the position of the ultimate problem solver and exploiting the pandemic to increase government control in the lives of Canadians, I believe it is best that we give real opportunities to the Canadian public. Let us shift the spotlight to them, onto business owners and entrepreneurs. It is Canadians who are best able to solve problems and generate wealth, not the government.

If we compare countries that are socialist in nature with those that have a limited government and a market economy, the contrast is undeniable. The people who live in societies where the government is not depended on for the essentials of life are certainly better off.

That is why earlier this week, the Conservative members of this place put forward a motion that advocated for small business owners and celebrated them as job creators and thus the backbone of Canada's economy. Allow me to take a moment to thank the NDP for voting in favour of our motion. I do appreciate their standing with us on that point.

Canada already has the highest unemployment rate in the G7, and we know that small businesses provide employment for millions of Canadians from coast to coast. Canadian workers want small businesses to succeed. They want industry to succeed. They do not want two more years of government handouts. Yes, those who are elderly or who live with a disability may need additional assistance, and we should show care and compassion toward them. However, the vast majority of Canadians would like to get back to

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work. They would like to have the dignity of being able to provide for themselves and their families.

Only the mighty 20 million workers in Canada can bring our country back to roaring success. Let us make that happen. Let us choose to put Canadians before government.

• (1820)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was so much fun. I am going to clip that and send it home. This is the Conservative world view: A 1% tax on billionaires will create Yemen. It will create the Soviet Union. It will create breadlines. It is like the flat earth of the 20th century, the Conservative world view.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives stand up day after day demanding support for small business because they are telling us small business does not need government. Actually, they do right now. A 1% tax will give someone the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, we have a party over here that stands up and says we are not doing enough to put up government money and it is not going out fast enough. Let all the entrepreneurs get by. They will get by, but they need support right now. If a 1% tax will create socialism—

The Deputy Speaker: We are going to have to leave it there and leave time for a response.

The hon. member for Lethbridge.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure why the NDP insists on demonizing work. When did it become a four-letter curse word? When did it become wrong to work hard and want to earn a living for one's family? When did that become wrong? When did it become wrong to start small, build up and establish a fortune? When did that become wrong? Then to use that money in many cases to benefit local communities and benefit people who are underprivileged, that is what these businesses do. Why is the NDP going after them as if their success deserves to be punished?

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:23 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

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

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● (1825)

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

And one or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, September 23, the division stands deferred until Monday, November 16, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you might find unanimous consent to call it 6:38 p.m. at this time, so that we can begin private members' hour.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to see the clock at 6:38 p.m.?

Hearing no objections, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

REDUCTION OF RECIDIVISM FRAMEWORK ACT

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC) moved that Bill C-228, an act to establish a federal framework to reduce recidivism, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great joy to rise this evening to speak on behalf of my private member's bill, Bill C-228, an act to establish a federal framework to reduce recidivism.

For those who may not be aware, recidivism is defined as “The tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend”. We know that nearly one in four, 25%, of those who have been released from federal prison end up back in federal prison within two years, and the rates among indigenous communities is nearly 40%. It is also a sad reality that the children of those incarcerated are seven times more likely to become incarcerated themselves. We must stop this cycle.

The bill is not about reducing sentences or the amount of time served. The bill aims to address the ever-revolving door within our prison system and break this perilous cycle that sees individuals consistently reoffend. Lasting societal change can only be accomplished when we work across different sectors to come to meaningful solutions. We must find partners of like mind that will look at this and say it is a problem we can all address, whether they be at the governmental level, in the private sector, with non-profits and NGOs, in faith-based communities or indigenous communities, those who have a desire to see this revolving door stopped and the cycle broken.

I believe this bill would provide a framework for not only that discussion and dialogue to begin in earnest, but also enable some potential pilot programs to be launched across this country based on best practices and models that have been rolled out in other jurisdictions.

I will never forget my first time visiting a federal prison. I would like to think I am still somewhat of a young man, but in my younger years I was travelling with gentleman by the name of

Monty Lewis. Monty ran a local non-profit organization in my area that worked with those who were incarcerated and their families.

He said something to me that day on the way to the prison that has always stuck with me. He said I would never be in a place where there was a higher concentration of the worst kinds of dysfunction, symptoms of societal and family breakdown, violence, victims and perpetrators of abuse, addiction, emotional and mental health-related struggles, and so much more, than could be found within the walls of the place we were visiting that day. He then went on to point out that I would also never visit a place where I would find a greater opportunity to witness the powerful effect of what hope, compassion, forgiveness, encouragement and the opportunity for another chance can do.

I have seen, personally witnessed, some tremendous working models, at various stages of development, that are seeing good results. There have been pilot projects, some of which I have witnessed and visited, and policies that have been tried around the world, some of which I would like to see more of and have all of us hear more about. We can look them and perhaps pattern after or adopt some of those best practices to help establish a national framework that combines the best practices from all around the world.

I think of one, for example, in the U.K. that has been referred to as the “Peterborough model”. It incorporated 14 different service providers. It made several initial contacts with social workers, employers, private sector developers and skills developers. They worked with them while they were still in prison and upon release, after their time had been served. They also piloted some unique social finance programming and initiatives, things like social impact bonds. They successfully implemented that program and incorporated private investment, and obviously local authorities and law enforcement, and had all these different sectors working together to have a good outcome. They saw a 9% reduction in the rates of reoffending. It is a really good news story and I think there are some things that perhaps we could look at in that model.

I will refer to another one, which is a model in the “get tough on crime” state of Texas, of all places. There were some who were part of a smart justice type of initiative, where a non-profit organization worked at helping those who had been released from prison or were getting out of prison. It mentored them, sometimes while they were still in prison, for periods of up to 18 months and continued this program post-release for another 12 months.

● (1830)

What happened was it helped to integrate back into community, developed necessary skills, helped people find job placements, get back into community and find support groups. It involved regular checkups. At the two-year point, it did a review and when it looked at the rate, they were 60% less likely to be reincarcerated. That is a true good news story.

In fact, the lady who championed this is Tina Naidoo. I happen to know her personally now. I met her through my previous work in the non-profit sector. In 2016, then President Obama, awarded her a champion of change award from the White House for the great work she and her organization were doing. It was effective partnerships through private sector, government and local non-profits. It had some great results.

Those are a couple of examples of models we perhaps could look into and maybe implement them as pilots or similar-type initiatives with some great Canadian input, non-profit service providers and local private sector employers, working in conjunction with provincial governments to help roll out some of these across the country to see if we could see our rates of recidivism start to drop quickly.

I base all of this on that principle of three. It has been known and it has been out there for some time. If members have not heard it, it kind of helps make this stick.

The first three minutes after people are released from prison, it is so important they have someone trustworthy to meet them at the gate to start that reintegration back into community process. Within three hours, it is trying to ensure they have living arrangements in place and good support networks available to them to help them make that transition. Within three days, life skills development, employment and other addiction-type programs, whatever may be needed, could be getting under way.

Within three weeks, hopefully there is some form of education completion or maybe they are starting a job somewhere with a great job placement. As we know, many people who are released from prison have a criminal record and it is hard for them to find meaningful employment. Then within three months, there should be remarkable and notable progress, with transitions starting to take place. Over three years, we hope to see a tremendous change and a life well on its way to wholeness and now helping others to make a successful transition.

I have received widespread support for the bill from representatives from all relevant stakeholders. One is former lieutenant governor of New Brunswick, former provincial court judge and former chair of native studies at St. Thomas University, the Hon. Graydon Nicholas. He said, "this bill is a step toward helping the walking wounded in our society."

Former minister of public safety for New Brunswick and retired police officer, the Hon. Carl Urquhart, said, "through collaboration and consultation, as outlined by [the member's] bill, relevant stakeholders will provide key insights in the development, and ultimately, implementation of a federal framework that is effective in reducing recidivism in a measurable way."

Executive Director of the John Howard Society Catherine Latimer said, "This bill would allow many Canadians concerned about the waste of lives and resources resulting from inadequate supports for those returning to community and help develop a framework to reduce recidivism."

Mitch MacMillan, a retired police chief from our region and RCMP officer of 35 years as well as a former member of the national Parole Board of Canada, gave this bill his full endorsement

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and said, "I would like to encourage you to continue on this path as I feel it is certainly needed to ensure that focus is maintained."

I would also like to refer to a local businessman, farmer and egg producer in my community, David Coburn. He is an apple grower and an egg producer. He has on several occasions, in conjunction with a local non-profit, the Village of Hope, provided meaningful employment opportunities for men who were in transition in that program. He helped in their finding meaningful employment and developing valuable skills. He is very much in favour of initiatives like this.

There is a desire among many of the relevant stakeholder groups to work together to find a solution and establish a federal framework based on best practices around the world. The key will be to study the results of any pilot project that is developed. This is so we can evaluate what works and what does not work and how we can work together with the various stakeholder groups to come to a national framework in conjunction with provincial and territorial jurisdictions.

● (1835)

I would like to say, as I move to close, that the gentleman I was referring to earlier, Monty Lewis, has now passed. His story is remarkable and has had a big impact on my life. He grew up in Cape Breton in very challenging circumstances. His dad was a coal miner. As he grew up, he got around some not-so-pleasant influences in his life and started down a pathway of substance abuse and addiction. It started to lead to criminal activity and he ended up doing time in prison. In fact, through various times spent inside, he eventually ended up in the Kingston Penitentiary. His story is encapsulated in the book he wrote several years ago, called *The Caper*.

Monty found himself in a very dark place. In fact, he was suicidal and, at one point in the hold of a prison cell, he tells this story. There came a chaplain down into the hold of the prison cell where he was, to make his rounds and visit. Of course, Monty, in a dark place, started swearing at him and cursing, and was not very nice to him. He wanted him to be gone, but the chaplain kept on visiting. He kept coming back. Monty would describe him as a messenger of hope at just the right time.

After a time, Monty's life began to change and he started looking at his life differently. He got released and he went to work. He ended up meeting the love of his life, Lynda. He had this ember in his heart. He said that he wanted to start an organization or a group that would provide support for others, like him, who have been inside and are coming out, and that he wanted to help them be able to have the supports that they need. He founded an organization along with his wife to help those who were transitioning from incarceration back into the community. They started on a shoestring budget and just did the best that they could to help.

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I must say I cannot think of a better way to pay tribute to the legacy of my friend Monty than by implementing this national framework for an overall reduction in recidivism. By doing this, I believe we, as parliamentarians, are helping to foster an atmosphere through which many other Montys and Lyndas can be afforded another opportunity to realize their potential and achieve their dreams. The impact of Monty's and Lynda's lives has gone far beyond their humble beginnings and regrettable decisions.

I cannot help but wonder how many others are out there, needing the power of a second chance, needing simply someone else to believe in them and believe that their story is far greater than the regrettable decisions that they had made at some point in the past, that their life will no longer be forever defined by what was or what once happened or the wrongs that they have committed, but instead, their lives will be transformed through the power of what new opportunities and a fresh start can afford.

We have an opportunity, with this bill, to provide a bridge of hope to those who need it most, an outstretched hand to those who feel left behind and a pathway forward for some of the most marginalized and vulnerable among us. We, together, can end the spiralling cycle of recidivism by providing the most powerful agent of change in our world, and that is hope.

• (1840)

The Deputy Speaker: We will have questions and comments. I am going to ask hon. members to keep their questions concise. We will try to get one from each of the recognized parties in the House, and others if time permits.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

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 thank the member for his compassion in sharing Monty's story. It is exceptionally admirable, what the member has been able to do over the last 15 minutes.

I have more of a comment than a question. I recognize how important it is for us to work within the system to try to reduce the likelihood of recidivism. I respect the amount of effort and time the member has put into this. He might want to provide some thanks to those other individuals who helped him put this bill together.

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Mr. Speaker, there are so many I would like to thank for their contributions to helping make this bill possible. I think of my legislative assistant, Jesus Bondo, who put in countless hours, helping make this happen with many calls and a lot of engagement, a lot of study and a lot of research. He is a fine young man who put countless hours into this, and I am very thankful for that.

I thank my colleagues in my caucus, who have been unanimously supportive of this, and my friend and colleague who seconded this, the hon. member for Fundy Royal, who has been a tremendous source of insight and wisdom. I thank my wife and family, who have helped me through this and were very patient as I spent the extra hours in trying to make this happen. I want to thank also all those who are continuing to volunteer and serve with the non-prof-

its and service providers and charitable organizations who go into the places of shadows where people are, where sometimes they feel pretty hopeless, but yet these messengers, oftentimes they are volunteers, keep going, because they believe that every person is worth it, no matter what their past may have been.

I cannot thank all of them enough, and I appreciate the good work that they do.

• (1845)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I was deeply moved by his personal story.

I want to talk about a part of his speech when he gave examples of places elsewhere in the world that are doing much better than Canada. He mentioned the United Kingdom, but there is an example closer to home. In Quebec, the Commission québécoise des libérations conditionnelles is doing significantly better than other systems, according to several studies. Canada should take a page from their book.

The bill raises some concerns because it would establish a framework in collaboration with the other provinces. We simply want to ensure that this will not infringe on provincial jurisdictions. The framework should not cover prisons that are under provincial jurisdiction.

I would like to hear his thoughts on that.

[English]

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely believe we would only work in total conjunction with the provinces. The intent of this bill is not to supersede the areas of provincial jurisdiction. It would, in large part, at the beginning relate to federal prisons and federal inmates returning. If a province would like to roll out a pilot that would affect its provincial institutions and those incarcerated within its provincial jails, then by all means it can, but we would not go in and override, in any way, provincial jurisdiction. We will totally respect that and—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac for his heartfelt speech and for introducing this bill.

He should know that I could not agree with him more about the importance of the programs he is talking about. I came to this House after 20 years of teaching criminal justice, but in my first term in Parliament, it was the Harper government, I was the public safety critic for the official opposition. I watched a Conservative government destroy the very programs that he is talking about. It closed down prison farms, cut apprenticeship programs and did everything it could to make sure these programs were not available in our prison system, and to focus on punishment rather than rehabilitation. I also watched the Conservatives institute mandatory minimums that placed inordinate numbers of indigenous people, Black Canadians and poor Canadians in the prison system.

Therefore, my question to the hon. member is: does he have the support of his caucus, because this is an about-face for a Conservative party that has always favoured the exact opposite of what he is talking about?

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Mr. Speaker, I can honestly say to the hon. member that I have been absolutely overwhelmed by the support that I have received from my own caucus in this. It has been tremendous. The support of my leader as well as our entire caucus has been nothing short of absolutely remarkable.

I cannot speak to the decisions made by previous governments at a previous time. All I can do is speak from this moment forward. I think, as parliamentarians who are here today in this season and in the House, we have a responsibility to act now upon what we can do to make things different and better. I hope that the hon. member, as well as all other members of the House, can look at this bill and see the heart and desire behind it, and that we can work from this point forward to bring about positive change, and—

The Deputy Speaker: We are getting to the end. I will take one more short question and response.

The hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague for Tobique—Mactaquac for bringing this private member's bill forward.

My colleague for Winnipeg North asked if the member wanted to say anything more about those who had helped him, and I just want to say that I had the opportunity of meeting one of the people he mentioned in his presentation today, David Coburn, on two occasions; once in an agricultural situation and again with the member in his riding. I wonder if he could elaborate a little. He mentioned that his family has helped.

Can the member name others who have helped, and in what way did they help make sure that these recidivism issues are not repeated by the persons who have fallen out of line with the law in the past?

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his kind comments. I remember the visit we had very well, and the great work that local farm and Mr. Coburn have done in our region.

Of course, there are other organizations that have made a great impact on this and continue to. I think of some of the private-sector employers, such as local car dealerships, those who have employed people in the carpentry field and other businesses that have come to

the fore and said that they were going to give these folks another chance. They provided employment opportunities and allowed them to embrace the opportunities before them. Yes, they have some things in their past that they regret, but they are so thankful to have that opportunity. I give those private-sector partners a big thanks.

I also want to thank those volunteer organizations that continue to go the extra mile. There are so many of them that do such great work across this country. They never get much recognition for it, because it is not a subject that many people are comfortable talking about. However, when people step forward from these various arenas, especially those who have been helped by these programs, it has a tremendous impact, and more and more Canadians will—

• (1850)

The Deputy Speaker: We will have to leave it there.

We will go to resuming debate with the hon. member for Richmond Hill.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member for bringing this private member's bill forward and congratulate him on a great intervention. Typically when an intervention comes from the heart and is based on lived or shared experience, it really impacts this House. It is really meaningful when we have this as part of our interventions in the House.

It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to add my voice to today's debate on Bill C-228, which proposes to establish a federal framework to reduce recidivism. Again, I thank the hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac for putting forward this bill.

Specifically, the bill calls for the development and implementation of a federal framework that, in the interests of reducing recidivism, would ensure the needs of people who have been incarcerated are met and would support their rehabilitation.

Back in the 42nd Parliament, I had the opportunity to table Bill C-375, which was also focused on the reduction of recidivism, with a focus on mental health. Unfortunately, it died on the floor of the other House and I hope this bill does not see the same fate. I will be supporting this bill.

This bill is important because almost all offenders in Canadian federal correctional institutions will sooner or later be released safely back into the community. We need to ensure when people who have been incarcerated make that transition they are well prepared and well equipped to succeed and lead productive and law-abiding lives. That is why we have a continuity of care in our federal correctional system.

It starts with rehabilitation programming and treatment inside our institutions. These help prepare an offender for eventual release by promoting law-abiding lifestyles and good behaviour. However, if positive change is to last, it must continue in the community as well. That is why most people who have been incarcerated are also provided with support for a gradual, structured reintegration into the community under supervision and with conditions.

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This approach helps improve public safety by providing appropriate rehabilitative and reintegration support to reduce the risk of reoffending. Indeed, it has been proven to lead to fewer repeat offenders, fewer victims and ultimately safer communities and a safer society.

A wide variety of programs, services and support are offered by Correctional Service Canada, Public Safety Canada and by partners in the community. While these initiatives are all different, they share the same goal to improve reintegration outcomes so people do not reoffend and return to our institutions after they are released.

It is important to note the transition from incarceration to freedom can often be difficult. The chance of success of people making this transition depends partly on their own efforts and partly on the supervision, opportunities, training and support they receive within the community. Community-based residential facilities are an important part of this process for gradual, supervised release.

The hon. member talked about the theme of three minutes, three hours, three days, three weeks, three months and three years, and this aligns with what our government is doing. These facilities provide a bridge between the institution and the community. Many offer programming for residents focused on important topics like life skills, substance abuse and employment. Some community-based residential facilities are owned and operated by non-governmental agencies.

Earlier this year, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, our government announced that we would provide up to \$500,000 to five national voluntary organizations to develop pilot projects during this unprecedented time to address the reintegration of those under supervision at halfway houses.

The lessons learned from the pilot projects will help continue to deliver effective programs and services to people in correctional institutions who are eligible for supervised release in the community. They will also keep halfway house residents and surrounding communities safe during emergencies such as COVID-19. People and organizations in the community also deliver programs and act as counsellors, role models and support networks. Community-based maintenance programs are one example.

• (1855)

The main goal of these programs is to reduce the risk of people committing new crimes and reoffending. The programs help people who have been incarcerated to enhance their self-management during their transition to the community. Through these programs, people review core self-management skills and apply them to real-life situations, obstacles and high-risk situations. This allows them to gain, rehearse and maintain recidivism-reducing skills. In addition to these efforts, our government is strengthening culturally responsive services and rehabilitation strategies.

We are also putting in place reintegration initiatives and building partnerships with indigenous communities and organizations to provide addiction treatment, trauma counselling and life-skill support. All these help to promote timely, safe and successful reintegration and to address the problem of overrepresentation of indigenous people in correctional facilities.

One example is the relatively new indigenous community correction initiative, which is a major development on this front. It was created to support the healing and rehabilitation of indigenous offenders and was backed by \$10 million of funding over five years in budget 2017. The initiative provides funding for community-driven projects and offers alternatives to incarceration and reintegration support for indigenous offenders. The project works with indigenous offenders before they are released from a correctional facility and provides continuing support once the offender is back in the community.

The projects are also meant to be culturally relevant. They incorporate local customs and traditions and are responsive to the unique circumstances of indigenous people in Canada.

For Black Canadians, who are also overrepresented in our penitentiaries when comparing their percentage with the general population, CSC is studying the in-custody experience of racialized inmates, including Black Canadians. It will focus on participation in correctional programs, education and employment, while studying how ethnocultural offenders are reintegrating into the community in terms of employment opportunities and successful completion of sentences.

CSC continues to also invest in partnerships with universities and we are committed to doing more to ensure that Black offenders are offered a comprehensive level of service aimed at supporting their reintegration. This includes addressing employment and mentorship needs, culturally relevant presentations, community outreach with service providers, community engagement and ethnocultural services and the purchase of culturally relevant materials.

We know that there is more work to be done and we are committed to doing it. Both the Office of the Correctional Investigator and the Office of the Auditor General of Canada have highlighted the importance of supporting offenders in their reintegration into the community and have called for improved measures. The government has made significant investments and launched important new initiatives to that end in recent years. We continue to take steps to support the safe reintegration of federal offenders into the community, as productive and law-abiding citizens.

That does not mean that we cannot or should not do more. The overrepresentation of Black and indigenous inmates is unacceptable and we must continue to make progress to address the issue. That was reaffirmed in the most recent Speech from the Throne. Among other things, it notes that our government will introduce legislation and make investments that take action to address the systemic inequalities in all phases of the criminal justice system, from diversion to sentencing, from rehabilitation to records.

The proposed federal framework in Bill C-228 is a reasonable and welcome suggestion that would complement existing efforts to reduce recidivism. I look forward to further debates on the bill. I, personally, will be supporting the bill.

● (1900)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this evening to speak to Bill C-228, which proposes a way to better support inmates in federal prisons in order to minimize recidivism.

I am pleased that the hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac took the initiative to introduce this bill, which I believe to be fundamental. It is a subject that is very important to me and that I have studied very carefully in my capacity as vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Earlier this week, Ivan Zinger, the Correctional Investigator of Canada, appeared before the committee to brief us on the findings of his annual report. Once again, he revealed just how many serious flaws there are in Canada's correctional system. He also highlighted the lack of action by the Liberal government and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness in this area.

His recommendations are clear and deserve special attention, particularly with respect to sexual coercion and violence in correctional centres and educational programming in penitentiaries. These are subjects I will return to in the interest of this bill, particularly educational programming in penitentiaries.

There are too many cases of recidivism. All of Quebec saw this last winter when it was shaken by the murder of Marylène Levesque, a woman who was only 22 years old when she was killed by Eustachio Gallese, a man on parole after serving a 15-year sentence following his conviction for murdering his wife. This is a case of violence against a woman by a man who had a history of violence against women. I have spoken before about this unfortunate case in the House. There is also the case of Michel Cox, a dangerous sexual predator who attempted to kidnap a teenage girl immediately after he was released from prison.

These are just two out of so many examples proving that there are clearly serious problems related to repeat offenders in Canada's correctional system and that, unfortunately, the mechanisms in place sometimes fail to protect the public, as the cases of Eustachio Gallese and Michel Cox show.

This is one of the reasons I sincerely believe in the importance of passing legislation to rectify the way we deal with prisoners in Canada's correctional system. Reintegration refers to a suite of interventions designed to help offenders live in a socially acceptable

manner as a law-abiding citizen. This can be done through activities and programming aimed at supporting the person's development and learning more about them, building a relationship of trust, making use of their family and social network, and delivering services tailored to their needs.

However, reintegration also means that, in the case of incarcerated individuals, the interventions must begin upon admission to custody and must include activities to prepare them for release. This approach can be frustrating for victims and their loved ones, but it does reduce the risk that the offender will victimize others once released.

I am particularly pleased that it is the Conservatives who introduced Bill C-228, because it could correct an error made by Stephen Harper's government. We can blame the Liberals all we want for their inaction over the past five years, but the reality is that the Conservatives are unfortunately also responsible for the failures of the system, particularly with mandatory minimum sentencing.

It should be remembered that this policy, which was put in place by the Conservatives, takes away judges' discretion to determine appropriate sentences for certain Criminal Code offences based on their knowledge of the case and their expertise in order to maximize the chances of rehabilitation.

The rationale for mandatory minimum sentences is the belief that length of time in prison acts as a deterrent to future recidivism. However, a major 1999 study on the effects of prison sentences on recidivism suggests otherwise. Researchers analyzed 50 studies over a 30-year period involving more than 336,000 offenders to establish 325 correlations between recidivism and length of time in prison or serving a prison sentence versus a community-based sanction. The objective was to determine whether prisons were effective in suppressing criminal behaviour or recidivism.

The researchers came to the following conclusion. Prisons should not be used with the expectation of reducing criminal behaviour, and the primary justification of prison should be to incapacitate offenders, particularly those of a chronic, higher-risk nature, for reasonable periods and to exact retribution.

That is why I believe that it is entirely appropriate to debate this bill, which seems like an ideal opportunity to begin a discussion on mandatory minimum sentences. If we really want to create a federal framework to reduce recidivism, mandatory minimum sentences definitely must be reviewed in order to maximize the chances of rehabilitation.

I will now come back to the Office of the Correctional Investigator's 2019-20 annual report, published on October 27, which I spoke about earlier.

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● (1905)

The report is devastating for the Government of Canada, because it shows that the federal government is doing a terrible job of managing inmates' reintegration into the community.

The correctional investigator reports that very few steps have been taken to implement the dozens of recommendations his office has previously made with regard to inmate training, which has a direct impact on their reintegration into the community. Moreover, he focused on what must be taken away from his report, namely that Canada is falling further behind the rest of the industrialized world with respect to digital learning and vocational skills training behind bars.

In his 125-page report, we learn that federal inmates do not have access to monitored email, tablets or supervised use of the Internet. Prison schools rely mainly on pen and paper, textbooks are out of date and the libraries lack resources. It is virtually impossible to pursue post-secondary studies behind bars. Apprenticeships are rare. Prison shops run on obsolete platforms, and the number of offenders on the waiting list for education programs is, in many cases, too high.

Based on these observations, is it any surprise that prisoners in federal penitentiaries are struggling to be rehabilitated? How can they re-enter the labour market without training that reflects the needs of today's workplace and without adequate information technology training? How can inmates successfully reintegrate into the community if their abilities and employment opportunities are neglected? Without a legitimate livelihood, the path to recidivism beckons.

This is why it seems clear to me that the issue of education programs in penitentiaries must be addressed first, as the Correctional Investigator of Canada strongly recommended to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, to ensure that inmates have access to adequate resources and employment opportunities.

There is another aspect of the bill that is bothering those of us in the Bloc Québécois. The bill states that the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness must develop the framework in collaboration with the provinces, first nations and other relevant stakeholder groups. We want to warn the government against the temptation of imposing a federal model on prisons under provincial jurisdiction. A federal framework should not dictate to the provinces what they can do, because everyone knows that the Bloc Québécois does not like that. Furthermore, Quebec is doing much better than other places in the world when it comes to reintegration into the community.

Bill C-228 must focus on reintegration in federal penitentiaries and stay away from telling the provinces what to do. We obviously insist that Quebec retain full authority over its correctional system. This is not coming from me or the Bloc Québécois; this is coming from CIRANO, the Center for Interuniversity Research and Analysis of Organizations.

In a study published in 2019, CIRANO noted that not only do programs at prisons run by the Government of Quebec to reintegrate inmates into the community reduce recidivism, but they also are far more successful than in other places. CIRANO researchers

observed a 10% recidivism rate among inmates in Montreal who participated in reintegration programs, compared to 50% for non-participants, over a period of five years.

The more an inmate participates in programs during their sentence, the less likely they are to reoffend. With these kinds of results, we obviously want to jealously guard the autonomy and jurisdiction of the Quebec correctional system.

Under a 1977 amendment to the federal legislation, Quebec manages parole for sentences of less than two years. As a result, the Quebec parole board is the one that makes decisions regarding the various types of temporary absences for inmates in the Quebec system. More specifically, the board makes decisions based on all of the information about the offender that is needed and available.

As members can see, Quebec focuses on reintegration into the community and has been successful in that regard. The federal system would do well to do the same and follow Quebec's example to limit recidivism and prevent human tragedies, such as the murder of Marylène Levesque that I mentioned earlier, as much as possible.

The Bloc Québécois will therefore support the bill at second reading because it is absolutely essential that we find more ways to reduce the rate of recidivism among federal inmates. We therefore support the intent of Bill C-228.

However, we will want to examine the bill carefully in committee to improve and amend it in order to avoid any hint of interference in the management of the Quebec prison system, which is recognized as one of the best in the world because, again, it has a low rate of recidivism among its inmates. More importantly, we want to help ensure the safety of Quebecers and Canadians.

● (1910)

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today in Parliament on Bill C-228, an act to establish a federal framework to reduce recidivism, and I commend the member for Tobique—Mactaquac for bringing forward this legislation.

A lot of things in the bill and a lot of what the member had to say are quite commendable. He said it with great passion and concern. I would be remiss if I did not remind him that many of the things here are things we have fought to have for many years. I was in Parliament between 2008 and 2015, fighting for these along with the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

There was a great deal of consternation among our caucus at that time as to how the Harper government treated inmates and people who were incarcerated. Many of our current caucus members were there at that time as well.

Under the Harper government, we saw serious cuts in prison farms. We saw the government closing addiction research centres, reducing access to libraries, eliminating funding for lifelines and circles of support within prisons, and cutting incentive pay for working in prison industries. Prison work programs were essentially designed to allow prisoners to save some money, so when they did get out, they had a bit of money for the work they did while incarcerated.

Currently, only 6% of prisoners at any time have access to a prison work program. The many things that were done under that regime in the interests of saving money leave us, in part, where we are today. If anything, I would say the member's bill does not go far enough.

We could talk about pilot programs to find out whether offering people employment after being imprisoned is going to help recidivism or return them to prison, but we do not need a pilot project to do that. That is common sense. That is based on the work done by organizations like the John Howard Society and community organizations. They are struggling day in and day out, with volunteers in many cases, to help people reintegrate into society and make a life for themselves, with very little help.

What we should be doing is providing them that help, not by way of a pilot project, but by way of a program for reintegration into the community. I would suspect that kind of a program would not necessarily be supported at all by his colleagues in this House.

The correctional investigator shows us time and again the failure within our prison system to provide proper rehabilitation services. The mental health supports that ought to be there for the people who suffer seriously inside prison are inadequate, not to mention how they are treated with respect to solitary confinement. We have recently seen the failure to properly and adequately assess people's rehabilitative potential within the system.

All of these things have to work together to make it possible for those who find themselves behind bars to leave prison having learned something while they were there, and to have found skills and developed attitudes that might help them reintegrate into society. That is the goal, not only to rehabilitate the offender, but also to make our communities safer by having someone who is able to be a contributing member of society.

As a lawyer, whether practising or watching other situations, I sometimes find people before the court asking to be sent to a federal penitentiary for two years or more when they are being found guilty or pleading guilty to an offence. They are saying that they need help. They want to go to a federal penitentiary because there will be programs there that might help them do something with their life.

• (1915)

Often, the courts believe that is the place for them to go and gives them federal time. They give them two and a half or three years instead of the lesser sentence he or she might otherwise have qualified for. They then find themselves in prison without the supports, which is a compounding factor for someone who is desperate for help and who wants to improve their lives. They want to get themselves moving forward, but they do not have the means to do

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so, and they are relying on a prison system that does not provide that support.

Yes, we do need what is in the bill. I will quote the preamble, which has all very well-intentioned words:

Whereas the purpose of the correctional system is in part to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by assisting the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community as law-abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and in the community;

The preamble continues:

Whereas people who have been incarcerated should have the necessary resources and employment opportunities to be able to transition back into the community

It then concludes that our system ought to be one that:

ensures the needs of people who have been incarcerated are met and supports their rehabilitation.

Of course, that is exactly what needs to be done. We agree with that totally, and we will support this legislation. Hopefully, in committee, we can make it more powerful to be able to do the job better. The situation we are in right now is very desperate. That is, in large measure, due to the failure of both the Conservative government of Steven Harper and the subsequent government in not following the recommendations of the correctional investigator to make improvements and to leave the prisons in the state that they are in.

Mandatory minimum sentences have filled our prisons with people who do not need to be there as long as they are. They would have been given a different sentence by a judge who could consider the individual circumstances of a person or the nature of the offence itself and the circumstances of the offence.

We see more and more indigenous people in prisons. In fact, the percentage of the prison population who are indigenous is going up not down. It is approaching nearly 33% for indigenous prisoners as a whole and 40% for indigenous women. This is a terrible situation, and the programs that are available for indigenous prisoners are grossly inadequate. In fact, they are diminished, as has been recently revealed by a Globe and Mail report, because they are over-assessed. Risk assessments discriminate against indigenous prisoners and put them in penitentiary situations where they do not have access to programs.

There are many reforms to be undertaken, and I hope that the member for Tobique—Mactaquac, who I know is a new member of the House and obviously has a passion for this issue, learns more about what is actually going on in the prisons of today and gets involved in helping to insist that reforms be undertaken that go much further than the suggestions he has made in his bill.

As was just pointed out by the previous speaker from the Bloc Québécois, my colleague on the public safety committee, the correctional investigator was very critical of the Corrections Service of Canada in failing to provide proper educational opportunities behind bars.

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The correctional investigator found that Canada is falling further and further behind the rest of the industrialized world with respect to digital learning and vocational skills behind bars. He also said that the evidence of the decline is increasing and that there had been little movement in implementing dozens of previous recommendations from his office in this area.

He then outlined some of the issues in detail, including that prison schools have outdated textbooks and they rely on pen and paper. They and their libraries are inadequately resourced. There is virtually no opportunity to pursue post-secondary studies behind bars and prisoners do not have access to computers.

The number of offenders on wait lists to participate in educational work programs is large and the periods can be lengthy. The correctional investigator said that this is a disaster in opportunities for people to better themselves in prison and be rehabilitated on the way out.

• (1920)

I do respect the passion and the commitment the hon. member has for this cause. I hope he is able to be a spokesperson within his caucus to change some of the negative attitudes that exist there and that existed in the government of Stephen Harper.

I look forward to seeing the bill at committee. Hopefully I will have further discussion with the hon. member on it.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate with the hon. member for Lakeland, I will let her know there are about six minutes remaining in the time for Private Members' Business for today. That is not quite the full 10 minutes, but the hon. member will have the remaining time when the House next gets back to debate on the question.

The hon. member for Lakeland.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to be able to speak today in support of Bill C-228, an act to establish a federal framework to reduce recidivism. I want to thank my colleague, the member for Tobique—Mactaquac for bringing this important piece of legislation forward, and for his leadership on making real and compassionate reforms to Canada's criminal justice system.

Far too many criminals reoffend after serving their prison sentences. In fact, an alarming one in four people who has been incarcerated will reoffend within two years of their release from prison. That reality has a profoundly negative impact on society. It creates even more victims of crime as a result. Conservatives have always been on the side of victims of crime and we always will be. We will put the rights of law-abiding citizens, the priorities of victims of crime and their families, and public safety and security ahead of criminals every single time.

As a society, though, the goal must be to reduce repeat offences so that families and communities do not continuously have to go through losses, emotional trauma, distress, financial and personal costs, anxiety about their security, diminishing peace of mind and an erosion of faith in the ability of governments, law enforcement and institutions to keep them safe. The only way to reduce the num-

ber of victims of crime is to reduce the number of crimes being committed.

This bill would take crucial and holistic steps toward reducing recidivism by mandating the public safety minister to develop a federal framework with important partners from a variety of sectors, bringing together indigenous groups, NGOs, non-profit groups, faith-based and private-sector organizations, in order to develop standardized and evidence-based programs to reduce the risk of criminals reoffending when their sentences are complete.

The framework would support reintegration and ensure access to adequate and ongoing resources, including employment opportunities. This bill's inclusion of non-profit, faith-based and community organizations, as well as local stakeholders, encourages the role that so many are already doing and aims to identify areas where additional help or resources might be required. Unfortunately, many of these organizations have been working in silos for many years, which is why the initiative of a federal framework is so important.

Bringing everyone to the same table can help foster long-lasting partnerships, especially among people and groups that have already demonstrated dedication, commitment and a concern for an invested interest in their local communities. Utilizing the expertise of each group and sharing resources can enable real solutions to the often complex problems of why people reoffend.

Patterns of criminal behaviour have often been associated with prior history or negative relationships, with poor examples of reintegration. Many factors cause people to commit a crime in the first place, and those same factors often lead people to reoffend, such as addictions and substance abuse, negative peer influence, personality disorders, socio-economic status, family breakdown, abuse and many others. These are reasons why some people are caught in the vicious cycle of committing an offence, serving time and then reoffending.

To be clear, none of those factors is a good excuse for committing a crime. There is never a good reason. Conservatives believe that action must be taken to fix a system that is often rightfully characterized as a revolving door, starting with real consequences for criminal activity, mandatory minimums, stronger and consecutive sentences for so many serious crimes, and more emphasis on law enforcement and prosecution resources. However, it is also important to deal with reality, to acknowledge that criminals will be released and to recognize these aggravating factors in order to design effective programs that successfully prevent more offences.

Whether someone's ideal view of the objective of the correction system is retribution or rehabilitation, a combination or something else, it seems obvious to me that there should be a focus on individuals who will be getting out eventually and ensuring that part of their incarceration emphasizes education, learning new skills and additional training to prepare them to transition to being productive members of society, and emphasizes a framework to support that goal when they are out. However, there are gaps in the system right now that need to be addressed.

Just last week the Correctional Investigator of Canada, Dr. Ivan Zinger, reported that training in the prison system is inadequate, as a colleague mentioned before me. Canada is falling behind the rest of the industrialized world. In fact, the Correctional Investigator made previous recommendations to promote learning and skills development behind bars, but the government has unfortunately ignored them all. He found that schools relied primarily on pen and paper, textbooks were outdated and libraries were inadequately sourced. Prison shops run on technological platforms that are no longer used.

● (1925)

A national framework could help by involving the private and not-for-profit sectors in partnering to ensure that those prisoners

who were suitable to re-enter the workforce would receive useful training and education, and it should not have to cost Canadian taxpayers a cent.

I want to be clear on another point. This bill is designed for those who would leave the prison system imminently and who had proved that they were good candidates for rehabilitation, therefore lowering the risk of them reoffending. Under no circumstances does this bill aim to create a system where criminals would see a benefit from going into prison and get a free education. That is not what this is about. It is about recognizing the reality that many of those who are incarcerated will be reintegrated, and ensuring the necessary steps to maximize the chance that they will become productive citizens. It is about being proactive to reduce the rate of recidivism—

The Deputy Speaker: We will bring it to a close there. The hon. member will have four and a half minutes remaining in her time when the House next gets back to debate the question.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

[For continuation of proceedings, see part B]

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Volume 150 No. 027
(Part B)

Thursday, November 5, 2020

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 5, 2020

[Continuation of proceedings from part A]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

INCOME TAX ACT

(House in committee of the whole, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair, resuming consideration of Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act regarding the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy)

The Chair: Pursuant to order made Wednesday, November 4, I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole on Bill C-9, an act to amend the Income Tax Act with regard to the Canada emergency rent subsidy and the Canada emergency wage subsidy, and the economy in general.

Before we begin debate, I would like to remind hon. members of how the proceedings will unfold over the next four hours.

[English]

Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, November 4, 2020, the Chair will call members in a fashion consistent with the proportions observed during Oral Questions. The rotation used for questions will be the one used for the former Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic.

[Translation]

Each member may address the House for not more than five minutes and may use that time to ask questions.

Members may share their time with one or more members, but must indicate their intention to do so to the chair.

[English]

The Chair will expect a minister's response to approximately reflect the time taken to ask the question. The debate will end after four hours, or when no member rises to speak.

We will now begin the debate with the hon. member for Carleton.

• (1930)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Chair, what is the dollar value of the national debt as of today?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am not going to offer new projections, but let me remind the member that in the fiscal snapshot, the deficit—

The Chair: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, what is the debt?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, it was \$343.2 billion as of the fiscal snapshot. There are no new numbers tonight.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, I want to clarify for the finance minister that there is a difference between debt and deficits. I asked for the debt. Is she sure the debt is just \$300 and some-odd billion?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Yes, Mr. Chair, and I want to be clear with members. I am going to refer to numbers from the snapshot, not new numbers tonight. I will tell the member more with the next question.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, does she know the debt?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I sure do. It was projected in the fiscal snapshot to be \$1.060 trillion.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, I think that number is hard for any of us to say, in fairness, so I will be charitable on that point.

Regarding all the new debt the government is adding, will it be repaid before interest rates rise?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said in my speech last week, we are extending the maturities of our debt to lock in current interest rates, which are at a 100-year low, our debt service charges.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: That is perfect, Mr. Chair.

What percentage of the new debt the government has added since March has been locked in for more than five years?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: As I said, Mr. Chair, I am going to be offering detailed projections and numbers in my economic update later on this fall, not tonight, but I will cite the—

The Chair: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, is it more than 50%?

Government Orders

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: As I said, Mr. Chair, the finance minister's numbers on these issues are very sensitive and I am not going to—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, it is actually not sensitive at all. It is published by the Bank of Canada. If the minister had just gone to the Bank of Canada's website, she would know that less than 10% of the new debt the government has borrowed is locked in for more than five years. The other 91% is locked in for shorter terms.

Why did the minister tell people that she was locking in low rates when, in fact, 91% of the debt is on short-term maturities?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, we have a program, as I said last week, moving into longer-term debt instruments. This is to lock in current rates. That is exactly what we are doing right now.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, it is exactly the opposite of what the minister is doing. I am surprised that she did not visit the Bank of Canada website where she could have found out that less than 10% of the new debt her government has issued since March is long term. The rest is short term. In fact, it is of shorter duration than our pre-existing debt. Why did the minister mislead an audience last week when she claimed she was locking in debt for the long run while Bank of Canada data shows precisely the opposite?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our government and the Bank of Canada's debt-management program is second to none in the world. We are making a careful and thoughtful effort to lock in longer-term maturities and move to longer-term instruments. That is what we are doing. Instruments are maturing all the time and are being moved into longer-maturity, lower-interest-rate debt.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, it is second to none in that it is the most expensive. Let us find out how expensive it is.

How much would it cost the government if there were a one-percentage-point increase in the effective rate of interest on our debt?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I need to challenge the first comment the member opposite made. Canada's debt is not the most expensive.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the question was how much would a one-percentage-point increase cost the government in extra interest costs on the national debt? How much? I just want a number.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the member's assertion was that Canada's debt is the most expensive and that—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, does the minister know how much?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, Canada is one of two G7 countries with a AAA credit rating. We borrow—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, how much would it cost the government if interest rates rose by 1% across our national debt? How much?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the member opposite is building an assumption into his questions that I strongly disagree with.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the minister cannot disagree with numbers. I am asking how much a 1% interest-rate increase would cost the government.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, actually one can absolutely disagree with implicit assertions.

● (1935)

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Chair, the Minister of Finance just announced that she intends to present an economic update this fall. Can she give us an approximate date or at least tell us whether she plans to present it in November or December?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I apologize to the House, but all I can say is that it will be this fall.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: At least I tried, Mr. Chair.

Bill C-9 extends the wage subsidy until next summer and puts in place real support for commercial rent. These are two measures we have been asking for for a long time and that we welcome. We are very happy about that, which is why we support the bill and hope it will pass quickly.

The parameters of the subsidies discussed here are announced until December 19. After that, the government will decide by regulation. I would like to know the criteria that the government will use to decide whether or not to change the subsidies: the economic situation, the evolution of the pandemic or the government's ability to pay? I would like to have a clear idea of what criteria the government will use as a basis.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: That is an excellent question, Mr. Chair.

The date was chosen so that the Canada emergency wage subsidy would coincide with the Canada emergency rent subsidy.

The three criteria that the hon. member listed are all important. I think the most important thing for us will be our country's economic situation, which is obviously very closely tied to the health situation.

For this reason, we have announced parameters until December 19. It is a matter of giving companies some certainty because it is important, but also to give us the necessary flexibility, because it is very difficult to know in advance what the economic and health situation will be at the end of the year.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for her answer.

Under the bill, if a business changes locations and the new lease for a smaller space is signed after October 9, will that business still be eligible for the Canada emergency rent subsidy or would it have to stay in its more expensive space to continue to receive the subsidy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, that is a very important question about the details of the Canada emergency rent subsidy. I can assure the member that we intend to help businesses and find a solution for each of them. We are not looking for reasons not to pay the subsidy. Obviously, Canada is a big country with a big economy—

The Chair: The hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for sharing her intention. That is reassuring.

I will give her time to finish her answer.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I simply want to add that this is a big program. This is the first time that Canada is going to pay a rent subsidy directly to businesses. We added an element that, in my opinion, is very important and that is targeted assistance for businesses that are subject to a public health lockdown order. We need to work on that and see if there are any gaps. However, the intention is to help our businesses.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister.

Why did the government decide not to make the rent subsidy retroactive to last summer and spring?

● (1940)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his question.

We did discuss this issue. The reason is that we always have to ask ourselves the following: What is the purpose of our measures? In my view, the purpose is to create a bridge for the businesses that are viable today and encourage them to continue working. Through our programs, we must think about the future, not the past. Through the new programs, we need to try to help the businesses that will be working in the future. That is the reason.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Chair, with the emergency rent subsidy program, the original contract this summer was given to a company whose leadership has links to the chief of staff of the Prime Minister. Landlords could only apply if they had a commercial mortgage at the beginning, and this was a non-tendered contract given to a commercial mortgage company. Therefore, it failed most of the businesses that should have been able to access the commercial rent subsidy.

We support the legislation moving forward, but the minister does have to recognize that there were many businesses that did not have access to the program, and their survival is dependent on having retroactive access to the rent subsidy. The NDP is offering an amendment to Bill C-9 that would achieve that, back to April 1, and allow those companies to access the rent subsidy.

Will the government accept the NDP amendment and provide the necessary support for it?

Government Orders

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I think that is an entirely reasonable question, and one that I have wrestled with. At the end of the day, my answer is the one I offered to my colleague from the Bloc. I think that our programs need to be focused on the future. We need to focus on supporting businesses in their activities going forward. What we want to do is to create a bridge from today to tomorrow and not focus on the past, but I do thank the member for the question and for his obvious concern for the businesses in his riding and across the country.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, that means we will see businesses going under that would not have if they had support from the government in this regard.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has been very critical about the lack of transparency, which basically was ended in August. Will the minister endeavour to start providing supports to the finance committee so that we can be kept current of government expenditures?

On the question of regulations through Bill C-9, coming through after December 19, what is the current scenario that the government sees for the regulations that would take us from December to June? Is it having maintenance of the same level of supports for businesses and for the wage subsidy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me start with the second half of that question, which is a really important one.

In choosing December 19 as the date to which we are setting the levels for the wage and rent subsidies, we have tried to strike a balance. We are striking a balance with, on the one hand, the fact that business owners are telling us, as I am sure they are telling everyone in the House, that they want certainty and stability and they want to be able to plan. However, on the other side of the balance is the reality that the situation with coronavirus, the situation with the global economy and, frankly, the situation with the North American economy is very unpredictable and very volatile. Therefore, we are trying to offer certainty while at the same time having flexibility for the future.

I would point out, as the member is very well aware, we have assured business owners that these two programs will be in place until June—

The Chair: The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, in regard to wage subsidy relief or any other government supports, how many company applications have been refused because the company is involved with international tax evasion or the company is named in tax-evasion papers like the Bahamas papers, the Panama papers or the paradise papers, or the company uses or has used international tax havens?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am sorry. It is because of the sound. What was the first part of the question? I know it was how many companies in tax havens and stuff, but companies doing what?

Government Orders

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, how many companies have had their applications refused because of that involvement?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, is the member asking about the BCAP, the LEEFF or the wage subsidy program?

The Chair: I will ask the hon. member just to clarify the question back to the hon. minister and we will proceed accordingly.

• (1945)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would like to really apologize to the NDP finance critic. I just did not hear, maybe because of the transmission, exactly the first part of the question. It is business owners turned down for which program?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I referred to the wage subsidy or LEEFF or any other program, and I hope I will not be penalized on the time.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as the hon. member for the NDP knows, so far for the LEEFF program we only have two businesses we have qualified. Other businesses are currently being reviewed and the LEEFF program absolutely has very tough criteria around environmental performance, around executive compensation, around being sure that these are companies that are paying their taxes in Canada and around foreign ownership assets, so we are being very, very careful in that program. The LEEFF program is one which is very bespoke and there is a tiger team that goes through the financials of each company very carefully.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Chair, in her speech last week, the minister said that she would “impose” limits on the debt. What limits?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I think in my answer around the retroactivity of the rent subsidy, I have been pointing to some limits that our government is imposing. We are thoughtful about targeting our support where—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, is there a dollar figure to which she would limit the debt?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said in my speech last week—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, is there a dollar figure she would impose on the debt, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I said last week that we are mindful that limits exist.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, what are they?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, there is no blank cheque.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, is the limit a percentage or a dollar figure?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, unlike the member opposite, I am the finance minister and I need to be very careful with my words.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, I wish she were as careful with numbers. What is the number?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am absolutely as careful and that is why I carefully said last week—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, it is a very direct question. What is the dollar-value limit that she claimed and she promised she would impose on our debt?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the member opposite should be careful with words. I did not claim in my speech last week anything of the sort that he is suggesting. What I said was that there are—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, actually she did. She said that she would “impose” limits on the debt. I am just asking her to tell us. What are her limits?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I use my words very carefully and I said that I would have more to say about the restraints we would impose on ourselves in the fiscal update we will offer later this year.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, she seems to want to take back her speech now. She said that she would impose limits on our debt. She said it, not me. Tell us. What is the limit?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I chose my words very carefully in my speech. I would be happy to read it to the members gathered here tonight. I was very careful in saying, yes there are limits, and that I would have more to say about them later this year, not tonight.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, she said that her government will “impose those limits upon itself”. Those are her words, not mine. What limits?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, that is a very fair quote and I meant what I said. I also said I would have more to say later this year in my fall fiscal update. It is not coming tonight.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, we have unlimited time to hear her limits on the debt.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I think our time is actually limited tonight. As I said, I would be happy to read my speech again. I wrote it myself; I am proud of it.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, well, then just tell us the limit. They are her words.

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Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, actually, in my speech I was quite clear that I would have more to say about the limits we would impose upon ourselves in the fall economic update, and I am going to stick to those words and that commitment.

• (1950)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, all right, so there are still no limits.

What percentage of the government's debt is now owned by the Bank of Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as the member opposite knows, our government is operating very much within the—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, what percentage of our debt is owed to the Bank of Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, Canada has the fiscal firepower to do what it needs to do. We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, is there a limit to the amount the Bank of Canada can print to lend to the government?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I think the member opposite should be very careful not to ask the finance minister questions better addressed to the Bank of Canada. I am aware of the—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, who holds the shares of the Bank of Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, I am the finance minister.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, she holds the shares of the Bank of Canada. She is the shareholder. She holds them all, so she is the only one we can ask in the House of Commons.

How much can the bank print to fund lending to the government?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I want to be very serious for a moment. The independence of the Bank of Canada is one of the central pillars of the Canadian economy, and I am not going to be frivolous about that or make frivolous comments.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, it would not be frivolous to tell us how much the bank can print to lend to the government. These are not frivolous questions. These questions are worth hundreds of billions of dollars. If she considers that frivolous, I am afraid we have someone in this job who does not care about taxpayers' money.

How much can the Bank of Canada print to lend to the Government of Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I think it is really important to be clear that one of the central principles of how the Canadian economy works is that we have an independent Bank of Canada, something, by the way, that the member opposite has raised questionable questions about. I will not play—

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, how much has the bank printed this year to fund lending to the government?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I really want to make clear tonight that an independent Bank of Canada is key to how the Canadian economy works. I think this is something that all members of the House—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the federal government is dependent on the printing presses over at the Bank of Canada. How much has the Government of Canada borrowed from the Bank of Canada this year?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, it represents a profound misunderstanding of how the Canadian economy or any other economy works to suggest that there is some kind of questionable relationship between our government and the Bank of Canada.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, if it was not questionable, she would be willing to talk about it out in the open. I asked how much the Bank of Canada has printed to pay for the government's debts. It is just a mathematical question that should be publicly available. Why is the minister hiding it?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am not hiding anything. What I am doing is two things. One, I am being very clear. This is important for markets, it is important for Canadians and it is important for our Bank of Canada. I will stand here all night long defending the independence, the propriety and the fine judgment of the people in the Bank of—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, she will not tell the people of Canada how much of their money is being debased to fund her government's spending.

I will ask one last time, and then we will know that she will not answer and she is covering it up. How much of the debt of the Government of Canada has been financed through printing by the Bank of Canada this year?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, it is profoundly irresponsible of the member opposite to suggest that a finance minister defending the independence of the Bank of Canada is “covering up” something. That is not how we do things in Canada.

I am happy for members here to ask questions about our programs. I am happy for members here to ask questions about our—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, I do not think the minister has given a single number with regard to any of these questions. I do not know why that is. If it is because she believes that Canadians do not have the right to know, she should just say so.

Government Orders

She will not tell us the limits on the debt. She will not tell us how much the Bank of Canada has printed to fund her government's debt. She will not tell us whether the debt will be paid back before interest rates rise.

Is there anything, mathematical or numerical, about our debt that anyone on the government side can share with the Canadian taxpayers, who will have to repay that debt?

• (1955)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me say a couple of numerical and mathematical things for the member opposite.

The first is that the debt service charges, as a share of GDP, that Canada is paying today are the lowest in 100 years. Notwithstanding the very considerable support we have given the economy so far, the debt service charges are the lowest in 100 years. That is a very—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, we are getting somewhere now.

How much would they go up in cost if interest rates rose just 1%?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me share another very important number with the member opposite. Seventy-six per cent of COVID-19 job losses recovered in Canada—

The Chair: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, again, the minister cannot even tell us what it would cost Canadian taxpayers for interest rates to go up just 1%, which would still be far below the historical average. Why is she so afraid to give that number?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am not afraid of much, and I would like the member opposite to come clean with Canadians. The Conservatives need to decide if they are the party of austerity or they believe in supporting Canadians through this crisis.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, we believe in supporting Canadians through this crisis. I can answer a question; now let us see if she can try. That is how it is done.

A 1% increase in interest would cost the Canadian taxpayers how much?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me share one motto I had during the NAFTA negotiations. It is a motto that has served us very well. I believe that engaging in hypothetical speculation is never appropriate for a minister of the Crown.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, does she think it is hypothetical speculation that someday interest rates could go up 1%? Is she telling us that she does not plan for that scenario?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said in my speech last week, and as I have said a number of times this evening, we will be sharing detailed fiscal projections in the fall economic statement. That is not for tonight.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, she claims the Bank of Canada is independent, but she also claims she is going to ban the bank from ever raising interest rates, even one percentage point. If

she is not going to ban them from doing it, how is she going to stop them from ever raising interest rates?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, it is highly inappropriate to put words in the mouth of any minister, especially the finance minister, suggesting that there is any form of coercion over our independent central bank.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, she has now admitted that the bank could raise interest rates in the future. We are back to where we started.

How much would it cost if it raised them just 1%?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, it is highly inappropriate that the member said, not insinuated, that our government would in some way coerce the—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, she cannot answer that question. Let us move to another.

Other than Italy, which G7 country has higher unemployment than Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am delighted to talk about jobs. Canada has recovered 76% of our job losses, and the U.S. is at only 52%.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the question was this: Can she name even one country in the G7 other than Italy that has higher unemployment than Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the more important, relevant figure is labour force participation. Ours is higher than that of the U.S., Japan, South Korea and Germany. The Economist has a piece this week about Canada's—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, all the countries she just listed have lower unemployment than Canada. She cannot name a single country outside Italy in the G7 that has higher unemployment than Canada. Is there a single country in the G20 that has a higher deficit as a share of GDP than Canada? If so, could she name that country?

• (2000)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, again, I am sorry to have to teach economics to the member opposite, but the really relevant figure is the debt-to-GDP ratio and Canada today has the lowest debt to GDP ratio in the G7.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, talking down to Canadians will not change the facts. We should be speaking with Canadians in the spirit of respect. I ask a respectful question. Is there a single country in the G20 that has a higher deficit-to-GDP ratio than Canada? Could she name even one such country?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me ask a respectful question in turn of the member opposite. Is there one country in the G20 that has done a better job than Canada in protecting its workers and its businesses?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, yes, there is Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and Germany. Japan, Germany and Taiwan all have lower unemployment and far lower mortality rates during COVID. The minister asked me to name a country? I just named them. This is how in the House of Commons it is possible for members to answer questions, and even members of the opposition can do it.

Maybe a member of the government could do the same. Could she name even one country with a higher deficit as a share of GDP, even one, in the G20?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, it is important for the answers to be accurate. Let me just point out that Germany today has 238 new cases of COVID per million. Canada has 73 new cases of COVID per million. It is too high in Canada, but I want to be clear with Canadians. Right now, in the G7, we are doing a pretty good job. When it comes to employment we have a higher labour force participation rate than Germany and Japan. Germany is 55.9% and Japan is 62.2%. We are at 65%.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Chair, the Liberals have filibustered the ethics and finance committees for over 45 hours to this point, with more to come I am sure, and it is all done in the name of a cover-up. This is to hide documents from Canadians and block the truth about the Prime Minister's corruption from coming to light.

Could the Deputy Prime Minister tell Canadians the amount of taxpayer dollars wasted to continue this cover-up and why these resources were better used filibustering these committees instead of getting help to Canadians who so desperately need it?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, let me be really clear. There has been no cover-up by our government. In fact, the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's chief of staff testified at length before committee and took questions, as did the Clerk of the Privy Council. This matter has been thoroughly aired before Canadians. The questions have been asked and answered. What I would say for the member opposite and all members in the House is that Canadians really want us to focus on them and to get through COVID together.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Chair, then why waste all the time and money filibustering at committees?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our government's intention and commitment is to focus on supporting Canadians. That is why we are here tonight. I am very glad, by the way, that we are—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Chair, let us talk about an attempt at helping Canadians that failed, and that was first rent program introduced by the government. Many small business owners in my riding have reached out to my office, saying that the clock is ticking and time is running out for their businesses. We know these businesses are the backbone of our economy, but the government

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dropped the ball and outsourced the program when the CRA was more than capable of administering it. Why outsource it?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I agree with the member opposite that the CRA is highly competent and, in fact, I would like to take the opportunity now to say how grateful I am to all the hard-working people there.

That is why the new rent support program, like the wage subsidy, will be administered through the CRA. We know it can do it. We have a platform now with which businesses are familiar. That is why we are choosing that path going forward.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Chair, we always knew the CRA could administer it. We are glad that the government has caught up.

Why did the government say it had no choice but to have MCAP administer the program to the tune of tens of millions of dollars in cost to Canadians?

• (2005)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as the member opposite knows very well, and as members in the House do, because I think we will be supporting these programs together, we have changed, significantly, the architecture of the rent support program. Now it goes directly to the tenants. Provinces and landlords are not involved.

Our new program is an improvement. Better is always possible. Members—

The Chair: The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Chair, how many times did the minister's office or the PMO talk to Rob Silver about the rent program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as the member opposite knows, I was not finance minister at that time. I can say that I never spoke to Mr. Silver about this program.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Chair, the minister should take note of what happened to her predecessor.

The Baylis ventilator is produced cheaper, yet sold for \$100 million more than its competitors. It follows the objective fact that the government will always put its Liberal friends to the front of the queue and line their pockets whenever it can.

Was Frank Baylis' deep connections to the Liberal Party of Canada the determining factor in awarding this contract?

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Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to thank my hon. colleague for asking this question, because it enables me to talk about the effort that Canadians undertook across the country. When we had a call to action, over 6,700 Canadians stepped up to help us produce personal protective equipment for front-line health care workers. We are very proud of these efforts. We are very proud of the fact that these Canadians have delivered for our front-line health care workers across the country.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Chair, why pay more for a ventilator that had no regulatory approval anywhere in the world, except if the reason is that they were a Liberal?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Chair, I would like to remind the hon. colleague that in March and April, when we were dealing with the early stages of this pandemic, we made a call to action to all businesses. We did not look at which party they voted for or their political affiliation. Canadians stepped up in a big way to support front-line health care workers, and we are very proud of that.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Chair, the rent program was introduced in May. When did the minister realize that there were serious design flaws?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, what we are here to talk about tonight are the new programs that our government is putting in place.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Chair, the minister is also a member of Parliament who, I expect, supports many small businesses in her riding. If she is like anyone else in the House, they learned very quickly in May and June that this program was not adequate.

When was the decision made to redesign this rent assistance program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, in the spring when COVID struck our country, there was no playbook.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Chair, the Liberals knew there were flaws with the program. There was obviously a decision made to redesign it as we have a redesigned program. When the Liberals prorogued for six weeks, they said it was because they needed to focus on a COVID response. It was not about the WE Charity they insisted.

Immediately after the Speech from the Throne, if this was about a COVID response, why have we been debating the Judges Act and other legislation and not this important bill for people who need assistance?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am glad we are debating this important bill now and I am glad we have been able to include some really innovative measures, particularly the lockdown support. This is a new program. I have not seen one like it anywhere in the world. It will provide targeted support to businesses subject to local lockdowns. It is going to get us through the winter.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Chair, we had six weeks of prorogation. We have had six weeks of sitting in the House. The Liberals have now finally introduced a bill and they insist it has to be passed by Friday.

When the minister was an opposition member, did she not believe that taking a few hours to hear from expert witnesses at committee did provide valuable input, especially if they had legislation that would spend \$5 billion or more?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the member opposite said that we, the government, believe this has to be passed by Friday. I would like to respectfully say I do not think that is some kind of peculiar conviction of ours. All Canadian businesses, all Canadian provinces and territories need this legislation.

● (2010)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Chair, if they needed this legislation, why was it not introduced right after the Speech from the Throne and why did the government prorogue for six weeks? Businesses have been sitting with no support and they have been closing their doors. How many businesses had to close their doors in July, August and September, while those guys dithered with their legislation?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, businesses do need this support and that is why we are debating this legislation late into tonight. I would like to remind members, as I know they well know, that the support will be retroactive to September 27, so people will be covered for October. This is support our businesses need and support I hope together we can get for them.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Chair, I have always found that having a few hours and a few panels of expert witnesses actually improves legislation. The minister insists that we have to move fast because Liberals moved so slow. Why are they so reluctant to hear from a few people who really understand what is happening and who might actually improve the legislation, by refusing throughout this pandemic to have a reasonable process for billions in spending?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am a little puzzled by the contradictions embedded in that question. On the one hand, the member opposite is quite rightly pointing out that businesses need support now. I could not agree more. On the other hand, the member opposite is asking why we want to pass this legislation with alacrity. The first half of the question answers the second half.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Chair, let me go back.

We had six weeks' prorogation so that the Liberals could plan for COVID and have proper legislation in place. We have come back to this House. We have been in this House for six weeks, and what have we been discussing? We have been discussing legislation about judges. As important as that is, and the other legislation, it is nothing compared to the business owners' needs.

When I talk about a couple of hours to hear from experts, I am talking about three months ago, and they would have improved this minister's programs. Why are the Liberals so reluctant to allow proper process in this House to scrutinize billions and billions in spending?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: As I said, Mr. Chair, we need to decide what matters most. I am firmly convinced, and I actually believe that in their hearts of hearts everyone in this House shares the conviction, that at the end of the day what matters the most is getting support to our business owners now, and getting support to them with alacrity. That is what we are committed to doing. These programs are good programs that would provide essential support as we fight the second wave of COVID. I hope the members opposite will join us in supporting them.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Chair, the Canada emergency wage subsidy is still available to political parties under the Bill C-9. The Liberal government puts forward programs, and then the Liberal Party takes advantage of them.

A poll conducted in June found that almost half of the population was against the practice. Even Liberal voters were against it. There is a real uneasiness at seeing all the federal parties, except the Bloc, taking advantage of a measure voted for by elected officials. The wage subsidy is there for the economy and for businesses, not for political parties.

Does the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance not think that what the Liberals have done is unjustifiable?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for her question.

The Canada emergency wage subsidy is designed to help employers protect the jobs that Canadians depend on and to rehire employees who have already been laid off. The support applies to employers of all sizes in all sectors, including not-for-profit organizations that have been hard hit by COVID-19.

To date, more than 3.8 million employees across the country are being supported by the wage subsidy. It is a good program.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, in the poll, 57% of respondents called for the amounts to be paid back.

Will they pay it back?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would once again like to note the importance of the wage subsidy program for the 3.8 million Canadians.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, we agree on Bill C-9 because for months, SMEs have needed urgent assistance.

On April 11, the Bloc Québécois started calling for support for fixed costs. Let's talk about the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program. That program was poorly designed. It was too restrictive and too rigid. For example, chiropractors in Repentigny could not receive that assistance because the property owner did not apply.

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Why did the government wait until November to support our businesses and their employees when help was and still is urgently needed?

• (2015)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I obviously agree that we must now provide assistance directly to the businesses to help with fixed costs and rent. That is why we are introducing a bill that does exactly that. I am pleased that the hon. member agrees that this is a good step to take. I hope we can do this quickly.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for her reply.

The government has a record of announcing programs well before they are voted on and implemented. Bill C-9 was introduced one month after it was announced. That said, better late than never.

However, businesses need predictability, and several hard-hit sectors, including the aerospace industry, hotels in urban areas, culture, festivals and even sugar shacks, need targeted programs.

How will the government ensure that no sector falls through the cracks?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, that is another good and important question.

I will start with the rent subsidy because I want to point out a new component that is really important for Quebec, and that is targeted support for businesses subject to new lockdowns. I am very supportive of the measures that the Province of Quebec has taken to combat the coronavirus, and this additional assistance will help the province make the right decisions. This is an innovative component that I am very pleased with.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, my question focused much more on targeted programs.

Because the emergency commercial rent assistance program was ill-conceived, businesses lost a lot of money between March and September. I know that other members have asked the same question, but I will ask it once more to highlight the importance of all the telephone calls we received about this, as well as the importance of small and medium-sized businesses.

Has the government considered making the new measure retroactive to March 2020?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as the member said, I already answered this question, but I will repeat what I said.

The assistance will be retroactive to September 27. This is important because it means that this program will cover October. That is a good question about making this measure even more retroactive, and it is something we will have to consider. However, I believe that we must focus on the future. We must help businesses that are operating now, and we need to help them keep their doors open in the future. I prefer to focus on that.

*Government Orders**[English]*

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. Chair, I realize it is questions and answers. I am going to spend my five minutes expanding on some thoughts on what I think is a really important debate here.

One of the things I noticed about the member for Carleton is that he is a master at manipulation of numbers and stats. I would like to demonstrate just why I believe that. The member for Carleton talks about unemployment and tries to give a false impression to Canadians, as if somehow the government is not doing as well as it is actually doing.

Let me give a relatively short history of it. It was not that long ago when we, back in 2015, formed a majority government. The Prime Minister back then said, as all Liberal members of Parliament believe, that our first priority was going to be Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it. That meant investing in Canadians. Whether it was giving a tax break, supporting our seniors, increasing disposable income or having that extra tax on the 1% wealthiest in Canada, we recognized the value of supporting Canada's middle class.

We worked with small business owners in every region of our country, and it worked. We generated, with the help of other stakeholders and Canadians in particular, well over a million jobs in the first four years. We were on track to continue to hit record highs. In fact, we have much lower unemployment than Stephen Harper ever had when he was prime minister. Even in Stephen Harper's dreams, he could not achieve what Canadians were able to achieve by having a government that was far more progressive in dealing with our economy, whether it was investing in tax breaks or investing in infrastructure.

Now, we hear the member for Carleton try to give the impression that our policies have not necessarily been working. He talks about our wage subsidy program, and he talks about the rental assistance program and he is saying that they are just not working. Then, he cites as his reason that we have a higher unemployment rate than other G7 countries, not all of them but most others.

When it came to the pandemic, after our getting record low numbers of unemployment, when the pandemic hit there were Canadians in all regions of our country who lost jobs. That is why the Government of Canada stepped up and provided programs such as the CERB. Some 8.9 million Canadians relied on support from the CERB program, a very effective program. The wage subsidy program, part of what this bill is about, provided and saved thousands of jobs throughout our country.

If we look at the results of those programs, and we can add on the rental program, we will see that Canada was far better at getting people back to work. Members of the Conservative Party might not believe this, but it is true. Almost 76% of the jobs that were lost have been coming back as a direct result of our policy. I compare that to the U.S.A., at 52%.

With less than a minute left, I can say that this legislation is good stuff and I suspect that is why the Conservatives are going to vote

in favour of it. The legislation would continue on with the wage subsidy program because, unlike the former government, we actually listen to what Canadians have to say. That is why we see the changes that we have within this legislation. Whether it is the wage subsidy program or the rental assistance program, this is a government that recognizes the value of small businesses and will continue to be there.

● (2020)

Our Minister of Finance and our Prime Minister are committed, day in and day out, to protecting the jobs that Canadians are going to continue to depend on to be there. As our policies have clearly demonstrated, they are working.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Chair, will the minister backdate the commercial rent assistance program to April 1 for the tenants who could not apply, now that the government has admitted that it had a design-flawed program that excluded two-thirds of Canadian businesses?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, let me start by pointing out that the rent subsidy that we are debating tonight does go back to September 27.

With regard to going back further, let me just say this. The objective of our program is to support the vulnerable but viable businesses across our country and to help create a bridge for them to get through—

The Chair: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

● (2025)

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, the minister earlier cited that she wanted to be forward thinking. Does she agree and believe that these small businesses that did not get any rent help for six months are coming forward with them?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me point out the help that will be available if we can pass this legislation.

Starting from September 27, up to 65% of wages would be paid, up to 65% of the rent would be paid, and if one is subject to a local lockdown restriction, 90% of the rent would be paid. That is real support and our—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, I ask for just a yes or a no. Does the minister understand or agree that the money, the debt, comes forward?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, we have been clear that the program goes from September 27 forward.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, does she believe it is an injustice for those who did not qualify because their landlords would not apply?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I think it is entirely appropriate for us to listen to the businesses in our ridings. I also think it is appropriate for the government to focus on businesses in the future, viability in the future.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, can she tell us how much money the mortgage company MCAP got paid to administer the CECRA program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, my focus as finance minister is putting this new rent support program in place, where the support will go directly to tenants.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, has the minister costed out what it would cost to help the two-thirds of businesses that did not qualify for the government's flawed program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the key issue here is a question of focus. My focus is on tomorrow, not on yesterday. My focus is on helping businesses get through the second wave.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, does the minister feel that small businesses have to focus on the six months where they got no help, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, businesses have had help since the beginning of the pandemic. They have had loans, including a significant forgivable portion through CEBA. They have had access to the wage subsidy. Going forward, they will have an additional expansion of CEBA.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, many mom-and-pop businesses actually did not get any help with the wage subsidy and they were counting on commercial rent. Does the minister believe that it was an injustice that they did not get any help?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, that is one of the reasons we put CEBA in place, so that the smallest businesses in our country can get support. That is why we are adding another \$20,000, including \$10,000 forgivable. It is also—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, does the minister agree or believe that, with the amount of deficit that we are running to help everybody, the people who were excluded from the commercial rent assistance program should still have to contribute to paying that back through their children or grandchildren, or whoever is going to pay it back?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, I think it is entirely right for MPs to be concerned about all businesses in their ridings, but I have thought about this really carefully and my view is that the inherently limited resources of the government should be focused on the future. They should be focused on supporting businesses to keep on operating. That means that going-forward support should be and will be our focus.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, does the minister believe that there should be some strings attached in terms of the targeted bailouts and full participation of employers in Canada in terms of active and laid-off workers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am not sure what targeted bailouts the member opposite is referring to, but certainly with LEEFF there are very stringent conditions and that is entirely appropriate.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Chair, my question will be very simple. I will quote someone who has spoken a number of times tonight and who said:

[English]

That person said, "Let me be very, very clear."

[Translation]

We have heard that many times, but I have never heard anyone as unclear as her this evening.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has been critical of the fact that the minimal amount of information that is publicly available to track this spending is lacking, thus making it more challenging for parliamentarians to perform their critical role in overseeing government spending. Why is the government hiding information from Canadians?

• (2030)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for raising this question.

If my colleague carefully reads what has happened over the last few days, he will see that we have launched an open government information system that contains many files that he can access online. We also have a system that displays the supplementary estimates and the main estimates in detail, with hundreds of pages that he can easily access.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, the Parliamentary Budget Officer says that there is currently no public government document that provides a complete list of all measures announced to date or updated cost estimates. Why are they so bent on refusing to provide these answers?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, I commend and thank my colleague once again for his interest in this issue.

He knows very well that transparency and access to information are extremely important in normal times, and they are just as important in a pandemic. That is why we are working so hard with the Parliamentary Budget Officer and others to provide all the necessary information.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, I would encourage the President of the Treasury Board to read the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report carefully.

Why is this government saying two different things? On the one hand, we have a Prime Minister who clearly says that he has no respect for Canadians' money, that he has not set a limit on future spending and that he will continue to borrow recklessly and without constraint. On the other hand, we have a finance minister who says she is setting limits but will not disclose what those limits are.

Government Orders

Where are we going with this government? How far into debt will this government plunge Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, my hon. colleague again correctly brings up the importance of transparency and openness.

I encourage him once again to visit the InfoBase portal, which contains exactly 316 specific files dealing exclusively with COVID-19. As well, as I said, there is another portal where he will find a data set on the budgetary expenditures we are currently discussing.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, the Liberals are stonewalling the Standing Committee on Finance, they are stonewalling the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, they prorogued Parliament, and now they want us to believe that they are being transparent.

The President of the Treasury Board has obviously not read the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report. Why is he hiding information from Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, on the contrary, we discuss these things every day.

In fact, we are doing so again today. That is why these discussions are important. I therefore congratulate my colleague and thank him for taking part in these discussions.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, we are discussing, but we are not getting any answers.

We are asking for very simple things. When are the Liberals going to stop seeing Canadians' wallets as an all-you-can-eat buffet? Canada's workers of today and tomorrow and those who have not yet been born will have to pay the bill racked up by this Prime Minister, who thinks that nothing is too expensive if it can get him votes.

Why is he hiding all this information from Canadians? Why can he not give us the real numbers today?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, I will respond to the first part of this question, which I find a bit disturbing.

I am sure that my colleague does not want to propose austerity as a solution to the current crisis. If that is what he has in mind, I think he should be more specific and explain to Canadians how an austerity program could help them during the public health and economic crisis we are going through.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, I want the President of the Treasury Board to do the job he gets paid to do, which is to give Canadians the information they are entitled to so good decisions can be made.

I want the President of the Treasury Board to tell us when the Liberals will tell Canadians the truth and why they are so afraid of holding public meetings of the Standing Committee on Finance and the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Chair, the member is absolutely right about the importance of committee work.

I am sure that he himself does a very good job in committee. I am sure that, like all members of the House, the other members of

the committees he mentioned will do essential work to ensure high-quality, effective and transparent government programs.

• (2035)

[English]

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Chair, the pandemic relief programs have been unfair and way too often ineffective. Job creators in my riding have fallen through the cracks. For months they have been begging the government to fix the commercial rent assistance program, but were completely ignored. We are happy to see the Liberals are finally paying attention, but for so many it is already too late. Why all of a sudden did the government change it? Why did the government not adopt the Conservatives' sliding scale for rent relief six months ago?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we have put a range of programs out to help small businesses. Those emergency measures are helping businesses keep their people on payroll and helping pay for those fixed costs that are so important to keeping their businesses alive. The small business loan is giving them some additional liquidity to bridge them through to better times beyond COVID-19. This program is in direct response to those businesses that want access to these important fixed costs directly. I am really pleased to be debating this legislation tonight.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: Mr. Chair, looking through the estimates, I noticed the Auditor General has still not been given the funds she needs to properly audit the government's out-of-control spending. Meanwhile, the same government is investing millions of new dollars in CRA to audit the books of small businesses with the threat of a 275% penalty. What are we, the Mafia or something? Why is the government aggressively going after the books of mom-and-pop shops, but refuses to open its own books?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we have the fortune of having a strong Auditor General, with whom we are extremely pleased to collaborate. She is extremely engaged with us so we can provide her the supports that she and her office deserve and will need in order to carry out her important duties.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: Mr. Chair, businesses across Canada are calling on the Liberals to safely reopen the economy. The government owes them a way to get back to work in an environment that is fair and dependable. One day a business is open, the next day it is closed. One industry is supported while the other is ignored. Government incompetence has created a wild wild west. When will it present a plan that allows all of Canada's businesses to get back to work safely?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, let me start by being very clear that it is up to provinces and territories and provincial and territorial public health officers to make the very difficult decisions about whether additional targeted local lockdown restrictions are necessary. I think that we need to support our public health officers across the country where they are introducing these limited targeted local lockdowns. That is what it is going to take to fight the second wave and to stop a huge resurgence.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: Mr. Chair, NHL players took rapid tests before hitting the ice. Even pro poker players take rapid tests before they play in tournaments. If rapid tests allow athletes, celebrities and pro poker players to do their jobs, why not allow regular Canadian businesses, like cinemas, restaurants and event centres, to get back to work using on-site rapid testing?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I want to disagree very strongly with the core premise of that question. There is no silver bullet right now anywhere in the world. Countries like France and Germany that members opposite have cited as using rapid tests are currently experiencing such a surge in coronavirus, they have introduced draconian lockdowns.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: Mr. Chair, Canadians need the finance committee to get to pre-budget consultations. When will the government stop the cover-up and end the filibuster?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I feel so strongly about the previous question, I am going to finish my answer. We cannot peddle snake oil to Canadians and we have to be clear with Canadians that it is better to act quickly with limited local restrictions than to wait too long and have a raging virus.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: Mr. Chair, the Liberals have been filibustering for 30 hours. I just left another one. Will the government stop the cover-up and end the filibuster at finance committee, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the government is very glad to be here in force this evening answering questions of all members of Parliament.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have a very simple question. My constituents want the finance minister to tell them what Canada's debt is right now.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I apologize in advance for my French.

I will not give any new numbers, but I can repeat and remind members of the numbers that were announced in July.

● (2040)

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, in that case, what are the numbers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the debt that was announced in July was \$1.060 trillion according to the economic and fiscal snapshot.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, according to the finance minister, what is the estimated deficit for this year, which will end in April?

Government Orders

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am sorry, but once again, I will not be giving out any new numbers this evening. They will be released later this year. However, in July, we gave a specific number for the projected deficit, which was \$343.2 billion.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, does the minister expect the deficit to climb to \$400 billion or \$450 billion by April?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said last week and as we said in the throne speech, we will provide new numbers later this year.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, the minister is well aware that the interest rate, which is very low right now, will not remain low forever.

If the interest rate were to go up 0.25% or 1%, what impact would that have on Canada's debt?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am glad the member agrees with me that the interest rate is very low in Canada and around the world right now.

To be clear, in proportion to the size of our economy, Canada's interest rate is at a 100-year low.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, if the rate went up, what impact would that have? It is a very simple question.

We know that we have a \$1-trillion debt. If the interest rate were to go up just a quarter point, what impact would that have on Canada's finances?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, during my time as minister of foreign affairs and during the NAFTA negotiations, I abided by a very effective rule: never answer hypothetical questions. It is inappropriate for a minister to answer such questions.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, how was my question hypothetical? We know that the debt is \$1 trillion and that it is bound to increase by 0.25% sooner or later.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would like to highlight something that the member said himself, specifically, that interest rates are currently very low. The interest rate we are paying today in Canada is at a 100-year low. It is very important that Canadians understand that.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, clearly, the minister does not want to answer the question.

Bill C-9 is retroactive to what date?

In other words, when can people start taking advantage of the measures included in the bill, once it passes?

Government Orders

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his excellent question.

That will depend on our actions and our willingness to pass it quickly. It will also depend a great deal on the Senate. I would be very grateful if the Conservative Party could speak with the Conservative senators and help us pass this important piece of legislation.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, we know that there will be a retroactive date from which applications can be filed.

Regardless of when the bill passes, what is that date?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I hope I have understood the question.

The commercial rent subsidy will be retroactive to September 27, so the month of October will be covered.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, a company in my riding purchased a business in mid-March, at the start of the pandemic. Since then, it has never been able to access the wage subsidy even though it never ceased operations.

Will Bill C-9 fix this problem with the previous bill? Will people who purchased a business at the beginning of the pandemic and became ineligible for the subsidy have access to it?

• (2045)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his very important question.

During the pandemic, we discovered that there were some very unique cases. I will ask the member to speak with me and my staff. We will look at the particulars of this company and see what we can do.

[English]

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister boasted just recently that 378,000 new jobs were created in September. Economists are predicting only 58,000 new jobs in October. It seems to me that this is not a consistent plan for a reasonable recovery.

What is the government's plan for continued, consistent job growth?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the member is absolutely right that the September job numbers were strong, stronger than economists predicted. That is an accomplishment by all Canadians.

Having said that, as the member opposite knows, since then we have entered into a second wave of the pandemic. The provinces are fighting it. Many have put in place local lockdown provisions. That is the right thing to do, but the lockdowns will have a short-term cost.

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Chair, to will follow up on my previous colleague's question about businesses that do not fit the box in the one-size-fits-all approach of the government subsidies being offered to business owners, what avenues are there for them to seek some kind of assistance from the government?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, inevitably, when we create programs to support Canadians, we need to have broad-based programs. Those are the programs we are voting on this week, and I know Canadian business owners need them and want them. An additional area where business owners can get support is through the regional development agencies.

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Chair, in the recent throne speech, the Prime Minister indicated that Canada was going to borrow money and spend money because the Liberals recognized that Canadians could not. Whose money does the finance minister think they are borrowing?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, we could have made a choice not to provide the CERB to Canadian workers who lost their jobs because of COVID. We could have chosen not to provide the wage subsidy. We could have chosen not to provide the CEBA. Business owners would have gone broke. Canadians would have lost their homes. That was not our choice; it was the right choice.

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Chair, Canadians have leveraged their assets and their homes to finance their businesses and pay for their everyday expenses. They have gone to their banks and their banks have given them lines of credit and established credit limits.

The Government of Canada has gone to the Bank of Canada. Has the Bank of Canada established a credit limit for the government?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, questions for the Bank of Canada are properly addressed to the Bank of Canada. I respect the independence of the Bank of Canada, and I urge all members of the House to do so as well.

When it comes to Canadian businesses, I know that a lot of Canadian business owners have made great—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Chair, that shows maybe how the minister has a failed understanding of how finances really work because when Canadians go to their banks, their banks tell them what their credit limits are. Has the Bank of Canada provided the Government of Canada, the borrower, a credit limit?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, if we want to get into a discussion of how finances really work as the member opposite suggests, I think we do need to realize that the relationship between the Government of Canada and the Bank of Canada is entirely different from the relationship between a commercial borrower and a commercial bank.

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Chair, other democracies in our G7 and G20 groups have been able to present budgets even during difficult times like the past six months in COVID. Why has our government failed to produce a budget?

• (2050)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as we committed to in the Speech from the Throne, we will be providing a fall update later this year, which will provide detailed projections and detailed further information on both what we have done so far and our government's plans going forward.

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Chair, recently the House passed a Conservative motion to put a pause on CRA audits for businesses that have received the wage subsidy. Can the minister tell us why the Liberals did not support putting a pause on the CRA for conducting audits and why they wanted to incur those further hardships for businesses?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the last thing I want to do is add in any way to the real hardships Canadian businesses are facing. That is why I am here tonight with a brand new rent subsidy program, with lockdown support and with the extension of the wage subsidy. We are here for Canadian businesses and we are going to be here for Canadian businesses with this program until next summer.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, I want to thank all members for agreeing to take this expedited approach to ensure that we look at Bill C-9 and try get it passed quickly. The minister has spoken a lot tonight about the historic low interest rates and debt servicing charges for the Government of Canada, but the average Canadian is not getting any breaks on interest payments and the six months' deferral on mortgages is over and people are experiencing a real fear of having to go bankrupt on mortgage charges and certainly credit card rates are not going down. It was in April that the previous minister of finance negotiated with the banks to reduce.

Five out of the six big banks experienced higher than expected profits in the third quarter. Will the minister work with the banks and get them to cut their interest rates in half and help Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her as usual very thoughtful question and for her tremendous care for the lives and struggles of Canadians. The issues she raises both about mortgage deferrals and about credit cards are very good ones and this is something that we are monitoring and looking at as we enter the second wave of the pandemic.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Chair, my next set of questions relates to the tourism sector in particular.

For many of my constituents, rent is not the problem. The tourism industry has fixed moorage costs, which are a lot like rent, and Bill C-9 does not help them.

Would the minister be willing to look at flexibility and realize that, for some businesses, their moorage is their rent?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the hon. member is absolutely right. One of the sectors that has been hit significantly is the tourism sector. We acknowledge that, which is why we have been very clear about our support for the sector. This sector employs over 550,000 Canadians, and over the past few years, the Government of Canada has contributed \$460 million to it to make sure that we support it. We put in measures through the regional development agencies to provide additional support to help deal with some of the costs raised by the member opposite.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Chair, I do realize that the Government of Canada has put money into the tourism sector, but it is insufficient.

Government Orders

I will raise a specific example. One of the iconic tourism attractions in all of Canada is in my riding. It is the Butchart Gardens. The wage subsidy did not help it. The Butchart Gardens could not bring hundreds of people back to work this season because there were no tourists, and the rent program does not help it.

What we really need is the kind of program aimed at the regional development offices. We had a tiny dribble of this, but we need a lot, in buckets. Businesses that are falling through the cracks can go there to apply for assistance.

Is additional money being considered for the tourism sector through our regional economic offices?

● (2055)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I very much agree with the member that, in this crisis, the RDAs have played an essential role. As we have heard from a lot of members tonight, we have put in broad-based programs that have, by their nature, helped a lot of people, literally millions of Canadians and hundreds of thousands of business. That is great, but a broad-based program cannot cover every single specific circumstance, and that is where the RDAs have been so important.

I agree with the member opposite on the very important role that the RDAs have played so far in this crisis. We are in a second wave now—

The Chair: We will go back to the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Chair, I have a very short and very specific question. The hon. minister may not have noticed an email I sent her earlier today.

One of the charities in my riding, a land conservancy, has a lot of revenue but it is tied to only buying land. It cannot use it for wage subsidies, and now it does not qualify for the wage subsidy.

Can there be flexibility?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I saw that the member had sent me an email, but to be perfectly honest, I had not had time to open it. I promise to read it when this evening is complete, and to look into the issue carefully.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to begin by acknowledging that for so many businesses in northwest B.C., the wage subsidy and the CEBA loans have been keeping them afloat. That is why I will be pleased to be supporting the legislation before us.

Government Orders

My question to the Minister of Finance is about a specific category of businesses that the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands mentioned. In northwest B.C., there are a lot of small tourism operators who have not just lost a percentage of their revenue for the year, but because they depend wholly on international clients, many from the United States, they have lost their entire season.

I was speaking last night with Gill McKean who owns Westcoast Fishing Adventures with his wife, Mandi. They have lost their entire season.

Is the minister considering targeted support of a magnitude that is going to be able to keep businesses like Gill and Mandi's afloat?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member opposite for his support for these measures.

As I think we have all agreed, the economy and businesses need broad-based support. We also need to look at whether there are businesses with specific needs. With our lockdown support, we have provided specific support to businesses subject to additional lockdown restrictions.

I agree with the member opposite that we need to recognize that there are businesses that are particularly vulnerable to our necessary border restrictions and quarantine requirements. That is a form of health measure, too. I think we need to think about how we identify those businesses, and how we provide them with the particular support they need.

I would like to acknowledge that the seasonality that the member opposite referred to is another very important consideration.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, my next question relates to the emergency wage subsidy. The initial iteration of the program was complex enough that there were small businesses that struggled with the application process.

The new iteration, this latest iteration that we are debating tonight, is infinitely more complex. How are very small businesses, owner-operator businesses, going to apply for this program when they do not have teams of lawyers and consultants helping them? They are trying to run their businesses. Service Canada offices are still closed in the region I represent.

What is the minister's message to them?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, that is an excellent question and something I have wrestled with, too. In putting together both the wage subsidy and the rent subsidy programs, we have tried to balance two things. One is to make it as easy as possible for businesses to get access to this support, but the other is to have a smooth curve of support, so that businesses that need the most get the most. If a business has a 70% revenue decline or more, it gets 65% support, but it does not just drop off. We do not want to create a perverse disincentive. In order to have that smooth curve, which we have achieved, there is a little complexity. I am hopeful that when people actually start applying for the—

• (2100)

The Chair: We will go back to the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, I think, especially with the Service Canada offices still closed in northwest B.C. in some communities, the complexity of the program is of particular concern.

My next question is around the emergency wage subsidy. It has been successful at helping businesses retain their remaining employees who are working for them, but it has not been so successful at allowing them to rehire the ones that they laid off.

Does your government have a plan to increase the number of employees who have been laid off being rehired under these programs and re-employed?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I do think, and it is not just my thought, the data shows that Canadians have been going back to work, and we have now recovered 76% of the jobs lost in the depths of the pandemic. I will also say that I think we are going to be operating under some restrictions to our economic activity until we can really vanquish the virus, so we need to have support measures in place until then. That will be the moment for the economy to come roaring back, which I know we are all going to work hard to facilitate.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, we all acknowledge the first iteration of the commercial rent assistance program was flawed. There were businesses that qualified for the flawed program and received those benefits, and there were businesses whose landlords did not want to play ball and did not get them. What do you say to those businesses that are not able to get retroactive support back to April and that are faced with this profoundly unfair situation?

The Chair: Before we go to the response, I will give a reminder to hon. members that we are keeping the debate rules, as we do in the House and in committees of the whole, to direct questions through the chair, kind of in the third person.

It is not a big issue, it is just a reminder.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, it was very kindly meant.

I think that is a very legitimate concern, and what I would say to those businesses is two things. One, we are focused on the future, and two, we have a lot of support for them in the future. They can get up to 90% of their rent paid. That is a lot. They can also get up to 65% of their wages paid. That is also a lot, and they can get another tranche of CEBA, another \$20,000, \$10,000 of which is forgivable. That is a lot of support.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Chair, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance about specifics this evening.

I would like to know whether she plans to use her regulatory power to address the gaps. I have one specific example from my riding, about an outfitting operation that experienced serious flooding in 2019 and therefore did not have any revenue. The owner managed to keep the business going. Then came 2020. Since this company did not have any revenue in 2019, it was not eligible for the wage subsidy.

Is there something in Bill C-9 that would address these terrible gaps?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank the member for his excellent question, to which I have two answers.

First, yes, there will inevitably be gaps. A country-wide program cannot account for every possible situation. I would be very happy to discuss this very specific example with the member.

Second, Canada's regional development agencies are there to help businesses that fall into these gaps.

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Chair, I will be pleased to speak with the minister about it.

However, this case was brought to her attention via email on September 23, and all I received was an acknowledgement of receipt. I resubmitted it on October 20 and still have not received anything.

At the same time, I submitted the case to the Minister of Economic Development, who got back to me rather quickly. However, her officials merely explained to the owner of the outfitting business that the programs could not be adapted to every individual because that would be impossible. He was offered a loan, when what the business needed was breathing room in the form of money. I could resend the email, but I hope we will find solutions.

Here is another case, this time involving an inn in the woods. It used the wage subsidy program in the spring, but it did not need the program in the summer because its campground gave it some breathing room. Now it really needs that program. However, according to the calculations and the new criteria, the inn would receive just one wage subsidy of 18%. Is that possible? The bill talks about 65%, and I would like the minister to elaborate on that.

The inn operators wanted me to know that the inn was closed in April. Next April, they will not be able to declare income for the previous year, so they will end up in the same boat as the outfitters. I hope we will be able to fill these gaps.

• (2105)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for his question.

I want to begin by saying that, in some ways, this example illustrates just how well the Canada emergency wage subsidy works and how it is targeted properly. It is there for businesses that need it. When the economy is doing better for these companies, as was the case for that inn this summer, they do not need the wage subsidy. Then they can apply for it again later. That was a very good example.

Government Orders

It is hard for me to comment on that specific case without knowing the exact details of the situation. Once again, I would be pleased to discuss it with the member or to have my team speak with his.

Mr. Yves Perron: Okay, we will talk, Madam Chair.

Basically, what these businesses are telling me is that they are currently struggling and that they are unable to maintain a connection with their employees. Is not the purpose of the wage subsidy to maintain that connection?

I would like to know whether the minister has anything planned for the tourism industry, particularly sugar shacks and other such businesses that are not covered by any program. They are facing uncertainty and are worried about having to close their doors.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we have already spoken about the tourism industry several times this evening. I agree.

As with the restaurant industry, which is subject to new lockdown measures and whose employees cannot work, the quarantine and border restrictions are limiting what the tourism industry—

The Deputy Chair: The member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Chair, I would like the Minister of Finance to share her thoughts about businesses that are not entitled to the subsidies.

Does she not feel uncomfortable about the fact that her party used the wage subsidy? Does she not feel that her party should, in good faith, acknowledge its poor choice and give that money back to taxpayers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I will continue with my response about the tourism sector. I just wanted to say that the situation facing all businesses that depend on our borders and on travellers was unique. The quarantine measures and border restrictions really hit those businesses—

The Deputy Chair: I am sorry, time is up.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Chair, does the minister view Parliament as an essential service?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I imagine I am the minister referred to, because there are a few of us here. I would certainly say that I am glad to be here answering questions tonight.

Government Orders

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Chair, I did not think that would be that tough a question, but I should not have been that surprised because in answering questions, or not answering questions, the minister has repeatedly reflected on her days negotiating trade agreements. I would remind the minister or maybe ask the minister if she sees the role that she would play negotiating an agreement with a foreign government as identical to being accountable to the Canadian people in their elected Parliament.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, what I do see as identical is my accountability to members of the House and to Canadians in all of the roles that I have been privileged to serve in this government.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Chair, I hope that we can get an answer to the question. It has been asked a couple of times.

What would be the impact of a 1% increase on interest rates to the federal debt?

• (2110)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the really important thing to emphasize for Canadians when talking about the interest charges on our debt is this actually rather startling fact, which is today the interest charges on our debt—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Chair, does the hon. member know what interest rate the Bank of Canada overnight rate was in August of 1971?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, one thing I pointed out in my speech last week was the way in which interest rates and the relationship between interest rates and growth have changed over the past decades.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Chair, it was 5% in August 1971.

Does the hon. member know what the Bank of Canada overnight rate was in August of 1976?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said, interest rates have varied over the past century. One very important fact was that only in the eighties and the nineties—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Chair, the interest rate in 1976 was 9.25%.

Does the hon. member know what the Bank of Canada rate was in August 1981?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, what I would like the hon. member to reflect on is that only in the eighties and the nineties did the interest rate exceed the rate of growth. That is a fundamental—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Chair, the interest rate for the Bank of Canada's overnight rate in August of 1981 was 20.78%.

Does the hon. minister understand the relevance of asking questions about what projected interest rates might be, given her government is taking on over \$400 billion in new debt this year alone?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I very much understand the relevance of history and the way in which Canada's very trau-

matic experience of debt in the 1990s is shaping the current debate. That is why I addressed that very directly in my speech—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Chair, does the hon. member know how much the Chrétien-Martin Liberal government cut in transfers to the provinces for health care, social services and education in the late nineties because of the debt the Pierre Trudeau government ran up?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I am really glad to have the member opposite ask questions about that because I think it is so important for us as a country to remember the lessons of the 1990s and to appreciate—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Chair, the amount was \$35 billion cut from transfers for health care, social services and education in the late nineties.

I am going to use my time to comment right now rather than question. As a parent of a 25-year old with autism, I care about not only what services are available for him now, but what services are going to be available for him two generations from now when we are no longer here to support him and look after him.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I am going to quote a Financial Post writer who observed that for sure debt is a concern when it comes to our future generations, but saddling them with a weaker economy than it needs to be is an even greater concern. That is—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Chair, on April 24, 2020, the Prime Minister announced the Canada emergency rent benefit for qualifying commercial property owners and small business tenants. Within weeks there were multiple issues that arose and we were all contacted by our constituents. It has now been six months and the government has finally changed the program. What took so long?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am really pleased that in all the questions we have been receiving tonight, there seems to be an unanimous view that the new rent subsidy program we are debating is a good program that will support our businesses in the future.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Chair, the rent program ended in September and nothing is yet in place. What is the advice from the minister to these businesses that are now closing and getting foreclosure notices?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, that is precisely why the new rent program we are debating tonight is retroactive to September 27.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Chair, what is the minister's advice to the banks that are pulling these loans during COVID—19 and increasing interest rates on these companies?

Government Orders

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I believe that it is the responsibility of banks, landlords and all of us to be supporting the Canadian businesses—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

• (2115)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Chair, this is all fine and well, but in my riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London, I was contacted by a trampoline park owner. They are about to close three more trampoline parks. They have already closed four in Canada: one in Moncton, one in Winnipeg and two in Quebec. These are huge industries and this place alone has over 200 employees.

This is this business owner's family. His life savings have been invested in this. Prior to going into COVID-19, it was extremely successful. Each and every one of them was extremely successful, but if people cannot do business, they cannot pay the rent. For many months, they were not able to get support from the government. They have received notice from their bank that they are being foreclosed on.

What is the advice when 200 jobs are going to be lost and an additional three businesses are closing?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, without knowing the precise details of the enterprise, I cannot give precise guidance, but I would say this. If we can get this legislation passed with alacrity, which I really hope we can, then Canadian businesses will be able to get up to—

The Deputy Chair: The minister was cut off and there was still time left. I want to make sure the time is even. The member may want to be recognized before she stands again because the mike was turned off. I will allow a couple more seconds for the minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, businesses can get up to 90% of rent covered, up to 65% of wages covered, plus a CEBA loan of \$60,000, \$20,000 of it forgivable.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Chair, it is truly too late. I am looking at this business. There are 200 employees and people's life savings are gone down the system and all because we have an overwhelming problem with this pandemic, but the government was not there to help them in the beginning.

What do we tell 200 people and people who are losing their businesses today, not what we are going to be doing in two months but today, who went into this financially fine and had over \$800,000 in the bank? We can say that we do not know all of this, but they had \$800,000 in the bank and now they are way below that.

What are we telling these businesses that were successful and are no longer in business?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the first thing I would say is this is not about support two months from now. This is about support really quickly.

The second thing I would say specifically to the Conservatives is that it is time for them to choose a lane. They need to decide whether they think we need to be offering meaningful support to Canadian businesses, as the questions I am getting now suggest, or whether their preoccupation is with debt and deficits. Pick a lane.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Chair, my lane is with Canadian businesses and I hope that the government will also do so. It is not about WE Charity. It is not about people like Mr. Silver and all of those things. It is about Canadian businesses and people losing their jobs across Canada. It is not about the friends and relatives of the Prime Minister. It is not about the friends of the Liberal government.

This said, I would like to know what I should tell the residents in Elgin—Middlesex—London, who know nobody because they are just average Canadians, who are losing their businesses today? What do I tell them when the government is saying we are here already? This program was already gone a month ago, so Liberals are late to the ball game. I am wondering what we tell businesses that are going out of business because the government has not been there.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I would tell them that it is not about what interest rates were in the 1990s, which seems to be the obsession of the member's caucus colleague. I would urge the members on the Conservative benches to really reflect on what they care about. Is it supporting Canadian businesses or is it debt?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Chair, the wage subsidy bill this past spring did not list political parties.

A number of parties, including the Liberal Party, chose to give it a shot, and the Canada Revenue Agency chose to pay. However, the wage subsidy is meant to help businesses offset the loss in revenue as a result of the crisis. It is not meant to line the pockets of a political party that has raised nearly \$9 million so far this year.

Does the government think that the taxes and collective debt of Quebecers and Canadians should be funding millionaire political parties like the Liberal Party?

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

The wage subsidy is designed to help employers protect the jobs that Canadians depend on and to rehire workers who have already been laid off. This support applies to employers of all sizes in all sectors, including not-for-profit organizations that have been hit hard by COVID-19.

To date, more than 3.8 million employees across the country are being supported by the wage subsidy. It is an important program—

• (2120)

The Deputy Chair: Order. The hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, sometimes it is easier to not answer the question.

We proposed an amendment to the bill to exclude political parties from applying for the subsidy. Does the government support this principle?

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Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said, this program was created to help a large number of businesses and organizations across the country.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, will the government support our amendment?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said, the purpose of the program is to help many businesses.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, will the Liberal Party commit to paying back all the money it received through the wage subsidy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I might add that the Liberal Party stopped accepting the wage subsidy at the end of August.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, that is a step in the right direction. We will see what happens next.

Does the government think it displayed exemplary behaviour and the highest ethical standards by taking more than \$1.2 million from the wage subsidy from March to August, when it has raised nearly \$9 million in political contributions so far this year?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I thank the member once again for the question.

I know the member is very familiar with the wage subsidy program. As I have already explained, this program was created to help many businesses and organizations in Canada.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, the original bill did not list political parties.

When there were discussions with the former finance minister and his staff, and when we met in committee of the whole in this place, there was never any question of political parties being eligible. In my view, that does not reflect the spirit of the bill.

Yes, community-based organizations should be eligible. However, is the Liberal Party, which has raised \$9 million so far this year—and the year is not even over—a community organization, or is it a political party, a money-making machine, a machine that awards contracts to its friends? That is what we have seen in recent months.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I thank the member for his question.

I know that the member is very familiar with the wage subsidy and that he knows that this program was created for all of Canada, for all businesses, big or small, and for not-for-profit organizations. That was the purpose of the program, that is what the program did and that is what it will continue to do.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, they received \$1.2 million in wage subsidies, which enabled them to raise \$9 million.

Ultimately, this \$1.2 million will be used for the next election campaign. When this money is spent, the Liberal Party will get a 50% refund, or \$600,000. Thus, the Liberal Party will receive \$2 million thanks to the Canada emergency wage subsidy, even though it is a millionaire party that does not need this money.

Does the government agree with this practice, or does it have any regrets?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I have no regrets about the wage subsidy. It is an excellent program that has helped many Canadians and Quebecers.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Chair, I know the minister knows my riding well. Too many businesses in my riding of Edmonton Strathcona were locked out of the rent subsidy program because their landlords refused to apply. Some of them have gone out of business as a result, but others are still hanging on by a thread.

Will you allow those businesses still hanging on to apply to recover the rent subsidy funds that they were denied under the CE-CRA program?

The Deputy Chair: I want to remind the member that she is to address questions and comments to the Chair.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I did go to high school in the excellent riding of Edmonton Strathcona.

We absolutely know that there are businesses across the country that need support. That is why we are discussing tonight strong programs to support Canadian businesses, rent support of up to 90% if a business is subject to local lockdown.

● (2125)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, will she make it retroactive until April?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as the member opposite knows, the program is retroactive to September 27. It is a good question, but our focus is on tomorrow.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, will companies that have locked out their workers be able to access the wage subsidy? Would you consider changing the criteria to ensure the program is not enabling employers to pay for replacement labour?

The Deputy Chair: Would she.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the wage subsidy is organized to help as many people keep their job as possible, but it is a very important issue to look into and to think about.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, if company owners refuse to use the emergency wage subsidy but apply for the LEEFF loan, will they be able to access the LEEFF loan?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, there are a lot of conditions for the LEEFF loan. Each situation is specific. A tiger team works very hard for—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, among the LEEFF eligibility requirements, why did the minister not require the company to use the wage subsidy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the LEEFF conditions are very strict, as they ought to be. They include environmental criteria. They include restrictions on executive pay. They—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, if a company wants to cut jobs and not use the wage subsidy to keep these jobs, then why will the minister help it through the LEEFF program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the LEEFF program involves very careful scrutiny before companies—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, not every business made it through the summer. What will the government do to help relaunch businesses that may have shut down due to the Liberals' poorly designed rent subsidy program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, that is an excellent question. We need to focus today on fighting COVID and getting through the COVID winter. Then once COVID is conquered, that will be the time for a program of government investment for jobs and growth.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, the second wave of COVID-19 is hitting Alberta harder than the first wave and some restaurants and bars that were hit hard over the spring and summer were able to use the patio season to mitigate their losses. We have snow and freezing rain in Edmonton today, yet the wage subsidy is now reduced to 65%. That 10% may be the difference.

Why has the government reduced the amount of the wage subsidy right when it is needed the most in Alberta?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I really share the member opposite's concerns about the COVID situation in Alberta and particularly in Edmonton. I have been in touch with Don Iveson about it. It is something on which we all really need to focus. Edmonton and Edmontonians really have our government's support in this fight against COVID.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, we are deep into the second wave of the pandemic in Alberta. Small businesses in the retail, hospitality, arts and entertainment sectors that rely on the December holiday revenues will not survive unless they get support immediately. The wage subsidy helps, but only if they can stay open.

Again, I would like to ask the minister if she can comment a bit about the immediate supports these sectors will be able to access in addition to the wage and the rent subsidies.

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Chair, the Minister of Finance has been clear that we have taken an approach with respect to broad-based support. Through the regional development agencies, we have con-

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tributed \$1.5 billion to assist in unique situations for sectors that have been challenged, like tourism and the restaurant sector.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Chair, I am supporting Bill C-9, and my chamber is very happy that Bill C-9 is going forward because its members said the other programs sucked, except for western economic diversification funding through Community Futures.

Would you agree with the following statement: “There is no public document published which provides a complete list of measures announced and with their cost estimates related to COVID-19 expenditures”?

The Deputy Chair: I remind the member to address the question to the Chair.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, first of all, I want to thank the member opposite for his support and the support of his chamber for these programs. I think what we will have in place once we get this passed into law is a comprehensive set of supports for workers and for businesses that will get us through together until next summer. That is a really big deal. I can think of no other country in the world that will have such comprehensive—

● (2130)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, do you agree with the following statement: “There is no public document published which provides a complete list of measures announced and with their cost estimates as it relates to COVID-19 spending”?

The Deputy Chair: I will ask the minister.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, thank you for bringing in a note of levity to our late-night debates. I am just going to finish my sentence from the last answer, because it is really important. We are now going to do something very special with this legislation. We are going to have targeted mutually reinforcing programs that go up and down as the economy needs it with—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, the government's central financial management and reporting system is meant to be updated monthly with actual spending data. The government has created several codes in its charts of accounts to track COVID spending. Why has it not been updated since July?

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Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, our government is very available to answer questions. Here we are late into the evening, and I think we are all actually glad to be here and to be having this discussion. I have also—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, I think the finance minister needs to pick a lane, a lane of transparency, accountability and a team Canada approach or one that denies Canadians the access to information on our public expenditures.

Bill C-11, Bill C-12, Bill C-13, Bill C-14, Bill C-15, Bill C-16, Bill C-18, Bill C-19, Bill C-20 and Bill C-4; the Parliamentary Budget Officer says that we do not have public information on all of those bills passed and that received royal assent.

Does the member opposite agree that Canadians deserve to have that information?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Chair, the finance minister has obviously picked a lane, which is full transparency, and full engagement and support of businesses and workers across Canada. We are delighted to have this opportunity, as well as the government portal info base and the open government portal, which provides hundreds of different files on COVID-19. The member is obviously most welcome to consult those files with hundreds of pages of detailed information, including on government estimates and the budgetary estimates process. There is a lot of information to support this very important discussion. We are very proud of the lane the finance minister chose.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, will the finance minister give Canada a budget in 2021?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I know everyone is really looking forward to it because we have heard a lot about it tonight. We have said we will provide an update later this year.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, will the finance minister table special legislation to grant the money required for the Auditor General to do her job?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as we have heard from the Secretary of the Treasury Board, we strongly support the work of the Auditor General and we believe the Auditor General does need the—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, will we receive a budget in 2021?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said, I am really thrilled everyone here is waiting with bated breath. The fall fiscal—

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, does—

The Deputy Chair: I am sorry, the time is up.

The hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

• (2135)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Chair, I have spoken to my chamber of commerce, as well. We have a chartered bus line in my constituency that is owned and operated locally. It has zero revenue and has had nothing since the beginning of the pandemic with no foreseeable future of having any revenue either. They have applied for just about everything they can and they have received some funds, but with no revenue, it is not enough.

We have had eight months of COVID and six weeks of prorogation to get the plans right. Why are small businesses like this chartered bus line still falling through the cracks and there is nothing in this legislation to help them?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, since we talked about this when it came to Edmonton, I would like to start by saying how much all of us in this House are thinking of the people of Manitoba as they fight a very powerful resurgence of COVID. We are here for Manitoba. I do want to point out that the additional lockdown support we are talking about tonight could be of particular—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Chair, the provincial exhibition in Manitoba, as well, survives on three major events that it puts on in a year: the winter fair in March, cancelled; the summer fair in June, cancelled; and the Manitoba agricultural exhibition in October, cancelled.

The provincial exhibition in Manitoba has been in existence since 1882. I think it has been cancelled twice, way back in the First World War and now. Without these events, the provincial exhibition is in dire straits, like the Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions.

Why is there no additional assistance contained in this legislation for non-profit organizations like the provincial exhibition in Manitoba?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Chair, many people have reminded us this evening that Manitoba is good. We are very proud to support Manitobans during these difficult times.

I also want to take this opportunity to underscore the fact that we, as a government, have invested \$500 million for cultural, heritage and sport organizations throughout this pandemic to deal with these types of circumstances, in order to support them. We have done so in the past, and we will continue to support these types of initiatives and organizations across the country, but particularly in Manitoba.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Chair, I have given examples of how the government has not helped.

I will give another one. Camps across Canada are closed this year, and they do not have any opportunities. All their bookings are cancelled. There is no expectation that this will not continue in 2021.

Above and beyond the programs already announced, why is there still nothing in this legislation specific to children's camps that are teetering on the edge of financial catastrophe?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Chair, again, I understand the frustration and the concerns. These stories from Manitoba are similar to stories that we are hearing across the country. That is why I just highlighted the fact that we have invested \$500 million to support such initiatives.

We have also indicated \$1.5 billion worth of support through the regional development agencies as well. We have invested in such initiatives in the past and will continue to do so going forward.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Chair, I want to ask the Minister of Finance whether the changes to the Canada emergency wage subsidy were provided to her in her mandate letter?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, the changes in the emergency wage subsidy, which we are talking about tonight, were first promised in the Speech from the Throne, and that it would go through to the summer. That is a commitment that I am delighted we are keeping.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Chair, were the changes to the Canada emergency rent subsidy contained in the minister's mandate letter?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I think that we all agree that the new Canada rent subsidy is a really good program that is going to support a lot of Canadian businesses. I am proud that we are discussing it.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Chair, it looks like she is like the Minister of Public Safety who did not get a mandate letter, even though he was at committee.

Would the Minister of Finance table her mandate letter?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we are talking about some really important legislation. The sound and fury of the past two hours may obscure the fact that we all agree this is legislation—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member, very brief.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Chair, let me be clear. Could she table her mandate letter?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, what I can table is great legislation to keep our businesses going through the second wave.

• (2140)

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Chair, I have not had the opportunity, but I would like to congratulate the minister on being the first female finance minister. I would also note that in tonight's debate we are being led by a female Speaker and a Conservative deputy House leader who is a woman. Given the impact that the pandemic has had on women, that is great and it is fitting.

I will move on to my question. We have seen through these programs that some audits are causing undue burden to Canadian business owners who are just trying to get through. Will the minister commit to pausing those audits?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, this coronavirus pandemic has given me a renewed appreciation of the hard work and the value of CRA. This is the agency that has been able to deliver support to literally millions of Canadians. I am grateful to the people—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Chair, is that a yes or a no?

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Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said, the CRA is doing really—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Chair, yes or no, will the minister commit to pausing the audits on small business owners?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Chair, the Canada Revenue Agency is an independent agency, and much like our government respects the political independence of the RCMP, we also respect the independence of the CRA. I know that my Conservative colleague—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

[English]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Chair, on a point of order, the interpretation was not working, and I am expecting my time to reflect that.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member can go ahead with his questions.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Chair, will the government direct the CRA to pause auditing on the rent subsidy and wage subsidy?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Madam Chair, the Canada Revenue Agency is an independent agency, and much like our government respects the political independence of the RCMP, we also respect the independence of the CRA.

[English]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South. I am not sure if there is an issue with maybe someone leaving their mike on, but we seem to have lost the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Chair, I am here, and I have a follow-up question.

Therefore, it is inappropriate for the Minister of National Revenue or the Prime Minister to direct the CRA.

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Madam Chair, I know that my Conservative colleagues had no problem politically interfering in CRA matters when they were in power, but we will never follow their example.

[English]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Chair, when the Prime Minister tweeted out publicly, stopping the CRA from taxing employee discounts, and the minister also said it publicly, it stopped that very day. That was inappropriate. Will they join me now in condemning their actions?

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[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Madam Chair, the Canada Revenue Agency is an independent agency.

[English]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Chair, again, they are admitting that their actions in 2017, when they directed the CRA to stop taxing employee discounts, was incorrect, inappropriate and perhaps unethical.

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Madam Chair, our government respects the independence of the CRA, and we will never do what the Conservatives did. They had no problem politically interfering in CRA matters.

[English]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Chair, I think that speaks for itself.

I will go back to the Minister of Finance. Is the Minister of Finance aware of what forecasting is? Because forecasting financials is critical. That is called hypotheticals. It is not part of her job; it is her job.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I certainly am and when it comes to offering forecasts, we were clear in the Speech from the Throne about that.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Chair, will the minister commit to doing forecasting as opposed to what she has been saying for the last three hours, that she does not do hypotheticals, which are hypotheticals?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we committed in the Speech from the Throne to offer detailed fiscal projections in the fall economic update and we will do that. We are not going to—

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Chair, will the minister commit to the debt-to-GDP ratio not increasing above 100%?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I was clear in my speech last week on our fiscal guide rail approach and fiscal anchor approach.

• (2145)

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Madam Chair, on May 14, I offered many different solutions to the old rent program. Could the Minister of Finance tell us today how many businesses were turned down under that old program?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, it was wonderful to work with you as the critic. I think you will agree with me that what we have here as legislation really is responsive to those businesses—

The Deputy Chair: Before I go to the hon. member, I want to remind the hon. minister that she is to address her questions through the Chair.

The hon. member.

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Chair, how many businesses do we expect to apply under this new program?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, every small business that is eligible should apply to this program.

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Chair, under the design of this new program, did the department do a sectoral analysis before designing both these programs, the wage subsidy and the rental program?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, today's legislation is about helping businesses continue to pay for payroll and to pay for that important fixed cost, including that lockdown support.

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Chair, did the minister consult the provinces on a design of this new program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am delighted to say that I had many conversations with provincial and territorial ministers of finance about this program and their comments were—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Chair, in designing this program, why did the minister select June 21 as the extension date?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, that is the date that is the extension date for the wage subsidy and it is important for the two programs—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Chair, does the minister expect the economy to be fully open by June 21?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, what I expect is that Canadian businesses and Canadians can now rest easy knowing we have programs in place until then.

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Chair, would the minister agree that the private sector has taken the initiative through rapid testing, particularly in travel agencies doing some test cases, and that program should be expanded so that we can get people back to work?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I have huge respect for the private sector and I am so thrilled that so many Canadians are back at work, that 76% of Canadian jobs are back. I am grateful for all—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Chair, will the minister consider, instead of doing an economic update, doing a full budget this fall?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we have been clear. We committed in the Speech from the Throne to do a fall economic update and that is what we are going to do.

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Madam Chair, would the minister agree that increased exports are needed to increase revenue, given the debt that we are loading and that should be a critical component of any fiscal plan?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, to the hon. member, this is exactly why we announced the expanded CanExport program and why, in the other room right now, I had a virtual trade—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Chair, would the Minister of Finance recognize the importance of a strong resource sector in the recovery and part of the great economic restart?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Chair, of course we recognize the importance of a strong resource sector. We think we need to have a very strong, robust economy for future generations, particularly for my daughters, Nanki and Kirpa, who are watching tonight.

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Chair, would the minister agree then, in the economic clusters that were developed, that the resource sector was not included and should be included as a strong sector that we want to see rebound?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Chair, we recently announced \$100 million for the Clean Resource Innovation Network. This network invests in the oil and gas sector and the technologies that will enable us to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and make sure we leave a bright future for our children—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for a 10-second question.

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Chair, is the Minister of Finance aware that the Mayor of Edmonton had asked for \$240 million toward homelessness and we received \$17 million in the rapid housing initiative?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I am delighted to hear Conservatives talking about homelessness in Edmonton. That is a big focus of ours. We are delighted to work with Mayor Iveson. We will keep on doing that. He is doing a great job on homelessness.

• (2150)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Chair, I am glad the government has finally listened to some of the Conservative recommendations from back in May to allow businesses to recuperate lost revenue without being worse off from clawbacks.

Today I heard from a Lakeland farmer who was not eligible for CEBA because he was a sole proprietor. He waited months for the change to allow non-deferrable expenses, but then his application was rejected because his feed invoices are not on a company letterhead. Farmers mainly buy feed from local producers, not big companies.

Could the minister confirm that the bill fixes this issue?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, right from the very beginning, we wanted to support those farming businesses. I am happy to look into this, and into this specific case.

Of course businesses that meet the \$40,000 non-deferrable expense will get access to CEBA.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Chair, Canadian business owners going to the border for visas or to pick up supplies have been forced to quarantine, but U.S. billionaires from UPS, Costco and Uline have been exempted. Why?

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Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, right from the very beginning, our commitment was to ensure that we keep Canadians safe from COVID and—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Chair, the public safety minister said the CBSA exemptions for American executives were mistakes, but the foreign affairs minister said he actually granted almost 200 of them for business mobility.

Canadian small business owners have to quarantine and some owner-operator businesses have to close for two weeks when they cross the border. Why is the government putting American interests ahead of Canadians?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to make it abundantly clear that we have had protocols and procedures in place that protect Canadians. We work with local health authorities to make sure that we advance measures to keep Canadians safe, and that will continue to be our policy going forward.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Chair, I want to cite specific cases, just so we can illustrate the double standard here. I hope the Liberals can find a fix for Canadian small businesses.

I just heard about a small business owner in B.C. who was told, in advance, by CBSA that he could go 300 yards across the border to retrieve supplies, yet when he came back CBSA agents told him he had to quarantine for 14 days. He has to close his business or significantly reduce operations, obviously at the very worst time.

Why is the government granting quarantine exemptions to well-connected American billionaires but not to Canadian small business owners?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Chair, we are, of course, very mindful of the difficulties the crisis has created for many Canadians. We would all like for the crisis not to exist and for the pandemic to be away from us. That will come at some point, but until then, CBSA border officials and various departments are doing all they can to protect both the integrity of the system and provide some peace of mind to all Canadians.

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Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Chair, Canadians have gone to the border for a visa so they could work. They are given paperwork stating that they were not actually in the U.S. by American border officials, and then when they come back, CBSA tells them to quarantine, that they must stay home from their jobs and lose a pay-cheque for two weeks.

Again, U.S. billionaires get free access to come into Canada, travel around freely and skip quarantine. How is that fair? How does that help Canadians and Canadian businesses survive financially?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, indeed, to make businesses thrive and survive going through the crisis and to help workers as well is a central piece of our economic agenda. That is why we are here tonight, together. We want this bill and these pieces of legislation to go forward exactly for that purpose, to support our small and other businesses in Canada.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: This is the problem, Madam Chair. The inconsistency, uncertainty and lack of clarity are hurting Canadians but helping Americans. The government gave the American UPS president an exemption to come to Canada to push the Teamsters union into a new contract. He was not delivering packages for UPS. He could have held his meetings by video like the rest of the world is forced to do, but the government let him in, with no quarantine required.

Canadian small business owners are being forced to quarantine in their own country, with no exemptions for them. They literally have to put their lives and livelihoods on hold for two weeks. How can small businesses survive when there is one set of rules under the Liberals for wealthy American elites and another set for working Canadians and Canadian small business owners?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister has 15 seconds.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: There would be a lot more to say that I can say in just 15 seconds, Madam Chair, but exactly the purpose of our meeting tonight is to support and help businesses, and small businesses in particular, get through the crisis, keep their workers and be prepared for when the crisis is over.

• (2155)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Chair, I congratulate you for your rigour and I also congratulate your predecessors. This is an interesting system.

According to a survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Quebec's SMEs will need an average of \$25,000 to cover their fixed costs to the end of the year.

Has the government considered providing assistance for fixed costs for SMEs, whether they are landlords or tenants?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, I appreciate that important question. That is exactly why we are here tonight: to debate this important piece of legislation to give those businesses the help that they need for those important fixed costs like rent, in

addition to the lockdown support that businesses will need in an effort to fight COVID-19.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Chair, Quebec has already taken steps to help certain Quebec companies and SMEs pay their fixed costs. In Canada, these consist solely of mortgage interest, property taxes and insurance. Quebec has added telecommunications expenses, permits, gas and electricity bills, and association fees.

Why is Canada not providing assistance that is this effective, generous and accessible to corporate tenants?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, I am thrilled to have met with a number of female business owners in Quebec who have been able to take advantage of the emergency supports that we have had. The CEBA loan, which is a small-business loan, helps give businesses that additional flexibility and working capital to help bridge through expenses like the ones the member just talked about.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Chair, I would really appreciate it if my colleague would listen and answer the question. We see that in this version of Bill C-9, the federal assistance will end in June 2021.

Will there be a transitional measure for companies and organizations that operate in certain sectors where business is seasonal?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, it is really important that we provide support to all Canadian small and medium-sized businesses, and that is what tonight's legislation is about. We committed to helping them with payroll costs, with fixed costs like rent, and with that important lending support so that they could get by and manage their businesses during this time.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Chair, I did not hear the answer to the previous question because the interpretation was not working.

I will continue with another question.

If some organizations want to start operating again in the next high season and want to prepare well in advance of collecting their main source of income, will there be some assistance for tourism, culture, festivals and summer camps, for example, to get through the summer season?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, we have provided a range of program supports for businesses, and the regional development office in Quebec, CED-Q, provides additional support for those businesses that may not have access to the other programs that we have.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Chair, it is all well and good to want to extend the program until 2021, but what will the parameters be as of January 2021? We know that business owners need predictability. We only know the parameters until December 31, 2020. What will they be after that?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, absolutely, I agree with the member that businesses need this predictability. This is why we have this legislation here. What businesses can rely on is that there will be support all the way until June, and—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Chair, once again, she did not answer my question.

Rent assistance must be given to those who need it, particularly to home-based businesses.

Will the program be adapted to that reality? Will there be provisions in the budget for the fixed costs of entrepreneurs who run a business out of their home?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, we have provided a wide range of supports, from the CEBA loan to the wage subsidy as well as this commercial rent subsidy for businesses. It is a wide range of program supports that we are providing Canada's entrepreneurs and businesses.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Chair, many business owners have paid a lot of money in interest charges since the beginning of the pandemic.

Will the assistance that has been announced enable business owners to pay off all of the interest charges they have incurred?

Is there a cap? How much can a business owner be reimbursed for?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, this is where I am very happy to talk about the Canada emergency business account, which is interest-free: \$40,000 is now going up to \$60,000. Of that, \$20,000 is forgivable, and it is interest-free.

• (2200)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Chair, the question is, when will business owners have the money in their account? Can we have a date, for the sake of predictability?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, our commitment is to make sure those businesses are supported with that liquidity.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would like to use my five minutes to ask questions of my hon. colleague, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. On behalf of

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my constituents, I want to thank her for her tremendous work throughout this pandemic. She has been a real leader and I want to make sure that is on the record.

Unlike the member of Parliament for Carleton, who would ask a two-second question and expect a two-second response, I would like the minister to have the opportunity to answer the questions because I really do want to hear from her.

This bill deals with, of course, the wage subsidy and the rent subsidy, which are two really important programs. I have heard that from my constituents, particularly the wage subsidy for tourism-related businesses.

Can the minister speak to how these programs will remain the same, or to some of the changes, particularly as it relates to the rent subsidy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would like to thank the hon. member for his really hard work, not only representing his riding, but also speaking for rural Canada. I always appreciate his advice on these issues.

When it comes to his question about what is so valuable about the measures all of us are supporting in this House tonight, we are now going to be able to say to small businesses across the country they will get up to 65% of their wages covered and up to 90% of their rent covered if they are subject to a local lockdown. Let us not forget about the expansion of CEBA, up to—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Chair, the point about the lockdown is extremely important. Here in Nova Scotia, we have been very blessed with the Atlantic bubble, and we have not seen some of the issues that other areas of the country have.

Could the minister go into a bit more detail on what that lockdown measures means for businesses being forced to shut down?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I am glad the member mentioned the Atlantic bubble. This was controversial when Atlantic premiers first introduced it. The significant restrictions they—

The Deputy Chair: I am sorry, but the time is up.

The hon. member.

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Chair, I appreciate we have to have a similar amount of time for the answers and the questions, but I do hope you will let the hon. minister answer the questions if she has the ability to do so.

I want to ask about our government's overall vision. I know the minister had to speak in two forums in Montreal and Toronto. For my constituents who might not have been able to see that, my question is this: What is the government's economic vision moving forward?

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We have done a very good job trying to put out measures to help support businesses and individuals. There is a lot of uncertainty about what the future looks like, but can she summarize for my constituents and all Canadians about where our vision is in the days ahead?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I would summarize our plan this way: Right now the focus for all of us needs to be fighting the second wave of the coronavirus, and for the government and all members of the House to be supporting Canadians and Canadian businesses as we get through that fight. Then, once the virus is vanquished, it is going to be time for all of us to turn our attention to investing for a roaring-back Canadian economy. We have been talking about that, too, a lot tonight, and that is going to be something we are going to be well positioned to do, and I know that we are all going to contribute to that effort.

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Chair, as the hon. minister mentioned, I come from a rural riding. I am very proud to be the rural caucus chair of our governing party.

Agriculture is an industry that matters across the country, but indeed in my riding of Kings—Hants we have a very diversified mix of commodity groups. I will go on record saying that when it is safe to do so, I hope the hon. minister will consider coming and having a Tidal Bay glass of wine down in Kings—Hants. We would love to see her.

As it relates to the agricultural sector writ large, I know we have had investments. Can she speak to how it would be important for our government in the days ahead to partner with the industry to make sure it is part of the economic recovery?

• (2205)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, agriculture is so key to the Canadian economy. It is key to Canadian society and Canadian communities. I think we should all be proud of our farmers, and of course agriculture and our farmers are going to be a key part. They are a key part of our economic—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Chair, before I ask questions, I just want to acknowledge that the NDP has worked hard on this to push the government to improve its legislation, and I wanted to thank my colleagues for that. Sadly, it took a long time, but I also want to speak to the incredible resilience of the small and medium-sized businesses in my riding. They have shown dedication to their craft, and loyalty to their clients and their employees. I want to also give special thanks to the Argyle and Hamilton BIAs. They have often advocated for their members throughout this pandemic and fought alongside them for their survival.

In London—Fanshawe, I also wanted to tell the House about Matilda, who owns Enchanté Hair Studio, and Melanie, who owns Madison's Boutique & Consignment. Their landlord refused to apply for the government's first failed commercial rent program.

What is the government doing to make sure this new program undoes the damage of the first?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would like to thank the

member opposite for her visible hard work on behalf of her constituents and the businesses in her riding.

What we are talking about tonight is a very substantial, comprehensive set of measures that will help Canadian businesses, like the ones the member opposite has described in her riding, going forward. The rent subsidy means 65% of rent covered and up to 90% if they are subject to a local lockdown, and that goes back to September 27. The wage subsidy is up to 65% of wages covered, and, of course, there is CEBA, which we are going to expand so businesses can get a 60% loan—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Chair, there is also an incredible Lebanese restaurant in south London. The owners are still trying to catch up on debts because they were not eligible for CECRA. They are just one example of so many in my riding.

Will the minister ensure this new rental subsidy program is retroactive from the start of the pandemic to help these businesses recover?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the member opposite makes me want to go dine in London, Ontario with that description.

This program will apply from September 27. It is focused on the future and provides really generous support for businesses.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Chair, the minister has said that the answer for companies that need help is they should go further into debt. Is that her only solution? Does she truly believe that is the most help her government can provide?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we are talking tonight about providing really significant support for enterprises, with up to 65% of wages covered. That is a grant, not a loan.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Chair, businesses cannot take on bigger loans. It just puts them further into debt. She does not understand.

There are several cultural clubs in my riding that provide an incredible connection for their members through their history, culture, language and identities. Several clubs survive by hosting events, celebrations and ceremonies and that cannot happen now because of COVID—19.

These clubs own their own land and their buildings, so they are not eligible for the programs under the former or the currently proposed programs, and they are drowning in debt from other fixed costs. Is there a plan to help these clubs?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I will conclude my answer to the last question, because it is important for Canadians to understand. Neither the wage subsidy nor the rent subsidy involve additional debt for businesses. These are straight grants from the government to Canadian enterprises. I agree that is what Canadian enterprises need. That is why we are going to be there for them.

I would also like to point out a new feature of the rent support program. It is available not only to enterprises that are renters but also to support enterprises and entities that are—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Chair, why did this government choose not to make the program retroactive to April?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, our focus is on keeping businesses that are viable today viable going—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Chair, a constituent in my riding named Matthew fears the loss of his job. He works for a company that has a few franchises. In this new program proposed by the Liberals, they have placed a \$300,000 cap on support provided to businesses. However, for companies that are franchises with a few locations, many rents can add up quickly and \$300,000 does not cover them for very long or at all. Would the government consider increasing that cap?

• (2210)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I think the New Democratic Party shares our government's absolute focus on helping the small businesses that need the support the most. That is what this program has been—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Chair, I am going to be asking questions of the Minister of Finance. I want to really focus in on those issues that are important to my riding and have been expressed to me by many businesses and farmers.

As was already alluded to by the member for Lakeland, a lot of our farmers have had trouble accessing the CEBA account. I want to ensure the current forms of the new wage subsidy and rent subsidy will not involve any problems with people accessing them if they do not have business bank accounts, which is so important to sole proprietorships.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Chair, I appreciate the member's excellent question. The idea is exactly what the Minister of Finance said earlier, which is to make sure that everything is put into place so that businesses in his riding and across Canada have access to the type of support that they need according to their conditions in the current crisis.

Mr. James Bezan: Therefore, Madam Chair, in the situation of a sole proprietorship that does not have a business account, or may not even have a business registration number with the Government of Canada because as a farm it is GST exempt and is not collecting taxes on behalf of the government, will the business owner be able to access these programs if they are eligible?

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Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, again I am very pleased to support and repeat what the Minister of Finance said very clearly earlier, which is that the objectives of this very important piece of legislation are to support business owners in a very difficult time, and to be adapted to their specific—

The Deputy Chair: The hon member.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, I am going to hold the minister to account on this because I really do believe that we want to make sure that business owners can access it. Right now, we know on the CEBA program that if people do not have a business registration number with Revenue Canada they do not qualify. To me, that is discriminatory against those sole proprietorships.

I will ask the minister one more time: Will the Liberals make sure, for these new programs as well as for CEBA, which is currently in effect, that they get rid of the requirement for business registration numbers for sole proprietorships, especially for farmers?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to thank the hon. member for that question and for his great advocacy for small business owners, particularly for those farmers who operate on a personal account. We announced, and of course it is being made available, the CEBA loan for those very business owners who operate on a personal account.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, I can tell the minister that I was talking to one of our local farm families, and they have been told by their financial institution that, because they do not have a business registration number with Revenue Canada, they do not qualify. Therefore, I am going to ask the minister to let them contact her. Will she make sure that they get access to the CEBA program?

I want to switch gears a bit and follow up on some of the questions that were asked by my colleague from Brandon—Souris.

In rural Canada, fairs, festivals and rodeos are the backbone of our communities during the summer. Of course, right now, they are really struggling. In 2009 and 2010, I was proud when our former Conservative government announced the marquee tourism events program: \$100 million over two years. Does the Minister of Finance plan to bring forward any support for our fairs and festivals across this country?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am very familiar with the marquee tourism initiative. Unfortunately, I also remember I was an opposition member at that time, and that program discriminated against certain organizations.

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In our investments, we have made sure that we have an open process that enables many organizations to take advantage of such initiatives. That is why we have invested \$1.5 billion through the regional development agencies to advance such programs and assist such associations, as well as \$500 million through the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in his fund, to assist these types of organizations.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, I can tell the member that fairs, festivals, special events and cultural events are waiting with bated breath, because there have been no announcements or support offered by the government. I think the government needs to make sure that there are dollars rolling out, because nobody has seen a single red cent yet.

Again, one thing that is important in my riding is tourism. I know that our independent travel agencies are struggling and our youth camps are struggling. I know that Camp Arnes, Camp Massad, Gimli Bible Camp and Camp Cedarwood are looking for some level of support.

Beyond the wage and rent subsidies, can the government guarantee that some of those dollars will flow to our camps, so that they can be there in operation for our youth in the future?

• (2215)

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, for those businesses that are so terribly hard hit, we absolutely want to see them supported through this very difficult time of COVID-19, and we are going to need to keep working together on this.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Chair, in the town of St. Thomas, it was recently announced that the Marriott was closing its doors. The Marriott hired over 500 individuals, mostly women. At this time, they have all lost their jobs and are looking for new ones. Multiple sectors just like this have also been hit hard, but specifically the tourism sector. I am wondering what the next steps are that this government is going to take to reopen Canada.

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to thank the hon. member for her advocacy and her hard work, particularly for her community and so many of the incredible businesses there. I know how much she cares and how hard she works for them.

The broad-based emergency supports are there to help our businesses, but remember that the fight we are fighting right now is the COVID-19 fight.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Chair, just yesterday, this government voted against our opposition day motion to delay audits for small businesses receiving the wage subsidy program. I fully believe in accountability and transparency, but why did this government choose to vote against it?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Chair, in June, my Conservative colleagues were clamouring for more audits of the emergency response programs.

Now they want fewer audits of a program that has paid out \$45 billion to 1.4 million applicants. The Conservatives need to make up their minds.

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Chair, I am really not sure where we are going with this. I am just asking why they did not support the motion. That is one of the greatest concerns.

We know that small businesses are being kicked right now when they are down. Why is the government asking for this documentation at a time that is very difficult, as many small business owners are working additional hours filling in all of these gaps? Why is the government not giving them a break right now?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, that is what the legislation is about. It is about keeping the work, continuing the work and building on what we need to do to help businesses with those fixed costs and help them with the wage subsidy. When I see some of these businesses that are so resilient, they have pivoted because of being able to get a—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Chair, right now, I am talking to small business owners, restaurant owners, who are working 12 to 14 hours a day. They have to go home now and get all of this documentation, and it is expected within two weeks. Why is the government asking for this documentation right now with such a short turnaround?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, as someone who grew up in a family business, I know what working those very long hours are all about. That is exactly how we put these programs together. These programs are specifically to help those hard-hit businesses.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Chair, I am going to pivot here, because we are talking about documentation at a very busy time, but we have heard the exact same excuse when we ask for documents regarding WE and these other programs. Why is it okay for small businesses that are extremely busy at this time, closing their businesses and losing employees, all of those great things? Why is it okay for the government to ask for documents, but the government will not give documents?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Chair, I fully support the importance of transparency and providing information and I do, indeed, want to assure the MP that we are doing precisely that. The open government portal is providing over 300 different files with all sorts of documentation related strictly to COVID-19 and the—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Chair, I very much appreciate that Liberals wants to be accountable, but I just heard from the Conservative finance critic that back in 2019, they did not bring a long-term fiscal update and we are looking at accountability for that.

The finance minister is saying that this fall she is going to be bringing forward a fiscal update. I am wondering what “this fall” means. Does it actually mean December 21, the last day of fall, just like the Liberals did with the fiscal update in 2018, or does it mean that they are going to bring it in the next two months?

• (2220)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, because the time that we have to discuss these important issues is always limited, I was going to add that the GC InfoBase provides hundreds of pages of detailed information on various budgetary estimates in support of the crisis.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Yes, Madam Chair, they are up to date until July, I guess. Are these redacted documents or are these actually for all of us to see?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I am delighted to say that these pieces of information are on the Internet. If people click on it, they see them immediately.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Chair, the government's rent subsidy program failed so many Canadians because the application was too complicated and it relied on landlords making the application. A number of worthy businesses in my riding that really needed the help just did not qualify, but I am so happy to see that the government, in Bill C-9, has picked up on some of the suggestions from the Conservative Party.

My question is about another group of Canadian businesses that the government has left behind, and that is businesses that do not rent but own the buildings where they do business. For example, Jasmine in my riding runs a very successful retail business in beautiful historic Fort Langley. She has worked hard all of her life. Her savings went into buying the building where her business is. The irony is that she would qualify for the rent subsidy, but she owns the building. Her mortgage company has just recently called and threatened foreclosure.

Is there help for Jasmine?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, obviously, to answer categorically, one would need to know the specific details, but this rent support also covers interest payments. It is not only for rent. If someone has an interest payment on a building, that is covered too.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Chair, that is good. When is help going to be on the way? Is this a program that is going to be implemented as soon as the bill is passed?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, let us get it passed in the House, let us get it through the Senate and then we can get it out to Canadians.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Chair, I have a question about the wage subsidy program, which has been a very important program to keep businesses afloat, but it of course required businesses have employees. I have spoken to a lot of businesses that wanted to hire people, but they felt they were competing with the government CERB program.

For example, Gordon in my riding runs a very successful landscaping business. He had the opportunity to expand that business to build cedar fences, but he could not get people to work for him be-

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cause people were at home collecting CERB. People like Gordon are competing with the government for good employees.

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, I think the hon. member would agree that supporting Canadians in the fight against COVID-19 is something we all agree is a good thing to do. At the same time we are making sure those very businesses are supported to get the employees and to pay for those costs so that we can have these businesses continue to bridge through better times. In fact, dare I say, some of them have been thriving during this time. Using the wage subsidy is helping them get through this and this is the—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Chair, I think \$10 billion is the answer to the very simple question the member for Carleton put forward to the Minister of Finance. I believe that the Minister of Finance said that the total debt is about \$1 trillion. That is a “1” with 12 zeros. Then 1% moves the decimal over two, so it is a “1” with 10 zeros, which I think \$10 billion.

Incidentally, that is the number that was being discussed in earlier debate today as the amount of money required to complete the universal pharmacare program. Is my math correct?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I would really like to ask the Conservatives to be clear with Canadians and maybe even to be clear with themselves as to what they are driving at. We know what the NDP believes in. We know what the Bloc believes in, but the Conservatives right now seem to be struggling. On one hand they are concerned enterprises in their ridings are not getting enough support from the government, but on the other hand they seem obsessed with debt and deficits. Conservatives really owe it—

• (2225)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Chair, we are all being kept in suspense. We all want to sleep well tonight.

Is my math correct? Is it \$10 billion?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we are being kept in suspense too. The Conservatives need to decide what they stand for.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Chair, we stand for common sense. The question is, how would a 1% increase in interest rates affect the national debt?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, the question is, what is the Conservative Party's policy? Is it a policy of austerity, or is it a policy of supporting businesses?

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Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, earlier the minister called this a hypothetical question. There is nothing hypothetical about the debt. How would an increase in interest rates affect the \$1-trillion national debt?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, it is actually a question of policy, a question of philosophy.

Our philosophy is to support businesses. I want to know what the Conservatives' policy is.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, the minister will be able to ask lots of questions once I am on the other side of the House and she is in the opposition. That will be soon.

She is unable to answer questions. Let's try another one. The Auditor General asked for more money so she can audit this government's massive spending. Will the minister give the Auditor General the money she asked for, yes or no?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am very happy to say that, in contrast to pre-2015 cuts, the Auditor General's budget was increased in 2018.

That increase made it possible to hire 38 new employees. We are collaborating with the Auditor General and are in constant contact with her.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, will the government give the Auditor General the money she asked for, yes or no?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I want to mention that the budget went up by \$8.3 million in 2018 compared—

The Deputy Chair: Order. The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, when the Conservatives were in power, the Office of the Auditor General conducted 28 audits per year, compared to 14 now. Government spending has doubled, yet the number of audits has dropped by half.

Here is a simple question dealing with the present, not the past. Will the government give the Auditor General the funding she asked for, yes or no?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I have great respect for my colleague, and even a bit of fondness.

I must tell him that, on this too, he needs to pick a lane. Does he support increasing the budget as we did, or does he want to cut the budget, like he did before 2015?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, I thank the hon. minister for his fondness.

I appreciate him very much, but I would appreciate an answer to my question even more. If he is so fond of me and our caucus, can he tell us whether he will hand over the money the Auditor General is asking for?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, to love someone completely, one must understand them completely.

Unfortunately, I am having a hard time understanding my colleague. I do not know if he is in favour of an increase like we did in 2018 or in favour of a cut like he did before 2015.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, the government is in favour of increasing the number of audits of small and medium-

sized businesses, but not of a government that is spending this year like never before in the history of Canada.

Why does the government accept major audits of our small businesses that create jobs, but not audits of Liberal spending?

• (2230)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, another person for whom I have a great deal of esteem and affection is the Auditor General.

She is doing amazingly solid work, especially in the difficult conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. If the hon. member for Carleton had listened to her comments over the past few days, he would know that she is practically in love with the Canadian government because we listen to her and we are there to collaborate with her so that she and her office can work in service of Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, he claims he loves the Auditor General, but it seems to me they are afraid of this important person, because they are denying her that money.

One last time, will the Auditor General get that money, yes or no?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, unfortunately, there is so much more I could add about the important work of the Auditor General. I guess I will have to do that some other time.

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Vancouver Granville, Ind.): Madam Chair, I appreciate being able to participate in the debate on Bill C-9. All the questions specifically on Bill C-9 that I was going to ask have already been asked. Therefore, I will address a number of issues that I raised in the House before and ask questions of the Minister of Finance. The first is on GDP. The other is on first nations finance.

GDP per capita has historically been used to make assumptions about the standard of living within a nation, the assumption being that the higher the per capita amount, the better the standards are. However, GDP has mixed results when trying to measure the social well-being of a population. As an economic tool, it only makes assumptions about the basic standards of living, which can be different across the socio-economic spectrum of the nation. Moreover, better standards of living do not necessarily equate to increased social well-being, with the latter affected by a range of factors: mental well-being, cultural resilience, environmental health.

Does the Minister of Finance agree that using a different planning tool than GDP could help us develop budgets and policy that aim to increase the social well-being of all Canadians and not just the economic bottom line? I would be very interested in the minister's thoughts in this regard.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is something that I think about a lot and we are doing some important work on this. In fact my colleague, the Associate Minister of Finance, is very focused on this and is doing some really important work exploring precisely that issue and exploring precisely whether there are some other metrics that we can and should be looking at.

As I know the member for Vancouver Granville is also aware, countries like New Zealand have been very effective in bringing some of this thinking into their own economic policies. If we look at how effectively New Zealand has fought the coronavirus, we need to appreciate there is a lot we can learn from them.

Finally, and I think the member for Vancouver Granville was going in this direction, the coronavirus has revealed in a very bleak way how we all pay a price if we leave the most vulnerable among us without resources. That is yet another reason why, in our plan for a recovery, we need to be thinking a lot about how we support the most vulnerable—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver Granville.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Madam Chair, as part of building back better, I am sure the minister will agree that recognition of indigenous self-governments and their empowerment to take back control of their own affairs is important, not only to reconciliation but central to our economic strength.

What the minister might not be aware of is that Finance Canada plays a gatekeeper role in fiscal policy that is in fact impeding the pace of indigenous groups moving out from under the Indian Act. There are more than 100 negotiating tables in Canada where tax policy is one of the biggest issues impacting negotiations.

For one specific example, and there are many, why is it Finance Canada's position that self-governing first nations should not collect property tax under the First Nations Fiscal Management Act?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I would like to thank the member for Vancouver Granville for another really thoughtful question.

I would like to say that another lesson of COVID has been how effective indigenous communities can be when they have the tools and authority to look after their own well-being. We have seen indigenous communities across the country take really tough decisions about protecting their health and well-being on reserve, and those decisions have really paid off.

I agree with the member opposite that we need to really speed up our work on reconciliation and our work on being sure that indigenous communities have the tools they need to control their own fate. That is the answer.

• (2235)

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Madam Chair, could the minister tell us why it is Finance Canada's position that self-governing first nations are not able to collect property tax under the First Nations Fiscal Management Act?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we do need to keep working on reconciliation and working on ensuring indigenous communities have the tools they need.

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Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Chair, I think we all recognize that Canada has experienced severe economic shocks periodically over the last century. However, what is notable about the present one is that this was caused by a health crisis. It has not only shown us how important it is to have a strong public health care system, but it has exposed, for all to see, the cracks, the deep crevasses that exist in our public health care system.

I am going to be addressing my questions to health care. The federal government has earmarked \$4.28 billion to support provinces and territories with the costs of increasing their capacity to conduct testing, perform contact tracing and share public health data. How much of that funding has been spent to date?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, the member opposite is absolutely right that a core direction for our government has been the understanding that health care is delivered by provinces and territories. We knew that we needed to support provinces and territories with really unprecedented levels of financial support. The safe restart has provided, as the member knows very well, \$19 billion to provinces and territories, and then an additional \$2 billion for the safe return to school. That came after half a billion dollars of—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, the question was about testing. All the experts tell us that in order to get control of transmission, we must have vigorous testing and contact tracing. How much of the \$4.28 billion allocated for testing has been spent? I did not get an answer to that.

I am going to move on. The minister has talked about the importance of social determinants of health. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada's recent report on an equity-based approach to COVID-19, "COVID-19 has underscored the inequities in health that are shaped by these [social] determinants [of health], highlighted how these inequities may be exacerbated in the context of a pandemic, and shown how they can aggravate and prolong the spread of disease, making the pandemic worse."

Would the government and minister support the implementation of a guaranteed livable income to address the inequities shaped by the social determinants of health?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I absolutely share the member opposite's analysis. I agree with him about the social determinants of health. We are just seeing very starkly both that the coronavirus is ruthlessly targeting the most vulnerable among us and also that we really are our brother's keeper. We are all paying the price for that.

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What do we need to do about it? The first step is to have support measures in place now to help all Canadians get through it. The EI and the new CRB measures we voted for on September 30 are playing an important role there. I also think the rapid housing initiative referred to earlier tonight is so important. If part of our fight against coronavirus can be real progress on ending homelessness in Canada, that will be both a necessary and major accomplishment.

● (2240)

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, the question was on whether the government supports a guaranteed livable income, and once again, I note that there is no answer to that question.

I want to move to long-term care. We know that 80% of the deaths to COVID-19 in this country happened in long-term care homes, giving Canada the worst record of any OECD country. Given that Canada is currently in the grips of the second wave and outbreaks in long-term care facilities have been rising in recent weeks, can the minister confirm when the national standards mentioned in the recent throne speech will be brought into force? Will the national standards be tied to new federal funding to meet those standards for long-term care in the provinces?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, that is another great question. I share the member's preoccupation with long-term care. I think this is a national tragedy and a national shame. We have to do better. I do not minimize how hard it is to do this.

I want to say to our partners in the provinces and territories that we are there to work with them on it. Significant support has already been provided in the safe restart agreement. We are—

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Chair, my riding is home to the municipality of Mont-Saint-Grégoire, which has the highest concentration of sugar shacks per square foot. They are worried because they have slipped through every hole in every safety net so far.

The latest announcement has done nothing to ease their worries because, to be eligible for fixed costs, they have to compare one year's revenue to the previous year's revenue. As it happens, sugar shacks make their money in March and April only. Technically, that means they would be eligible for the program next March and April only. Moreover, the program does not cover other costs, such as supplies and food, which they have to pay for several months before a season that might not even happen.

What can the minister say to reassure them?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to thank my colleague for her question.

Obviously, we have a strategy for all regions and all sectors. That is why we invested \$1.5 billion in regional development. I believe that investment will help businesses, especially the ones she mentioned.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Chair, help with rent and fixed costs is great, but for some businesses, rent is not their biggest fixed cost. For instance, my riding is home to Rodéo Sainte-Brigide, which took out a huge loan for a new stadium. This

business does not have to pay rent, but it does have to pay back an infrastructure loan. These kinds of businesses are also falling through the cracks.

Once again, what can the government say to them to reassure them?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank the member for her question.

I want to say two things. First, I hope the member will agree with me that the rent relief is very important and that we must pass it, because many businesses in Quebec need it.

Second, I agree—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Chair, several specific sectors did not get assistance tailored to their reality.

This was the case for many seasonal businesses in my riding, such as summer camps. Many of these businesses, such as the Centre de plein air l'Estacade, a non-profit in Saint-Paul-del'Île-aux-Noix, are struggling.

Would the minister agree to make assistance for fixed costs and rent retroactive, at the very least for seasonal businesses?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I thank the member for her question.

As I have already explained in response to the Bloc's other questions, our approach with the rent relief is to focus on the future, not the past. However, I agree with the member that seasonal businesses are unique, and I agree that we need to find a solution.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Chair, I hope that the government will think of the future of these businesses and not their past.

Hotel owners in my riding contacted us in September because the application criteria for the wage subsidy were not reasonably predictable. In order to be eligible, owners needed to have paid employees' wages, which means that these employees would have had to have worked.

Come December 19, will these businesses get the criteria for the next period, or will they still hesitate to put their employees to work because they do not know whether they will be able to get reimbursed through the wage subsidy?

• (2245)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we tried to strike a balance with the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency rent subsidy.

We gave our businesses plenty of certainty. We told them that the help would be there until June 2021 and that it would remain at its current level until December 19.

At the same time, we need to be flexible. We do not know how the economy will be doing or what the public health situation will be. We therefore found—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Saint-Jean has 30 seconds.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Chair, there are businesses that were unable to benefit from the assistance because it was ill-conceived.

I have a company that sublets from the tenant of an owner. That company was unable to access the assistance because the tenant was in a good financial position.

Could the government consider retroactive assistance for people who fell through the cracks?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, once again, we are thinking of the future, not the past.

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Chair, when the Liberals prorogued Parliament, they said they were going to bring forward a new plan to support Canadians, but since then all we have seen is more of the same.

As we have learned how to better deal with the pandemic, and as the public health crisis ends and these programs eventually expire, we must allow our economy to get back on track, or keep on going back, if I can use the Minister of Finance's terms. However, we have not seen any plan except for the status quo.

I wonder if the Minister of Finance can tell us what the plan is to get this economy off of life-support.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would like to start with where Canadians are now. I think it is so important for us to appreciate that we are in a second wave of the coronavirus. This is really serious.

Canada is in a lucky position because the virus has hit us later than many other countries, so we can look at their experience. If we look at what is happening with Europe, the situation is really disquieting.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Chair, I would like to know if the economic plan, or lack thereof, includes rapid testing.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I just want to emphasize that the second wave is here. It is hitting countries much like ours with a vengeance—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Chair, given that many jurisdictions, including the province of Ontario, have brought forward budgets

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this year, can the minister tell us when we can expect to see a budget from the government?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said earlier this evening, I urge colleagues to have patience. We committed in the Speech from the Throne to a fall economic—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Chair, if the government will not bring forward a budget by 2021, could the minister please explain why?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said, the next important economic moment is going to be our fall fiscal update. I am glad so many members are looking forward to it.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Chair, I would like to expand on a letter I actually sent to the Minister of Finance before she became the Minister of Finance earlier this summer. It was an inquiry based on some questions from my constituents.

Our party supported many of the emergency benefits. We supported the border closure measures. We actually called for them long before the government took action, but the lack of certainty from the government and the constant moving of timelines really put a lot of business owners in a difficult position. In my letter I asked if there were any metrics that the government was using to determine when it may move forward from some of these measures, and if it is able to share them.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, let me start with the premise of the question, which I think is not quite right. With this legislation, which we are all talking about tonight and voting on tomorrow, we are offering certainty to our businesses. We are saying these essential programs will be in place until the summer. That is really important, and I am glad we all support that.

• (2250)

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Chair, many business owners have been speaking out about many different problems with various COVID-19 supports throughout the summer, whether they are onerous criteria, inflexible timelines or a lack of clarity. I think this is especially true for many tourism and seasonal operations in my riding and across northern Ontario.

I would like to know if the government has been consulting with these businesses to ensure the amended programs are going to work as they are intended to.

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Chair, we recognize that we need to have sectoral strategies and sectoral supports going forward. That is why, through the the industry strategy council, we are engaging with different sectors to better understand their unique challenges and pain points, so we can put forward tailored measures to support them, particularly the tourist sector, which has been hard hit.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Chair, our party brought forward many different suggestions very early on in the course of this pandemic. Why did it take the government so long to amend many of these programs?

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Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I am grateful for all the great ideas we hear in this House, and I am really glad we are going to support this important legislation.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Chair, the first question I have for the Minister of Finance is this: How much is budgeted to pay for the rent relief program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am going to be giving specific updates in my fall economic—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Chair, I think it was \$2.3 billion until December 31. What percentage of that is for municipal taxes to be paid?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we have a broad understanding of the relevant expenses that can qualify for the rent subsidy.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Chair, what percentage is for mortgages to be paid to the banks?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said, our objective in creating this program has been to reach a broad range of businesses—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Chair, has the minister thought about the unintended consequences of the 25% bump-up if a municipality goes into lockdown?

For instance, my municipality of Calgary is getting 90% of municipal taxes and the utility fees for 90% of the utility it owns, so it might be a motivation to actually cut down our economy when we do not necessarily need to. Can the minister respond to that?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I have thought really carefully about the intended consequences of the lockdown support. What I believe this support will do is empower public health officers, mayors and premiers to do the right thing for health because that is going to be the right thing for the economy.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Chair, the balance sheet of the Bank of Canada has increased by \$450 billion since the pandemic started. Of that, \$175 billion is in the repo market. That means it has paid the banks. Can the minister tell us why so much?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the members opposite seem to be confusing the job of the finance minister with the job of the Governor of the Bank of Canada. I understand the distinction, and I honour it.

Mr. Greg McLean: The answer, Madam Chair, is to keep interest rates low. Interest rates go down, outstanding bond prices go up. It is kind of a rule, but about 100% correlation: we will put it that way.

With \$250 billion in the secondary market, how many billions of Canadian dollars has the Bank of Canada wasted and overpaid to institutions to redeem off-the-run securities in the financial markets?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Again, Madam Chair, the members opposite seem oddly keen on undermining the independence and the authority of the Bank of Canada, and I can think of nothing that

is more pernicious and more dangerous in this difficult time. Our government believes in the independence of our Bank of Canada. We know how important that is to our economy.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Chair, who is responsible for the overpayments of the government's Crown corporation called the Bank of Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the Conservatives may, for partisan reasons that I actually do not entirely fathom, seek to attack the Bank of Canada—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Greg McLean: It is billions, Madam Chair, and the Canadian taxpayers are responsible for it, so somebody in the House should be responsible for it. However, with a few billion here and 10 billion there, pretty soon I know we are going to be talking about real money. That will need to be repaid by Canadian taxpayers.

Financial analysts are reporting that with the amount of on-the-run buying of Canadian bonds in the marketplace, by the end of this year, there will be no external demand for Canadian securities at all. At that point in time, can the minister tell us what she thinks will happen to interest rates?

• (2255)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Again, Madam Chair, external demand for Canadian securities is in fact very strong because of our strong economic performance and because of our strong fiscal record. However, I want to repeat, the Conservatives cannot have their cake and eat it too. Either they believe in supporting Canadians and Canadian businesses or they do not.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Chair, with 44% of the Bank of Canada's buying being in the on-the-run marketplace, there is no demand for new Canadian securities out there, and it escalates every month.

Who is going to be paying this accelerating interest?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Again, Madam Chair, I say to the Conservatives to pick a lane: They are for austerity or they want to support Canadians. We know what we believe in.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Chair, Bill C-9 is pretty late in coming, but it fixes some of the problems the Bloc Québécois identified back at the start of the pandemic. We will definitely support this bill, and we hope it will be passed in a timely manner. The Bloc wants to support our workers, our entrepreneurs and our communities.

Does the government agree that the bill must help those who really need help, those whose needs are so great that the pandemic could threaten their existence?

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Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am very happy to hear my Bloc Québécois colleague. We are from the same province, and those of us on this side of the House also recognize the major issues and challenges that our businesses, especially our small businesses, are facing. That is why we are so happy we can count on the Bloc's support for this bill.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, would the government also agree that a business or applicant should not receive assistance twice for the same need? For instance, a restaurant or bed and breakfast could not receive both the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance for the same premises.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I think we all agree that government assistance should be targeted at those who need it most, in a way that respects the integrity of the use of public funds.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I am so happy to hear the government say that assistance should go to those who really need it, to people whose very existence is in danger, and that people cannot receive double payments of government assistance.

Does the government believe that political parties like the Liberal Party of Canada, the Conservative Party of Canada and the New Democratic Party, which have accumulated a combined total of \$25 million in their coffers over the last six months, which they will use to finance the next election campaign, are as much at risk from the pandemic as SMEs on the North Shore?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, if she had the time, my colleague might have also added that the assistance, as was the case in the past few months, was provided efficiently, quickly and without discrimination as to the type of work people do or the regions where people live.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, again, the recipient should need the money. It is not right to double dip.

Does the government agree that the Liberal Party, which received \$1.2 million from the emergency wage subsidy that it will use it for the next election and be reimbursed for by the Chief Electoral Officer, essentially got twice the assistance when it did not need any?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, this gives me the opportunity to thank my colleague for her question and point out that the emergency wage subsidy has helped close to four million workers over the past few months. That is four million workers who would have lost both their job and their ability to put food on the table.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, in light of these inconsistent answers, I would like the government to be honest enough to say that it applies for double the assistance when it does not need any, while people back home on the North Shore and elsewhere in Quebec are not getting anything during this pandemic.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I am somewhat concerned when the member says that no one in her riding has received government assistance. If that is the case, they really have to take action in that riding because, in Canada, almost nine million workers, including tens of thousands—

• (2300)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Manicouagan.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, the government misunderstood the question. Some have received assistance, but there are some who need it more than the Liberal Party does.

To prevent wealthy political parties, like the Liberal Party of Canada, from receiving twice as much financial assistance, which they do not need, when at the same time companies whose survival depends on it are denied that assistance, does the government think that reinstating public funding for political parties would be the solution?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I did not have time to finish my answer. I was going to say that 8.8 million workers have received the CERB. I imagine that there are tens of thousands in the member's riding. If that is not the case, if she does not have that kind of information, she has the right to ask for it. We will do everything we can to obtain it.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I would like an answer regarding public funding for political parties. That is the question I was asking. As I said, rich parties are getting money they do not need, and they are double dipping because they will get reimbursed. They will use this money for an election campaign and not for their current needs, because they are not in danger, unlike businesses.

I would like to know if the minister sees this as a solution.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Chair, I think the word “solution” is apt because in her riding, and in mine, it is a solution that addresses many challenges faced by businesses, small businesses in particular, whose rent and wages—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Chair, Vancouver East small businesses cannot understand why the Liberals require the landlord to apply for the first commercial rent subsidy program in order to qualify. With the second program, the minister will only allow small businesses that are still struggling to survive the pandemic to apply retroactively to September 27, not April 1. If the idea is to help small businesses survive through the second wave into the future, small businesses will not be able to sustain themselves if a new commercial rent subsidy program is not backdated to April. Surely the minister realizes they have to carry the debt from the first wave forward. The past is part of their future. What will it take for the minister to make the program retroactive to April?

Government Orders

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to thank the hon. member for her advocacy and her work. As the finance minister said earlier, what is really important here is getting this legislation through, helping businesses today and helping them going forward so that we can help them bridge to better times beyond COVID-19 and help them with these very important fixed costs that they have to pay.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, repeating the same lines does not answer the question.

My constituent is a member of the Air Line Pilots Association. In an effort to support the company, he and his colleagues from West-Jet have sacrificed themselves by taking a 50% cut in compensation for 12 months straight. As many as 180 to 200 pilots have taken a 70% reduction. Will the government come in with an airline recovery package that ensures public equity, job protection and consumer protection?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I do want to say how much I admire and respect the people who are keeping our planes flying. They are doing a terrific job in circumstances that are really challenging and I know how dedicated they are. We are looking now carefully at the particular circumstances the airlines face—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, among the large companies that apply to LEEFF, how many companies receive financial support and of those that receive financial support, how many use the emergency wage subsidy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as the member opposite knows, so far two companies have received support through LEEFF. This is a very rigorous process that we go through—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, I have written to the minister about the PNE. If it cannot get access to the wage subsidy program, that may spell the end of this 110-year-old institution that provides employment to over 4,200 Canadians annually.

Will the Liberals help the PNE survive the pandemic?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, let us just remember that what we are talking about tonight is very comprehensive support that is going to be in place until the summer. I do not think there is any country in the world—

• (2305)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, it is not enough. Statistics from the Tourism Industry Association of Canada state that only 12% of the tourism applicants to the business credit availability program were approved and 43% were outright denied.

The tourism and hospitality sector desperately need liquidity to get through the winter. Will the Liberals make adjustments to the program so they can access this critical program?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Chair, with respect to the programs we have in place, BCAP is a great initiative. Also, I want to underscore the

fact that we have LEEFF, which was highlighted before. Above and beyond that, if companies have faced challenges, we have put forward monies through the regional development agencies, \$1.5 billion, to assist these enterprises and organizations across the country.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, again, will the Liberals make adjustments to the program so they can access this critical program?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Chair, we have demonstrated not only scale and speed, but also flexibility in the way we design programs. We look forward to working with members opposite going forward.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, I would like to go back to the Minister of Finance about the PNE. Will the Liberals help the PNE survive the pandemic?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: As I said, Madam Chair, the programs that we have put in place are extensive. We, together here in the House, are giving businesses and organizations across the country real certainty. We know that they do not cover—

The Deputy Chair : The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Chair, does the finance minister have a short-term plan for the economy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, yes, we do have a plan and big part of the plan is the work we are doing here tonight.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Chair, does the minister have a medium-term plan for the economy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: I sure do, Madam Chair. It is called one million jobs.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Chair, does the minister have a long-term plan for the economy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, yes I do. It is called a Canada that is more innovative, more—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Chair, does the finance minister agree with the agriculture minister that farmers should have to drain their personal savings before the government will provide assistance to them?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I know that the agriculture minister supports our farmers heart and soul, and so do I.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Chair, does the finance minister know how much money the average farmer pays in carbon tax?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I am actually very personally aware of the hard work our farmers do. I am really—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Chair, based on Statistics Canada information, the average Canadian farm, by size, is 1,668 acres. APAS calculates the carbon tax at \$2.38 an acre for 2020, which costs farmers just shy of \$4,000. It is going up to \$3.80 an acre in 2022, bringing the total to over \$6,300.

Does the minister think it is okay to keep raising the carbon tax on the producers responsible for our food supply chain?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Chair, first of all, we all understand we have a collective responsibility to reduce our carbon footprint, but we also acknowledge the unique challenges faced by farmers.

That is why we put forward \$5 billion in lending capacity for Farm Credit Canada. It is why we put forward \$125 million through AgriRecovery, including measures to help cattle and pork sectors, \$50 million to help with the mandatory isolation period for temporary foreign workers, the launch of the \$77.5-million emergency—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Chair, how much will the buyback of firearms that the government never previously owned cost taxpayers at fair market value?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we agree about a lot in the House. We are going to vote together to support Canadian businesses. However, I think we disagree on firearms and I am very glad to be on this—

• (2310)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Chair, how much did the implementation of the order in council cost taxpayers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I am not sure which order in council the member is speaking about, but if he is talking about firearms, we are proud of our government's position. We—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Chair, does the minister think the reason no one wants to bid on the tender for the buyback is because the price tag will be way higher than the government anticipates?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, what I think is there is a clear line between us and the Conservatives. We believe military-style assault weapons have no place in the hands of Canadians.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Chair, did the government consult with store owners who sell firearms on what the cost and the impact to their personal business would be before it implemented the order in council?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said, on this point we differ, and I am proud to be on our side. We need to get these weapons out of our country.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Chair, does the finance minister believe that the subsidies, like the wage subsidy and the rent subsidy, maybe along with other programs, will be enough to get the Canadian energy sector back to pre-COVID employment levels?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, these subsidies are about helping our businesses get through the fight against COVID.

Government Orders

They are about helping businesses across the economy and across—

The Deputy Chair: We can have a very brief question from the hon. member.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Chair, is the minister concerned that some organizations opposed to certain industries might receive these funds while they are working against other Canadian jobs?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Chair, we have supported, through the wage subsidy, more than 60,000 resource workers. This is a testament to the diversity of our sectors, and more importantly, the support for this key sector.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Chair, as has been stated by other colleagues in the House, I am glad to see the bill come forward to implement long-overdue changes to these COVID-related relief programs. As the saying goes, it is never too late to do the right thing.

In this case, I worry that the very long time it has taken the government to do the right thing is in fact too late for thousands of small businesses across our country and in my riding. While the wage subsidy has been helpful, for many owner-operator businesses the real problem has been ongoing fixed costs. Many of them have received no help thus far with their rent, either because their landlord would not participate or, in the case of several businesses in Maple Ridge, because their landlord could not participate.

Properties owned by municipal agencies were excluded from CECRA. At those daily 4:30 p.m. calls organized by the health ministry, we all remember those, I asked for the municipal exclusion to be removed. Officials said that they would look into it. My local mayors said they were open to it, if it were not for the exclusions.

Over 700 people in my riding signed a petition to remove the exclusions. It was initiated by Sally and James with Sushi Ebenezer and Temptations Salon, owned by Lisa. Everyone was on board except for the government.

Why have these exclusions remained for so long? After nearly eight months of pleading from tenants, residents and me, will the minister confirm that this completely unjust exclusion is removed in the new program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, let me start by thanking the member opposite for his truly heartfelt question, a question that, to me, reflects real knowledge of his community and real advocacy for his community. I really respect that and I am grateful for the input.

Government Orders

In terms of the measures that we are going to be voting on tomorrow, together we can all be really proud that once we have passed this legislation, Canada will have a set of measures that are mutually reinforcing, that will be in place until the summer, that support businesses and support Canadians, and that I think are second to none anywhere in the world.

We will have done our job helping Canadians to get through. That is what we need—

• (2315)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Chair, what I am hearing is more waffling, not an answer to the question I asked.

I look forward to finally seeing some of those tenant applications coming back approved after eight months of rejections. That is the issue with these programs and has been since day one. They get rushed through this place, and within days, if not hours, inadequacies are quickly pointed out.

I wonder if the minister could advise what the most likely complaints are that I can expect to hear from my struggling local business about this program?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to share some comments from a couple of businesses.

Aphrodite's café, says, "We are not completely out of the woods yet, but without these programs like rent support, I would have had to close my doors almost immediately."

Eby Manor milk states, "It is important that we are able to hire staff. We have hired a number of part-time staff and it is because of the Canada emergency wage subsidy."

This legislation is going to help businesses like this. I am really glad we are getting support so we can pass the legislation.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Chair, while we are on the topic of reading emails and communication, I will read one myself.

This is from a local business that says, "Here at PMP, we are fortunate to be working, but like everyone else, struggling to stay COVID-free in our offices, our shops and our sites. We just got informed yesterday that PMP is subject to a CRA audit in the middle of a pandemic. We find this highly inappropriate even though we recognize the need for CRA to do its job. Our thinking is simply that now is not the time. As you know, we employ a ton of people and are working hard to keep everyone employed, so going through an audit in the middle of a pandemic is very unsettling."

Why are the Liberals so opposed to the motion we passed, with the support of the opposition parties, for businesses like Pitt Meadows Plumbing?

The Deputy Chair: That was not quite a short question. I will get the minister to respond very briefly because there is no time left.

The hon. minister.

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Chair, our government is acting quickly and decisively to help Canadian workers and the organizations that they work for.

[English]

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Madam Chair, let me start by expressing my appreciation to the Liberal government's ministers for finally staying up late in debating Bill C-9 to help Canadians. Unfortunately, throughout this ongoing pandemic, Canadians have been done a grave disservice by the federal government: a government that openly claims to be doing everything possible to help Canadians except, when this is closely examined, it is far from the truth.

Instead of effective help, what the people have heard are grandiose aspirations and empty promises. Instead of efficient support, the people have received confused and poorly implemented programs, like the original rental assistance and the initial proposal for the emergency wage subsidy. Instead of genuine assistance for all, the Liberals wanted an unprecedented power grab. Even with the limited oversight Parliament had been constrained to, WE, in upper case, found the true purposes and goals of that opportunity the Liberals saw.

Why is doing it right and optimally so important? Why is focusing on the future not enough to let us forget about the untrustworthy past? It is because, as in life, there is only one chance to do it right.

Many businesses in my riding of Steveston—Richmond East had no choice but to permanently close because of ill-timed or poorly implemented flawed policies. There is no future for them and little for their employees. When both CECRA and CEWS were pushed through the House of Commons, opposition parliamentarians stepped forward and proposed corrections and changes. Some of these were adopted, but so many others fell on deaf ears. We called upon the government to fix the rental assistance in April. That was almost seven months ago, and it has taken until now to see change: over a month after the previous and flawed program expired.

Members can imagine if this meeting we are having now took place seven months ago. The Conservatives have been advocating for incentives to help Canadians get back to work for equally as long, and we have brought solutions to the table to help small businesses, which are the backbone of our economy. Now, we once again find ourselves in the same situation, where the government is announcing programming and telling Canadians it will help, and the opposition parties are requesting more measures to effectively help Canadians and to efficiently assist our small businesses.

Canadians have received far fewer benefits than the hundreds of billions of dollars in extra debt the government has burdened on their, and future generations', backs. The finance minister earlier asked Her Majesty's opposition to consider which lane we are in. I can inform her that the government is not in the lane that will deliver the most effective and efficient results that our country deserves. In addition to traffic navigation, tonight the finance minister also wanted to teach us lessons in finance and philosophy.

Let me be clear. As I used to work in the software engineering business, I know that this is not a zero-and-one world: one can definitely chew gum while walking. Allow me to enlighten the hon. minister: What Canadians rightfully demand is assistance without a complete disregard and sell-off of their and their kid's futures. In other words, they expect smart, prudent and respectful use of their precious and very limited resources, and Her Majesty's loyal opposition wholeheartedly agrees and believes.

Will the government explain why it denied Canadian small businesses, entrepreneurs and workers the unanimous support of the Conservative motion to be flexible about increased CRA audits?

• (2320)

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, since the hon. member started talking about working late, I am really looking forward after this debate to joining the virtual trade mission I have going to Korea in another room here. We are all here today because I think we would agree with the member that supporting small businesses across the country is exactly what we are all here to do.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Chair, has the government done a cost-benefit analysis on how having rapid testing would act as an economic tool? For example, could rapid testing affect how workers who have time off because of being in contact with somebody would be able to go back to work sooner? Would it have an impact on the confidence of consumers in the retail and hospitality sectors. Would it have an impact potentially on businesses like the ones in northern Saskatchewan that rely solely on foreign tourism, like the outfitters, where revenues are near zero and the supports are not working for them? Would rapid testing change their outlook?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Chair, I just want to state some very important facts. Federal staff are making over 1,000 contact tracing calls daily in Ontario, and four federal labs are setting up and running support initiatives for provinces when it comes to lab-testing capacity with two more online shortly. What is really important to know is that since October 21, over 2.4 million rapid tests have been sent to provinces and territories and we think this is important when it comes to overall testing strategy.

Government Orders

Mr. Gary Vidal: Madam Chair, Kevin Page, the former parliamentary budget officer and now president and CEO of the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, when talking about the release of mandate letters, said, "I do not think the government has been sufficiently transparent with Parliament and Canadians on the spending for COVID-19 fiscal supports".

Does this statement by the former PBO trouble the Minister of Finance in the least?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, we are here for four hours tonight, answering questions of members from the opposite side of the House and across the country. That is democracy in action, and what I am really proud of is at the end of all of this, tomorrow, I hope that all of us are going to support these measures that are so important for Canadian businesses.

• (2325)

Mr. Gary Vidal: Madam Chair, Mr. Page added, "Reporting on fiscal supports during the 2020 pandemic will fall far short of the public quarterly reports we saw during the 2009-10 fiscal stimulus response to the global financial crisis (yet the fiscal supports are at least 10 times larger)" today.

Does the Minister of Finance agree that better reporting would improve the ability to measure the effectiveness of the current programs, as well as Parliament's accountability role?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, some verdicts are already coming in on how Canada is doing. I want to point to a TD report, which describes "The Tale of Two Recoveries: Canada Versus the U.S." Here is what TD said, "Perhaps the old adage [that when the U.S. sneezes, Canada catches a cold] should be rephrased to say, 'When the U.S. sneezes, Canada builds antibodies'."

Mr. Gary Vidal: Madam Chair, the current Parliamentary Budget Officer, Mr. Giroux, told The Hill Times last month that it has been much more difficult to get information out of the minister's office since Ms. Freeland assumed the role. Can the minister explain why the PBO would—

The Deputy Chair: I would remind the member that he is not to use the names of members in the House.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Chair: Order. You are using up the time of the hon. member.

Government Orders

The hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Madam Chair, in a report released earlier this week, Mr. Giroux and his team noted that the finance department had been providing a thorough public accounting every other week until August, but that practice ended when the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament.

In referring to many of the recent commitments, he said, “While the sum of these measures is significant, the amount of information that is publicly available to track this spending is lacking, thus making it more challenging for parliamentarians to perform their critical role in overseeing government spending and holding it to account”.

This lack of transparency is a matter of grave concern to the Canadian public. Will the Minister of Finance commit to restarting the biweekly updates?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I would like to point the members here to another verdict on how Canada is doing in fighting the coronavirus.

The Economist this week has written a piece that calls Canada a “Northern light”. The Economist concludes that “among rich countries Canada has so far performed well” on both the economic and

epidemiological fronts. That is the objective view of how we are performing.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Chair: It being 11:28 p.m., pursuant to order made on Wednesday, November 4, the committee will rise and I will leave the Chair.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to the order made on Wednesday, November 4, Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy) is deemed reported to the House without amendment.

● (2330)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Wednesday, November 4, the House stands adjourned until Friday, November 6, at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:29 p.m.)

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