



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 150 No. 009
Monday, October 5, 2020

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 5, 2020

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

• (1105)

[*English*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from October 1 consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

As per Standing Order 43(2)(a), I am indicating that the Conservative caucus's 20-minute speaking slots for the remainder of this debate on the Speech from the Throne will be divided in two.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Brampton East.

I am honoured to rise in the House today as we mark the opening of the second session of this remarkable 43rd Parliament; a Parliament unlike any other before it.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created one of the most challenging health and economic crises our country has ever faced, and in cross-border communities like Windsor—Tecumseh, we have felt the full force of COVID-19's terrible impact. As a proud manufacturing region, many of our workers did not have the ability or the choice to take their work home during the shutdown; either one was in the factory or one was not. The closure of the U.S. border not only deprived our community of visitors and commerce that keep our businesses vibrant, but it also forced the gut-wrenching separation of families and loved ones at a time when they were needed the most. As a region with the largest concentration of greenhouses in North America and hence the largest concentration of temporary foreign workers, we saw how quickly and ferociously COVID outbreaks could spread in the agriculture sector.

Few communities in Canada faced all these forces at once, but we more than faced these challenges. In the face of COVID-19, the residents of Windsor—Tecumseh rallied together like never before, and here is just one incredible example. On June 27, a miracle hap-

pened. Communities across Windsor—Essex came together and, with the help of 10,000 volunteers, collected over two million pounds of canned goods and donations to help feed the most vulnerable.

As members can see, the residents of Windsor—Tecumseh are incredibly resilient and incredibly compassionate. Our community was able to weather this storm in part because we felt we had a partner and friend in the federal government in Ottawa. Since March, our government worked at lightning speed designing new programs and benefits to support Canadian workers and businesses through this challenging period. As the member of Parliament for Windsor—Tecumseh, my goal was to ensure that our constituents' voices were heard and reflected in the decisions being made in Ottawa. Each day, we spoke with countless residents, workers, business owners, organizations, mayors, farmers and nurses. Each night, we transmitted everything we heard directly to cabinet ministers who quickly crafted programs in response, such as the Canada emergency response benefit, which helped nearly nine million Canadians keep the lights on and cover the cost of rent, groceries and other expenses. Three million-plus Canadian employees remain connected to their employers through the Canada emergency wage subsidy program. I spoke with workers at Ford and FCA's Windsor assembly plant, and small business owners like Mike, the founder of Advance Electric and Controls, who said that the wage subsidy was a lifeline that kept the company going and took care of families. Restaurants, cycle shops and hair salons were able to continue because of the wage subsidy and because of the \$40,000 emergency business loan that supported over 750,000 businesses.

The Address

When we designed the programs, we did not always get it right the first time, but we kept listening to Canadians and kept adapting to make sure we protected the health and livelihood of Canadians and Canadian businesses. While the pandemic has certainly exposed major weaknesses in our systems and institutions, it also brought to light an incredible sense of community. Signs popped up on lawns and in windows across Windsor—Tecumseh thanking essential front-line workers. Manufacturing companies in Windsor—Essex converted their operations to produce PPE and medical supplies. Windsor Mold Group partnered with the federal government to produce two million face shields for health care workers. Hiram Walker and Wolfhead Distillery shifted production from whisky to hand sanitizer. Ford Motor Company, CenterLine, Cavalier Tool and Valiant began manufacturing face shields, face masks and protective clothing. The Windsor Essex Sewing Force recently pieced together its 25,000th mask. It is inspiring but not surprising to see the number of local companies that stepped up.

When it became clear that the pandemic was impacting low-income women, seniors, persons with disabilities and those experiencing homelessness, our government crafted the \$350-million emergency community support fund to leverage the great work of charities and local not-for-profits to support vulnerable neighbours.

• (1110)

In our region alone, over \$2.3 million in community support funding was distributed to local organizations through trusted local partners the United Way of Windsor-Essex and the Windsor-Essex Community Foundation. Lorraine Goddard, Lisa Kolody and their teams were chosen based on their commitment to collaboration and an ability to respond quickly to emerging needs in our community.

The local Alzheimer's society and several other organizations collaborated on the Windsor-Essex seniors call assurance program, which provided outreach and social support to seniors in isolation due to COVID.

Big Brothers Big Sisters developed a virtual learning program for at-risk youth in priority neighbourhoods.

The Arts Council received funding for their art share initiative, which helps grow Black and indigenous cultural spaces, connections and professional development opportunities.

Family Services developed the COVID-19 counselling support line to help residents access much-needed professional counselling services.

Since the start of the pandemic over 50,000 children and adults received food assistance in Windsor-Essex. In April, the Prime Minister announced the federal investment of \$100 million to create an emergency food security fund to boost the efforts of local food banks. The Windsor Essex Food Bank Association received over \$500,000 in direct funding and purchased food from the emergency fund. This important investment will allow June and her team at the Unemployed Help Centre to continue operating drive-through food hubs, ensuring that our most vulnerable neighbourhoods and neighbours have access to fresh food throughout the winter.

I am proud that our federal investments have helped these essential organizations continue their vital work during the pandemic. They are what makes our country so great and they have a strong partner in our government. That has been the signature approach: working together, all hands on deck, partnering with community organizations, collaborating with the province and working together with our mayors. This has been a true team Canada approach.

When Mayor Dilkens and Mayor McNamara told me that the city of Windsor and the town of Tecumseh, like many cities and towns across Canada, were struggling under the costs of COVID, we listened and we got to work. Within weeks our government put forward \$19 billion in safe restart funds to help municipalities. Our two communities of Windsor and Tecumseh received close to \$19 million to help keep services going.

When Ontario opened schools back up and parents were worried about the safety of their children, our government provided \$2 billion in a safe return to class funding. Our local Catholic and public school boards received \$6 million to purchase PPE and retrofit their classrooms to make them more safe for our children.

What I am most proud of is not just what our government has done to help Windsor—Tecumseh during the pandemic; what I am proud of is the vision we have outlined in the Speech from the Throne of what we are going to do next. The vision outlined in the Speech from the Throne feels like it was written by a resident of Windsor—Tecumseh, for the community of Windsor—Tecumseh.

Protecting Canadians from COVID-19 remains our top priority, which is why we are accelerating the production and distribution of vaccines, COVID testing and PPE. At the same time, we have committed to developing an affordable Canada-wide early learning and child care system that works for parents and their kids. Establishing national standards for long-term care and accelerating the national universal pharmacare program will provide seniors the level of care they deserve, while lifting the burden of expensive medications for all Canadians.

One pillar of the government's vision is to protect jobs, workers and their livelihoods. Modernizing and expanding the EI system, while at the same time establishing a Canada recovery benefit, creates a safety net for workers not able to work, for those not eligible for EI and for families taking care of loved ones.

There are two additional key commitments that will have a huge impact on the residents of Windsor—Tecumseh. Our government has committed to making historic investments to make Ontario and our region a global leader in the manufacture of zero-emission vehicles, batteries and clean technology. We are already seeing the fruits of that commitment with a \$2-billion investment in the Ford plants in Windsor and Oakville. That is combined with a commitment to make the largest investment in Canadian history in the training and upskilling of Canadians to guarantee our workers and our residents of the skills necessary to thrive in the economy of today and tomorrow. These investments protect the health and well-being of Windsor—Tecumseh residents, while at the same time protecting jobs that drive our region's economy and prosperity.

Over the last year, it has been a privilege to serve the residents of Windsor—Tecumseh during these difficult times and it has been an honour to be part of a team and government that is focused on the right things, the only thing, which is the health, safety and well-being of Canadians.

• (1115)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite noted that the manufacturing sector was particularly hard hit by the pandemic. With the second wave coming, and the Prime Minister indicating that maybe the answer is to shut the economy down, what is the plan to keep manufacturing in his riding, and all of southern Ontario, going?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Speaker, for constituencies such as Windsor—Tecumseh, which have a proud history of manufacturing and auto, the Speech from the Throne really hits the mark. The commitment to make Canada the world's most competitive jurisdiction in the manufacture of zero-emission vehicles, batteries and clean technology is really music to the ears of the workers and the workforce of Windsor—Tecumseh, because we know it positions us not only for the jobs of today but also the jobs of tomorrow. As well, the commitment to the largest historic investment in the training and upskilling of Canadians will also ensure residents and workers of Windsor—Tecumseh are positioned to compete in a 21st-century economy.

[Translation]

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

He said that it was as though the throne speech was written by one of his constituents, as it really hits the mark for his region. I do not know if he lives in an alternate universe, but I can say that the throne speech does not reflect the priorities of my constituents and Quebeckers, and especially not those of environmentalists.

The throne speech states that thousands of jobs will be created by surpassing the 2030 climate targets and becoming carbon neutral by 2050, but says nothing about how we are going to get there.

I would like to know when this plan will be tabled.

[English]

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Speaker, this Speech from the Throne really builds upon the last six or seven months of our experience with COVID. We can look at the fact that the throne speech

The Address

talks about the extension of the wage subsidy to protect workers and their jobs, as well as the fact that we are looking at improving upon our experience with the CERB, which provided support and protection to over nine million Canadians. We are looking to improve on that with the introduction of the CRB and with the modernization of the EI system.

We are looking at the fact that this Speech from the Throne not only builds upon that experience, but also enhances it and focuses on building back a stronger Canada. This is because we do recognize that there are gaps, whether they are in the national standards for long-term care, the necessity of bringing forward a disability inclusion plan, eliminating chronic homelessness, and, of course, making sure we continue on our path to reducing carbon emissions and being on target for our climate promises.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss not to mention that it is Canadian taxpayers' monies being used to get services out to Canadians, and that this was supported unanimously by all members in this chamber. It was not just one particular effort, it was done through a minority Parliament.

It would also be remiss to suggest the auto investments were not the responsibility of the successful negotiations of Unifor Local 200, and in particular, Jerry Dias and John D'Agnolo. Similarly, Dave Cassidy and Unifor Local 444 are fighting for investments right now. Without a national auto strategy, we are always in the back seat whereas Detroit, for example, has had \$8 billion in investment.

I would like to specifically note that there are two situations I would like the member to address. First, where is single-event sports betting, which was promised during the election and is yet to be delivered? Second, and most important at the moment, the member knows many people receive supplementary unemployment benefits, and I want his guarantee today that the government will not claw back CERB or other employment insurance at tax time. This applies to thousands of workers in Windsor and Essex. What guarantee is there that at tax time they will not be punished?

• (1120)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate working with my neighbour from Windsor West on the many issues common to our constituencies. The hallmark of this government's approach has been to move quickly and responsively, but also to move collaboratively. The proof of that, for example, is the \$19-billion safe restart program, for which we worked very closely with provincial and territorial partners and municipalities. We also worked together on housing standards for temporary foreign workers, again working with our partners across levels of governments.

The Address

It is the same with the promise in the throne speech to bring forward national long-term care standards, and again, we will be working with all of our partners on that. In the same way, partners such as Unifor and the unions have been incredibly powerful. They have been strong partners every step of the way as we design solutions to COVID-19.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I notice my friend did not answer the two questions I put to him. I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House to give him an extra minute to answer them.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sensing there is not unanimous consent for that. Perhaps the hon. parliamentary secretary will have an opportunity to properly reflect on those things at a later point in debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Brampton East.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I would like to thank you and the whole House of Commons team for working hard to ensure members of Parliament across the country can participate during this pandemic, as I am doing right now from Brampton. I would also like to give a shout-out to all of the amazing teachers, including my wife, on World Teachers' Day.

These past few months have been difficult for everyone and I am incredibly proud of Canadians for stepping up to the plate to take care of their loved ones, support their neighbours and pivot their business practices. Despite many success stories, this has been a period marked by loss and pain for many. I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to the many families in my riding of Brampton East, as well as those across the country, who have been profoundly impacted by COVID-19.

Throughout these difficult months, I am pleased that our government took the bold steps needed to ensure Canadians could continue to provide for their families, and businesses were given the tools and resources to maintain their critical employee and supplier relationships, and pivot to providing essential services or safer versions of their services.

In my riding of Brampton East, Embassy Ingredients, a local food manufacture, was able to access much-needed federal resources, donated N95 masks to health care workers and began producing hand sanitizer. It is a terrific example of a socially minded company, whose public safety focus has helped our community, which was allowed to continue adding vibrancy to the neighbourhood while continuing to employ Canadians.

Our government acted quickly to help businesses weather the pandemic. Over three and a half million jobs across Canada were supported by the Canada emergency wage subsidy. We also established the Canada emergency business account, which provides interest-free loans. As our economy transitions into the recovery process, many businesses still require help. For this reason, we are extending the Canada emergency wage subsidy through to next summer, so workers can remain on the payroll.

Additionally, I look forward to the launch of a campaign with the goal of creating more than a million jobs. Creating direct investments in the social sector and infrastructure, providing immediate

training to quickly scale up workers, and providing incentives for employers to hire and retain workers are all part of our economic recovery plan moving forward. This fall we will take further steps to bridge vulnerable businesses to the other side of the pandemic by expanding the Canada emergency business account to help businesses with fixed costs while improving the business credit availability program.

The Speech from the Throne highlighted how women, particularly those who are low income, have been hit hardest by COVID-19. Accelerating the women entrepreneurship strategy, which has already helped women across Canada grow their businesses, as well as giving parents access to affordable, inclusive and high-quality child care, are important to our action plan for the women in our economy.

As we go about fixing the holes in our system that have been identified through this pandemic, addressing climate change to transform how we power our economy and our communities will be a top priority of our government. Looking toward legislating Canada's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050, I am proud of our government's efforts in the last five years and during the pandemic to continue combatting climate change at the forefront of our efforts.

Our government has ambitious federal targets for zero-emission vehicles. They are to reach 10% of light duty vehicle sales per year by 2025, 30% by 2030 and 100% by 2040. In order to do this, the government has committed \$130 million over five years and into 2024 to deploy a network of zero-emission vehicle charging and refuelling stations in more localized areas where Canadians live, work and play. Here in the Peel region alone, 43 new electric vehicle level 2 chargers were announced recently, with 12 in the city of Brampton. They will be located conveniently at community and recreation centres. Our government is also there to support industry to bring more electric vehicle production to Canada.

In July, the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, my fellow Brampton MPs and I were proud to announce a \$45-million investment from our federal government in Brampton transit. This is the largest investment in Brampton transit in over 10 years. These funds will go toward creating a transit hub, refurbishing buses and purchasing safety equipment. In an exciting step toward electrifying the transit system, 300 hybrid and conventional buses will be refurbished, making them more reliable for riders. Incentivizing the auto industry to transition into electric vehicle production, as well as dismantling convenience and accessibility barriers with a wide network of charging stations and a robust electrified public transit system, are tangible ways our government is working towards achieving our ambitious climate goals.

This year we are facing the most serious public health crisis Canada has ever seen. Our country has been presented with unprecedented challenges, with the safety of Canadians and protecting our economy being among the most pressing. Our government is working with Next Generation Manufacturing Canada, a not-for-profit organization that promotes collaboration between technology and manufacturing to identify critical health care priorities and supply shortages. Our government allocated \$50 million in funding to launch production of innovative manufacturing solutions that will contribute to the fight against COVID-19 by assisting federal procurement for ventilators, test kits and PPE.

• (1125)

In a move to further engage the manufacturing industry, our Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry has been working hard with industry to retool and ramp up PPE production. I am excited to say that with the diligent work of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Canada is now buying roughly half its personal protective equipment from Canadian companies producing PPE right here in Canada.

Every day throughout the early days of the pandemic, my office received many calls and emails with feedback and suggestions regarding our government's economic response to COVID-19. This served as an important reminder of the real faces and families being impacted. I am incredibly proud of our government's flexible and adaptive response allowing for more than nine million Canadians to access the Canadian emergency response benefit.

COVID-19 has been particularly hard on seniors, as they are among the most vulnerable to its effects. In order to help seniors, we invested in a one-time GIS and OAS additional payment, as well as partnered with the United Way, food banks and charities to get essential services and supplies to seniors. We also invested an additional \$20 million into new horizons for seniors program. This additional investment went to community projects focused on reducing isolation, improving quality of life and helping seniors maintain a social support network.

The Brampton Bramalea Christian Fellowship in my riding of Brampton East received additional investment in order for them to expand upon their virtual programming. This allowed them to administer enhanced digital literacy training focused on apps in order to allow seniors to connect with others remotely, take part in online seniors fitness classes and mental health wellness workshops. I

The Address

would like to offer my congratulations to all the organizations that identified a greater need than ever among our seniors and created innovative solutions to address them. I am thrilled our government was able to support these efforts.

The Government of Canada is providing Canadians with extra tools, such as the COVID-19 alert app, to help keep them safe and alert them if they have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. The COVID-19 alert app was developed as a secure way to make Canadians aware of their surroundings, while improving contact tracing for health officials. As we have all experienced an increase in the use of digital software, the COVID-19 alert app is a great example of how this government continues to provide Canadians with accessible technology and information to keep them safe.

Ensuring youth are not only supported, but also have the tools and skills training to improve their job opportunities and prospects, continues to be of utmost importance to our government. The Canada summer jobs program has provided funding to organizations that provide high-quality summer jobs to young people. This summer, employers were undoubtedly thrown a curve ball with COVID-19. I would like to congratulate the organizations in my riding and across Canada that were able to rise to the occasion and create virtual summer camps and other socially distant activities. They create unique and memorable experiences for their clients and customers, and provided substantial job experiences for youth.

Small businesses and organizations are the heart and soul of our neighbourhoods and communities. They provide skills development and training for workers of all ages across our country. In order to recover from this pandemic as a more resilient nation, we must invest in a stronger workforce. Our government is prepared to make the biggest investment in Canadian history for Canadian workers by supporting skills development in growing sectors, helping workers receive education and training, and connecting them to employers and good jobs in order to grow and strengthen the middle class.

In Brampton, as well as across the country, historic investments in comprehensive, affordable housing plans has been occurring. In August, the single largest funding announcement in the region of Peel of \$276 million was established through the national housing co-investment fund from the Ministry of Families, Children and Social Development. This investment will allow vulnerable populations, including victims of abuse, seniors and people with mental and physical disabilities, to access affordable and safe housing.

The Address

I would also like to praise the Prime Minister for keeping Canadians informed and establishing a point of communication so that the support that Canadians and business owners needed was delivered efficiently. When hard-working Canadians were suddenly out of work, or had their hours cut beyond a liveable wage, our government stepped in with CERB. When businesses could not afford the costs of running their business or supporting their employees, our government stepped in with the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency business account.

When there was a fear of lack of PPE equipment in the country, the government stepped in by building a domestic manufacturing capacity and secure supply chains. When the provinces and territories were working on reopening schools, our government stepped in with a \$2-billion investment through the safe return to class fund. As public health measures were implemented to allow businesses and public centres to reopen, the federal government stepped in with a \$19-billion investment to the safe restart program. All this and more was done while making investments in green technologies, so Canada can reach its target of net-zero emissions by 2050 and create a better future for today and generations to come.

As we head into the fall and winter, I am energized by our government's ambitious Speech from the Throne to do everything we can to protect and support Canadians. Protecting Canadians, growing our economy, tackling climate change, protecting jobs and investing in job creation in emerging industries continue to be our government's top priorities.

● (1130)

I am proud to have been chosen to represent my riding of Brampton East and incredibly humbled by the efforts of small businesses, not-for-profit organizations and everyday people who are looking out for their neighbours while creating new opportunities to move our community forward. We have quite a lot of work ahead of us, but our government is committed to building a stronger and more resilient Canada together.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Brampton East listed many projects that show the government's efforts in his home riding in Ontario. I do not see the same thing in my home riding of Edmonton Manning. I have an agri-industry of canola farmers, a growing industry, in my riding. China's coercive policy against our canola has been hurting farmers a lot, not only in my riding but across the country.

What is the government doing to facilitate the efforts of canola farmers in Canada and in my riding?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the pandemic devastated many sectors of the economy and many Canadians lost their jobs. Since the restart of the economy, many Canadians have been able to return to work, but many workers continue to struggle. We know the CERB and the CRB, or the revamped EI, are support systems for these workers to help them in their time of need. Of course, our federal development agency works with different industries across Canada to support the agriculture sector and small businesses across the country. There is much more to be done and I know the government will continue listening to industries across the country to provide the supports that are needed.

[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

He pointed out that women have been affected by the pandemic. However, is the government's proposal not contradictory, given that women are encouraged to be entrepreneurs but they have to stay home to look after their young children affected by COVID-19?

What are his solutions?

● (1135)

[English]

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member across the way that I am still working on my French, but I hope to answer in French one day.

Listening has been a key part of our government's plan in providing a better future for Canadians: listening to mothers who are working from home, but also who must care for their children, and listening to businesses that need funding to pay for overhead costs. I know the government is continuing to listen to women who have been disproportionately affected by this pandemic, and it is working on a child care strategy to ensure we support families. I have two children of my own. I hear from my neighbours, as well, that child care is extremely important and on the minds of many, including women, in order to help them get back into the workforce and contribute to the economy. We know that women have an important part to play in our economy and we need them involved. I know our government will be working extremely hard to develop a national child care strategy.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. member for Brampton East reference tackling climate change. I know that is a very important topic for my constituents. He referenced the production of electric cars and electric vehicles as one of the ways in which the Liberal government plans to do so, but at \$60,000 to \$70,000 a pop plus auto insurance, my question through you for the member is this.

Does he not agree that providing more significant investments in the operating dollars of public transit would be a real and meaningful step toward addressing climate change rather than a continued subsidy of private vehicles?

The Address

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that our government believes in transit investments. Here in Brampton, over \$45 million has been invested in transit. We know if we can provide consumers and our residents with better and cleaner transit options, it will help reduce vehicles on the road and in turn reduce pollution.

With respect to electric vehicles, I think it is important that we give Canadians access to electric vehicles through incentives so we can ensure we get to net zero by our target date.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be back in the House today. This is the second time in less than 12 months that I have been able to respond to a Speech from the Throne. I find it quite comical that we are doing this again, after a prorogation that was not necessary but was to hide scandal.

That being said, I am eager to have the opportunity to participate in this debate, not only as the member of Parliament for Battlefords—Lloydminster but also as the Conservative shadow minister for seniors. I am very honoured that our leader has asked me to serve in this capacity. It is one that I do not take lightly.

This year has been particularly challenging. Now more than ever, Canadians need a government with a clear plan and vision going forward. That is why the Speech from the Throne was such a disappointment when it was delivered. Many Canadians did not find themselves in the Liberal government's vision. In fact, Saskatchewanians and westerners once again found themselves explicitly excluded. Despite the Prime Minister's disbelief, western alienation is real and it is largely a product of the Prime Minister's own attitudes and failed policies.

Well before this pandemic, the agriculture sector and the oil and gas sector had been completely left behind by the Liberal government. These two sectors have contributed so much to our entire country, and have the potential to contribute so much more. Despite the families, the businesses and communities that depend on these sectors, they continue to be left behind by the Prime Minister. His continued indifference continues to make things worse. This is underscored by the absence of western Canada and its priorities from the throne speech.

When it comes to what was actually in the throne speech, it still falls very flat. There was no real plan. There was no detailed plan laid out to help the millions of Canadians who are struggling, and the complete lack of a clear plan failed to instill confidence in Canadians that the Prime Minister can or will follow through on his throne speech promises.

I will pre-empt the defence that my colleagues across the way will try to build: that there are never details in a throne speech. However, as has been said countless times, these are unprecedented times. Unprecedented times call for an unprecedented response. Beyond that, the Prime Minister himself told Canadians that he was proroguing Parliament so he could deliver a detailed plan going forward.

It was his own office that had a press release announcing the prorogation of Parliament. It said:

The Speech will outline a detailed vision for the future...

Now that we have all had ample time to reread the speech, we can be certain that we have not missed the details. They are simply not there, confirming what we already knew. The Prime Minister prorogued Parliament and wasted six weeks just so that he could hide from his ethical scandals. That is shameful.

The Prime Minister prioritized hiding his scandal over the interests of Canadians. He prioritized himself over that single mother who lost her job through no fault of her own, and who did not know how she would pay her bills and put food in her children's tummies when CERB ended. He prioritized himself over all the other Canadians who were unsure of what would happen when the program ended.

The shutdown of Parliament was in no one's interests but those of the Prime Minister and his friends. I would hope that the Liberals would stop insisting otherwise because, honestly, Canadians are not buying it and Canadians deserve better.

It is Canadians who pay for the failures of the government, and Canada's seniors have paid dearly. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on our seniors. They have faced greater health risks, higher fatalities, forced social isolation, limited access to services and so much more. Despite this, the throne speech did not provide great attention to our seniors, nor did it offer them any semblance of a detailed plan to help them get through the rest of the pandemic healthy and safe.

● (1140)

Last week, on National Seniors Day, I reminded the House that we owe a lot to our seniors. We cannot leave them behind, and we have to do better than the little that was described in the Speech from the Throne. The throne speech reannounced past policy commitments that the government, frankly, has just failed to deliver.

The commitment to amend the Criminal Code to penalize those who neglect seniors is not new, nor is the commitment to increase OAS and the CPP survivor benefit. They have all been said before. With no clear outline of how the Liberals plan to deliver these promises, it is difficult for seniors to put stock in any of these. It is also not possible for us to put stock in other vague commitments, like taking action to help people stay in their homes longer. While the benefits of aging in place are broadly accepted, the Liberals have offered no indication of how to accomplish this, leaving us to believe that it is not a real priority for the government.

As we continue to navigate this pandemic, which should without a doubt be a priority for the Liberal government, we need to make sure the health care workers who take care of our seniors have the critical supplies and the resources that they need. The outbreaks and fatalities experienced in long-term care homes during the first wave of the pandemic were devastating, and too many Canadians experienced the pain of losing loved ones.

The Address

The government's number one priority in supporting our seniors in the immediate term should be working to prevent the same outbreaks and fatalities in long-term care homes. As we know, the provinces' premiers made their case crystal clear to the Prime Minister ahead of the throne speech: that additional funds and resources were needed to deal with the pressing health care needs, and that the provinces needed flexibility to use those funds accordingly.

This is also an issue that our leader raised with the Prime Minister in advance of the throne speech. It is absolutely shameful that the Prime Minister failed to even respond to the premiers' requests. Instead, he opted to weigh in on provincial jurisdiction like he always does, committing to an Ottawa-knows-best approach. That approach does not work when the immediate care needs differ, not only from province to province, but from community to community. Provinces are much better suited to address the specific needs in their regions.

To be clear, the commitment to develop a national care standard is positive. The federal government should work with its provincial counterparts to ensure that Canada's seniors have access to quality, consistent care throughout the country. However, Canada's seniors living in long-term care, and their families, cannot afford to wait for care standards to be developed at the government's pace, and much less at the current government's pace.

We are in the middle of a pandemic. If the Prime Minister acknowledges that we are in the second wave, resources are needed now and that is well within the government's jurisdiction. With no commitment to provide greater resources to long-term care workers, I would also caution the government: Liberals cannot vilify our health care workers who are working extremely hard, some in precarious environments, to support our seniors because they do not have the resources they need to provide the highest quality of care. Just the same, knowing the significant impact that this pandemic has had on Canada's seniors, we cannot afford to fall behind in our response. The government's failure to close our borders and secure personal protective equipment at the outset of this pandemic cost lives and livelihoods.

As we see Canada lag behind our allies in securing testing, it is Canadians who pay the price. We run the risk again that Canada's seniors will pay the greatest price. We have to do better for our seniors and for all Canadians. That is why, as Conservatives, we are focused on holding the Prime Minister and his government to account. We will fight for all Canadians, including those the Liberal government has left behind. We will fight for the interests of Saskatchewan and western Canada, and we will focus on putting forward a real plan to keep Canadians safe, protect jobs and get back on track because our country's unity and strength depend on it.

• (1145)

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 have a point and a question.

This government has been very proactive on the seniors file. In fact, there has been hundreds of millions of dollars, whether directly through increases in the GIS and the OAS, through the support to the many hundreds of non-profit organizations, through the GST re-

bate or through support to the military for long-term care facilities. This government has been there in a very real and tangible way, no matter what the Conservatives might say.

The member opposite seems to be hung up, just as many of her Conservative colleagues are, on the prorogation of the session. I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts on the province of Manitoba. The premier, in a majority Conservative government, prorogued the Manitoba legislature. Was he wrong to do so?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, it was the Liberal government that threw out PPE, if not sent it away. When we talk to our long-term caregivers, we hear this is what they need to provide safe places to work in our long-term care facilities.

Before the member starts lecturing me, he should look at what his own government is doing and the ethical scandals it is plagued with.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech accurately described the realities that we have been seeing first-hand for over six months now.

At the beginning of her speech, she talked about seniors and how they have been treated.

The government literally created two classes of seniors by giving extra money to seniors aged 75 and over, while the majority of seniors, those between the ages of 65 and 75, are not getting anything.

What does she have to say about that? I would like to hear her comments.

[English]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what the government has done for seniors. Even stakeholders are stating that in the throne speech, "details around all issues including the promised increases to OAS and the CPP Survivor's Benefit were frustratingly vague and repeated the message we've been receiving for months." This is from the Canadian Association for Retired Persons.

If there were political will, it would be done already. This goes back to my previous answer: We need to see action, and throwing out PPE is not a good action.

• (1150)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know my hon. colleague's speech focused mainly on seniors, but at the beginning of her speech she made reference to the oil and gas industry, particularly in western Canada. I caution the Conservatives when they speak about western Canada because, looking at the floor right now, I see that my riding is actually farther west than that of anyone I can see.

That being said, we have two major factors going on right now. We have the threat of climate change and, as we know, an investment climate that is starting to peel away from oil and gas.

Given those facts and the way the industry is heading, would it not be smarter and better policy to start making major investments in helping the workers, the men and women who work so hard in oil and gas, transition to the industries that will be a part of Canada's future 10, 20 and 30 years from now, and start making those investments now before they start costing us far more than they should?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, I invite the member to come to my riding and tell that to the parents who are trying to put food in the tummies of their children. They are just trying to get ahead. That is all they are trying to do.

He could tell that to the farmers who have to supplement their egg income because of the crappy policies the government has put forward, such as Bill C-69, the carbon tax and Bill C-48, whatever it is. The government is making it more difficult to get their products to market and is taking more money out of their pockets. Farmers have to subsidize their egg income by working in oil and gas because they cannot put food on their tables with what they are receiving in egg income as it is.

Before there are suggestions about allowing investment to free this country, when all our energy investment is leaving and leaving people without work, I invite the member to come and make his comments to my constituents in Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know just how much the current Liberal government loves slogans, clichés and idioms, a whole variety of figures of speech and double-talk, to avoid straight talk, transparent answers and well-reasoned policy. As we all know, the Prime Minister is the cliché master, double-talker and sloganeer: “I've got your back”; “We are all in this together”; “We will succeed, because we must succeed”; “We have the tools”; “We're all hands on deck”; and, of course, the ultimate fallback when faced with a tough question, “Nothing is off the table”. The Prime Minister has excused ethical lapses by telling the Ethics Commissioner that he does not have business meetings when he improperly joins meetings with lobbyists; they are just relationship sessions. The PM excuses alleged misbehaviour from decades ago, and even from much more recently, by saying he respects women's ability to experience things differently.

Clichés are essentially a result of unremarkable thinking, which brings me to the theme of the Speech from the Throne: the remarkably imprecise commitment to build back better. The current government may have a historic record for spending hard-earned Canadian taxpayer dollars, but it has an abysmal record of building anything.

The Address

Last week, the government made much of the relaunch of perhaps the Liberals' most misguided creation, the Canada Infrastructure Bank. The institution, when it was created in 2017, was challenged far and wide as a problematic, theoretical mix of public and private investment and interest, and, as predicted, it has been a flop. Still, the original CEO retired with a six-figure bonus on top of his \$600,000-a-year salary. Last week's attempted resuscitation included a new board chair and re-profiling of \$10 billion of the original still-languishing dollars. However, the Liberals are still hoping that private investors will be drawn in by the public money put up to backstop loans, which really lays all of the investment risks on Canadian taxpayers.

There is one infrastructure investment by the government that has seen Canadian tax dollars spent. Unfortunately, it has been invested offshore: \$256 million to buy an interest in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Global Affairs officials warned the Liberals that the investment would be used by China to further the communist regime's authoritarian model of governance in vulnerable nations around the world, and it has. Those Canadian tax dollars are building infrastructure, but the building is not happening in Canada and it is not creating Canadian jobs.

All of that said, there is one massive infrastructure project under way in Canada today, an almost \$6-billion project, but it again speaks powerfully to the government's fumbling, to lost opportunities for a major Canadian employer and to many lost worker-years of employment. It is the Gordie Howe International Bridge project, one of the largest infrastructure projects in North America today. It will provide a spectacular new crossing link between Windsor and Detroit that will be of tremendous benefit to bilateral trade and travel.

When bids were called in 2016 and 2017 for the massive precast reinforced concrete girders and slabs for the longest main span of any cable-stayed bridge in North America, Canada's leading infrastructure product manufacturing company, with the largest manufacturing facility in Canada, a company called Decast, tendered bids compliant with Canadian specifications and Ontario's tough MTO standards. The girder portion of the project is worth \$20 million and 30 direct full-time jobs for one year. The slab portion of the project is worth \$40 million, with 45 direct manufacturing jobs for a year and a half. This does not account for the many millions of dollars in downstream business for Ontario suppliers of the aggregates, the cement and steel materials, and the many trucking and transportation jobs.

The Address

What happened? Decast lost the bid. Who got it? It was a company that did not meet any of the quoted specifications or standards, with a facility not certified under the Canadian precast concrete quality assurance certification program, a company that does not buy material from the MTO's designated sources of materials list, a company that does not have facilities to allow proper concrete curing to MTO standards, a company that is American, in Columbus, Ohio.

• (1155)

When Decast asked why Canadian and Ontario MTO standards cited in the tender were so flagrantly ignored, the Ontario government, which should have jurisdiction over standards for a project largely in this province, had an answer: The federal government put Canadian and Ontario safety and quality standards aside and decided to export Canadian dollars and Canadian jobs to Ohio. Canada is paying for 85% of the construction of the Gordie Howe bridge, not to mention paying the bill to the customs facility on the U.S. side, and it exported the structural manufacturing and all those jobs.

The latest infrastructure minister has some questions to answer. Why? What standards is the U.S. manufacturer working to? Who is auditing the U.S. manufacturer? MTO standards are set for a 100-year service life. With the deficient standards, does the Gordie Howe bridge consortium only care about the 30 years it will be responsible for the operation of the bridge?

Infrastructure spending should contribute to the growth and prosperity of Canada. The government does not get that sourcing foreign, in the absence of fair trade, will hobble Canada's economic recovery and essential growth.

In the real world, building back better means moving the sorry lot opposite to this side of the House and for the Conservatives to deliver the jobs and the road, bridge, rail line and subway infrastructure that Canada so sorely needs today. As the House knows, my constituents expect the subway element to include the long-delayed Yonge subway extension north through Thornhill.

• (1200)

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, this is a bit much. When I sat in the opposition benches and Stephen Harper was the prime minister, there was a lack of support for Canada's infrastructure. Shortly after the 2015 election, we saw historic amounts of money being invested in Canada's infrastructure, as our Prime Minister believed that by investing in infrastructure we are building a healthier and stronger Canada. The member cites one particular project when there are literally thousands of projects across our country.

Given that the member was a cabinet minister under Stephen Harper, does he have any regrets that former prime minister Stephen Harper did not have the strong conviction toward investing in infrastructure that the member seems to have today, where he supports the current government's infrastructure plans?

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am always gently amused by the revisionist history of my colleague from Winnipeg, and I will, with respect, correct him. The government, after

its election in 2015, did not build all those wonderful projects that he is talking about. It made promises to build projects, but could not get the money out the door.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the other day, the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord said that the Conservatives support a stable, predictable increase in the health transfer escalator.

However, it is the Harper government that cut those transfers to 3%. That was completely insufficient and the Conservative government's actions, along with those of the successive Liberal governments, contributed to the shortfall that Quebec and the provinces are currently united in speaking out against. Experts who appeared before the Standing Committee on Health to talk about COVID-19 told us that this was undermining the systems and preventing us from properly addressing a crisis like one we are currently experiencing.

I would like to know where the Conservatives stand. Do they agree with the demand for the \$28 billion top-up, an increase of the federal government's share to 35%, and an escalator of 6% for health transfers, yes or no?

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

I must correct the member. When it comes to the spectacular cutting of health transfers to the provinces, it was the Liberal government, and former prime minister Paul Martin, who downloaded, causing problems right across this country, which we are still recovering from today. With regard to the Harper government, in which I was pleased to serve, we did not cut the health transfers. We reduced the future transfers by 3%, because the provinces were not spending that money.

With regard to the provinces' request for a greater share of health transfers, there are serious discussions to be taken, but the Liberal government did not even mention them in the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising the Gordie Howe bridge. My first public meeting to have a new border crossing in Windsor was 1998 at Marlborough Public School. We are still anticipating the final infrastructure being built.

I do want to note a couple of things that are important. The first girder and building process took place on the parkway. It was called "girder-gate". I actually met with and revealed, through a number of different welders, that there was a problem that took place, where they actually rejected over 200 girders.

The problem, though, and I would like the member to comment on this, is that the legislation calls for a P3, which is different from what was built for Sarnia. They had separate legislation for it. It is different from Niagara Falls. All those different things led to having a P3 as part of the operator. What is the solution going forward? That was the legislation enshrined by the Conservative government, to do a P3 and to go against the traditional process for building international border crossings that had been done in our country.

I do want to finish by giving some credit. The Conservative Party, unlike the Liberals, did not fall under the siren spell of Matty Maroun, the private American billionaire who owns the Ambassador Bridge. Conservatives have played a constructive role in this process and need to be recognized for that, because it has been a long fight.

• (1205)

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I will always accept a compliment from my hon. colleague.

I must say that we cannot link P3 projects with the scandal that occurred with regard to those girders that were rejected. What we need to see in projects like this, however they are structured financially, is that they abide by the standards and the safety specifications that are set by Canadian and, in this case, the Government of Ontario's MTO standards.

It is quite obvious that the government's awarding the contract or overruling the respect and recognition of the Canadian company's more than capable tender bid has to be recognized and remedied.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

It is an honour for me to address the House in reply to the throne speech for this second session of the 43rd Parliament.

Over the past few months, people in my community, Vaudreuil—Soulanges, and thousands of other communities across the country have had to overcome unimaginable obstacles. As stated in the throne speech, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit us all, but it has hit some of us harder than others.

Today, I would like to applaud the people of Vaudreuil—Soulanges and the rest of the country for their resilience. This unprecedented pandemic has forced us all to adapt to extraordinary circumstances.

[English]

Thanks to the hard and diligent work of our front-line workers, Canadian Armed Forces, first responders, doctors, nurses, grocery store workers, small and medium-sized businesses and, of course, all those who were at the forefront of this pandemic, we have been able to navigate through this crisis on a united front. As was stated in the Speech from the Throne, it has not been easy. It has not been easy on all of the parents who had to stay home to take care of their children as schools closed. It has not been easy on those who had to stay home to care for family members, a friend or a partner. These were not easy times, but with empathy and generosity in no short supply, as Canadians, we have been able to and will continue to

The Address

face this unprecedented crisis by leaning on each other and being there for each other.

Since the beginning and through it all, the Government of Canada has been there with support, keeping Canadians safe and supporting workers and small businesses. Whether it was by extending the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance, providing loans to SMEs through the Canada emergency business account, transitioning from the Canada emergency response benefit to regular employment insurance or introducing the new assistance programs such as the Canada recovery benefit as part of our recovery plan, we are ready to continue to face this crisis together and in unity.

[Translation]

The last few months have also brought to the fore the work, dedication and generosity of community organizations in Vaudreuil—Soulanges that have worked so hard to help people in vulnerable situations. One of these is the Maison des soins palliatifs de Vaudreuil-Soulanges, a palliative care home that stayed open as long as it could so that patients could spend precious time with friends and family during their last days of life. Another is the generous team at Café de la Débrouille in Rigaud, especially Maria and Richard, who never stopped working to provide food hampers to everyone in need in our community.

I am also thinking of organizations like Hébergement La Passerelle, led by Véronique Girard, which, under the most difficult of circumstances, had to accommodate a growing number of women and children seeking safe and secure housing in Vaudreuil—Soulanges to get away from dangerous situations at home. I applaud the Centre d'action bénévole L'Actuel, Source d'entraide, Grand Rassemblement des aînés de Vaudreuil et Soulanges, Réseaux, DEV and the Vaudreuil-Soulanges RCM. On behalf of the residents of Vaudreuil-Soulanges, I want to thank those organizations for the remarkable work they do. They have done so much to help our seniors, children, families, workers and small businesses weather these tough times.

The throne speech talked about COVID-19 and the immediate measures we took as a government. However, we must not forget about another crisis we are confronted with, climate change. A fair and carbon-neutral future is about more than just protecting our at-risk biodiversity, ensuring greater social justice or slowing climate change. It is about protecting our neighbours, friends and loved ones from the ravages of the destruction of nature. Future generations will decide whether we did the work that was needed to create a greener, healthier and more sustainable society.

Fighting climate change is at the heart of who we are as Canadians. Our government continues to take action.

The Address

● (1210)

[English]

Indeed, prior to the beginning of this pandemic, Canadians showed tremendous leadership in their everyday lives to tackle climate change. I think of parents in my riding of Vaudreuil—Soulanges who purchased fuel-efficient vehicles or took up public transit for the first time. I think of young people who I saw every spring taking to our shorelines to pick up all of the waste that was there, including so much plastic. I also think of neighbours who made the effort to put their food waste in the compost instead of the trash for the first time.

These actions stem from the firm belief in members of my community and all Canadians across the country that no matter how big or small, all of our actions individually matter, even small actions like putting a mask on during the pandemic or ensuring that we keep our distance and that we wash our hands. In all things, whether we are talking about the pandemic or environmental protection, we need to be able to count on each other and to do our part. That is exactly what people are doing in my community and I know that more and more Canadians are taking action all across the country.

[Translation]

The leadership shown by ordinary Canadians has been essential in supporting our government's implementation of the first real plan in Canada's history to combat climate change. For example, in a single term, we brought in a plan to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by more than 200 megatonnes. We have protected more than 12% of our land and marine environments, made it more affordable to buy electric vehicles and enabled green technologies to expand. Climate change needs a “Team Canada” approach and Canadians are key to our success.

However, over the course of this pandemic, the health and safety of Canadians remain our priority. This Speech from the Throne accounts for the fact that the world entered into this pandemic facing the risks and consequences of climate change. COVID-19 has taught us that we must face challenges decisively and with determination.

[English]

In that spirit, our government will bring forward a plan to exceed Canada's 2030 climate goals and will also legislate Canada's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. The Speech from the Throne lays out key initiatives that will be a big part of our upcoming plan and will help us continue the momentum Canadians created to fight climate change. There are measures such as creating thousands of well-paying jobs in retrofitting homes, making zero-emissions vehicles more affordable while investing in more charging stations across the country, and creating a fund to attract investments in making zero-emissions products. Canadians know that climate change threatens our health, our way of life and our planet. This Speech from the Throne makes it clear that our government will continue to deliver.

[Translation]

Another measure I am thrilled to see in the Speech from the Throne is a new commitment by our government to work with the municipalities to increase the number of urban parks across the

country. The pandemic has reminded us just how much nature means to us.

My community is rich in opportunities for nature outings, such as hiking Mont Rigaud, biking along the water in Vaudreuil-Dorion, and walking the colourful trails of Hudson and Saint-Lazare.

However, in the more urban communities it can be harder to get close to nature, and our government is working to green our urban centres.

● (1215)

[English]

In addition to providing more access to nature, this pledge would have benefited families like mine when I was younger. Indeed, when I was a young boy, I was not living in a household that had a lot of money. My brother and I could count on a loving mother who did all she could to provide for us. However, we knew that money was scarce. Expanding on urban parks is not just a question of increasing green spaces. It also provides all Canadians, no matter their social status or wealth, with an opportunity to benefit from connecting with nature.

The Speech from the Throne made it clear that, as Canadians worked together to fight this pandemic, to save lives, to protect and secure jobs, and to tackle generational challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss, they will have an ally in the Government of Canada. History has shown us that we can meet any challenge by coming together and the many challenges we face today are no exception.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the Bloc Québécois climate change critic, I am pleased to speak directly to the parliamentary secretary. He spoke about the government's objectives of exceeding 2030 greenhouse gas reduction targets and becoming carbon neutral by 2050.

These objectives are essentially those of Bill C-215, an act respecting Canada's fulfillment of its greenhouse gas emissions reduction obligations, which I introduced in the House of Commons a few months ago. First, I would like to know whether the government will vote in favour of this bill, because I know it intends to introduce legislation about this.

Second, I will come back to the 2030 climate target. At this time, if we rely on Environment Canada's most optimistic scenario, Canada will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 19.45% by 2030, with a shortfall of 77 megatonnes. What tangible measures will this government introduce to exceed these objectives?

The Address

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question and for the bill she introduced. I know that introducing a bill is not easy and that it takes a lot of energy and time. I look forward to hearing more about what she wants to do with her bill.

In response to her second question about our objective to not only meet the Paris targets, but also exceed them, I would say that this is why we want to propose a clean fuel standard, why we promised to plant two billion trees and why we are going to invest in green infrastructure. We believe that all of these initiatives will allow us to not only meet the Paris targets, but also exceed them.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for devoting a large part of his speech to the importance of tackling climate change. We know that climate change will be the defining issue of the 21st century and how we respond to it will largely determine our success on this planet. We also know that the economic costs of climate change are going to be significant. We can see that private sector investment is already starting to take heed of these facts and is making its investments appropriately.

The Liberals just came off four years of a majority government and they have failed to meet their targets thus far. They also spent billions of dollars on a pipeline. The government seems to be going completely in the wrong direction.

How can Canadians continue to have confidence that the Liberal government will actually meet its target, given its track record thus far?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague may already know, my community has been devastated over the last three years with two historical floods.

We know full well the need to take action on climate change. That is why I am very proud to be part of a government that has put forward the most robust plan in Canadian history to tackle climate change. It has allowed us so far, as the projections show, to reach 200 megatonnes of our goal of meeting and exceeding the Paris targets.

We also know that we are not done yet. That is why we have put forward our promise to plant two billion trees. That is why we will be introducing clean fuel standards. We will continue to invest in record amounts in green infrastructure and make electric vehicles more affordable.

We know that all these initiatives will help us meet and exceed our Paris targets.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. parliamentary secretary knows that Canada has obligated itself to improve its target within this calendar year, 2020. It is called the nationally determined contribution. That will not be met with this vague, feeble pledge to exceed Canada's 2030 target, which is not consistent with the Paris treaty, that was put in place by Stephen Harper and is approximately half of what must be done.

I beg the parliamentary secretary to make a clear statement that Canada will live up to its responsibility to put in place a target that

meets the IPCC's science and does it within the terms of the Paris agreement, within calendar year 2020.

• (1220)

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for all she did as the leader of the Green Party. She moved so many great initiatives forward. It was a pleasure to have worked personally with her on numerous initiatives.

With regard to doing better and doing more, we know that we need to do better and do more. That is why we have put forward numerous initiatives to help not only attain but exceed the Paris targets. We have also put forward a very ambitious pledge to ensure that Canada is carbon neutral by 2050.

I look forward to continuing to work with my hon. colleague on that. I know she will still be a strong advocate for the environment, regardless of whether she still leads the Green Party. I look forward to working with her in the months and years ahead.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak to the Speech from the Throne and how it will impact the realities of Canadian lives today and in the future.

A few weeks ago, I had a really heart-wrenching conversation with a constituent who outlined her struggles. She is a single mom, a personal support worker and a mother of three children. She and thousands more like her have been faced with the challenge of a lifetime. While this pandemic has taken its toll on every Canadian, it has taken a bigger toll on women.

Women have bravely served on the front lines of this crisis. They make up 92% of our nurses and 81% of all workers in the Canadian health care and social assistance sector. One in every three jobs held by a woman is deemed essential. That also means that women are putting themselves at risk.

A study in July by the Middlesex-London Health Unit shows that women comprise approximately 59% of those infected with COVID-19 compared to 41% male. Women have also been on the front lines at home, taking care of children who have been away from school, aging parents or ill parents. That means time away from work. They have been the first to be let go from jobs. They make less money than their counterparts. We have seen an increase in gender-based violence in the home.

The Address

Therefore, it makes me very proud to see the gender lens being applied to the Speech from the Throne and on the economic recovery plan proposed by our government. Equality must begin with our highest offices, which is why we appointed Canada's first gender-balanced cabinet. We expanded the women and gender equality into a full federal department and implemented gender-based analysis to ensure that our policies and programs took that lived experience of women into account.

We made a commitment five years ago that our government would be a feminist government and we followed through on that commitment, with historic measures to protect women's rights and provide opportunities for women to succeed in every corner of our society. However, COVID-19 has had the worst kind of impact on women, personally and professionally. If we are not careful, if we do not prioritize supporting women, the incredible progress that we have made over these past years will be set back by this pandemic, and it already has been.

At the onset of this crisis, we recognized how COVID-19 would impact Canadian lives and we took swift action to provide support for families, workers and businesses through tailored programs to suit their needs while they tried to keep themselves safe from COVID-19. Programs such as CERB kept the lights on in homes. The Canada emergency business account and the Canada emergency wage subsidy helped small businesses survive. Mortgages were able to be deferred. We worked with Canadians at every turn, listened to their feedback and enhanced these programs at every opportunity. We recognized how this pandemic was uniquely impacting women and we took action to help.

When Canadians stayed home to protect themselves and each other from COVID-19, it unfortunately also created an environment where those facing gender-based and domestic violence were isolated with their abusers. The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses saw increased crisis calls in 20% of its shelters and police services across the country saw increased police reports of domestic violence. During the pandemic, we were able to support local organizations in my neck of the woods, in Mississauga, like Interim Place and Nisa Homes so we could keep providing those essential services to vulnerable women in my riding.

I am glad that our government stepped in early to deliver combined \$50 million investments through Women's Shelters Canada and indigenous organizations to provide these centres with the means to continue operating.

Moving ahead with our recovery, we have accelerated our investments in shelters and transitional houses to better protect those fleeing domestic violence. We continue to build on our strategy to end gender-based violence with a national action plan.

• (1225)

Over the last five years, we reversed harmful cuts to women's organizations and made historic investments to create opportunities for women to thrive and achieve success. A major part of supporting women's success is through empowered entrepreneurship. Through programs such as the women entrepreneurship strategy, we have invested in female-led and female-owned businesses.

A couple of young women in my riding run an organization called Welo. We were able to support them to scale up their business. Having the opportunity to go and see their business, I saw first-hand the kind of impact this strategy has had on women all across the country.

During this pandemic, businesses have suffered significantly. A lot of small businesses are owned and run by women, and those businesses have been struggling to the point of bankruptcy. This is why our government committed to advancing the women entrepreneurship strategy to better support women to grow their businesses. It is estimated that 62% of the jobs lost at the onset of this pandemic were held by women. Our government recognizes child care has been and continues to be a major barrier for participation of women in the workforce.

Fifty years ago, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women outlined that child care services were a necessity for women's social and economic equality. We know that child care is an issue that disproportionately impacts women and has been instrumental for women to enter the workforce. With the restart of our economy, mothers will face difficulties as they return to work unless they have safe, affordable and accessible child care on which to depend. When half our population is held back, it creates ripple effects that continue to impact single-parent households and those households that rely on two incomes to make ends meet.

From day one, our government recognized that child care was an economic imperative. We worked with the provinces and territories to create bilateral child care agreements and committed to spending \$7.5 billion over 11 years. Since 2015, that investment has created 400,000 affordable child care spaces, targeted for families in need, and thousands of jobs for early childhood educators.

We know this pandemic has put those jobs and that incredible progress at risk. That is why, when our government committed \$19 billion through the safe restart agreement, we ensured that child care was included as a key priority. Through this agreement, we invested \$625 million for Canada's child care sector. Combined with agreements under the multilateral early learning and child care framework, the Government of Canada will invest almost \$1.2 billion to support child care in 2020 and 2021. That is a 67% increase over the next highest year in history.

This pandemic has changed much, but not our commitment to equality of opportunity for women. We are a feminist government, and that has remained at the core of our response to this crisis. Even now we continue to break down barriers as we appointed the first woman in our history to serve as Canada's finance minister.

There is a reason this crisis has been called a “she-cession”, and a full economic recovery is not possible without a “she-covey”.

● (1230)

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I honestly feel bad for many of the Liberal members. I know they are dedicated to things like the environment and women's rights. However, their government has been a disappointment. We have an environmental government that states it is about the environment, yet it has not planted any trees or hit its targets. The government is supposed to be a feminist government, however, it did not get the wage subsidy out in time, which caused many women to lose their jobs and—

The Deputy Speaker: I have to interrupt the hon. member for a moment. We have a point of order.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member has a very interesting point to make, but I do not see that he is wearing a tie.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his point of order. I bring this to the attention of hon. members and pick up on recommendations and fairly rigorous suggestions on the part of the Speaker, who has reminded hon. members that even though they are participating by video conference, the standards we use in the House should indeed be used, as well.

I see the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South is making a slight adjustment. I will go back to him and see if he can finish his remark quickly, then we will go back to the hon. member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue on and say the government is supposed to be about feminism. However, we have a wage subsidy that was not rolled out that cost many women their jobs. We have a rent subsidy that cost many women their jobs and businesses because it was not rolled out correctly. We have rapid testing that could put so many women back to work faster. However, we cannot get it out to people, to schools and to care facilities. That is leaving so many women with the inability to return to work.

Is the member disappointed in the government or am I just experiencing it differently?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, I am very proud of the work our government has done to support Canadians during this pandemic. The member's remarks have shown quite clearly how out of touch he is with the reality Canadians have experienced. The wage subsidy saved tens of thousands of jobs. The CERB kept the lights on in the homes of millions of Canadians. We have done that work. We have made sure that Canadians have been supported throughout this pandemic and we are going to continue to ensure that women are kept at the forefront and all Canadians have the support that they expect from a government that takes equality of

The Address

opportunity into account, regardless of gender and any intersectional barriers we have.

● (1235)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to thank the member for her appeal on behalf of women.

She left out one category of women, however. Senior women, aged 65 to 75 years old, worked hard and helped make Quebec what it is today. The government has offered assistance to senior women over the age of 75, but 65-year-old women, who worked their whole lives, did not receive any assistance from the government.

Does my colleague think that is fair? Can the government give these women some real, concrete assistance to get through the pandemic?

I have first-hand experience with the pandemic. I was very close to my sister, who died from COVID-19. She was in a residence—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

[*English*]

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, I offer my sincerest condolences to the member for the loss of her sister. COVID-19 has impacted tens of thousands of lives across the country. She is absolutely right: Seniors do matter. We are making sure that we prioritize the work to make sure that seniors are placed at the forefront, that their vulnerabilities are not exploited.

Through the Speech from the Throne, we are ensuring that we would increase those payments to seniors. We would create new benefits such as the disability benefit that will impact seniors.

We have made, over the past number of months, investments such as making a one-time payment through old age security and GIS to seniors to cover their extra costs during this pandemic. We have made historic announcements in my riding to administer, through the United Way, programs targeted toward supporting vulnerable seniors in the Peel region and indeed all across Canada.

The reality is—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We have only a short time left and we are going to take a quick question from the hon. member for Ottawa South.

The Address

Hon. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague for an outstanding exposé of our government's approach to and investments in Canadian women. I want to focus on and get her insight on the most important investments from my perspective and certainly in my district. That is investments in shelters for our most vulnerable women and their children. We have seen quite an increase in compromised situations right now. There is an overflow demand. Can the member help us understand how our government is investing in these most important front-line shelters?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, I was talking to the chief of police in Peel region. Chief Duraippah outlined for me how much there has been an increase in domestic violence and gender-based violence within the home over this pandemic. It has really exposed vulnerabilities within our communities and within our society, and our government recognizes that.

Just on Friday, we made a massive announcement of \$50 million. We have created a whole strategy to combat gender-based violence. Over this pandemic, we have invested over \$50 million to ensure that shelters are able to take in that increased capacity and to remain operational.

The reality is that gender-based violence is systemic and it has to be a fulsome and wholesome approach in how we combat it and how we eliminate it from our communities and society. In the meantime, we are making those important investments to continue to support women at their most vulnerable by having support for shelters.

• (1240)

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour that I rise today in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

As the member of Parliament for Tobique—Mactaquac and as the shadow minister for Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, I would like to thank our leader of the Conservative Party for the opportunity. We look forward to serving the people of our region and across the country to the best of our ability to make sure that their voices of concern are heard at this time, and also that we seize the opportunities that are before us.

Over the course of the last six months, Canadians have been hit extremely hard by COVID-19. It has affected every area of our lives. Most of us have spent extended periods of time locked in our homes, cut off from family and friends, oftentimes only able to communicate virtually or by phone, which has been extremely difficult for our seniors. Many people have lost their jobs, through no fault of their own, throughout this crisis and, most tragically, some have lost loved ones and those they cared for.

It is during times like these that both the best and the worst of people are revealed. Today, I choose to focus on the best.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the first responders, those who rush in when others are rushing out, and who gladly go into areas of danger to help their fellow citizens. I would like to thank our health care workers, such as our doctors, nurses, personal care providers, pharmacists and nursing home workers. I would like to thank our agricultural workers, those who grow and harvest our

food, including farmers, fish harvesters and grocers. I would like to thank our truckers, those who haul and transport our goods to make sure that we have the needed supplies during this time. I would like to thank our small business owners, entrepreneurs and innovators who are still taking the risk and getting out there doing everything they can to provide meaningful employment for others. I would like to thank those who choose to continue working in their minimum wage jobs when there is increased risk; they had other options before them and yet chose to keep working, and I commend them for that. I would like to thank our teachers, especially on this World Teachers' Day, and acknowledge the great challenges they have had to face, and the big adjustments they have had to make to ensure the safety of their students, to ensure that the quality of education is maintained and that our children are prepared for the challenges that lie ahead. I would like to thank our faith-based, non-profits and other food bank organizations, etc., who provided these essential services and offered hope to some of our most disadvantaged, often overlooked segments of our society. They continue to do good work in spite of not having the resources they once had. I would like to thank all of them.

I know that Canadians feel like there is no end in sight. It seems like, every day, it is just a new update on how many new cases and where the outbreaks are. Despite how it feels, I want to assure members that COVID will not last forever and that this too shall pass. Canada, as well as all the nations of the world, will get to the other side of this together. It is important and imperative now more than ever that we as Canadians and we as a nation choose to embrace our potential rather than continually focus on the peril that is before us. I feel that, in the midst of this, there is opportunity and there is hope in spite of all the challenges we face. All too often governments and people reach after the things that challenge us and concentrate on the things that are negative.

If there was ever a time for the voices of hope to arise and voices that point to our opportunities and our potential as a people, it is now. The Liberal throne speech was not just somewhat but a whole lot disappointing in this fact. It was high in spending, had a tremendous number of platitudes and a lot of virtue signalling, but it was very low on sustainability and a vision for our future.

The Prime Minister had six weeks of a prorogued Parliament to chart a path forward and instill confidence in the Canadian people who are so desperately looking for both a COVID plan and an economic recovery plan. Instead of using those six weeks to plan for the future, it would appear that the Prime Minister chose to prorogue simply to run away from the ever-increasing and ongoing ethics scandals, and threw together a speech made up, it seems, of the greatest hits from the last 20 years of failed Liberal promises and social experimentation.

I have heard from many Canadians about their disappointment in the Liberal throne speech, from those Canadians who were forgotten or left out of the speech, from Canadians who understand the need to take care of those who are struggling in these difficult times but are equally concerned about the ever-rising deficit and national debt, and those Canadians who are concerned about their children having to pay down this debt for years and years and for generations.

• (1245)

Unfortunately, it would seem that sometimes despair and apprehension are all too common during this time.

A great opportunity was missed in the throne speech, and that was the opportunity to speak to our potential as a people and as a country, the opportunities for growth where we maximize the potential of our resource sectors, our agriculture sector and our manufacturing and technological sectors. I have a feeling that, if we spoke to that potential, hope would begin to arise and we would say, “Yes, we can overcome. We can become more. Canada can be positioned to come back stronger,” as the Conservative leader has talked about.

Canadians know the circumstances we are in, but they also know deep within that there is a new day coming when this will all be behind us, and they expect us, as leaders, to be offering a vision that positions Canada to not only grow through this crisis but to be positioned to take advantage of the opportunities that are going to emerge on the other side of this.

I have had the privilege of being in a riding that has a lot of farmers and agriculture producers. I have also had the privilege in my new role to talk to fish harvesters. I have learned some very valuable lessons. I remember that at the height of the crisis, at the time we were so uncertain about what we were facing, I personally drew comfort in driving through the riding and seeing tractors going back into the fields this spring to plant seed, seeing them work as they always had in spite of the uncertain times we were living in. It was reassuring to see trucks driving back and forth on the highways taking goods to Canadians.

There was something reassuring about the fact that even though they were faced with uncertainty, they chose to keep working. They chose to keep doing what they knew they could do with the things that they could control. While there were lots of things that were beyond their control, they chose to keep specializing in the areas they had control over. It reminds me of the ancient proverb that says that he who regards the wind or looks at the clouds will neither sow nor reap. In other words, if we are waiting for perfect conditions to do what we can do, we will probably never reap or get back to doing what needs to be done in this time.

Farmers and fish harvesters can teach us a very valuable lesson, which is that we should keep working and doing what we can. Even though we are not sure what the future may hold, let us position ourselves to be ready to prosper and do well again when the tide changes.

In conclusion, this too shall pass. Yes, as the old writer once said, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning”. I want to assure the people of Tobique—Mactaquac and the people

The Address

of Canada that, yes, it seems like it has been a long night with COVID-19, but morning is coming and the day will break again. Now is the time for us to position Canada to prosper and seize our potential, rather than continually focus on the perils that surround us.

I look forward with optimism to a future that is bright for Canada, when we invest in our people and not only seize on the immediate crisis at hand but look beyond that and say that Canada can grow the goods the world is hungering for, we can produce the energy the world is looking for and we can manufacture the goods that the world is depending upon. I look ahead with hope.

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 concur with the member in the sense that there is good reason for us to have hope and to be thankful.

The member referred to farmers and the production of food, truck drivers bringing food to our grocery stores, taxi drivers taking individuals to hospitals and grocery stores to get essentials and our first responders, whether they are a health care nurse in an emergency or a police officer on the street. All of these people have contributed a great deal and to them and so many others, we say thanks. There are also so many ways that outside organizations or non-profits have contributed. To them, we also express appreciation.

I would ask my colleague across the way if he could provide further thoughts on the goodness that we have seen at a time of crisis like this.

• (1250)

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member. There have been some real unsung heroes in the midst of this crisis. I think of those who are in the non-profit sector and those in food banks who are helping meet the essential needs of people. Oftentimes, it goes unnoticed or not thought of, but many in the faith-based sector, the charitable sector and the non-profit sector have had to continue to do that good work on reduced budgets and resources because it has not been as plentiful for them. It speaks volumes to the character of those types of organizations and the individuals who serve in those organizations as they continue to work and to do what is right in less than ideal circumstances.

That is a big lesson we can draw from them as a people and as a country: Let us continue to work even though it is uncertain and not ideal. We are going to keep embracing the challenges with optimism and dedication.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the assistance programs are designed in such a way that farmers practically have to be on the brink of bankruptcy before they can apply.

Does my colleague have any suggestions for improving these programs and ensuring that farmers both young and old can benefit from the help they sorely need, especially after watching their crops rot in the field this year?

*The Address**[English]*

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member in that agriculture needs to become a much bigger priority for the current government. Rather than being an afterthought, it should be one of the first things that gets prioritized. Food security is so important. We do not want to just be there as a backstop or as a last resort, but to be an effective partner to help position agriculture across the country to prosper and thrive and do well, because we know world demand for food is only going to increase. Canada has a tremendous reputation for providing some of the highest-quality agriculture and food products around the world.

We need to be positioned to take advantage of that and be set in a place where we recognize that potential and work with the farmers and stakeholders to make sure agriculture is a priority and positioned to do well coming out of COVID. There is no reason we cannot do this.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back in this chamber all the way from the North Okanagan—Shuswap riding in B.C. Since Parliament prorogued, we have not had great opportunity here.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the member for Tobique—Mactaquac for mentioning farmers. I would like his thoughts on the government's response to the COVID situation and farmers not being able to get seasonal agricultural workers into the country. I know the orchards and farms in my riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap suffered great difficulty in getting their orchards pruned and crops harvested. What did the member think of the government's response to not bringing in these agricultural workers?

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. It was a sure sign of a delayed response as it related to the seasonal workers and temporary foreign workers who were needed during this time to ensure our food security and to make sure the farmers were able to continue to do the necessary work they needed to do. All throughout this pandemic, we have seen that there has not been a prioritization of agriculture as a whole.

I believe we have a tremendous opportunity right now as Canadians to position our agriculture sector not only to prosper but to thrive by making it a priority and making sure we are putting it at the top of our list when we are entering into any trade negotiation, and also making sure it is there as we position ourselves going forward and coming out of COVID-19. The world wants Canadian food and we have awesome Canadian producers. Let us make sure they are able to take advantage of that.

• (1255)

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am please to speak today on the Speech from the Throne and its implications for residents in the riding of Kenora and those across northern Ontario. Unfortunately, the Liberal government's speech made one thing exceedingly clear, and that is that it has no plan to guide our country through this pandemic. The speech promised lots of new spending and plenty of recommitments to promises the government had already broken in the past, but the government has no plan to get our economy moving, no plan to address the health crisis nor any plan for the north.

The Liberals' slow response to COVID-19 has cost Canadians their jobs and their lives, and the government seems committed to its same failed approach. The speech contained no pledge to increase health transfers to the provinces, no plan to increase access to testing and no timeline for approvals of rapid at-home tests. The government has also been slow in its response to the pandemic in northern indigenous communities and has failed to deliver adequate support in a timely manner.

As I already noted, there was no plan to get our economy back on track. I have heard from countless business owners in my riding that the federal support programs that the Liberals came up with were not sufficient to cover their costs or any of their losses. Now the government is pledging to reform the business account and the business credit availability program, and I will be very interested to see what it is exactly that it comes up with.

The Conservative Party has been providing insight into many of the shortcomings of the government's pandemic support since this crisis began. We know the Liberals could have and should have acted much sooner than they did. They certainly did not need to prorogue Parliament. We note that the six-week suspension had nothing to do with helping northerners or Canadians, but had everything to do with covering up Liberal scandals.

Now as the economy of our country is attempting to bounce back from what truly was a devastating blow from COVID-19, we know that nearly one million Canadians are currently out of work as a result of the government's actions. The Liberals now claim that they can create one million new jobs with even more government intervention. This is a government that also claimed it would plant two billion trees and we know it has not planted a single one, so please forgive me if I do not have a lot of faith in its promise.

What northerners and all Canadians need right now is a plan to provide small businesses and the private sector with the opportunity to grow and prosper again. If the throne speech was any indication, the Liberals will continue to spend recklessly at a time when the government should be exercising ever more caution of how public funds are used. The last thing that hard-working families and businesses need as they begin to rebuild their lives after this crisis is to be hit with a huge tax bill to pay for Liberal overspending.

Let me be very clear. These are exceptional circumstances and many Canadians find themselves unemployed, underemployed or struggling to keep their businesses alive through no fault of their own. They need support to get through that. That is why the Conservatives supported many of the programs that were rolled out. We supported the emergency response benefit and the student benefit, and we convinced the government to provide a benefit top-up to Canadians who are gradually returning to work to make sure that there is always a financial incentive to do so. This new top-up is reflected in the government's Canada recovery benefit.

However, we also lobbied for the government to reform its business support programs and allow more Canadians to get more support faster. We also know if we want our social safety net to be sustainable for future generations, then we need to spend responsibly right now. The Liberals have shown time and time again that they have no idea how to prioritize when spending taxpayers' money and would rather hand over millions of dollars to their more connected friends than invest in legitimate projects to help Canadians.

The Liberal government is also ignoring many issues that are of importance to indigenous communities and those living in the north, such as the fact that it has recently walked back its promise to end all drinking water advisories on reserve. In fact, it was not even mentioned in the throne speech. What the Liberals did do was make some commitments on issues like infrastructure gaps and food insecurity as well as Internet access, but these are all promises that the government has made before and we have seen very little improvement after five years of Liberal governance. Residents in my riding of Kenora and the territories and across northern Canada are not under the expectation that these promises are going to be anything more than just words.

• (1300)

For instance, I would like to talk about Internet access for northern communities. It is something that I have been fighting for since I was elected nearly a year ago. It is an issue that was top of mind for many folks in my riding and across Canada long before I was elected, yet there has been very little action from the Liberals. Residents in Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories have been especially disadvantaged by the gap that exists. We are now in the middle of a pandemic, forcing many people to work, attend classes or perhaps even act as government services from home, without any tangible commitments from the Liberals on how they are going to support people through that. I believe the necessity for reliable broadband is abundantly clear, given the fact that I am delivering this speech to the House of Commons through virtual means right now.

That is why, this past May, the Conservative Party released a list of recommendations that would bring Internet connectivity to all of Canada, including its rural, remote and northern parts. These are practical, common-sense policies that would provide relief in both the short term and the longer term. We look at a number of different things, including ways that we can increase competition and provide better services. I believe if the government wants to make good on its broadband pledge, it can start by immediately implementing many of the policies and solutions that we have put forth, as well as by reducing red tape for providers looking to deploy many innovative solutions. Unfortunately, if the government does not act soon, many people living in rural, remote and northern Canada will be left behind.

I must also say that I was glad to see that, in the new throne speech, the Liberal government finally acknowledged the tourism industry needs some help. Members from all parties have been lobbying for support since the crisis began, and there was no sign of movement from the Liberals. I signed a joint letter with a colleague from the NDP and even a member from the Liberals, urging the government to provide tourism support. There was still no response.

The Address

In the meantime, tourism operators in the riding of Kenora and across the north have lost their summer season. They have been forced to lay off employees and many are at risk of losing their businesses altogether. Frankly, many have also wasted capital on overhead and startup costs for a summer season that never happened, in part due to the government's lack of clarity on how long the border closure would last. I do hope the government will finally step up and provide that support. However, I feel it will be too little, too late, for many.

While the Speech from the Throne mentioned food security, I am concerned about the lack of detail that was provided. If the Liberals are serious about ensuring food security and lowering the cost of delivering it in the north, they need to commit to serious investments in transportation and infrastructure. The current programs and structures put in place by the government have actually led to an increased prevalence of food insecurity across the three territories, as well as in many northern and indigenous communities in my riding.

That is why economic development must be a central focus for our country, and more specifically northern economic development. Whether it is natural resources, transportation or tourism, I believe northern Canada has the potential to drive our economic recovery and provide the revenues that will help close the gap of food insecurity. Unfortunately, we did not see any of those details in the throne speech. In fact, one of the only things that the Liberals were explicitly clear about was that they are hoping to further restrict firearms rights, which is a direct attack on the way of life in northern and indigenous communities.

Going into the new session of Parliament, I hoped the government would present a new plan to bring Canada through this crisis. It is clear to me now that the Liberals have no such plan.

Canada's north is a region with immense opportunities, but the government has been trying for many years to dismantle the northern economy and is failing to provide adequate housing and social supports. The Conservative Party will continue to hold the Liberals to account and to provide a compassionate and ethical government in waiting, and we will fight for a stronger response to this health crisis across Canada and ensure northern regions have the tools and the support they need.

We will get our economy back on track. We will provide small businesses the opportunities to thrive in this unprecedented challenge. As always, we will continue to be a voice for northern Canada.

The Address

● (1305)

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 would not want the member to give the false impression that the government has in any way ignored the tourism industry. We recognize that some industries were affected more than others. This government, working with other levels of government, has been there in a very tangible way. A few weeks back I talked to the owner of a hotel who said how appreciative he was of the fact the federal government was able to provide programs that allowed him to continue running his hotel. We need to recognize the industries through programs, such as the wage subsidy program, which literally saved thousands of jobs and protected many industries.

I wonder if my colleague would want to reflect on the fine work that not only Ottawa, but the provincial governments and other stakeholders, have put into place to protect our tourism industry, which has so much potential not only today but going into the future.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member for Winnipeg North to take a drive down the highway to my riding and visit some of the tourism owners and operators in northern Ontario who would most certainly disagree with his statement and the implication that the government was there to support tourism operators.

I asked questions in the House. I wrote letters. I had individual conversations with various ministers about the issues that have been impacting tourism operators across northern Ontario and Canada. I even signed a letter with the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, who is a colleague of the member for Winnipeg North, and there was still no response from the government. Across northern Ontario, we see many business owners who are struggling to get by and might not make it to the next season, so I would have to disagree with the member on that.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of his speech, my colleague talked about health transfers and the demands of the provinces. Unfortunately, the provinces have not gotten an answer from the government on that.

It is odd because we had that discussion with the hon. member from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord last week. When we asked him whether he was prepared to increase health transfers to 35% he said that number was made up. I would like to give my colleague the opportunity to come back to the Conservative Party's proposals. The provinces are calling for health transfers to be increased to 35%.

If the Conservative Party were to form the government one day, would it commit to increasing health transfers to 35%?

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc Québécois for his good question.

[English]

I would like to make clear that it is the Liberal government in this situation that has failed to address the concerns put forward by a number of the premiers. It has been abdicating its responsibility

from that point of view. I know my colleague would agree with me. Unfortunately, we have seen, time and again, that this is an issue the Liberals have. They talk a good game, but they have cut health payments before. Unfortunately, we do not think they are stepping up to the plate to provide that support.

● (1310)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech there was a passing reference to the need to ensure our supply-managed sectors receive full and fair compensation for the trade deals the Liberals signed, which have given away our domestic market share. I am wondering if the member can speak to whether he has any dairy, egg or poultry farmers in his riding, and how important it is that the Liberal government lives up to the promises it made, not only in budget 2019 but several times this year already. Here we are in October, and farmers are still waiting for that compensation. This affects small communities right across Canada. It is important that we live up to the promises we make when we stand in this place.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, when we talk about trade, as the member mentioned, what is really important to a lot of residents in my riding is the forestry sector.

Unfortunately, as we have seen, the government has failed to adequately secure trade agreements that can get our softwood lumber to market and support our forestry sector. I know that is something we all need to work on. It is a sector of our economy that can provide a great amount of revenue. It is also great for the environment and is very important for our economic recovery going forward.

[Translation]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since this is the first time I have had an opportunity to address you in person since the throne speech, I would like to welcome you to the House. I am happy to see that you are back in the chair to preside over the debate.

Before I begin, I want to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Scarborough Centre. We have been colleagues since 2015, and I know that she has a lot to say and that she does a wonderful job of representing her constituents in the House of Commons.

I would like to voice my support for the government with regard to the throne speech. In my opinion, the Speech from the Throne very clearly identified the issues that are important to Canadians. It is not what is happening to us that is important but rather how we react. I am proud of the minority government for taking action. Sometimes it is hard to set aside one's partisan instincts, but I am proud that, in the end, members came together to ensure that Canadians get the help and support they need during this health crisis.

The Speech from the Throne is divided into four main themes defining the government's priorities. The top priority is protecting Canadians against COVID-19. The second is knowing how the government can support Canadians during the pandemic. The third is building back better. We do not want to return to the same inequalities that existed before. Rather, we want to create a more sustainable Canada with a more cohesive and stronger society. To achieve that, we need to include women, men, indigenous peoples, people from a range of cultural communities and Black Canadians. We hope everyone can work together to create a better Canada. Finally, the last priority is knowing what kind of Canada we want to stand up for and promote. I am very proud of everything we have done.

Now I would like to focus my remarks on two elements that demonstrate the importance of the Speech from the Throne.

The first is the way the government chose to support Canadians and restore their confidence. The government is encouraging people to fight the public health crisis by staying home. If they have to leave the house, they must practise social distancing. We know it will have a devastating effect on our economy, but it is necessary. If we want a strong economy, we need people to be healthy and able to carry out their daily activities safely.

I am very proud of the government's actions. As Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, I must say, at the risk of sounding partisan, that I am very proud of the work public servants have done to ensure that Canadians get the support they need. Let's not forget that public servants have had to cope with the pandemic too.

• (1315)

These public servants had to leave their office towers, especially here in the national capital region, to return home, look after their families, look after their parents, protect themselves and reduce the spread of the virus. I have to admit, we were not ready to let tens of thousands of public servants work at home. I have to say that it happened thanks to the dedication of the public servants, these men and women who chose to serve their fellow citizens by joining the public service. On March 12, they did not know that they would find themselves in such a situation. Beginning on March 13, they quickly took the bull by the horns to ensure that we could provide services to Canadians. People working for Government of Canada digital services quickly came to realize that they would have to create the infrastructure required to accommodate these tens of thousands of public servants who, from one day to the next, had to work from home. It was unbelievable. They grew our government's capacity to provide services. They moved over to the digital world, to the Internet, without compromising security. They provided services.

The Address

They created the Canada emergency response benefit from scratch very quickly, in just a few weekends, to provide financial assistance to more than eight million Canadians. In a few weeks, they created a secure online system that helped many Canadians. It was unbelievable. On behalf of all parliamentarians and all of my constituents, I commend our public servants for their work.

I do not have much time left. I now want to talk about another part of the throne speech that really speaks to me. Our government has taken measures to eliminate anti-Black racism and systemic discrimination in Canada.

I am very proud of the work the government has done and of the priorities set by the parliamentary Black caucus. This caucus is made up of members of the House of Commons, independent senators and people from all political parties. We established these measures and also called for support from our allies. Half of parliamentarians immediately signed on, and I know that almost all of the other half supported our work.

With this consensus in Parliament, I am proud to see that all of the measures and main points were included in the throne speech. These measures included the importance of having disaggregated data, economic measures to support Black business owners across Canada, and measures to help integrate Black people into the public service and private companies.

• (1320)

The throne speech showed great respect for our heritage and our contributions to our heritage. For all these reasons, I am proud to support the throne speech.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge my hon. colleague.

I have the pleasure of being my party's Treasury Board critic, so I will probably have opportunities to discuss a number of issues with my colleague opposite.

I have to wonder how the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board can accept that his government is using all sorts of devious ways to prevent Canadians from accessing the government's data and numbers and from reviewing its spending with full knowledge of the facts.

We are in the middle of a pandemic, and the government is spending enormous amounts of money. It needs to spend to keep the government running and help people work from home. There is a lot of spending, and some of it is absolutely necessary. However, we cannot be certain about all of it, since we have not been able to review it.

How can the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board accept such an attitude from a government that is not being transparent?

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge my colleague from Estrie and thank him for his question, although I must reject its premise.

The Address

Against great odds, Parliament took action to ensure that it could operate even during the pandemic in order to review government spending. It was by consensus that all members of this Parliament were able to ask the ministers questions and get answers and that they were able to improve the bills authorizing this minority government's spending.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech given by my colleague from Hull—Aylmer, and it is clear that he is very proud.

However, I do not think he can be proud of his government's performance when it comes to access to high-speed Internet. Many Quebecers and Canadians still do not have access to high-speed Internet, which prevents them from working from home during the pandemic.

This morning, I was talking with a reeve from my RCM. She said that she felt abandoned by the government because an agreement has not yet been reached with Quebec and she does not have the additional funding she needs to get more people connected to high-speed Internet.

I would like my colleague to explain how he can feel proud when we know that many Quebecers and Canadians still do not have access to high-speed Internet today.

• (1325)

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question. However, I have to set the record straight.

On several occasions the federal government has announced increased investments to ensure access to high-speed Internet in rural regions. We have signed agreements with several provinces so that we can work hand in hand to provide these services.

I know that there are discussions under way with the Government of Quebec. I hope that my hon. colleague might help us convince the Government of Quebec to meet us halfway so that we can ensure that everyone can benefit from the advantages of this new digital economy.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his remarks, the hon. member talked about the non-partisan nature of the response to COVID-19, and I would agree with him. I thank him for his leadership and work on the Black parliamentary caucus, which was historic.

The caucus' document was historic as well. In fact, it was a blueprint that provided the government with the legislative framework to move forward in truly tackling anti-Black racism. However, given the Speech from the Throne, this still feels like a dream deferred. It still feels like, from our highest courts to our national research chairs to our senior levels in the public sector, Canadians of African descent continue to be left behind.

Given how much has been missed in this throne speech, what priorities from the Black caucus' declaration would the member like to see fast-tracked and prioritized by the government to truly begin to dismantle anti-Black racism?

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Hamilton Centre for his work alongside all members of Black caucus to develop what he calls, and justifiably so, the historic document produced back in June.

The hon. member will be very pleased to know all the big aspects of what we put in have now become government policy, priorities of this government. That is what a Speech from the Throne is. It lays out the blueprint for the government's actions over the parliamentary session, and I am pleased to say that all the big issues we raised were there. The hon. member is right in the sense that there is impatience in the community in making sure we move forward with things.

The government put a pretty good down payment on an aspect of the economic measures we announced on September 8 with the Black entrepreneurial program: \$221 million, a partnership between the private and public sectors. We also saw very good action taken by Statistics Canada to get at disaggregated data, which is particularly important, because we cannot change what we cannot measure. Those two actions, of the five big things we are going for, are a good down payment.

I expect the hon. member to keep on pushing, as I expect all Canadians to do.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that I am happy to be back in this place for the first time since March. It is so important that we are able to be here, whether virtually or in person, to represent our constituents in a way that is safe and consistent with public health guidelines. I would like to thank the House of Commons staff who have worked hard to lay the groundwork to allow Parliament to resume safely, and the co-operation of all parties that has allowed us to be back here together.

It has been a challenging time for our country and for the world since many of us were here last in March. Canadians came together to meet the challenges of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. As businesses closed their doors and there were those who had to stay home, our government stepped up with programs to support individuals and businesses facing loss of income and loss of business. I am proud of how our public servants responded to quickly design and launch programs like the Canada emergency response benefit to get help to the people who needed it the most. I am proud of how Canadians responded, supporting their local food banks and showing their support for our first responders.

No response will ever be perfect. There are lessons that can and should be learned, and this challenge is not yet over. Parts of the country are now firmly in the second wave of cases. Here in Ottawa and in my home of Toronto, cases are on the rise. We cannot afford to be complacent in following the public health guidelines.

I am here today to respond to a Speech from the Throne that sets out the government's plan, not only for meeting the ongoing challenge of the pandemic, but also to begin looking ahead to the recovery and the kind of a country we will build back: a stronger, more resilient Canada. One thing that is clear to me is that we must apply a gender and intersectional lens to our plans for supporting Canadians and for the recovery, because COVID-19 is not impacting all Canadians equally.

Data from the City of Toronto shows that positive cases are far higher among the city's Black population and among other people of colour. The data also correlates to household income, with those earning under \$30,000 reporting far higher levels of positive cases. If an individual is wealthier and has a job that allows her or him to work from home, it is easier to limit that person's exposure. Meanwhile, lower-income residents, often members of minority groups in Toronto, most often have jobs that require them to go in and take the bus to work. Often in those front-line jobs people are relying on, in restaurants, grocery stores and taxis, they do not have the privilege of just staying home.

We must also look at the impact of this pandemic on women. Women have been on the front lines of this pandemic, with fields such as nurses, lab techs, home care workers and personal support workers dominated by women. As people began to go back to work over the summer, women were not returning to the workforce at the same rate as their male colleagues. Economist Armine Yalnizyan has said that Statistics Canada labour force data for May showed we were having more of a "he-covery than a she-covery, that is, more men returning to work than women." In July the Standing Committee on the Status of Women met to examine the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, and one key message was the importance of child care.

Without access to safe and affordable child care, it will not be possible for both parents to return to work, and most often it is the woman who will stay home to care for their children or their elderly parents. For single parents, there often is no choice. So, I welcome the government's commitment to a significant, long-term and sustained investment to create a Canada-wide early learning and child care system.

• (1330)

We cannot let access to child care be a barrier for parents choosing to re-enter the workforce. I also welcome the commitment to an action plan for women in the economy and to a feminist intersectional response to the pandemic and recovery. We must consider the needs of diverse Canadians and have diverse voices as a part of a task force of experts.

My constituents have also told me that they are concerned about the safety of seniors, particularly in long-term care homes. The government responded to requests from some provinces to send in the Canadian Armed Forces and the Red Cross to help during the worst time of the crisis.

I have a number of long-term care homes in my riding. Despite the hard work of caring staff, we lost members of our community who were residents in these homes. Any loss is tragic, but to pass without one's loved ones by one's side is grief beyond compare. There can be, and there must be, a role for the government here.

The Address

The safety of our citizens must be paramount. I support the government's commitment to work with the provinces and territories to set new national standards for long-term care homes, as well as to amend the Criminal Code to penalize those who neglect seniors under their care. I will work to bring the voices of the constituents and community groups in my riding to that process, so that we can ensure that workers in those homes have the support they need to give residents the care they deserve.

This pandemic has also underscored the need to move more boldly on our commitment to developing a national pharmacare system. Many Canadians cannot afford access to the medication that they need and many Canadians, who had coverage through their employers' plans, lost it during this pandemic. A person's access to medication should not be dependent on their wallet or their job. We must move forward more quickly to make pharmacare a reality.

We must do more to combat systemic racism in Canada, including rising levels of online hate. Our communities are reeling from a string of recent incidents. Last month, an innocent man, Mohamed-Aslim Zafis, was killed in front of the IMO mosque in Toronto by an individual with apparent links to a neo-Nazi group. During Rosh Hashanah, a father and a son were verbally assaulted with anti-Semitic remarks, outside a synagogue in Thornhill. Sadly, these are not isolated incidents. We must stand together to condemn Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and all forms of hatred. Our anti-racism strategy must include an acknowledgement of the dangers of white supremacy and a plan to combat this growing threat to the safety and security of Canadians.

As I come to the end of my remarks, allow me to highlight two areas that have frequently been raised by my constituents that were not directly addressed in the Speech from the Throne, but that I feel must form part of the government's agenda for a stronger, more resilient Canada.

The Address

The first is affordable access to the Internet. The speech touched on broadband access to rural and remote communities. I recognize how important that is. My constituents in Scarborough Centre are lucky enough to have access to broadband access to the Internet, but at prices so unaffordable that in reality they have no access at home. The government has committed to lowering wireless Internet rates and has a plan to bring down the price of mobile packages by 25%. Our efforts for affordability must also include wide broadband Internet access. I recognize the infrastructure and capital costs faced by the major service providers, but it is not fair that Canadians pay among the highest prices in the world. Unaffordable access is no access at all. We must do more to bring prices down.

The second is the call for basic income. We have seen during this pandemic the importance of Canadians having access to a base level of support. CERB made a major difference by helping Canadians through the first wave when the economy ground to a halt and many were asked to stay home. The need for support will not go away with COVID-19.

• (1335)

In a country like Canada, people should have the ability to keep a roof over their heads and meet their basic needs. I do not believe a basic income is a silver bullet. No one program can address all of society's challenges and it is not something the federal government can do alone. Our social safety net includes different programs at all levels of government. It would not do if benefits introduced at the federal level were to be clawed back by the provinces. We must take a holistic approach, working with our partners at all levels.

It is time to reimagine our social safety net for the 21st century. It is time for a national conversation about basic income, and I want our government to lead that support.

I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne and I will be the voice for my constituents pushing the government to move forward with its goal for a stronger and more resilient Canada. Let us build that Canada together.

• (1340)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has pointed out quite rightly that women have been disproportionately impacted by this pandemic, but why is that when all the legislation for all the programs rolling out was supposed to have a gender-based analysis done?

I was the chair of the status of women committee when it wrote a report recommending economic action. That was not delivered for three years. Now it is in the throne speech. There was a report on violence against women and again there has been no action, and here we are talking about it again. There was talk about other things that concerned women at the pay equity committee, which I was on, and there was zero action taken.

Why should Canadian women believe anything the government says about what it will do for women?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for all the work she has done on gender equality.

I am proud to be part of a government that believes in gender-based violence and that for the economy to recover, it is important

that we have a she-covery. Just last week, we announced \$50 billion for an accelerated investment in shelters and transitional housing to ensure that anyone facing gender-based violence would have a safe place to turn. During the first wave of the pandemic, we also invested \$50 million. From talking to constituents in my riding, I know that it really made a difference and many women were able to find a place at shelters when they faced gender-based violence.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot from the Liberals about how proud they are. They like patting themselves on the back. They are giving the throne speech rave reviews. Where does the truth lie though? This government has been in power for five years. What has it really accomplished?

Canada signed a greenhouse gas reduction contract in Paris, but it has not reduced greenhouse gases. The country is getting farther away from the Paris targets, yet the government is still investing in oil rather than in green energy.

What about health care? The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons says that he is the one who negotiates with the Premier of Quebec. He would like the Bloc Québécois to leave him alone. What is he actually negotiating though? The Premier of Quebec wants him to increase health transfers because we are in the midst of a pandemic and we need more money, but there has been no movement on this.

What about the government's special powers? Earlier, my colleague talked about a non-partisan agreement concerning these special powers. What did the Liberals do with their powers? They helped their WE Charity friends. Helping friends is the only thing this government has done successfully since taking office. This is scandalous.

Can we look forward to firm commitments from this government on health transfers, money for high-speed Internet and investments in electric transportation?

That is my question: Will the government be making firm commitments or will it be making the same enticing but empty promises it has been making for the past five years?

[English]

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, I am really proud to be part of a government that is committed to and believes in climate change. In the last mandate, we did a lot of work in that regard. We are still committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. As mentioned in the throne speech, we will legislate the targets that we can achieve by 2050.

A few weeks ago, I welcomed the Minister of Infrastructure in Scarborough to make the announcement on electric buses for in my riding. We have invested in Canadians. We have invested \$19 billion for a safe restart agreement with the provinces and territories to ensure they have the PPE and money for health care and testing. We have invested heavily to ensure testing is done for more and more Canadians. We will continue investing in Canadians.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member has talked about the fact that so many people have died alone during COVID-19. However, people who have overdosed from a toxic drug supply are also dying alone. In British Columbia, we have had five times more deaths from overdoses than from COVID-19. In three of the last four years, over 1,000 people have died, but there is only a passing reference to the opioid epidemic.

Why has the Liberal government refused to call the opioid crisis a national health emergency? Why is it not heeding calls of organizations like the chiefs of police to decriminalize this? Why is it not providing the federal resources that so many communities across the country need to finally get a handle on this crisis?

• (1345)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, safety and security of Canadians is the most important thing for us as a government. I am proud that in the last six months we have done our best to ensure Canadians are safe and have those tools available to fight this pandemic. We will continue investing in the health of Canadians to ensure we can get through this pandemic as team Canada.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join all my colleagues virtually, coming live from Teulon, Manitoba.

This is the 11th throne speech I have heard since I was elected in 2004 and this is by far the weakest throne speech I have had to listen to. I even reread it this morning and it is just filled with Liberal dogma. It is about social re-engineering. The only reason we had prorogation by the Prime Minister, since the throne speech is so uninspiring, is the WE scandal. It was not about resetting the agenda; it was about trying to do a cover-up and ensuring the opposition parties could not continue to litigate the government about its scandal and the almost billion dollars it was going to hand over to the WE Charity.

We are going to get around to dealing with that during this session of Parliament, but let us ensure we talk about all the problems the Liberals continue to have, especially with respect to its fiscal mismanagement and how it is building upon that during this COVID-19 crisis.

We have supported the government on ensuring we get timely payments out to Canadians where they are needed, but we have to

The Address

ensure we take exception to the Prime Minister's comment in the throne speech, when he said, "Canadians should not...take on debt that their government can better shoulder." Who does the Prime Minister think holds the debt of the Government of Canada? It is Canadians.

As we are now running right past \$350 billion in deficit this fiscal year alone, that is the equivalent of \$100,000 per man, woman and child in the entire country. I do not know anyone who has received \$100,000 from the Government of Canada. Definitely people have received \$2,000 a month through CERB and businesses have received up to \$40,000 in CEBA loans that will be repayable. However, if we look at a family of four, nobody has received \$400,000, and we are doing all of this without an actual budget in place for this fiscal year. Therefore, as we move forward, we will have to hold the government to account as to where this money has gone.

When I was part of the Harper government and we were running deficits, we had a plan as to how we dealt with it. It was called the three Ts. When we were dealing with deficits, they had to be timely, transparent and temporary. I am worried that some of the social re-engineering the government is looking at will make some of the benefits out there to help during these rough times become more than just temporary funding and turn into permanent programs. That will hurt our overall economic recovery as a nation and further indebt Canadians as the Government of Canada continues to pile up these mountains of debt, which is going to exceed \$1 trillion for the first time in Canadian history. They have to be timely. So far a lot of Canadians have had to wait for months for benefits from the government, and these have to be transparent.

We do not have a budget. When this crisis first started and Parliament was not sitting, we know the government tried to get control of the entire public purse, without any oversight, to deal with the so-called recovery from COVID. We are not there yet, so we have to continue to drive forward. However, right now we see this ongoing use of non-disclosure agreements and national security designations as a way to hide any government contracts that have been sole-sourced, like the WE scandal, and as we have seen recently with PPE manufacturing, when it used national security as a way to hide a sole-sourced contract for face masks. That makes no sense at all. We have to continue to hold the government to account.

The Address

Nothing in the throne speech did anything to address western alienation. Here in Manitoba, as it is in Saskatchewan and Alberta, there is a real concern that Ottawa knows best and the rest of us in the west can just take a hike. We cannot allow that to happen. As a national Parliament, we have to address every region of our country.

• (1350)

The Conservative leader's first ask was how the Prime Minister would deal with national unity, with the rise of western alienation and the ongoing sovereignist movement within Quebec. There is no plan in the Speech from the Throne that even addresses that.

We do not see any action from the government on how it is going to deal with the COVID-19 health recovery. Months after this pandemic started, we are finally getting approval for rapid testing. All the G8 nations that we deal with, and our partners under NATO and the European Union, have been using rapid testing for months. We are only getting there now.

One of the greatest disappointments in the Speech from the Throne is that the government talks about having an economic recovery and job creation, but the only jobs it can create are the ones it adds to the civil service. It has not done anything to set in motion the economic objectives to build our current economy. Liberals do not even address the fundamentals of our economy, or having a fiscal anchor in how we deal with these ongoing deficits, and they have completely ignored the pillars of our economy.

When I re-read the Speech from the Throne on the computer this morning, I did a search for the word “farmers” and it only appears twice in the document. Once to talk about the Liberals finally paying supply managed farmers for any market losses that they are experiencing because of the free trade agreements we have signed, but we have heard that for five years from the government, and it has not done anything yet.

Then the Liberals talk about wanting to make sure farmers are given support to adapt to the new environmental regulations that are coming out. Farmers and ranchers are partners in the environment and they should be rewarded, not penalized, because they are carbon sinks, and they are securing our food supply. We need to help them, not penalize them.

There is nothing in the speech about fish harvesters. We waited in Manitoba for almost five months after the Prime Minister announced from Rideau Cottage in May that there was going to be support for fish harvesters. In my riding of Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, we have almost 1,000 commercial fishers. These are families in our communities and they waited for months before they could even apply. They have still have not received any cheques in the mail.

Energy workers were ignored. Forestry workers were ignored. Those who work in the natural resource sector were not even mentioned. These are the pillars of our economy, yet there is no support for how we create those jobs. There is nothing for manufacturers.

The real drivers of our economy are small business owners. Almost 90% of businesses in Canada are owned by small business

owners, and they are the job creators. There was not much said to help them.

Aviation was completely forgotten about. How do we keep our airlines flying and our airports open? Nav Canada has laid off a pile of people, which is impacting Winnipeg and St. Andrews Airport in my riding. In Churchill, how do we use the gateway to the Arctic without having Nav Canada there to help with the safety and planning of those flights?

As the shadow minister for defence, I want to join with all members who have stood and thanked members of the Canadian Armed Forces, especially those tasked through Operation Lentus, which was the work done in long-term care. It was much appreciated. It was much needed, and I know they stand at the ready to do it again.

Again, there is almost nothing in the speech to deal with the military, or the use the defence industry as a way to drive economic recovery, as well as supply our Armed Forces. I know members of the Canadian Armed Forces are worried about these huge deficits. They remember the last time the Liberals had to start paying down deficits and address the national debt, which led to the decade of darkness. We cannot allow that to happen again.

We have to invest in our Arctic sovereignty. We have challenges from Russia and China, so we need to have an upgraded north warning system, make sure we are working in NORAD and use new capabilities. Speaking of China, I want to mention, as the Prime Minister did in the throne speech, that today is 665 days that Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor have been wrongfully incarcerated in China.

• (1355)

It is time to get them home. Let us deal with that head on, as we address all the problems we have in our relationship with Beijing.

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 want to address a point the member made in terms of unity, and recognize that through this pandemic we have witnessed Canadians coming together from all regions. Whether it is individuals or the government, we have seen people and governments coming together in order to minimize the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has actually been very encouraging.

The member makes reference to the prorogation of the session. His good friend, and mine, Premier Brian Pallister has prorogued the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. I am sure that an annual contract with the WE organization is not why the premier prorogued. I suspect, much like in Ottawa, it is important to focus on the COVID-19 pandemic and what government can do to minimize the negative impact. Would the member agree?

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, as a former MLA, the member for Winnipeg North knows full well that the Province of Manitoba prorogues its legislature every fall. It is an annual occurrence, and it has an annual throne speech because of it. There is nothing new to report here.

What is new is that the Liberals had to cover up the WE scandal, and that is why they prorogued. They wanted to try to reset the agenda, filling the throne speech with more Liberal ideology, as we move forward into the session.

The member mentioned national unity and working alongside the provinces. If the Liberal government was working with the provinces, why did it not address the provinces' demands for more equalization? They asked for more health care transfers so that they could deliver health care during this pandemic in a timely manner and have the equipment required, especially as hospitalizations continue to increase. Ignored by—

The Deputy Speaker: Continuing with questions and comments, the hon. member for Jonquière.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, earlier I heard my colleague talking about Canadian unity and the challenges facing the oil and gas industry in the west. I would like to draw just a couple of figures to his attention. From 2017 to 2020, the federal government provided \$827 million in support to the forestry industry, and 80% of that was in the form of loans. In the same period, the federal government provided \$22 billion in support to the oil and gas industry. There is a big difference between \$827 million and \$22 billion.

Does my colleague not see the inequity in terms of the support provided to the forestry industry compared to that given to the oil and gas industry in western Canada?

• (1400)

[English]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, we all know that the oil and gas sectors in Alberta and Saskatchewan in particular, and in British Columbia, have generated billions upon billions of dollars in equalization payments because of the success of the oil and gas industry. They have been left completely out of the loop under the current Liberal government, and that goes right back to its election five years ago, with its “no more pipelines” bill and banning of tankers on the west coast.

These antidevelopment and antiresource policies of the Liberals are hurting all of Canada, not just the workers and industries in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

We need to work with the sector to ensure that workers are fully employed and that everybody is benefiting from this great resource that we have locked in the ground. Leaving it there and using foreign oil is not the answer, but that is exactly what the Prime Minister wants to do.

Statements by Members

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

GREEN PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it was an incredible weekend for the Greens in Canada. It marked the end of our party's leadership race.

We made history. I am so pleased with our members' choice.

[English]

Annamie Paul will soon, I hope, walk into this place as the first Black leader of a federal political party. I hope she will soon walk into this place as the first Black woman to head a federal political party.

Annamie Paul comes to us with great experience. She came to this city to get her law degree. She went to Princeton for her master's degree. She has worked at the International Criminal Court. She has worked at our embassies overseas. She has worked at the very grassroots level to help communities, to increase diversity and to fight the climate crisis. She is extraordinary, and I hope we all wish her the best of luck in winning the seat in Toronto Centre so that she can be here soon.

* * *

AL GARDNER

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the City of Beaconsfield has lost a beloved and respected people's representative. Councillor Al Gardner left us suddenly and far too soon this past summer.

A loyal public servant, Al treated everything with the thoughtfulness and rigour of someone who always wanted to do the very best for his constituents and community. Always welcoming and kind, Al was a friend to everyone and a true gentleman.

Al Gardner exemplified an approach to politics that is fundamental to a healthy democracy. The political was never personal. He always looked at both sides of an issue, and this allowed him to find common ground.

Last, but by no means least, Al was a dog lover. He adopted many, and whenever he was out and about in the community, he was never without a treat in his pocket just in case.

We have lost a good man. I ask the House to join me in offering Al's son, Geoffrey, and his sister, Fern, our deepest condolences at this time of great loss.

* * *

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is World Teachers' Day. Teaching is an occupation I am quite familiar with, having taught at both the secondary and elementary levels since 1995 in Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

Statements by Members

I want to thank all teachers across Canada for pouring out their hearts and souls to inspire and educate young people. It is not at all an easy task, but they have chosen this profession because they care. So often I have been amazed as I have watched colleagues engage and motivate their students with creative lessons in whatever subject matter or grade they may be teaching. Teachers have a powerful impact on the lives of our young people. We can all look back and remember a teacher who breathed life into us.

The year 2020 has been a very challenging one for so many of us, and that certainly has been true for teachers. I invite all members of the House to join with me in acknowledging our nation's teachers in this very challenging time.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the month of October is a time to celebrate small businesses across the country and the valuable contributions they make to our communities. The face of small business in my riding of Egmont includes farmers, fishers, tourism operators, the service sector, manufacturers and food processors, all of whom have endured a challenging peak season due to COVID-19.

• (1405)

[Translation]

Small businesses are very important for my riding, Egmont.

[English]

Small business owners take risks to provide our community with local goods and services, and by taking these risks they are providing opportunities for others. Thanks to the hard work of local small business owners, Egmont is building a stronger economy that benefits everyone, and as a result, we all have the opportunity to share in our community's progress.

Supporting small business has and remains the best way forward for our national economic recovery. That is why our Liberal government continues to support small businesses.

* * *

[Translation]

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, October 5 is World Teachers' Day.

I want to acknowledge the dedication of these men and women who, as the theme suggests, are not only shaping the future, but are true leaders in a time of crisis.

This year's back-to-school was historic. It was unprecedented. I will not soon forget the image of these young school children wearing a mask following their teacher into their elementary school. A little further, I saw teenagers also wearing masks, waiting for their school bus. I knew I would not be seeing the older kids because they are learning online, cut off from all social contact. It is unreal.

As a former teacher myself, I know that teachers are navigating unknown territory while trying to provide a semblance of normalcy

to the students even as they fear for their own health, for their children and for their family. They are sure not to transfer their fear to their students.

Teachers in Quebec and elsewhere are used to juggling a lack of resources and working miracles with next to nothing, but they will always make sure that the children are getting the best education possible. That is why the Bloc Québécois pays tribute to them today.

* * *

[English]

HELLENIC HOME FOR THE AGED

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to recognize the residents and the hard-working staff of Hellenic Home for the Aged in my riding of Scarborough Centre. As a long-term care home, it has been on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first wave was difficult for it. Residents were unable to see their loved ones and, under difficult circumstances and spending much time away from their own families, the staff worked very hard to keep residents safe. I would like to extend my condolences to the Hellenic Home community for the lives lost during this pandemic.

We owe it to our seniors to do everything we can to keep them safe. We need to develop new national standards for long-term care. I look forward to working with organizations in my riding to bring their ideas and their voices to this discussion.

* * *

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, October 4 to 10 is Mental Illness Awareness Week. Mental Illness Awareness Week is about the need for dialogue and the need to allow anyone who is struggling the opportunity to express, without judgment, the pain, suffering and hurt that they feel as they struggle with various health problems. Those suffering in silence need to be able to come forward and know that they will be believed, and not seen as weak. They need to know that we are fighting for the services and support that they need. Until we recognize mental illness as a true health problem, we will not be able to move forward as a nation.

All of us here in the House have a responsibility to keep this issue at the forefront of the debate, not just today but every day. We can do more and we can do it together.

I am proud to sit on the all-party mental health caucus with colleagues from across this great country. In the coming weeks and months, members will be hearing from us as we work together to raise the profile of mental illness among Canadians. We have a responsibility to make sure those in need have the tools necessary to get better.

There is no health without mental health.

* * *

WISH DROP-IN CENTRE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first wave of COVID-19 exposed deep gaps in our social infrastructure and let us see the desperation of our most vulnerable, such as sex trade workers. Many cannot claim benefits like CERB because the work they do is criminal. They cannot pay rent. They face an increased amount of societal violence, are at risk in shelters and are stigmatized by many.

I shout out to an organization in Vancouver named WISH, which provides a safe, non-judgmental place for sex trade workers facing gender-based violence, giving them shelter, food and respite and helping them gain workforce skills if they wish to exit the trade. WISH recently opened the first overnight shelter in Canada for street workers. Last week, its executive director Mebrat Beyene won the YWCA Women of Distinction Award for non-profits.

Brava WISH. Keep defending the vulnerable and speaking out for the voiceless.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

GATINEAU'S LOCAL ECONOMY

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Outaouais is fortunate to be able to count on extraordinary entrepreneurs who make our region vibrant and who contribute to its recovery and our prosperity every day. Gatineau businesses, especially those in the downtown area, were hit hard by the first wave of the pandemic. Thanks to the Government of Canada's aid measures and the vigilance of Gatineau residents, we managed to open up again this summer.

However, today we find ourselves at a crossroads with the arrival of the second wave. We must continue buying local and encouraging our local businesses while observing public health guidance. The business community has been able to adapt to ensure everyone's health and safety. Governments are supporting SMEs with additional measures. This all goes hand in hand with urging everyone to respect public health guidelines. I know that the people of Gatineau will heed this appeal, because the health of our local economy depends on it.

* * *

[English]

JOHN PRITCHARD SCHOOL

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to recognize the parents, students

Statements by Members

and staff at John Pritchard School in my riding. Last month, the school celebrated its 105th anniversary. Over the last century, John Pritchard students have lived through countless challenges, including two world wars and two global health pandemics.

The John Pritchard School family is facing adversity again, with 250 students now enrolled in remote learning following a recent COVID-19 outbreak at the school. My heart goes out to all those affected. I am praying for a speedy recovery for those battling COVID-19. I want to thank the teachers, support staff, administrative officials and parents for rising to the occasion and putting the education of our kids first by implementing at-home learning during this unprecedented time.

I also want to thank the Kildonan—St. Paul community for donating new items to my back-to-school supplies initiative, which will help provide lower-income students in our community with much-needed items, and for their support of their neighbours. This makes me proud to represent this community as their member of Parliament.

* * *

[Translation]

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate World Teachers' Day in Canada and all around the world. This is a day to celebrate our teachers and express our appreciation for them.

As a former educator from a family of educators, I know all too well how hard teachers work every day to give students the best possible education.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a number of challenges for our education systems. Our teachers have shown unbelievable leadership as they responded to the crisis, offered online learning, supported vulnerable students and helped reopen our schools. I want all of our teachers to know that their passion, hard work and sacrifices do not go unnoticed. You have our respect and our gratitude.

* * *

[English]

MANITOBA COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, scientists around the world have always said that easily accessible testing is the key to combatting the spread of COVID-19 while helping people live normal lives. That is why Conservatives have been calling for rapid and easily accessible tests since March.

Statements by Members

The Liberal government is months behind our allies when it comes to approving and procuring COVID-19 testing devices. Now that a rapid testing device has finally been approved, the Manitoba government is being blocked from purchasing them.

Why are we being blocked? The Prime Minister has blocked the direct sale of these rapid-testing devices to provincial governments, leaving them unavailable for Canadians to access.

For months, Canadians have had to wait days in worry, wondering if they have COVID-19 because the government has dragged its feet. It is time for the Prime Minister to get out of the way and let provinces make these tests readily available.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today regarding the layoffs recently announced at Suncor Energy. A total of 15% of Suncor's workforce will be laid off in the coming weeks. This comes directly as a result of the government's anti-energy policies. Instead of exporting our oil, the government is exporting our jobs.

Two weeks ago, the government delivered the throne speech. The only thing mentioned about oil and gas in the throne speech is how they will play a role in getting to net zero emissions. I believe the Liberals' plan to get to net zero is to eliminate oil and gas in Canada. This is not a sound way to build back the economy while there is still a huge need for oil, gas and all the by-products it produces.

While the government does not support Canadian producers, it thinks nothing of bringing oil in from foreign countries, such as the United States, and instead support Donald Trump in making America great again. The Suncor layoffs are the most recent example.

When is the government going to stop exporting jobs and start exporting oil?

* * *

● (1415)

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit earlier this year, the national emergency stockpile had already been grossly mismanaged, with three warehouses shut down and millions of pieces of PPE thrown into the trash.

Canadian companies have started producing PPE but over fears of being outbid again, the government refuses to make the names of these companies public to ensure that the supply remains available to Canada. If the government is admitting that free-market capitalism is putting us at risk, then we must commit to starting government production of PPE as a part of our just recovery for the manufacturing workers and to ensure that Canadians will always have access to safe, affordable and reliable PPE.

With close to 10,000 deaths and the second wave upon us, the Liberals must, at a minimum, confirm that the contracts signed with

the Canadian PPE producers ensure that Canada will have first access to PPE indefinitely, or we risk being outbid once again.

* * *

[Translation]

ALCOHOL EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are in the middle of the 30th anniversary of Éduc'alcool.

The mission of Éduc'alcool is to keep the people of Quebec informed, aware and educated when it comes to drinking and their relationship to alcohol. For the past 30 years, in campaign after campaign, Éduc'alcool has influenced our evolving attitudes and helped us adopt healthier drinking habits. The percentage of fatal accidents due to impaired driving has dropped 20% over the past 30 years.

We can be proud of the progress that has been made, but it must not distract us from the serious challenges that lie ahead when it comes to alcohol.

With wisdom gained over the past 30 years, Éduc'alcool will tackle those challenges, especially ending alcohol-related domestic and sexual violence and continuing to work toward eliminating impaired driving.

Congratulations to Éduc'alcool. As their motto goes, moderation is always in good taste.

* * *

COVID-19

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, damn COVID-19!

"I am a store owner. The government closed my store, my livelihood, and then allowed it to reopen, but now my customers prefer to shop online."

"I am a restaurant owner. My dining room is empty. I was asked to reinvent myself, but my refrigerators are once again too full."

"I am a therapist. My waiting room emptied out before I was able to help. I find it hard to no longer be able to help people."

"I am a young entrepreneur whose dream is dying. I do not know whether I will have the courage to start over."

"I am a student. I have been hearing about these years, about prom and university parties since I was a child. Today, I have to entertain myself by watching TikTok between online classes."

"I am a worker. I have energy to burn, but my shop is closed. It is depressing to be stuck at home."

"I am a senior. I am finally at an age where I have some freedom, but I have never felt so alone. I have never met my great grandchildren."

"I am the forgotten. No one talks about me on television and the various levels of government have forgotten about me, but life has changed for me too and I have no one to talk to about it."

"I am a member of Parliament. I can no longer shake hands with my constituents, but so many of them need reassurance. To them, I say, 'Talk to us, even through your mask. Our ears and hearts are open.'"

* * *

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS IN VAUDREUIL— SOULANGES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the hard work of the community organizations in Vaudreuil—Soulanges.

These organizations have maintained their essential services to those in need in my community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The emergency community support fund contributed more than \$350,000 to help keep a number of organizations in my riding going. These organizations include Café de la Débrouille, the Centre d'action bénévole L'Actuel, the Notre-Dame-de-Fatima centre, Le Versant, the Vaudreuil—Soulanges RCM, Parrainage Civique de Vaudreuil—Soulanges and the Réseaux emploi entrepreneurship.

These organizations have made a huge difference in our community during these difficult times. I want to thank them on behalf of the people of Vaudreuil—Soulanges. We will get through this by working together.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, around the world, countries are procuring hundreds of millions of rapid tests. The WHO procured 120 million and the United States 165 million. France is performing a million tests a week and Italy now has 30-minute tests at its airport. However, on Friday we learned that the government is blocking Manitoba from being able to procure its own rapid tests.

The Prime Minister has been months late on securing rapid tests for Canadians. Why are the Liberals now making the provinces go to the back of the line as well?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by congratulating the member opposite on his election as leader of the official opposition and by saying how pleased I was by his and his wife's recovery from COVID-19.

I share the member opposite's view that rapid testing is absolutely essential to our health. It is absolute essential to our economic re-

covery. That is why I am pleased that we bought 7.9 million rapid tests last week.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister said rapid tests are essential, but her own minister is sending mixed signals from the federal government. Last month, the health minister said that provinces were free to develop and deploy their own rapid tests. Nine days later, the health minister told the Government of Manitoba that it could not buy the recently approved Health Canada test.

The health minister has flip-flopped on the border, on the risks of COVID, on the use of masks and now on rapid tests. When will the government stop interfering in provincial COVID plans?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me say the health minister is a cherished colleague who is doing a fantastic job.

When it comes to provinces and the fight against the coronavirus, this is an effort that we must undertake together. That is why over the summer we agreed, in the safe restart agreement, to \$19 billion to the provinces to support their fight against coronavirus and another \$2 billion for the safe restart of schools.

[Translation]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, several regions in our country are fighting a second wave. Quebec is making sacrifices to fight COVID-19, but just yesterday, it had more than 1,000 new cases. If people cannot access rapid testing, they are more likely to spread the virus. The Prime Minister promised rapid testing six months ago. After all this time, we are still wondering why rapid testing is not ready for the second wave.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the opposition leader concerning the measures that the Province of Quebec has taken. I support these strong measures. That is very important, and we must work with Quebec.

Concerning rapid tests, we bought 7.9 million of them last week. The tests will be in Canada next week.

[English]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they just ordered tests six months after they promised they would. Their slow response is impacting millions of Canadians. In Quebec, it is the long lineups. In Ontario, it is the labs that are stretched to the limit. In Manitoba, it is confusion over buying rapid tests.

When is the Prime Minister going to take the health of Canadians seriously and roll out a real plan for rapid testing?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. The Prime Minister and, indeed, I believe all members of the House take the health of Canadians extremely seriously.

When it comes to rapid testing, I was very pleased that last week we were able to announce the procurement of 7.9 million rapid tests. Those tests will be in Canada next week, and we will have more to announce about rapid tests very soon.

[Translation]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians and Quebecers know that the Liberal government failed to close the border in time for ideological reasons. The New York Times demonstrated that the decision to keep the border open was not based on science. The Prime Minister chose the WHO's misguided policies over the interests of Canadians.

Why did the Prime Minister balk at closing the border when he should have?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to make one small correction: Quebecers are Canadians.

With respect to borders, I have to say that I am very proud of our government's policy, especially regarding the U.S. border. We were able to restrict non-essential travel while allowing trade, which is so vital to our economy, to continue. That is what we will keep doing.

• (1425)

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the second wave has hit Quebec. We have 1,100 more cases today. That is unbelievable.

The health care system is on the verge of breaking down, yet the government has decided against increasing health transfers to care for our people. Simply put, the facts are undeniable. The government has spent nearly \$300 billion more during the pandemic, but only \$500 million on health care during a public health crisis. For every \$100 the government has injected into the economy, only 15 cents has gone to health care. That is ridiculous.

When will the government do its part?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree that the second wave in Quebec and Ontario is very serious. We are taking it seriously. That is why we signed the safe restart agreement, which includes close to \$3 billion for Quebec to support a safe restart.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, facts are facts. Quebec and the provinces are asking the government for \$28 billion to make up the shortfall. The government gave them \$500 million. That is less than 2% of what Quebec and the provinces are calling for to help with health care. The provinces and Quebec are calling for more help to take care of people. Health care providers in Quebec are asking for more money, more help.

What is the government waiting for? When will it help Quebecers get the care they need while respecting Quebec's jurisdictions?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are well aware of how serious the health care situation is in Quebec. That is why we gave Quebec nearly \$3 billion for the economic recovery and health measures. We also helped seniors in Quebec through our Canadian Armed Forces. We were there when Quebec needed us and we will always be there for Quebecers.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are now, without a doubt, in the second wave of COVID-19, but the same problems persist. We are frightened for our seniors in long-term care centres. People are having a hard time accessing COVID-19 testing.

What is the plan for the second wave of COVID-19? What is the plan for improving access to COVID-19 testing? What is the plan for helping our seniors in long-term care centres?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the plan is to continue working closely with the provinces, territories and municipalities.

We purchased 7.9 million rapid tests last week, and we will have more news this week.

As for our approach, the safe restart agreement we reached this summer will provide the provinces and territories with \$19 billion in support.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that we are not headed in the wrong direction. The Prime Minister said we are not going in the right direction. The Prime Minister is the sole person responsible for steering our country in the right direction, but he is not taking action. Right now in Ontario there are 49 outbreaks in long-term care homes, where hundreds of seniors are infected with COVID-19, but we know that these problems have existed before.

What is the plan? What is the plan to help our seniors? When will families know that their loved ones in long-term care homes are finally safe?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must agree with the leader of the NDP about one thing: We truly are at a crossroads when it comes to COVID-19. The second wave is here right now, particularly acute in Quebec and Ontario, and each one of us has a responsibility to do everything we can to flatten the curve.

When it comes to fighting the coronavirus, we are committed to continuing to work in close collaboration with the provinces, territories and municipalities. It is the Canadian way and we are going to keep on doing it.

• (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian way to solve problems is to work together and act quickly. Unfortunately, back in March, during the first wave, the Liberal government dragged its feet on the border problem. Everybody recognizes that.

Now, in the midst of the second wave, the Liberal government is dragging its feet on approving rapid tests. There were 1,200 new cases in Quebec today, and some people are waiting a week for their results. Why is the government dragging its feet on this?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is right. We have to work incredibly hard together, the provinces, territories and local public health units, to fight this second wave of COVID-19.

We know that testing is one aspect of controlling COVID-19. So is a strong contact-tracing regime. So is isolation of close contacts.

We have been there for the provinces and territories, including all Canadians across this country. We will continue to work with the provinces and territories. This is a very sneaky virus, and we know that all hands on board is what we need to get through it together.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are not seeing results. Back in March there was the border issue, and now there is a rapid testing issue. Japan has been using tests since March that provide results in just 15 minutes.

Japan has been able to do it. Why is Canada dragging its feet on approving rapid tests?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the premise of the question of the member opposite is incorrect. We have had rapid testing in Canada for several months. In fact, we have nearly 70 GeneXpert machines across the country in provinces and territories, in rural and remote communities to protect indigenous communities, and we have continued to add tests as they become available in Canada. In fact, the Abbott test is our third test to have been approved that is a rapid test. We will continue to work with manufacturers and with provinces and territories to be there, no matter what it takes.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if things are going so well then why do we in Quebec still have to wait almost a week to get results?

Some lucky people get their results in hours and that is great. However, most Canadians are unable to get results in a timely fashion.

Why did the government wait so long to approve rapid tests?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the provinces of Quebec and Ontario in particular are strug-

Oral Questions

gling with their testing strategies and with their capacity. We are there for provinces and territories that need additional help. We have a rapid response program, where we go into different jurisdictions to support them.

Whether it is with contact tracing needs, whether it is with human resources for long-term care or whether it is with epidemiological expertise, we have been there for the provinces and territories. We will continue to be there for provinces and territories because at the end of the day, no matter where Canadians live, they deserve excellence in health care.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister just claimed there are rapid tests for Canadians, yet Karl Skogstad in Thunder Bay said that he had to wait nine days to get his toddler tested. If one is keeping one's kid at home for two weeks and has to stay at home, it is difficult on families and the child's education.

The minister is claiming there are rapid tests; Karl says there is not. Who is right, the incompetent health minister or Karl?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my heart goes out to Karl, because of course it is challenging, he is absolutely right, when we are waiting for the results of tests to determine whether we can continue on with our lives. We have been working very closely with the Province of Ontario to help deal with the backlog of nearly 78,000 tests or so that they are experiencing. Of course, as they refine their testing strategy, we are there with them to provide additional supports in clearing that backlog. We will be there for Ontarians, including Karl, including all Ontarians across the province, to make sure they get the test they need when they need it.

• (1435)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is the point: The government has not been there for Karl.

In fact, in Thunder Bay, Dr. Stewart Kennedy, the physician leading up the COVID-19 response at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre says that the turnaround test time for COVID-19 is problematic. It is because they do not have access to rapid tests. That is this minister's job, and if she cannot even do the job in her own backyard, what hope does the rest of Canada have?

When are we going to have access to rapid tests?

Oral Questions

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I speak with Dr. Kennedy every single week on the situation in Thunder Bay, so I am excited the member opposite knows so much about my home community. I would gladly include her in briefings with the department if she wishes to take me up on understanding the challenges Ontario is facing, including on testing capacity. Thunder Bay has the capacity to do 300 lab tests, but the rest it does not have the capacity to process. We are going to be there for Ontario, along with all other provinces and territories as they continue to work through testing strategies that make sense and will work for all Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if only there were some way to rapidly test people in Canada, let us say at home, using tests that have been approved around the world in other countries, maybe we could have more access to tests. The minister fundamentally does not understand this. She sat on her thumbs for months. Karl and her hospital are telling her this and she thinks that it is great and it is fine. The government is incompetent and it is killing people. There are people who cannot see their loved ones or go to work because of the lack of rapid tests, and the Liberals sit here and try to tell us it is okay.

When are we getting rapid tests?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reiterate my offer for the member opposite to be fully briefed by my department on what a comprehensive testing strategy looks like, because clearly when she indicates that perhaps people could test themselves at home and that would solve our problem, she is indicating a lack of awareness that, once people receive the test, something has to be done with that test. That is where the real work begins with public health with respect to contact tracing and the isolation of close contacts.

I am on the ground every single week talking to public health units at local levels to understand what their challenges are. I certainly invite her to take the briefing at her convenience.

* * *

[Translation]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY MEASURES

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, SMEs, like restaurants or bars, survived the first wave of COVID-19 by going into debt. That is no longer an option. Loans no longer cut it.

If we want to avoid thousands of bankruptcies during the second wave then we have to help our businesses pay their fixed costs. Quebec has brought in repayable conditional financial assistance for fixed costs and is calling on Ottawa to contribute to it. The Bloc has been calling on Ottawa for help with fixed costs since April.

Quebec has taken action. What is Ottawa waiting for?

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

In the Speech from the Throne, we promised we would help SMEs pay their fixed costs. This assistance is more important than ever since we are in the second wave and the provinces, including

Quebec, have taken strong measures to combat this second wave. We must truly be there for them and we will be.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what the government announced on Friday is more loans. However, there is a limit to how much debt bars and restaurants can take on. There is a limit to what can be put off to tomorrow. In its throne speech, Ottawa promised to help businesses being closed by order of the public health authorities.

Will they finally put their words into action? Will Ottawa join the Government of Quebec and provide assistance for the fixed costs of businesses in the red zone?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes. I discussed this issue with Quebec's finance minister, Éric Girard, yesterday evening. He and I are going to be talking again this evening.

I have a question for the Bloc. Once we have completed the technical work, I hope the Bloc will vote with us.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has hurt the cultural sector more than most. The sector was just coming back to life when people were told to shut down again. This year is a write-off for festivals and events. Our artists are in lockdown again. They are worried.

Quebec has announced measures, such as box office income support, that will really help.

In the throne speech, the Liberal government promised support for the cultural sector specifically over and above the Canada emergency response benefit and the Canada emergency wage subsidy because everyone knows that is not enough to save an industry worth over \$53 billion. The throne speech clearly states that the government will introduce “further support for industries that have been the hardest hit, including travel and tourism, hospitality, and cultural industries like the performing arts.”

Existing programs are not good enough. When will the government announce something? What is it waiting for?

• (1440)

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

We are also very concerned about the situation in the arts and culture sector. This is why our government has so far provided \$4 billion in assistance, including \$500 million in emergency assistance, to help the sector through this serious crisis. Just last week, we announced a \$50-million fund to provide insurance coverage so that television and film productions can resume across the country.

We have been there, we are there and we will continue to be there for the arts and culture sector.

HEALTH

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the Liberal Party, the arrogance starts at the top and trickles down to its members. I implore this government to stop wasting time and make rapid testing a priority.

Instead of taking responsibility for their inaction, they blame others. Last week, the member for Gatineau attacked Outaouais health officials, saying that decisions are often made in the Outaouais that leave people confused about health.

Will the Prime Minister take him to task and ask him to apologize?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that we, all of us in the House, understand that every public health official, every health care worker, every person in our health care systems across the country, at the local, provincial and federal levels, are working flat out to protect Canadians' health. I think that on this side of the House and, certainly I would hope, all of us understand that we owe a debt of gratitude to these hard-working professionals who, in many cases, have not slept for months.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely why the comments made by the member for Gatineau are shameful.

At a time when we should be grateful to health care professionals, the Liberals are attacking them. So many of our health care workers are tired, overworked and in need of support. Instead, the member for Gatineau chooses to insult health care workers by questioning their procurement strategy and management skills.

Will the Prime Minister stand up in the House and apologize for his paternalistic attitude toward the Government of Quebec, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I can say that all of us have a profound respect for the work of health care workers all across this country, regardless of which area they are working in.

We know that we cannot get through this without our health care workers. Furthermore, we know that people are learning every single day about this virus: how to manage it, how to contain it and how to deal with the second wave. I am proud to be part of a government that knows that when it gets hard, we roll up our sleeves and we work even harder.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Gatineau hospital bought a state-of-the-art rapid testing machine. The Quebec minister of families, Mathieu Lacombe, said that this is like we have a Ferrari in the garage and are just waiting for permission to drive it.

Oral Questions

What is the federal government waiting for? When will it give the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de l'Outaouais the green light?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am unaware of the particular testing device that the member is speaking about, but I will certainly dig in and find out exactly what the delay is and what kind of equipment they are waiting for.

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, local businesses in Edmonton have been hit hard by COVID. Instead of helping small businesses like Fred's Truck Outfitters, the government laid out a flawed rent assistance program that did not do the job. Now that the Liberals have ended the program without replacing it, Fred and other business owners are left scrambling to stay open as the second wave hits. Small businesses create jobs and contribute to our communities and the country.

When will the Prime Minister stand up for small businesses and support them into the second wave?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, personally, I love the small businesses of Edmonton Strathcona, in particular.

In the Speech from the Throne, we committed to extending CE-BA to support small businesses across the country and to support small businesses with their fixed costs, including rent. That is something that we are working on right now with the provinces and municipalities. Small businesses need our continued support and we are going to be there for them.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a damning report released today says that the decisions made by the Public Health Agency of Canada put health care workers at risk, because unlike other countries it failed to learn lessons from SARS.

Canada's infection rate for health care workers is twice that of the global rate. The nurses union has not been properly consulted. Some nurses were denied N95 masks and the safety needs for long-term care homes were ignored. The president of the PHAC stepped down after only 18 months and now this.

Does the minister accept any responsibility or is she just going to point fingers again?

Oral Questions

● (1445)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, I accepted full responsibility and insisted that the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, CFNU, was at the table as guidance continued to be developed for the appropriate use of personal protective equipment in hospital and clinical settings. The CFNU was included in those guidance documents. Their suggestions were included and updated guidance was released.

We will continue to work with unions to protect the health and safety workers across this country.

* * *

HOUSING

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Halifax West and across Nova Scotia, we are seeing a concerning decline in housing affordability. The government has taken important steps to help Canadians find an affordable place to call home with a national housing strategy, which has had a real impact for communities across Canada. Still, many Nova Scotians are concerned about paying rent.

Could the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development please provide an update to the House on the measures being taken to make rent more affordable?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my thanks to my hon. colleague for Halifax West for his strong advocacy on behalf of his constituents, and on housing issues in general.

We know that people in Nova Scotia and across the country have been worried about making ends meet during these challenging times. That is why I am so pleased that last week we were able to launch the Canada-Nova Scotia targeted housing benefit. It will provide up to 6,100 households in the province with an average of over \$200 a month to help cover the cost of housing. This is real help going directly into the pockets of Nova Scotians and this is another example of the national housing strategy at work.

* * *

*[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Germany, the United Kingdom and Japan are also dealing with COVID-19, but their unemployment rates are half that of Canada. Our unemployment rate is not only twice as high as those of these three countries, but we also have the highest unemployment rate in the G7. The unemployment rate is 3% higher in Canada than in other OECD countries. Canada has the worst employment record in the G7 and that is a result of this government's policies.

Will the government do away with its anti-employment policies so that Canadians can get back to work?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Conservatives do not want to admit it, but our economic policy works for workers.

Members do not need to take my word for it. We are told that Canada is ahead of the United States in the race to recover the jobs

that were lost because of the pandemic. In August, Canada had recovered approximately two-thirds of the lost jobs, compared to 55% in the United States.

I believe the United States is a G7 country.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Right, Mr. Speaker, but we went into the crisis with a much higher unemployment rate than the United States of America because of the anti-job policies of the current government. Right now, today, this country has higher unemployment than the U.S., the U.K., Japan, Germany, Italy, France. It is three percentage points higher than across the OECD. That is the result of a failed jobs policy here in Canada. When will the government get out of the way so that Canada gets out of last place?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to remind the member for Carleton that going into this crisis, Canada had the lowest unemployment rate we have had in 40 years, and I believe that there were a few Conservative governments during that period. They did not hit our record.

When it comes to international comparison, the better metric is labour force participation. Canada is at 78.5%, Australia is only at 77.5%, the U.S. is at 73% and South Korea is at 62.1%. We are higher than all of those countries.

* * *

● (1450)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, a gangland shooting occurred where the targets were connected to an international money-laundering syndicate. These individuals are linked to the Chinese Communist Party's efforts to interfere in Canadian politics and disrupt this country's institutions. These same people have rubbed shoulders with well-known Liberals, including former MP Joe Peschisolidi, former minister Raymond Chan and former Liberal Party insider Michael Ching. When will these Liberals temper their affection for the Chinese Communist Party and protect Canada's democracy?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear that our government is actually quite firm in dealing with individuals who are attempting to hide their money in Canada, and on organized crime.

I would simply remind the member opposite that in the Conservatives' last four years in office they slashed the budget of law enforcement by over half a billion dollars. They closed 12 integrated proceeds-of-crime units. Tough talk about crime and organized crime and protecting Canadians was backed up by very weak action.

We are reversing the cuts and the slashes that the Conservatives made and we are restoring the capacity of our law enforcement agencies to keep us safe.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that cozying up with the Chinese Communist Party comes with serious consequences. Joe Peschisolido, whose ethical violation these Liberals tried to cover up in this House last week, is one of the Liberals connected with the incident. Many of the individuals pictured with these senior Liberals have ties to the United Front, an organization that Beijing has been using to suppress pro-democracy rallies in Hong Kong. The Liberals have had these ties for years. When will the Prime Minister finally condemn those who are actively trying to undermine democracy here and in Hong Kong?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from the Conservatives when it comes to dealing with China. We were the first country in the world to suspend our extradition treaty with Hong Kong. We suspended the export of sensitive equipment to Hong Kong. We are going to announce measures on immigration with respect to Hong Kong. Every step of the way we have fought for human rights. We are standing up for the people of Hong Kong and the 300,000 Canadians who live in Hong Kong.

The Speaker: Order. I want to remind the hon. members that usually when the Speaker stands it means everybody stay quiet.

I want to remind hon. members that I heard some words. I kind of know where they came from, but be careful on the parliamentary language you are using. Calling someone else a name is not something that we encourage in the House. Actually, we discourage it.

The hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec had to close restaurants and bars. The next day, it announced help for restaurants and bars. The Government of Quebec had to close theatres. The next day, it announced help for theatres. The Government of Canada had to close airports. Six months later, there is still nothing to help them. While the Minister of Transport tells us he is thinking about it, other countries are supporting their airline industries.

What is the minister doing? When is he going to do something?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Oral Questions

I want to assure him that we are working very hard to find help for our country's airline industry. We know that it has been profoundly affected by this pandemic. I can assure him that the government's priority is to find solutions to ensure that the airline industry will be healthy when the pandemic is over.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the industry has been waiting for quite some time already. It was obvious that, with the borders closed, things were going to be tough for the airline industry, which has lost 90% of its business. Despite this tragedy, there is still no support from Ottawa. The United States has earmarked \$20 billion for its airports alone. The only thing the Canadian government has done is stop collecting rent from the airports in Montreal and Quebec City. It has done absolutely nothing for the regions. Air transportation is crucial to our economy, and 70,000 jobs depend on this industry. That means 70,000 families are in limbo.

When is the minister going to do something?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said, this is a priority for us, and it was actually mentioned in the throne speech. We have been clear in our commitment to support the regions, because the regions need to be served just like the other parts of our country. We recognize how important it is to do this. It is part of the solution, and we are working on a global solution. We will make the announcements as soon as we have something to say.

• (1455)

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mental Illness Awareness Week is designed to open the eyes of all Canadians to the reality of mental illness. It is incumbent on all of us as leaders of our great country to commit to doing better, being better when it comes to understanding the very real impact of mental illness and injury.

Last week, the Minister of Employment made a snide comment about having PTSD as it related to the Phoenix pay system. It is comments like this that further stigmatize and minimize the impacts of mental illness and injury on those suffering in the shadows. Will the minister apologize to the thousands of Canadians fighting mental illness and injury for this ridiculous comment?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can say that, on this side of the House, all members understand that far too many Canadians are living under the shadows of mental illness. Certainly my heart goes out to them and their families. That is why at the beginning of the pandemic we added an additional \$500 million in direct transfers to provinces and territories to boost up capacity to deal with mental illness. We also launched the [wellnesstogether.ca](https://www.wellnesstogether.ca) portal at the very beginning stages of the pandemic. I encourage all Canadians to check out this free resource where they can gain access to professionals who can help them in this time of need.

Oral Questions

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, therefore, the Minister of Employment will not apologize. Too many Canadians are struggling with mental illness in silence. Extended periods of isolation and quarantine have led to increased anxiety, stress, substance abuse, domestic violence and suicide. COVID-19 has pushed those already suffering further into the shadows. Mental health is a cornerstone of public health and it is critical to our nation's recovery. There is no health without mental health.

Canadians need a plan to address this mental health crisis, before we go forward, to go forward. Where is the plan?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all along the way, before the pandemic and including after the pandemic, we have been there for provinces and territories to increase their capacity to support Canadians who are living with mental illness and to improve the mental wellness of all Canadians. I encourage the member opposite to take a look at the [wellnesstogether.ca](https://www.wellnesstogether.ca) portal, which adds federal support to the work that provinces and territories are conducting. It is very important that we all have these open and honest conversations about mental illness and wellness in our own personal lives and in our communities. We must break the stigma. We must help people to seek help.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last December, the environment minister declined to order an impact assessment of the Bighorn mine outside of Hinton, saying that it would be dealt with by provincial approval. However, on July 30, ministerial discretion was used to designate the Vista mine expansion to be under federal review.

When will the government finally admit that it does not want any form of natural extraction in Canada?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague could not be further from the truth. The reality is that we have and continue to support our energy sector workers. Just during this pandemic, we invested over \$1.7 billion to help clean up abandoned oil wells. We have invested \$750 million to support the efforts in the oil sector to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. We have put in place measures to support the workers, and we will continue to do that.

We are going to continue to support all Canadians, regardless of what sector they are in. We are going to be there for Canadians.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the residents of Brampton East were thrilled to hear about the recent \$45 million transit investment made by our federal government, which is one of the largest investments in Brampton transit in over 10 years. This funding will allow for increased reliability for riders at capacity, while providing cleaner transit options for the wonderful residents of Brampton.

Could the Minister of Infrastructure or parliamentary secretary please provide insight into our government's plan for clean transit solutions across the country?

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Brampton East for all his hard work on behalf of his constituents.

We are committed to investing in communities as we build back better from the effects of COVID-19 pandemic. Our investing in Canada plan means new electric buses, new subways, new bike lanes and new multi-use paths.

We will continue to invest in public transit and active transportation to help Canadians get to work and back home to their families safely and quickly, while creating good jobs, economic growth and promoting environmentally-friendly transportation.

* * *

● (1500)

HEALTH

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Tri-City COVID-19 testing clinic was run by 10 doctors who gave up their spare time. It was the only clinic in my community and, sadly, its doors closed on October 2. The doctors were burning out.

Other countries have had rapid testing for months, but the Liberal government has delayed procuring rapid testing devices. The recently approved Abbott ID NOW may not arrive in sufficient amounts for months.

Will the Prime Minister admit that his failure at rapid tests has caused the clinic in my community to close?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's story illustrates why we owe health care workers such a debt of gratitude during this incredibly demanding time. In fact, all across the country, health care workers are tired, they are exhausted, including public health care workers who are doing the hard work of contact tracing and helping people to isolate.

We have accelerated access to rapid testing. In fact, the Abbott test is the third rapid test we have approved. We have had almost 70 gene experts around the country in rural and remote communities for a long time. We are going to continue to work with all kinds of different test manufacturers to make sure we have the blend of tools we need.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just a minute ago the foreign affairs minister said that nobody was going to be tougher on China than the Liberals were, but that is not what he told Chinese state media. He said, “and I would say China, stands out as a beacon of stability, predictability, a rule-based system, a very inclusive society.” That was the foreign affairs minister. He is saying one thing one thing to Canadians and another thing to Chinese state-owned media.

My question for the foreign affairs minister is this. When are he and the Liberal government going to temper their affection for the Chinese Communist Party and start putting the interests of this country, of Canadians, first?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that the member allows me to talk about the leadership we have done around the world when it comes to the Chinese issue.

The member knows very well when I was referring to that, and Canadians at home understand, that the beacon of stability, predictability and rule of law is Canada. Everyone in Canada and around the world understands. That is why we can take a stance in the world, talk for human rights, defend the people of Hong Kong, speak with the Uighurs and speak for the Tibetans.

We will continue to do that at every opportunity.

* * *

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all western Canadians, including our premiers, want to be equal partners in Confederation. Canada's economic recovery plan must be inclusive by considering and respecting the wealth of all provinces, including their natural resources.

At a time when our country so desperately needs to come together, the divisive attitude and actions of the Prime Minister and his government are very disturbing.

When will the Prime Minister stop his childish mocking of the concerns of western Canada and finally begin to address our needs?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has for many months worked collaboratively with western premiers and, indeed, premiers across the country to meet the economic and public health needs of their citizens. I had a conversation with the Premier of Alberta, for example, a few days ago. It was a very constructive and positive conversation about what we could do together to support the people of Alberta and to work together to help Canadians in the economic crisis and public health crisis that all Canadians face.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout the pandemic the government has made it a priority to support indigenous communities, which has helped contain the

Oral Questions

spread of COVID-19 and has kept people safe. Our government has committed to walking the path of reconciliation with indigenous peoples and has been focused on implementing commitments made in 2019.

Could the Minister of Justice please update the House on our commitment to introduce the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Brampton North for her tireless efforts on behalf of indigenous peoples and the reconciliation process.

Our government is committed to advancing the rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis across the country as we walk the path of reconciliation together. As part of that work, we have committed to introducing legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the end of 2020. We have been working closely with national indigenous organizations on a path forward that is adapted to the new circumstances imposed by the pandemic, while collaborating with indigenous partners and rights holders on the development of the legislation.

We look forward to having more to share soon.

• (1505)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, vigils were held across the country to honour, remember and demand justice for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Indigenous women in my riding, frustrated by the inaction of the government, started the lil' red dress project to raise money to put up billboards with names and faces of missing indigenous women and girls across Vancouver Island.

Is this what it has come to: fundraising to save lives? What will it take for the Liberal government to move past empty words and actually help to save the lives of indigenous women and girls in our country?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the concern of the member. I too participated yesterday, October 4, as we honoured the lives of those who had gone missing and supported the families of the MMIWG, two-spirited and gender-diverse people across the country.

Our government is determined to work with all provinces and territories in responding to the first-ever national inquiry to make sure that the families can seek justice and receive support. We will put in the concrete actions to stop this national tragedy.

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Vancouver Granville, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are horrified by the racism witnessed during the tragic death of Joyce Echaquan. Of course, racism is not new. Indigenous peoples, even those in this chamber, including myself, have experienced racism throughout the history of Canada. Racism occurs in all sectors of society, including governments and political parties. This must change.

Does the minister agree that not nearly enough has been done by his government to combat indigenous-specific racism? Assuming he does, what new concrete and specific actions will he take to combat it? Will he call it out always and not only when it reaches the front pages?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this traumatizing and dehumanizing event that occurred in the death of Joyce Echaquan was an expression of the absolute worst face of racism.

Systemic racism in our health care system is a national problem and we must face the reality that our institutions continue to fail indigenous peoples. It is essential that there be a timely and transparent investigation and we welcome Quebec's decision to act swiftly on the inquest.

We know that this is not limited to the health care system and expresses itself across all institutions of government. While much has been done in the last five years, much more remains and we will continue to work on it diligently and call it out wherever it occurs.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying).

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

* * *

● (1510)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-247, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (controlling or coercive conduct).

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I have a private members' bill that would help address domestic violence in Canada by making controlling or coercive conduct in an intimate relationship a criminal offence. Right now police often lack the ability to intervene in domestic violence cases before physical violence takes place, even though significant harm may have already been inflicted on one of the partners. People living in fear of violence should not have to wait to experience violence before receiving help and protection. This bill acknowledges that victims of controlling or coercive conduct suffer serious harms that are not overtly violent. Harms resulting from fear of violence often include declining mental and physi-

cal health, and limitations on the partner's ability to carry on an independent and autonomous life.

During this pandemic, governments have told Canadians to stay home to stay safe, but unfortunately not every home is a safe place. In fact, I know in my riding, as in most communities, police have seen a spike in domestic violence calls during the pandemic. Creating a new offence for controlling or coercive conduct will not only help stop the serious harm already being suffered, but also facilitate earlier intervention by police, which may avert physical violence later on.

If this bill had already been enforced, it might have been possible to prevent the shootings in Portapique, Nova Scotia, earlier this year. The shootings began with an incident of domestic violence between individuals whose problematic relationships had been brought to the attention of the police by neighbours and friends numerous times, though without ever rising to the level of physical violence that would have allowed police to act. This bill will fill that gap. The federal ombudsman for victims of crime has recently called for adding this kind of provision to our Criminal Code, and a similar bill has been enacted in the U.K.

I hope the government will support this private members' bill and help facilitate its early passage through the House.

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

The Speaker: Before continuing, I want to remind all members that the explanation given should be succinct.

* * *

PETITIONS

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition is from a group of constituents in my riding who are concerned about the situation in Kashmir. They are concerned that there are human rights violations going on and are calling on the Canadian government to lift the curfew that has been going on for four months, withdraw the 900,000-plus armed troops, return the 13,000 Kashmiri boys abducted and demand Mr. Modi give freedom back to the Kashmiri people.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is about small business owners. They are calling on the government to take the lead on implementing policies that will help businesses succeed, including reducing EI and CPP premiums, repealing the federal carbon tax, making it as easy to sell a business to a family member as it is to a stranger, cutting red tape in policies and guidelines, and balancing the budget within the next five years.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to present to the House a petition put forward by Tina Smith Brooks, a member of my community who lives in Rigaud. She is a business owner and a very active member of the community.

She has put forward a petition calling upon the Government of Canada to implement quantifiable targets to transition to organics; offer education and financial support to Canadians to increase organic agriculture and food processing, giving all Canadians better access; and require government buildings to purchase organics and protect Canadians' health from the dangers of conventional farming processes, while healing the environment.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to be presenting five petitions in the House today.

The first petition is with respect to Bill C-7. It is timely, as it is the same bill number that the justice minister just tabled, although maybe we see some differences in the text.

This petition refers to some changes that were in the last version of the bill, which removed vital safeguards associated with the euthanasia regime. The petitioners are concerned that the bill sought to eliminate the 10-day reflection period and eliminate requirements regarding witnesses. They believe those safeguards should remain in place.

• (1515)

AFGHAN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with the challenges experienced by the Sikh and Hindu minority in Afghanistan. The petitioners highlight various instances of violence that have targeted this community and call for a response from the Government of Canada. In particular, they would like to see the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship use the powers granted to him to create a special program to help persecuted minorities in Afghanistan.

I note there was a recent letter on this issue, which was signed by members of the Conservatives, as well the New Democratic Party and the Green Party caucuses.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition I present is with respect to organ harvesting and trafficking. The petitioners are supportive of

Routine Proceedings

various legislative initiatives that have sought to make it a criminal offence for a Canadian to go abroad to receive an organ taken without consent.

FIREARMS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, petition number four is with respect to the rights of firearms owners. The petitioners note that the vast majority of gun crime involves illegal guns, often smuggled into Canada. They point out that the order in council brought in by the government on May 1 is really an act of misdirection that does not focus on the real problem. The petition proposes that the order in council be reversed and that instead the government bring forward necessary measures to address the real cause of gun crime, which is illegal guns, and in particular smuggled guns.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fifth and final petition draws attention to the horrific abuses facing Uighur Muslims in China. It calls for a meaningful response from the government, or, in other words, more than just words.

The petitioners ask the government to formally recognize that Uighurs in China have been subject to genocide and ask the government to use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, the Magnitsky act, to sanction those responsible for the heinous crimes being committed against Uighur people.

HERBICIDES

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I will be tabling two petitions in the House.

The first one is on herbicides in the forestry industry. This is specifically for the Minister of Health. It talks about the impacts of herbicides in the forestry industry. This is from the citizens of qatset Regional District and Powell River.

The petitioners are concerned about the use of herbicides and the impacts they have on biodiversity. They harm local water sources, accelerate climate change and worsen forest fires. The petitioners call for a ban on the use of herbicides in the forestry industry in all of Canada, with the exception of addressing invasive species.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am tabling today is in support of Motion No. 1, a green new deal. This was signed by numerous citizens across Canada. It is in support of the member for New Westminster—Burnaby and calls for a green new deal in Canada to prevent catastrophic climate change and ensure a just transition and an economy that works for everyone.

Routine Proceedings

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions.

The first represents the voices of 35,255 Canadians who are calling on the government to protect human life. These signatories call on this chamber to enact legislation granting full legal protection to a child not yet born, starting from the beginning of his or her biological development as a human being. The petitioners also urge the House of Commons to show leadership in fostering a life-sustaining society.

I hope we heed their voices in this chamber. When we fail to protect the right to life of some, we undermine the right to life for all.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on sex-selective abortion.

The petitioners note that sex selection is antithetical to our commitment to equality between men and women, and that 84% of Canadians agree that it should be illegal to have an abortion simply because a family does not want a child to be a certain sex. The petitioners call on this chamber to pass a Criminal Code prohibition of sex-selective abortion.

Members of the House will have the opportunity to pass Bill C-233 to address this inequality, and I encourage all members to do exactly that.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to present e-petition 2759. It has 2,278 signatures and has been put forward by Annamie Paul, from Toronto, who is the new leader of the Green Party.

The petition calls for the Government of Canada to proclaim August 1 as emancipation day, and to celebrate it on that day each year. It notes that the transatlantic slave trade brought people of African descent to Canada in the early 1600s and that the practice of slavery was also inflicted on indigenous peoples, continuing until it was abolished in the British Empire on August 1, 1834.

Canada's history of enslavement, racial segregation and marginalization has had a devastating impact on people of African descent. The existence of systemic anti-Black racism in education, housing, employment, health, criminal justice, politics and other areas can be directly traced to the history of slavery in Canada. Canada has neither recognized nor educated the public adequately about the historical facts related to slavery and the anti-Black racism it has produced. Black Canadians have made outstanding contributions to Canada in every field, which is all the more remarkable given the legacy of slavery. It is necessary to recognize the history of Black Canadians in order to build a more just society, free from discrimination.

I am hoping that we can pronounce August 1 as emancipation day in Canada, each and every year.

• (1520)

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members to be as succinct as possible when presenting petitions. I know it is very important to

us and we want to make sure that a lot of this gets out, but try to be as succinct as possible.

SENIORS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I table a petition signed by many residents of Winnipeg North. They are calling on the government to look at ways that the OAS could be supported by looking at seniors who need the additional support.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present, virtually, a petition that comes from a number of organizations in the field of international development assistance. It is petition 10865856, in the area of climate finance. It calls for the Government of Canada to ensure that funds provided to developing countries for climate action recognize the need for adaptation, the needs of women and the need for projects that target gender equality. The petitioners specifically ask that at least 50% of Canada's public climate financing for developing countries go toward adaptation, as well as substantial support for gender equality.

The Speaker: I would remind all members who presented a petition to please bring it to the table themselves. We do not want to expose the pages to any dangers of COVID, so I would ask them to please remember to bring their petitions to the table.

[Translation]

I would ask hon. members to bring the petitions to the table themselves. We do not want to jeopardize the pages' health.

* * *

[English]

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.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[English]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

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

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been quite a while since I have been physically present in the House. This is my first day back, partly because of the COVID pandemic, and partly because the Prime Minister decided to shut down Parliament and prorogue to get away from the WE scandal that was damaging his reputation, due to the Liberal corruption and involvement there.

As I am here today, I want to say that 2020 has been a difficult year for everyone. My heart goes out to those Canadians who have suffered in many ways, including from the loss of a loved one, from separation and from isolation. We all need to work together to do the right thing and move forward.

As is my habit when it comes to the throne speech, I am going to talk about what I liked in the throne speech, what I did not like in the throne speech and what I thought was missing in the throne speech.

In terms of what I liked, there were a lot of noble ideas, including things that the citizens of Sarnia—Lambton could agree with and get behind, but without any evidence that action was going to be taken.

This is the third throne speech I have had the pleasure of hearing. This one was really reminiscent of 2015, with a lot of the same buzz phrases, such as “the middle class and those hoping to join them”, and “a whole-of-government approach”. Nobody really knows what that means anyway. Resiliency and agility were mentioned as other buzz words, but again, it was mostly a regurgitation of promises previously made.

I think addressing the opioid crisis is a priority, but that was a promise made by the government years ago and we are having more deaths from the opioid crisis than from the COVID crisis. Some of the other things in the speech, like pharmacare, the Liberals have been talking about since 1992. We continue not to see anything.

The speech mentioned pay equity for women. I was on the pay equity committee when I was first elected in 2015, and there has been no action taken in five years. Where is that action?

Concerning the truth and reconciliation recommendations, the government has said that the relationship with indigenous people is its number one priority, but since 2015 we have seen no action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations.

Achieving the Paris targets by 2030 is certainly a noble theme, because those targets came from the previous Conservative government. The reality is that the Liberal government is not going to achieve the 2030 targets, and it is now talking about exceeding those targets.

The Address

These things may be noble, but where is the action?

One of my constituents pointed out that the promise to plant two billion trees in 10 years is way behind, and if the Liberals want to get going, they are going to have to plant 547,945 trees each day for the next ten years. That is another promise I do not believe is going to happen.

Affordable housing is something we desperately need in my riding, and I have been waiting for it. The Liberal government has been talking about a national housing strategy and affordable housing since I got elected. I do not know if the money is just going to the Liberal ridings and not to the Conservative ridings, but I am still waiting. It is a crisis and something we need to get behind.

I was very happy to see something about seniors in the throne speech because, in 2015, they eliminated the minister of seniors, which seemed wrong. Half of the people in Sarnia—Lambton are over 60, so seniors are important to my riding.

The Liberals said they were going to take action on long-term care. Certainly, this pandemic has shown us that we need to do something there, but there needs to be recognition that if we come up with national standards for long-term care, more resources are going to be needed. More helpers will be needed: there are not enough workers. That will increase the cost of long-term care.

How will the many seniors living on a fixed income be able to pay for that, especially single seniors, who are among the poorest in the country? Although there are a lot of noble themes, a lot was just a regurgitation of old promises.

What I did not like in the throne speech was the way the response to COVID-19 has rolled out. It has been a gong show from the beginning. The health minister said there was very little risk to Canadians. She said border controls do not work, and then flip-flopped on the mask issue. I have been sending rapid tests for approval to the Minister of Health since April of this year. To see that the Liberals are still nowhere in terms of implementing rapid tests is a big deal.

● (1525)

It is especially a big deal in my riding, because it is a border riding. Lots of folks are inter-married. There are people who have not been able to travel to see their dying parents, attend weddings or funerals, and a lot of people own property on both sides. Rapid tests would be a great way to make sure people could be tested for COVID, found negative, come across to do what they need to do to be part of their families without risking Canadians, and return. It is incredibly important to get this out and not just say the words but get it implemented, and implemented using a protocol at the border that I suggested to the health minister.

The Address

There were some other things that I did not like. Sarnia—Lambton has 30% of the petrochemical oil and gas production in the country, and there was no addressing western alienation or the oil and gas industry. I see nothing but further erosion with respect to this very important industry.

I have three refineries in my riding: Suncor Energy, Shell Canada and Imperial Oil/ExxonMobil. We heard today about the job cuts at Suncor. The day that it looked like the clean fuel standards were being put in place, Shell went up for sale. The Imperial Oil refinery officials are saying it is existential to them: If they do not get an exemption from the clean fuel standard, it will cost three or four billion dollars a year, and the company can be more competitive in other parts of the world. Those were things that I did not like in the throne speech.

I also did not like the single-use plastics ban that was announced. This is hypocrisy from a government that gave \$35 million to Nova Chemicals, in my riding, to incentivize the stakeholders to build a \$2 billion expansion in Sarnia—Lambton instead of in Texas. Of course, the Liberals had to make concessions on the carbon tax because that was not going to be competitive with Texas. We are talking about 1,500 jobs each year for the next five years, and then a bunch of permanent jobs. Now the Liberals say they are going to ban single-use plastics, which puts this project at risk. These are Canadian jobs.

Single-use plastics are not the problem in Canada. I would point out that in the middle of a pandemic, in order to keep every Canadian safe, every bit of food we got from any place was packaged in individual single-use plastics, and everybody who went to the hospital was treated with little implements that were single-use plastics that were wrapped to be sterilized. When Gatineau floods every other year, the sand is put into single-use plastic bags to keep the damage from happening. The issue in Canada is not single-use plastics. We collect a whole bunch of plastics, but we only recycle 9% of them. The issue we should be looking at is microplastic pellets in the Great Lakes. Those issues are fact- and evidence-based. The Liberals talk about being fact- and evidence-based but, honestly, they are way off base on this one and they are going to cost Canadian jobs again for no reason. I did not like that.

The response to crime is always rich coming from a government with Bill C-75, which reduced incidents like forcible confinement of a child down to a summary conviction of less than two years or a fine. It is always fun to hear what the Liberals have to say about crime. Once again, they are going to tackle crime by putting in a handgun ban. I can assure them that the criminals of this country are not going to obey a handgun ban. The lawful gun owners will, but they are not the problem. Ninety-five per cent of gun crime in this country is committed with illegal guns and guns used illegally. Once again, the Liberals are attacking the wrong problem.

What was missing in the throne speech?

An economic recovery plan was mentioned that is going to create a million jobs. I am not exactly sure where those are coming from, because the Liberals are eliminating oil and gas jobs, they are going to kill the plastics industry and they have not done anything for forestry. It goes on and on. That was missing.

Broadband Internet is a noble theme. Where is the money? My riding was promised \$12 million in 2015 or 2016, and we are still waiting for that.

What about the duty-free business? I know the tourism industry is under duress. Duty free is 100% export and right now, the government is doing nothing except closing the borders and depriving tourism businesses of their revenue. Every dollar not spent there is a dollar spent in the U.S., so there is an opportunity.

Finally, I would say the understanding that it is a great time to invest misses the point that, if interest rates increase just 1%, that adds \$12 billion to the debt. Provinces are crying out for more health transfers. We give about \$40 billion total in health transfers, and a 1% interest rate increase could be \$12 billion. Four per cent could be the entire health transfer.

● (1530)

We are really restricting our ability to help the country by not understanding basic math and basic economics.

With that, I will summarize by saying that it was a disappointment, but there is more to come.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her speech. She mentioned that she was going to tell us about things that she liked in the speech. I must have missed some of that because it seemed to go in the other direction.

As a new member in 2015-16, I was on the public accounts committee and we were shocked to see how disability payments from the Canada pension plan had been significantly slowed to Canadians. In the Speech from the Throne, the hon. member will remember that we talked about the disability pension plan and our plans to change it. I would like to hear her comments on that.

● (1535)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, certainly supporting the disabled is important, but keep in mind that it was this Liberal government that tried to remove the disability tax credit from 80% of the people who were getting it so they could not get their disability pension. Keep in mind that this is also the government that promised the disabled a \$600 payment this year, and they are still waiting for that.

It is important to support the disabled, but it is also important to do the actions to support the disabled.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent speech.

I found it admirable that she managed to split her speech into parts of the throne speech she liked and parts she did not. Mind you, one section was slightly longer and more detailed than the other.

She briefly touched on a subject that is important to me, namely access to high-speed Internet. I would like her thoughts on the following question. Does she believe that the federal government should continue to withhold money and try to interfere in programs to roll out high-speed Internet, or should it instead give the money to Quebec and the provinces so they can manage the Internet rollout themselves? In my opinion, that would be much more efficient, but I obviously do not want to answer for my colleague.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

[English]

When it comes to high-speed Internet across the country, there is so much need that we can never have too much. The provinces have come forward and, in fact, the provinces right now are addressing the gaps that were supposed to be addressed in my riding by the federal government, because the federal government never came through with the money it was supposed to come through with. That said, there are so many gaps. We see this even in our virtual Parliament where, chronically, people are dropping off their connection, they cannot hear, their system freezes and all of these things.

The federal government needs to step up its game and co-operate with the provinces and territories to identify the gaps and then have a quick plan to fill them. We do not need a plan that will take five years. This is for business competitiveness. It is for students and those working from home, as many of us may be in this pandemic for some time. This is an urgent need.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that my colleague mentioned the Great Lakes and the microbeads issue. It is one of the good examples of Parliament, because it was passed as an NDP motion. Later on it was the Harper administration that brought it in through regulations and finally enacted it. We see industry and environment actually working together.

I would like the member's comments regarding the border and the connection of American and Canadian families. The government is finally changing its policy a little. We have been pushing for solutions, and we see some openings with regard to that. Nobody wants to have their families reunited and then get them sick, so there is a high degree of accountability on the families that reunite.

What are her thoughts about how that process might actually improve the economy, the environment and businesses as well as the

The Address

families, because this does not only affect the families directly but the entire country?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I began pressing on this issue of the border and of reconciling families early in May. I was pleased to see the government come forward with the reunification of families. However, the definition was not broad enough, so I pressed again to see if we could not include people who were long-term partners. I am happy to see that come along, but there are a number of other gaps, including people who own property and are trying to go there.

Now we have the snowbirds, who want to go, of course, to Florida. Many of them own property there and would stay for some months and then return. That is why we need to have a protocol to protect people. We know that there are different frequencies of COVID in various places where people may be going, so either they should quarantine or we need to have rapid tests in place. In other countries they have tests so that if a person crosses the border, they will take a test and, if negative, be allowed to stay. It reduces the risk to the population while allowing for freedom.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Since I am the health care critic, it will not surprise anyone that my response to the throne speech is mainly about health and the fate of seniors under the current government. I will let my colleague, the agriculture critic, share his concerns on that topic. However, since agriculture is one of the main industries in my riding, I would like to acknowledge all of the farmers in my riding and tell them how proud I am to represent farmers, who never compromise on the quality of their produce and never will.

The Bloc Québécois had four conditions. Obviously, we made several proposals. We made our position clear. Before we would vote in favour of the throne speech, four conditions had to be met: an increase in health care transfers to cover 35% of Quebec's costs; an increase of \$110 a month to old age security; full compensation for supply-managed farmers to make up for the loopholes in the trade agreements with the United States, Europe and the Pacific nations, which have been allowed to stand by successive governments, Conservative and Liberal alike; and respect for areas under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

The Address

None of these conditions were met, announced or even touched upon in the throne speech. It should therefore come as no surprise that I will be voting against the throne speech, which I, along with other observers, see as a political diversion intended to draw attention away from the Liberal Party's inherent problems: ethical problems, not genetic problems, and the WE scandal. A number of pundits have commented on the Prime Minister's address to the nation, saying that it was merely a partisan replay of the throne speech.

This is the same government that keeps calling upon our spirit of collaboration in these difficult times. It is true that the world is going through one of the worst health crises ever. The Liberal Party's next slogan should be, "Do what I say, not what I do." It is turning a deaf ear to a broad consensus in Quebec and even, in some respects, across Canada. I will get back to that. Once again, with the throne speech, the government defied a broad Quebec consensus and the unanimous will of every party in the National Assembly. That is something. It also ignored the united front presented by Quebec and the provinces with regard to health transfers, Quebec's seniors' rights associations, the FADOQ networks and the AQDR. That is really something.

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons says that he is tired of hearing the Bloc Québécois advocate for this broad consensus and unanimous demand from Quebecers. It is my job to speak for Quebecers in the House, because he is not doing so, despite being from Quebec. He is turning a deaf ear, as, I would imagine, are many of the Liberal members from Quebec. Who will stand up in the House to defend Quebec? The Bloc Québécois. That is why I was elected.

We are in the middle of a serious public health crisis, and public health is a matter of prevention.

• (1540)

Let us revisit that great idea of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin, that of punting the federal government's deficit into the provinces' backyards. Some people found that brilliant. Jean Chrétien travelled around the world saying that the best part of this policy was that he was making cuts, but citizens were protesting in front of Québec's National Assembly rather than the Parliament in Ottawa.

So far, there have been 25 years of cuts. Québec has tried its best to do more with less. It has shaken up structures; it has tried. However, in the case of public health and prevention, when the province is having a hard time caring for patients, when it has to send people abroad for cancer treatments, cuts have to be made somewhere.

At the Standing Committee on Health, which was trying to find solutions and understand what is happening with COVID-19, every expert witness said that we needed to learn something from the pandemic. One of the first lessons is that no one in Canada was prepared to face this health crisis. We will be able to identify the problems later in a report to be prepared by the Committee.

According to those experts, the reason why no one was prepared is the chronic underfunding of the health care sector, which laid bare the shortcomings and weak links in the system when unforeseen events of this scope occur. Year after year, transfer payments have been systematically cut.

The Conservative Party is not in a position to lecture anyone, since Stephen Harper decided on an escalator of 3%. When they were the opposition, the Liberals said that it should be 6%. It is a funny thing. Now that the Liberals have been in government for five years, they are no longer talking about increasing the escalator to 6%.

I am eager to learn what the Conservatives' position is on the provincial united front. I have been asking the question since the beginning of the debate, but I have not gotten a clear answer. It seems they want the escalator to be predictable, but, apart from that, no one is saying much. The escalator of 3% was predictable, but still inadequate.

Do we agree there is a need to catch up? The federal government's share of health care is almost 18%, or about 22 cents on the dollar. If nothing changes in the coming years, we will be talking about 18 cents on the dollar.

The provinces and Quebec are calling for 35 cents on the dollar, which means \$28 billion more. Right now, the provinces as a whole spend \$188 billion a year, compared with the federal government's outlay of \$42 billion a year.

During a pandemic, we need to make sustainable and structural investments, not one-off payments. We need structural investments that will enable us to build a future and allow the system to get back on its feet. That is why it is so important to invest wisely in health care.

That is also why our seniors need a decent income. Worrying about making ends meet makes people sick. I am talking about all seniors, starting at age 65. Health issues crop up between the ages of 65 and 75, not just after age 75. We need to ensure that our seniors are financially stable. That is essentially prevention, because, at the end of the day, health care spending is much lower when people are healthy, when they do not have to worry about their income and when they live above, and not below, the poverty line.

For all of these reasons, I cannot vote in favour of the throne speech. I do not understand why the government continues to turn a deaf ear to Canadians.

• (1545)

What does it want? Does it want Quebec to beg? This is our money. The government needs to give us our money.

• (1550)

[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. Speaker, I listened very closely to the government House leader and one of the reasons he answered the questions in the fashion he did was that there was a commitment from the Bloc party that had more focus on elections than it did on serving the people of Canada, in whatever region. It is unfortunate.

I am very much familiar with the history of health care and the funding thereof. I was a provincial MLA during the 1990s. The member referenced cuts, and there was a cut, but there was also a tax point transfer that was agreed upon in the early 1990s, which would have seen an even smaller percentage of federal dollars going to provincial coffers. It was Jean Chrétien who established back in the early 1990s the ongoing commitment of cash going to the provinces, and every year it has increased.

Today it seems the member opposite is saying all the Bloc wants is cash, yet the constituents I represent and, I would argue, constituents across this country want the federal government to play a role in health care. Why would he deny them that?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, all the Bloc wants is our money. We want our money back and we want the experts in charge. The people who have the experience, who have the knowledge and who provide the services are in Quebec, in the provinces. They should be the ones managing everything. We do not want Quebec to fall short because the federal government wants to keep the money for itself to pay down its deficits. That is how this started. When health transfers increase by 3% but system costs increase by 5%, Quebec is forced to make cuts to health care.

We need to look beyond COVID-19 patients and remember those who do not have COVID-19. They are suffering because the government is refusing to restore health transfers and hand over the \$28 billion in back pay.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like start by congratulating my colleague on his speech.

The Liberals are currently waging a small partisan war with the Bloc Québécois. They talk all the time about politics and partisanship, and are accusing my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois of only wanting to trigger an election. As far as I know, the Liberals created all this by proroguing Parliament, by making an election speech that reintroduced a lot of old promises and by scorning Quebec by wanting to dictate conditions on the money they say they will send to solve Quebec's health care problems. We saw it today in question period. The Liberal government and the Liberal members have very little respect for everything that has been done in Quebec with regard to health care.

Does my colleague agree that this government has completely let things get out of hand when it comes to managing public health over the past few weeks and that, since it has absolutely no expertise at all in the matter, it should allow Quebec to manage our health care problems here in Quebec?

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, there is no need for money for establishing and administering national standards when what should be done first and foremost with respect to health is to keep one's word. We are dealing with a partner who told us that the cost would be split 50-50 and then decided it was not going to pay their share for 25 years. Then, when an unexpected problem arises, it tells us that we did not do what was required, it tells us how to do it and what's more, it tells us that it is going to establish standards.

First, that party should start by contributing what it was supposed to. Then, it should look after matters falling under its own jurisdiction.

Once it starts looking after its own affairs properly, things will go better. One of the lessons to be learned is that everyone should stick to their own jurisdictions for the good of our citizens.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for clearly illustrating the financial strains that so many governments find themselves in during this pandemic. Of course, that burden has also been borne by the members of our society who are unable to deal with many financial costs.

One group that has benefited very well is millionaires and billionaires. While Conservatives and Liberals seem fine to leave them be, I am wondering what the thoughts of the Bloc Québécois are on bringing in a wealth tax, especially since 74% of Quebecers are in favour of this. Is he in favour of making sure that the very wealthy members of Canadian society pay their fair share, so the ones on the margins of society are not bearing the brunt of that by themselves?

• (1555)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I recall the first measure introduced by the Bloc Québécois in 2015, by my colleague from Joliette. This measure was going to put a stop to the use of tax havens. The Conservatives and the Liberals voted against the motion, even though it would have enabled us to recover a huge amount of money. In fact, if everyone paid their fair share, and if the big banks' money did not leave Quebec and Canada's economy, we might not have to have so many debates about this.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as agriculture and agri-food critic, I will obviously be talking about agriculture, as my colleague from Montcalm stated earlier.

Quebeckers and Canadians care deeply about agriculture and agri-food. Last year, we saw the importance of food sovereignty, food autonomy. We realized that it was important. Unfortunately, the recent throne speech was a pathetic exercise in public relations that was completely devoid of new measures. Actually, that is not entirely true: There were some new measures, all of which further encroached on areas of Quebec jurisdiction. That is why we are going to vote against the throne speech, unless major changes are made. Let us be optimistic.

I would not want to ignore the sacrifice that the agri-food industry has made over the past year and is still making. I would like to acknowledge everyone who goes to work every morning to keep us fed. Of course, I am talking about farmers, food processors and agri-food workers. I would like to thank them, because we know we will have all the food we need.

The Address

However, we learned that buying local is important. We must seize this opportunity and change course, contrary to what the government did during the crisis. It did not seize the opportunity to act in a manner commensurate with the severity of the crisis. Agriculture is the backbone of our economy. Each year, we lose 5% to 7% of our farms, and, this year, the numbers will probably be higher. We have seen milk being thrown out, huge losses in eggs, chickens, grains and agri-food in general. Modifying plants running at low capacity would have required more than a few hundred million dollars.

The food service industry is notoriously unpredictable, and sadly, we are shutting it down once again. Along with labour concerns, all of this puts pressure on the integrity of the food supply. We need to realize the scope of the situation.

The government across the aisle invested \$252 million in agriculture during the crisis, despite the Canadian Federation of Agriculture's position that \$2.6 billion were needed to make a real difference. During that time, the United States invested \$19 billion, about 10 to 12 times more. That is outrageous. We need to do something. The Speech from the Throne only recycles vague promises.

We are going to talk about compensation for supply management. This was mentioned by my colleague earlier. Obviously, it is one of our conditions. There is a rather vague paragraph stating that "those in...supply managed sectors receive receive full and fair compensation". What does that mean? Who are these workers? What sectors are we talking about? Is it all areas of production?

We want a date and we want timely announcements. Of course, I am going to be told that throne speeches are vague, but everything we are hearing is vague. It has been a long time, and it is not the first time we have seen this paragraph. It is high time something happened. We need help, and quick. As far as milk is concerned, we need the second year's payment. We have to budget for the remaining seven years with amounts because our producers get up in the morning to feed us, but they need predictability. They need to know what to expect next year. They need this money especially during the COVID-19 crisis. The other supply-managed sectors have received absolutely nothing yet. The committee was about to study the issue, but then came prorogation. Why was that? There was a scandal to hide, that is why. The government was left to idle for five weeks, and then we were brought back to the House to vote in four and a half hours on measures that could total up to \$57 billion. That is more than \$200 million for every minute of debate.

I would like to remind the House that agriculture got \$252 million. That is outrageous. The money needs to go out. Poultry, turkey, hatching egg and table egg farmers are not asking for money to put in their pockets. They are saying that they need to prepare for the unfair competition that is going to come from outside the country because those companies do not have to meet the same standards as they do. The reciprocity of standards is another issue.

• (1600)

We need to do something about labelling, and labels will need to be clear. Is it American milk? If so, is that clearly indicated on the carton? Of course, I encourage people to choose the blue logo. I al-

so encourage them to check and see where the chicken in their chicken pot pie comes from.

If governments do not make good choices, consumers will have to. Our supply-managed farmers need time to prepare. Stakeholders are telling us that the amounts for these modernization and marketing programs were decided in August 2019. That was over a year ago now, and this is urgent.

I want to reiterate that I appreciate the throne speech's good intentions, but good intentions are not enough. Supply management ensures stable prices, high quality products and a stable income for the folks who live in rural areas. Supply management promotes buying local, which I believe is trendy these days. Perhaps I am mistaken, but I think it is catching on.

It may be a good idea to keep our supply management system. This system supports the dynamic use of our land. It is good not only for supply-managed farmers, but also for veterinarians, farm equipment dealers, truck drivers, mechanics, nutritionists, animal feed producers and many more. This system keeps our rural areas in business. It keeps these areas full of life and makes them an attractive place to live.

Unfortunately, successive governments have given way in response to the WTO loopholes. There was the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with the European Union in 2017, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership in December 2018, and CUSMA this past July. In yet another unkept promise, CUSMA came into effect in July instead of August, as planned, costing the dairy industry \$100 million. We do not hear much about these breaches, but it bears repeating. Foreign producers will ultimately account for 18% of the dairy industry.

The Bloc Québécois believes that we need to protect supply management, since it has already been damaged enough. We are saying loud and clear that all supply-managed sectors must receive the money they are owed as soon as possible. Processors are worried today because they were not mentioned in the throne speech. Everything is vague and potentially full of loopholes. The Bloc Québécois will be keeping a close watch. Poultry, egg and dairy processors have also suffered because of these trade agreements, and they need to receive the money they are entitled to. The government needs to keep its word. It does not seem all that complicated to me.

We need to deal with supply management once and for all. We will table a bill. It is coming. With all the noise we will be making, members will be too embarrassed to vote against it. I invite all members of Parliament here in the House to protect and promote our model.

We have plenty of other proposals in our recovery plan. The other parties sometimes say that the Bloc Québécois is only here to complain and demand money. Last week, we were told that we were acting like we were at the ATM. We are not acting like we are at the ATM. It is our people's own money.

The problem lies in the division of responsibilities in this federation. Half of the money goes to Ottawa, but 75% to 80% of the responsibilities fall on the provinces. That is the problem. There is a reason we want to leave this federation, and that is part of our argument. In the meantime, since we are still part of the federation, we come here and ask for our money, because it is our people's money and we need it for our long-term care homes, among other things.

I am getting so carried away that I will not have enough time to talk about our recovery plan. However, I will say that we need to encourage and promote greener practices, riparian buffer zones, organic farming, biomethane production, the transition to clean energy sources, local agriculture, greenhouse production using clean energy sources, and agri-tourism. We also need to transfer responsibility for temporary foreign workers to Quebec.

We are proposing quick adjustments, but we are asking that the responsibility be transferred to Quebec to make things easier. Earlier on, I spoke about the labels on all the products we are letting in from abroad. Do these products meet our standards? Are they properly labelled? Will our consumers have the information they need to make informed choices? Slaughter capacity in the regions is also a priority, an extremely urgent matter for which measures need to be implemented.

I will continue as I answer questions.

• (1605)

[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. Speaker, I am sure my colleague across the way would recognize that, when it comes to supply management, we have been a very strong advocate for it not only while we have been in government but also when we were in opposition. When we look at trade agreements, there is compensation there for supply management. We recognize the true value of supply management and we will continue to fight for its existence. In fact, it was the Liberal Party along with farmers that created the whole supply management system.

In addition to that, we need to recognize how important that trade is. We have created and have seen new markets being created for farm products. In terms of the pork industry in the province of Manitoba, it is doing exceptionally well. There are a lot of limitations because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but generally speaking, the future for our agricultural communities is looking positive because of world demand and the protection of supply management. Would the member not agree?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his great question, which will allow me to speak about several things.

We agree on free trade. The Bloc Québécois has always been in favour of trade, but it must be done in an intelligent manner. Canada exports pork and will continue to do so. That does not mean that we must sacrifice our supply management system for the sake of free trade.

The Address

I am told that Canada promotes supply management. I am sorry, but I will refer to the last agreement. First, it came into effect in July rather than August. That is already one promise that was not kept. The agreement opens up access to 3.59% of the dairy market, an additional 62.9 million kilograms of access to the Canadian chicken market, and access to 3.5% of the turkey market. I could go on.

[English]

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I sat on the agriculture committee together and his numbers are not quite correct. He said there was \$270 million for the COVID-19 fund relief but actually \$125 million of that was pre-existing money. Liberals spun it as a new program even though that program has existed every year since 2008, so they have not really given this quite as much money as they believe they have.

The member also brought up supply management and that is a very good thing to talk about. During our supply management question when the dairy producers were not fully compensated for all the trade deals, the motion was moved by the Conservatives, yet the member voted against it. Could he please explain why?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his multi-faceted question.

First of all, I did not say "\$270 million", I said "\$252 million". My colleague raises a very important point. Indeed, not only is it a rather small amount, but some of it is recycled money.

Second, I do not believe we have ever opposed compensation for dairy farmers; quite the contrary. What I said earlier was not that dairy farmers have never received any cheques. They did get one. It was during an election campaign when they were used as political pawns, because the money was announced in August.

We will always be there to work together at committee. I look forward to seeing my colleague there again.

• (1610)

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too sit on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food and I very much enjoy working with him. I share his frustrations about the government's approach to supply management. The Liberals are great at telling us and indeed all Canadians how supportive they are of supply management, while with the other hand they slowly give away the market that has been allocated. He talked about predictability in his speech. Predictability is so important. It rests on three pillars: price control, production control and import control. On import control, the Liberals have been undermining this sector of agriculture for the last five years.

The Address

I would like my colleague to tell the House just how important supply management is. Often it is the keystone farm in a small community that other farms that sell commodities that fluctuate in price can depend on because there is that guaranteed source of income. That is why it is so important and that is why the minister must step up to the plate and honour the commitments that she made in the budget last year.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. I thank my colleague from the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. It kind of feels like a committee meeting here this afternoon. There are people here who know what they are talking about, and that is great.

Predictability is essential for businesses. Since I need to be brief, I will provide one concrete example. At the beginning of the crisis, some milk was dumped, but dairy farmers soon adjusted. One of the benefits of supply management is that the producers regulate themselves. The system works very well, and no one was on the brink of bankruptcy. However, dairy farmers need the compensation they were promised.

Earlier I did not have time to quote Pierre Lampron, the president of Dairy Farmers of Canada. I will close by repeating what he had to say about the Speech from the Throne: “When every year, you lose \$450 million in domestic production being transferred to foreign dairy farmers, words aren’t enough—only when we see details will we know if a promise made is a promise kept.”

He seems to have read the same vague paragraph I did.

[English]

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for St. Catharines.

We remain today in unprecedented times. Families and loved ones mourn the deaths of over one million people around the world as a result of the coronavirus, with over 34 million people having been infected.

COVID-19 has created monumental challenges and constraints that continue to evolve, challenges that relate first and foremost to public health and safety, but extend to income security, our economic future and the way we interact as human beings on this shared planet.

There are three major crises that we are called upon to address and resolve in our communities and around the world:

The first is the COVID pandemic itself. Infection rates are climbing and many countries, including Canada, are finding themselves in a second wave. It is crucial that all of us continue to work together to defeat this pandemic. Basic fundamental protocols like physical distancing, handwashing and wearing masks in public remain at the very core of effective solutions. As individuals and businesses continue to face the economic effects of COVID-19, financial supports that will allow them to weather the pandemic are critical to our economic recovery.

Second, the need to address climate change has never been more important as manifestations progressively increase in the form of more erratic weather patterns, floods and wildfires, melting glaciers, rising sea levels and rapidly eroding biodiversity. The climate crisis runs parallel to COVID-19 and action cannot be postponed. The Government of Canada is focused on progressive investments in a green economy to support a transition to reduced GHG emissions to meet and exceed the Paris targets and agenda 2030 and to shift to renewable energy sources under our legislatively established net-zero threshold by 2050. We are on track to ban single-use plastics by 2021 and to protect 30% of our land and oceans by 2030.

Third, the fight for inclusion faces new challenges and requires sustained commitments and action in our communities and around the world. Systemic anti-Black and anti-indigenous racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and other forms of hatred, division and violence persist.

The killing of George Floyd and, in Mississauga, Ejaz Choudry at the hands of police and the death of Joyce Echaquan in a Quebec hospital following a chorus of racial slurs are only three of the most atrocious cases we have witnessed in 2020. There are many others.

I am also concerned about gender equality, inclusion of the LGBTQ2S+ community, persons with disabilities, veterans, seniors and youth. The fight for inclusion cannot stop until everyone has an equal voice, and our government is committed to action but we will need help from all Canadians.

Let me elaborate briefly on these three priorities.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it remains particularly important to protect the most vulnerable individuals and populations, those among us who are most severely impacted. They include seniors in long-term care homes, women and children fleeing gender-based violence, the homeless and persons with disabilities, pre-conditions and rare diseases.

To protect Canadians in the face of a sharp rise in infections, our government will continue to support provinces and territories in increasing their testing capacity. To meet this critical challenge quickly, we are making the required investments and will create a federal testing assistance response team.

In the throne speech, our government has committed to establishing national standards for long-term care. It remains focused on the elimination of chronic homelessness and will increase investments in rapid housing developments in the short term. We will also bring forward a disability inclusion plan and a rare disease strategy to help Canadians save money on high-cost drugs.

As the coronavirus continues to severely impact national and global economies, the Government of Canada will ensure that individuals and businesses remain financially supported throughout the course of the pandemic. We will deliver targeted financial support directly to those businesses forced to temporarily shut down as a result of local public health decisions.

Some sectors have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The Government of Canada is committed to further support travel and tourism, hospitality and cultural industries like the performing arts. Community leaders in my riding of Mississauga—Lakeshore have emphasized the increasingly important role that the arts play in these uncertain times. The arts provide an opportunity to cope with isolation and hardship and they are at the very core of who we are as human beings. Their positive contributions to the fabric of our culture cannot be overstated.

• (1615)

Our community also recognizes the urgent need for a green recovery and the importance of job creation through climate action. Climate action is central to our government's plan to create one million jobs. Fifty-two percent of Mississauga's emissions come from buildings and 30% of its carbon footprint comes from the transportation sector.

We are committed to creating well-paying jobs connected to the retrofitting of homes and buildings, supporting more public and active transit options and making zero-emissions vehicles more affordable in order to reach net zero by 2050. Our government is also investing in mitigating the impact of climate-related disasters, like floods and wildfires, to make communities more resilient.

Systemic racism is a lived reality for far too many and it is clearer now than ever that we each have an important role in overcoming this ugly and unacceptable reality. Our government is committed to moving forward on a path of reconciliation with Canada's first peoples. We will accelerate work on a national action plan, work to co-develop a legislative framework for first nations policing and move forward on RCMP reforms.

We are taking important steps to fight anti-Black racism and other forms of racism with the release of Canada's anti-racism strategy for 2019-22, and the creation of an anti-racism secretariat. We will continue to support and empower Black Canadians through economic investments, such as Black entrepreneurship program.

Pandemics know no borders and COVID-19 in this regard is no exception. By pushing more people into extreme poverty, driving up food insecurity and threatening refugee populations with increased risk of infection, the coronavirus has exacerbated living conditions of the most vulnerable. Our response to the pandemic is only as strong as our ability to protect them here at home and around the world.

We cannot solve any one of these crises in isolation, but instead local and international efforts must reinforce one another. Many organizations in our community are providing important services. I would like to thank their leadership teams, advocates and volunteers.

The Address

Interim Place and Armagh House provide a safe space for women and children fleeing violence. The Compass food bank and IS-NA Canada food bank provide access to food and hygiene products for those in need. Indwell launched a new affordable housing project. The local BIAs in Lakeview, Clarkson and Port Credit support our small businesses.

The Mississauga Arts Council assists performing artists with on-line transition and the Mississauga-Lakeshore Constituency Youth Council and Mississauga Seniors' Council are providing important perspectives on the pandemic response.

For Our Kids, Climate Impact Fund, Peel Community Climate Council and others advocate for a green and just recovery. Many businesses have reinvented themselves in order to meet new needs, like the Como Foundation that provides COVID-19 lip-reading masks for the hard of hearing community.

At the international level, we see equally dedicated leadership. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, is leading and coordinating the international health response to COVID-19. Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, leads efforts to protect refugee populations. Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, continues to speak out on human rights violations as the pandemic poses additional threats to vulnerable populations.

David Beasley, executive director of the World Food Programme, leads the global fight against hunger. Tuula Yrjölä, OIC and Secretary General Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, works to prevent conflicts and build peace.

I thank them, their colleagues and international and local partners for their service.

A few weeks ago, I spoke with Olivia Allen, a remarkable 11-year-old student in our community who has demonstrated brilliantly that young people are not leaders of tomorrow but indeed of today. By asking the difficult questions and the right questions, Olivia is already contributing to work to build a brighter future.

There is only one planet and only one humanity. We must connect local and international efforts and work together to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and promote inclusion. We must each do our part to build a better world. Our shared collective future depends on it.

The Address

• (1620)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member chose, in the shot for his video, to prominently have the United Nations flag on display. I did notice, though, that during his speech he did not mention the government's failed Security Council bid in which the Liberal government got fewer votes in the Security Council election than Stephen Harper's government did. It might have something to do with the fact that the government spends less on international development as a proportion of our gross national income than the Stephen Harper government did. The numbers seem to tell a somewhat different story from what the member spoke about with respect to global aspirations.

I would like to hear his thoughts with respect to the UN bid. Clearly, with the flag there, it is something he is thinking about quite a bit even if he did not mention it. I wonder if the member could tell us what he thinks went wrong in the Security Council bid and also how much money the government spent on that Security Council bid.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member back to the House of Commons. He is on the physical side of the fence and I am on the virtual side today. It is good to see him, and his question is important.

These days are not days of political brinkmanship, political games or even international elections. These are times when we focus on serving vulnerable populations. No other organization, with the staunch support of Canada, is more at the forefront of this international fight for a better tomorrow, for the most vulnerable than the United Nations, along with its implementing partners and regional associations and organizations. I have mentioned some of them.

I am excited about the fact that our government has stepped up to the plate in so many ways with respect to engaging in the UN and investing in it, most recently, investments of \$400 million for international development and another \$200 million for the COVAX.

This is truly a collective pandemic. It is time to put aside partisanship. It is time to get to the same side of the fence and serve those who are so deeply and profoundly affected by COVID-19.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the notations in the Speech from the Throne was national urban parks. I would like to ask the member a question specifically with regard to his government's current policy.

Windsor has been trying to get a national urban park with Ojibway Shores along the Great Lakes, and members know the significance of that. There are over a hundred different endangered species. It is a hot spot identified as not only important for Ontario, but across Canada and the world. Currently the government's policy, through the Minister of Transport, is to allow the port authority to expropriate the City of Windsor for millions of dollars in a bizarre land swap process that would benefit a U.S. car dealer with up to \$4 million potentially.

There has been a proposal for that land to be transferred from the port authority, because it is Crown land and it has been done before. Should that be done to create the potential for the national urban

park and to protect those endangered species, of which over 100 have been identified? If not, why should city residents have to pay the federal government for land they already own? That does not sound like a sound environmental policy.

• (1625)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, I am not familiar with the details of the case the member has brought forward, but he does make a very important point in the sense that our national parks intersect with the current challenges I outlined in my earlier remarks in two ways.

Parks are fundamental to the effort to contribute to conservation, and it is very encouraging that we are committing to protect 30% of our lands and oceans by 2030 to enhance biodiversity and to mitigate climate change. Equally important, as the member mentioned, is the access to parks by our local communities for reasons quite directly related to COVID. Parks provide that opportunity to get outside, to physically distance and to get engaged and involved in questions of conservation, particularly for our young people. Therefore, access to our parks in the COVID pandemic is fundamentally very important.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question.

I heard him reply to our Conservative colleague that this was not the time to talk about partisanship. I would like government members to stop using this circular argument—as one of my distinguished colleagues recently put it—and answer my question directly.

What does the hon. member think of the transfer of money to the provinces and Quebec for health and Internet connections? What can be done to speed it up? This is urgent. I would like his personal opinion.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question, which goes to the heart of our collective response to the pandemic.

[English]

As we heard earlier in the exchange, the voice of the Bloc Québécois is important. It was heard very clearly this afternoon.

It is important for all levels of government to stay on the same page. Whether it is about agriculture or health, this is not a time for divisions to open up. This is a time for people to move to the same side of the table. It was very encouraging earlier in the House to hear the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs make reference to his conversation last night with the Premier of Quebec, and also the tremendous work that the Deputy Prime Minister is doing with our provinces.

We need to work together and we need to also listen very carefully, which is what we are doing.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back. I hear some cheers from the other side. They are happy to have us back, and it is good to be back. It is a little unusual here and I think we are all suffering a bit from that.

It is nice to hear the opposition applaud a Liberal member. I do like to hear that. It is good for the ego, and it encourages me to speak more in the House of Commons. I know they are worried that I have not been speaking as much as I did in the previous Parliament.

I was not going to mention this topic, but the hon. member for Windsor West brought it up, so I thought I would speak to it. He mentioned single-event sports betting, which is a topic that I know both he and I share a concern about. He asked the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh about it, who unfortunately did not have enough time to answer, but I want to assure him that the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh and I have been pushing hard, even though there is not much in the way of sports going on.

I saw an article in the newspaper recently about a casino run by organized crime that was taken down by Toronto area police. It really highlights that the impact of organized crime still exists in the gambling industry.

Single-event sports betting in this country is a multi-billion dollar industry, and very little of it is legal. In my mind, it is time to legalize it. It is time to regulate it, and it is time to take the money out of the hands of organized crime. I know the hon. member for Windsor West is in favour of it, and a Conservative member has brought forward a private member's bill on the subject as well, so I hope we move forward with that. When we can get back together, it will be an important tool for areas such as my riding, Niagara, Windsor and many other ridings that have casinos in them.

It will be an opportunity to create jobs and for Canadians to take advantage of it. Sports betting in this country is not illegal, as we see with ProLine. People can bet on sports, but it is the single events that people cannot bet on. It is time for us to move on that. I would like to again thank the hon. member for Windsor West for bringing that up.

We find ourselves talking about the throne speech in the middle of a global health crisis. I want to focus part of my speech on what we are doing right now to help Canadians. The end goal of this crisis needs to be a vaccine or treatment that really works. We are seeing second waves around the world.

We are even seeing that rapid testing is not the panacea some members are claiming it is. If we look to our allies and friends down south, every member in the White House received a rapid test before they went into work, but now there is an outbreak there. This virus keeps moving on.

The end goal has to be a vaccine. That is how we will get Canadians safe again. That is how we will get the economy back for Canadians and have them stop worrying. We all want to meet with constituents. We all want to shake their hands, go to events, see them, speak to them and be in the same room with them. We do not want to be 10 feet away from each other, as we are in this room. We want to be able to be together again. It is human nature.

The Address

I will say in the House of Commons what I have been saying on social media. I encourage my constituents and Canadians across the country to continue to practise social distancing, wash their hands, wear a mask and download the COVID alert app. These are ways that Canadians can help control the virus. There is nothing first responders, doctors or the government can do, if Canadians are not following those guidelines.

What have we done? Billions of pieces of PPE have been procured. Half of them are now being manufactured in Canada, and that is a testament to Canadian companies, which stepped up when the need was there. They stepped up to start manufacturing Canadian-made PPE. As I said, they are producing nearly 50% of it, and this is key.

● (1630)

As we are fighting other foreign governments to get the best price and to get access to much-needed PPE, the best way to do it and the best way to handle it is to manufacture it right here in Canada.

I also have to give credit to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, as Canada now has contracts for five different vaccine candidates, up to 154 million doses of the vaccine. Some people may say that there are only 37 million or 38 million of us, so why do we need so many vaccines? It may take more than one dose, or one vaccine may be more effective than another. The Government of Canada is there to look out for Canadians. We are not putting all of our eggs into one basket because we need an effective vaccine.

It concerns me when I hear in this place, and I see it on social media, the anti-science rhetoric that can filter up. It is leading to a great concern in me that when a vaccine is approved there is going to be a segment of the population who does not believe in it, who says that they do not need it, that it is poison and that it is toxic. We have seen this with other vaccines. We have seen diseases that we thought we had beaten, such as measles, coming up again and killing children around the world because of faulty, flawed social media reports that get shared and believed.

Therefore, I hope every member in this place stands up and encourages their constituents, as flu season is approaching, to get a flu shot. Members can get a flu shot, post it on their social media pages and encourage it. If we model good public health behaviour, we can have an impact and be leaders in that. As our hospitals are facing the second wave, they are also facing an increased threat of flu.

The Address

As we know, and as we have heard, flu kills thousands of Canadians every year. The more of us who get the flu shot, the better we are able to reduce that surge on the hospital system. I hope every member in this place takes advantage of that and highlights that. They can take a picture of it, post it on their Facebook page and show their constituents that they care.

I am not sure why members of the Conservatives are heckling me during a pitch on flu vaccines. I would have hoped that would be the least controversial thing that I talked about today, but apparently not.

Many of these vaccines are either at the end of phase three trials or working their way to phase three trials. I am confident in Health Canada. I am confident in our Health Canada officials, who will work with companies to approve these vaccines.

We are not going to reopen the economy 100% without that trust, without the belief that we can go in and not spread this virus. We can see how rapidly it spreads. For members of the various parties, we can talk to our colleagues who have gotten this terrible disease, some of them worse than others, so we need to do everything that we can.

I hope that we are able to bury the anti-science rhetoric that often comes up. Our scientists and our researchers are some of the best in the world. Our public health officials and our Health Canada officials, who are working on the various projects that come in, are doing their best. They are working late hours. They are trying to ensure that Canadians are safe.

Therefore, I hope that on all sides of the House we can put our trust in science and we can bury the anti-science rhetoric. Again, I want to congratulate the minister of procurement and her team for the work they have done to procure in advance not only potential vaccines but also the syringes and other equipment that is needed for a mass vaccination campaign.

I see my time is nearly at an end. I welcome any questions.

● (1635)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question for the hon. member after his presentation has less to do with communications advice for members of the opposition and more to do with how he believes the government spent a very vital time this year. Parliament was prorogued for nearly six weeks.

We recognize that we are in unprecedented times. We recognize that we are in a health crisis emergency, but Parliament was shut down. The only coherent reason we know of is so the Prime Minister, under investigation for a third time for breaking ethics laws, could hide from his ethical scandals. When the House could have been taking care of so many things and getting ready for providing support for Canadians, instead of now rushing measures through to assist Canadians, why shut down Canada's Parliament?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, after prorogation, instead of starting debate on Monday, we started debate on Wednesday.

With respect to communication, I am glad the hon. member brought that up, and anti-science rhetoric I have heard. I was doing the late show once, and the hon. member had a question for me. He

was criticizing the price of pollution on the one hand, but on the other hand was asking for money to help a flooded area of his region. That pollution has consequences, so I hope the hon. member takes the advice that science matters and we should be listening to our scientists. This crisis is not the only issue. The looming crisis of climate change is coming in fast and we should be prepared.

● (1640)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether I am speaking directly to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport or to his ego, but I will ask my question anyway.

I fully expected the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport's speech to be about transportation, but it was not. Just like the Speech from the Throne, it was mostly vague and empty rhetoric.

Can we know what is ahead for transportation?

The government says that it is looking into rural transportation issues. I would like to see clear measures.

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the throne speech was clear that rural routes are an issue we are taking very seriously. Canada is a big country. We need to get people and goods from place to place. That is a priority.

We are happy our airlines are taking advantage of the Canada emergency wage subsidy, and there is more work to do. We are going to work with our airlines. We are going to work with our railroads. We are going to work across the board to find solutions. We are still in the early stages of this crisis, and I look forward to any suggestions the member has.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his work on single-event sports betting. It is important because it will not only get money away from organized crime, but it is also what the provinces want, and it is a way of making sure there is accountability in the system. I am hoping he can provide some insight as to whether the government would make an order in council. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, he knows that his government made an order in council to give a new bridge to a private American billionaire, so I would like to know about that process.

Second, what is his position currently with respect to Ojibway Shores? I mentioned the hunting of endangered species along the Detroit River. The Windsor Port Authority wants to extort millions of dollars from the residents of the city of Windsor to protect this land, which would eventually require a land deal with a private American dealer for autos. Will he go back and look at that file to find a solution? The Speech from the Throne mentioned national urban parks, and this could be the first example of many to improve the environment across our country.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I will have enough time to answer both of those questions.

With respect to single-event sports betting, there is no provision within the Criminal Code that would allow for an order in council to amend the Criminal Code, so it would have to be done through private member's legislation or through government legislation. There is private member's legislation from the hon. member from the Conservative Party, whose riding I forget at the moment. It is the member for Saskatoon West. I want to give credit where credit is due. I remembered his name, but did not want to break the rules and mention it here. That is an opportunity. I hope one of those comes up.

With respect to urban parks, that is something we are excited about. I hope we are able to work with the City of Windsor and the port authority to find a solution.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to resuming debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Taxation; the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, Health.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to say something that may get me thrown out of the Conservative Party caucus. It is a pleasure to follow the member for St. Catharines. I have known him for many years and I would even consider him my friend. That may be the end of my career, so I thank everyone for that. This may be my last speech.

COVID-19 is a global pandemic that has wreaked havoc on humanity. There is no doubt the Liberal government is not responsible for the pandemic, and there is no way in the world of global interdependence that Canada could have kept the coronavirus from coming to our shores. However, the government is absolutely accountable for its response. As the Speech from the Throne is a time when the government puts itself forward to see whether it has the confidence of Canadians and the response to the pandemic is a pressing issue of our time, let us take this opportunity to review its performance.

The most critical issue of the pandemic, of course, is the health and safety of our people. With the pandemic now approaching almost a year in duration, lessons are starting to emerge. We are starting to have clarity on what areas are necessary for the government to protect our people. Some of those areas include alertness, awareness, border control, PPE availability, testing and tracing.

How did the government perform in these key areas? Some of the top performers around the world, including Taiwan and Singapore, took action quickly and decisively. They were almost imme-

diately aware of the danger. Canada's response in contrast was slow and confused. We could have been in a much better position. Only shortly before this global pandemic, the Liberal government decided to scrap the pandemic alert system, and in this very House, our health minister proclaimed to the world that the risk of the pandemic in Canada was low.

While many countries acted quickly and decisively to impose borders controls or even mandatory screening, our response was once again late. We chose to hand out pamphlets, rather than impose common-sense border restrictions like checking someone's temperature.

After the SARS outbreak, our country should have been acutely aware of the necessity of PPE and many countries were aware, including our own. We had a large stockpile. Unfortunately for some unknown reason, the Liberal government decided to dispose of that. The PPE we had left, they unbelievably gave to the communist regime in China.

Being able to identify those who have the virus and isolate them quickly is perhaps the most critical action we can take with respect to the spread of the virus. Any country that wants to defend itself from this terrible plague must test, test and test some more. When the rest of the world was creating, reviewing and approving rapid tests in preparation for the second wave, the Liberal government decided to prorogue Parliament.

Thank goodness for the member for Calgary Nose Hill. Thanks to her emphasis on the importance of large-scale, rapid testing, she has forced the government, who spent months twiddling their thumbs, to approve a mass order of rapid tests.

However, they are still not here. They are still not in the long-term care facilities. They are not in the schools. They are not in our workplaces. This is stopping our economy from going and it is also stopping women from returning to the workforce. As we know, women are disproportionately the caregivers for our children, and if children cannot return to school, they cannot return to work. For a government that claims to be feminist, this is truly offensive.

The other issue is tracing. Tracing is a critical element as well. I will give the government credit. When we look at tracing, we have a great app. Once again, the government is disappointing and leaving people behind. We have an entire province being completely excluded. Why will the government not extend the app to British Columbia? The Liberals' response on the health side of things has been disappointing and unacceptable.

Let us move on to the economic impact and perhaps that is second only to the health of Canadians in the impact of COVID-19. Many Canadians have lost their jobs. Some have lost their homes and some, even more unfortunately, have lost hope.

The Address

The Address

• (1645)

To contextualize my comments on the government's economic response to the pandemic, I would like to share the following: It has been said that Liberals measure government programs' success by how many people they help. Conservatives, in contrast, measure government success by how many people we don't have to help. There can be no question that Canadians who are locked out of their jobs, businesses and schools because of COVID-19 needed temporary financial assistance, but let's be clear of the source of these funds. This money did not just appear. It did not come from the government. The government does not produce wealth. The government is an expense, a necessary and important expense, but yes, an expense for our society. That money did not, most certainly not, come from the Prime Minister. He did not go into one penny of debt. He was a millionaire before the pandemic and he will be a millionaire after. The debt was taken from Canadians. Indeed, generations of Canadians will be paying back this debt. We are literally borrowing from our children and our grandchildren. The government should take no pride in taking from our children's future. We owe it to all Canadians, those who have not even been born yet, to borrow what is necessary and not a dollar more.

How has the government done with respect to fiscal management? We have the largest debt in our history and the second worst GDP-to-debt ratio in the history of our country. The non-partisan Parliamentary Budget Officer has described our current fiscal outlet as barely sustainable. Our debt-to-GDP is forecast to increase to nearly 50% in coming years. That is a shocking and enormous number. This will be a serious challenge for our country to overcome in the years following.

Let us look at what some of the government agencies have done with their extra billions. As shadow minister of national revenue, I spend my time reviewing the work that the CRA does. The CRA did some great work early on getting the CERB out to Canadians and we all appreciate that, but what else has it done?

We have had the largest security breach, which allowed Canadians' information to be stolen from us. What was its response to that? Was it an apology and an admission to its limitations? No, it rewarded Canadians' patience with the implementation of interest and penalties on Canadians who are having a tough enough time going through COVID-19. Now if they happen not to be able to pay their taxes, we are going to start charging them interest and penalties.

On top of that, despite the fact that they are unable to fill some of their basic duties, the CRA is now asking for a promotion. It wants to do our taxes.

We have had one of the most expensive pandemic relief programs in the world, which has put us into debt for generations. The former Liberal finance minister John Manley has called for the return of that money, for a payment plan, for a fiscal anchor. We have become completely unmoored from our debt. The Martin and Harper governments, for example, had the fiscal anchor of a balanced budget. Former finance minister Bill Morneau used to say that we had a GDP-to-debt ratio target. We are completely unmoored. We are literally cast in a sea of debt without a plan to get out.

As the famous author Lewis Carroll said, if you don't know where you're going, any road will do. In this case, it includes a road to bankruptcy.

What have we received for this record-breaking expenditure? We have one of the lowest recoveries in the OECD. We have one of the worst unemployment rates in the G7. Our GDP continues to grow at 50% less than the United States. That lack of recovery is costing us new businesses in my riding in the town of Orono, our manufacturing in Port Hope and Cobourg, and our tourism in Brighton.

We need a government that will allow Canadians to get back to work. We need a government that will allow the free market to take us through adversity to the stars, not one that takes us through confusion and disappointment into the depths of socialism.

• (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.): Mr. Speaker, I take it the member did not listen to what the Minister of Finance said earlier today during question period. When we compare Canada to the United States, when we look at the number of people who ended up unemployed as a direct result of COVID-19, Canada was far more successful than the United States at getting those people re-employed as the economy started to open up. That clearly demonstrates, for example, that programs such as the wage subsidy and CERB have proven to be very successful at protecting jobs in Canada and providing the much-needed money necessary for disposal income for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

To me, everyone was able to win. Would he not agree with that assessment?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I will join the great traditions of Conservatives across this land who have attempted to unwind the demagoguery from the member for Winnipeg North.

I did actually listen to the Deputy Prime Minister when she talked about it. When we define "labour force", which is a number that she chose, that number includes the unemployed. In fact, in her argument, she was agreeing that Canada has the worst unemployment in the G7, which is a fact. Therefore, I will accept an apology from the member for Winnipeg North.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member a question.

The Address

Some people are wondering whether we acted fast enough to contain the pandemic, but I would rather hear my colleague talk about economic recovery. If I understand his position, the answer is laissez-faire and the free market. Does he think investments in social programs and public services are important contributors to economic recovery?

[English]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, of course, government programs are important and our treasured social safety net is important, so too though are our businesses, our private sector, our workers, our farmers and our front-line workers. These are the people who are going out every day working to produce the income that is needed for the government to have the money it needs to pay down the debt. It is the businesses and workers who pay down the debt. It is the businesses and workers who will reinvigorate agriculture and allow manufacturing jobs to return across our country. Yes, it is a collaboration and the government has an incredibly important role in that.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I sat with the member a number of times on the agriculture committee, and I know he has great interest in that subject.

In the throne speech, there was mention by the government that it wanted to recognize the role that farmers have as key partners in the fight against climate change, and one way comes through the clean fuel standard. I am confused by the Conservative Party's position on this, because the Conservatives are against it but most canola farmers who are in support of this actually live in ridings where they are represented by a Conservative MP. I am just hoping that he can clarify that for me.

Is the Conservative Party against the clean fuel standard that is so obviously going to benefit canola farmers who live in Conservative-held ridings?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I have the opportunity to live in the great riding of Northumberland—Peterborough South, and I have talked to my constituents as much as I can during COVID days. What they tell me, whether they are farmers, workers or single moms, is that they cannot afford life to be more expensive. With the clean fuel standard, for that single mom trying to get to work, trying to feed her family, trying to pay her mortgage desperately and trying to achieve that uniquely Canadian dream, it will be put out of reach. That is why we have some reservations about the clean fuel standard.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech and it was very interesting, except that I felt he talked about Conservative ideologies more than the context of his riding.

We have made investments. In the throne speech, we indicated that for seniors, in the new horizons program, there is \$7.3 million just in my riding and about \$2.4 billion across the country. We have invested in CERB and the wage subsidy. Those are big investments, and we are actually borrowing money at the lowest interest rate ever and saving \$3 billion a year on our debt.

What would the member and his party cut, as we move forward, if his party were in power?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. It is an important question and greatly appreciated.

First of all, I would go back and say there were certain ways to make this less expensive, such as putting that wage subsidy in place quicker, which would have gotten our economy back on track. If the Liberal government had not bungled the rent subsidy program, we would have more businesses. The more taxpayers we have, the more prosperous they are, the more revenue we have and the better our social safety network will be.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating the people of Mégantic—L'Érable on their extraordinary resilience in response to the situation we have been dealing with since March.

Quebec has to pull back in several regions, once again closing bars and restaurants, suspending cultural and sports activities, and strictly enforcing rules in schools because of a dramatic increase in COVID-19 cases. Clearly, we are not done sacrificing and will have to cope with this virus much longer than we would have liked.

As we kick off Mental Illness Awareness Week, we must keep in mind that every decision made by Parliament, by the government, by all levels of government and by public health authorities will impact not only the fight against COVID-19 but also the economy and the well-being or loss thereof of people across the country.

The virus did not make bullying or racism go away. It exacerbated domestic violence, and loneliness has become an even heavier burden for the most vulnerable members of society to bear. Our masks must not prevent us from speaking up and sharing our problems. Our ears and our hearts must remain open to those who need to be listened to and heard.

I would now like to come back to the subject we are discussing today. The Liberal government's throne speech was followed, that same evening, by a free national advertisement for the Liberal Prime Minister. I would remind members that the throne speech was needed because of the Prime Minister's decision to prorogue Parliament in the midst of a pandemic. At a time when millions of Canadians are depending on their elected officials to make sure they are safe, from a health and economic standpoint, the Prime Minister deliberately chose to shut down Parliament and put us in a position where we could no longer act quickly.

The Address

The throne speech was supposed to refocus the government's efforts on helping Canadians deal with and recover from the COVID-19 crisis, or at least that is what the Prime Minister, his ministers and Liberal members claimed. In the end, we got an interminable speech read by the Governor General that basically reiterated the unkept promises of the Liberals under the direction of the Prime Minister. As everyone knows, the Prime Minister does not like to share the stage, so he thought it would be a good idea to make all the media outlets give him some free air time. That gave him a few minutes to summarize the long list of Liberal failures and unkept promises while clearly demonstrating that he had no plan to get the country through the pandemic and that he had learned absolutely nothing from the first wave of COVID-19.

Everyone knew the deal: The prorogation of Parliament, the Speech from the Throne and the PM's televised speech later that evening had but one objective, and it was not to help Canadians. I will paraphrase a journalist from *La Presse* who, like us, saw right through the Liberals' smoke and mirrors. He basically said that what the Prime Minister presented was more like a preview of his election platform than a Speech from the Throne.

The best was yet to come in that article. He went on to talk about how, in the middle of the speech he thought to himself, "quick, someone snap your fingers, he's trying to hypnotize us. We are going to forget how we got here. The Prime Minister prorogued Parliament last month to put an end to the inquiries into the WE Charity scandal. That is what led to the Speech from the Throne."

Feedback on the throne speech from across the country was not any more flattering. I would like to share some reactions. "It was a disappointing speech that offered no reassurance." "[The Prime Minister] lives on another planet. He needs to go." "The Speech from the Throne can be summed up in three words: spending, interference, arrogance. Nothing new from this government". "I'm very worried. All of this spending shows that [the Prime Minister] has never made a budget in his life." Many similar comments can be found in the media and on social media.

Parliament was prorogued by a Prime Minister who promised never to prorogue Parliament to avoid scrutiny. I remind members that he made this promise himself. All of this came just as thousands of redacted documents were being handed over to the opposition. The throne speech enabled the government to sweep the finance minister's resignation under the rug. The throne speech did nothing to address the problems with the work-sharing program for businesses in Mégantic—L'Érable. It did not address the extremely long waiting periods for citizens dealing with immigration issues.

• (1700)

He offered nothing to small businesses, which were left out of the assistance measures even though they are integral to the very vitality of our regions. He did not allow Canadians to have access to rapid tests, which would have helped my region and countless others escape such an aggressive second wave. This Speech from the Throne was a purely partisan exercise to protect just one person: the Prime Minister himself.

However, I am known to be an optimist. I always try to see the good in everything. I told myself that surely something good would come out of the Speech from the Throne. My colleagues may find it

hard to believe, but I found something positive, very positive even. What did I find in the Speech from the Throne that was so good?

You seem skeptical, Mr. Speaker. I will end the suspense. The only positive thing about the Speech from the Throne was the response in reply by the new leader of the official opposition, the hon. member for Durham. What a great reply worthy of a head of state.

Allow me to thank him for the trust he placed in me by giving me the role of Treasury Board critic. I am proud to serve on his team in the official opposition, the team of the government in waiting.

The Conservative leader's reply to the Speech from the Throne laid bare the major difference between the leaders of the two main parties in Canada. One is there to be served by Canadians. The other is there to serve Canadians. Although that may not seem like a big difference, in the context of the current crisis, it is vitally important.

The Leader of the Opposition has shown that putting Canadians, all Canadians, at the centre of a future Conservative government is the only thing to do. I look forward to Quebecers and Canadians getting to know him for who he is: a hard worker, born in Montreal, a navigator in the Canadian Armed Forces, a lawyer and a father. His career path is like that of many of us who were not born with a silver spoon in our mouths.

I will quote part of the opposition leader's speech.

Who is going to make sure Canada is better prepared next time? Who is going to make sure that Canada learns the lessons from the first wave and fixes the gaps and some of the problems that have put our citizens at risk? Who is going to make sure that working Canadian families stop getting left behind by the government?

Who? Let me continue.

We are a government in waiting, and we do not accept the poor response and the lack of lessons learned by the current government in a time of crisis. Canadians will also get to know that I have tried to spend my entire life standing up for this country. I was not born with a sense of entitlement to lead the country, but I have worked hard for my entire life to serve Canada and its people, to earn the chance to lead. That is what we need in public life when we face a national unity crisis, a pandemic, economic rebuilding and uncertainty on the global stage: someone who will fight to ensure that no Canadian family gets left behind; someone who understands the importance of service and community.

That is an attitude befitting a future prime minister. That is what we need in a time of crisis: a leader who understands the importance of work, who loves his country, and who will always place his country's interests above his own.

His agenda for Quebec is clear. I clearly remember his promise to Quebec during the party leadership race: He will not interfere in Quebec's internal affairs and, under his leadership, the Conservative Party will be more open than ever before. He said, "As long as I am your leader, Quebec nationalists, like Conservatives from all walks of life, will be welcome in our party."

Unlike the current Prime Minister, whose words are rarely followed by action except when it comes to shutting down ethics inquiries, the Conservative leader walks the talk.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent was appointed opposition House leader. He is the first Quebecker to hold this position in the Conservative Party of Canada. The Conservative leader's inner circle is made up of many Quebeckers, including the former member for Beauport—Limoilou, who I look forward to seeing again with us here in the House.

Our new leader's first meeting with a provincial premier was with Quebec Premier, François Legault. During that meeting, he was very clear about his intention to increase health care funding to the provinces in a stable, predictable and unconditional manner, as a matter of respect.

The leader of the Conservative Party and the official opposition is a leader who worked hard to get where he is and who will deliver on his commitments, unlike the leader of the Liberal Party.

In closing, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to take these few minutes to introduce our leader to Quebeckers because, unlike the Bloc Québécois, which will never be able to keep its promises and will always be an armchair quarterback, we will be able to keep our promises and get to the bottom of things.

• (1705)

It is time we had something besides an armchair critic. It is time we had a real player on the ice, someone like a Guy Lafleur, Mario Lemieux or Phillip Danault. We want a party leader who can score goals, not someone who is going to watch from the sidelines.

• (1710)

[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. Speaker, I have listened to the throne speech, I have also listened to the leader of the Conservative party. I suggest that if we were to take both speeches and present them to a focus group, or any group of Canadians, I suspect we would find far more support for the government's throne speech, which provides all sorts of details as to what the government has been working on and goes well into the future, giving a greater sense of unity and Canadians coming together to make a difference in combatting COVID-19 and supporting the economy in all regions of our country.

I wonder if the member has actually read through the throne speech. If he has, would he not agree that there is far more detail and far more of a vision within that document than there was in the speech that was presented by the leader of the official opposition?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, it is not complicated. The Liberals simply assembled a collection of their broken promises since 2015, since their leader was elected Prime Minister of Canada, turned it into a throne speech and said to Canadians, "Here is our plan".

The Address

This is the third time he has promised the same things. We got a little bit the first time and a little more the second time. There was quite a bit the third time, but at the end of the day, nothing is really being done. There is nothing concrete in what the Prime Minister has presented to us.

There was nothing concrete in the Speech from the Throne. That is why Canadians did not fall for it. The Prime Minister felt obligated to give a short televised address that evening to try to summarize all of his broken promises. Nobody fell for it. Nobody believed the Prime Minister.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one thing to come out of the lockdown was a temporary reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Global warming, however, increased.

My distinguished colleague spoke a lot about his party leader, but is his leader prepared to step up and look for solutions to the climate crisis?

His leader also said that he was prepared to introduce a bill to force all of the provinces to accept pipelines.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of the leadership race, the beginning of this Parliament, people have thought the Conservative Party is not worried about the environment. They think that the Conservatives are not worried about climate change. That is not true. In fact, it is quite the opposite. We think Canadian solutions can improve the environment for the whole planet. That is the truth of the matter. Projects that could benefit the entire world tend to get blocked for ideological reasons.

Is the Bloc Québécois in favour of the GNL Québec project or not? Will it support this much-awaited project in the Saguenay region, a region where there are many Bloc Québécois MPs?

This project will bring prosperity, foster economic development and improve greenhouse gas emission outcomes around the world. It will leverage Canadian knowledge to improve conditions, improve our environment and lower greenhouse gas emissions.

[English]

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the throne speech almost two weeks ago, and I made copious notes. In fact, I have them here, pages and pages of notes on the promises that were in that throne speech. It went on and on. I had to think back to see that I had heard this before, and I had heard that before. It was like the 2015 election campaign of the Liberals. They had all these ideas from right across Canada and had put them all in a great big jar and said they were the Liberal election promises for 2015.

Here we are in 2020 with the third throne speech from the same government. It was like they reached into that same jar and pulled out an idea and saw that they had not lived up to that promise yet, so they put it back in the throne speech. I think they emptied that whole jar of recycled ideas.

The Address

Why did they do that? I would like to hear from the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable why they had to prorogue and create another throne speech just so they could rehash all of the same ideas that they put out in 2015, which they had not lived up to.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question.

[*English*]

The Liberals did not have to prorogue Parliament. They just had to hide the ethics scandal of the Prime Minister. This is why they prorogued Parliament, not just for throwing away those promises again and again. They had a scandal to hide and they did their best to hide it.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Etobicoke North.

I am proud to speak to the Speech from the Throne. A Speech from the Throne gives us an opportunity to reset our clock, to say that the things we talked about before the election are not valid anymore, because this thing called COVID-19, this pandemic, began to take us off track. All of the old economic and social systems, etc. that we had are not working anymore. We are in a new world and we have to do something about it. I think we expected that COVID-19 would not last and we would be out of it now. We now are braced for a second tsunami of COVID-19, which we hear globally that it will be worse than the first.

With this Speech from the Throne, we reset new systems because the old ones left a lot of people very vulnerable as well as let a lot of people down.

The first thing in the Speech from the Throne was that this government decided that if we did not do something to contain the spread of COVID-19, whatever we did for businesses, individuals or jobs would not be sustainable and could not be permanent because COVID would be there. COVID-19 does not give a fig about jobs. It does not care about boundaries. It does not care what province or territory people are in. It is a global pandemic.

We decided to talk about how we would help Canadians, workers, individuals, families and business owners through the second wave. Because we have a AAA rating, being the only country in the world besides Germany to have that, we can borrow from ourselves at 0.25%, so Canadians and business owners do not have to borrow from the banks at 5%, or use their credit cards at 19%, or even re-mortgage their homes so they can carry on during this pandemic.

We talked about how we expanded. We brought back new support systems. CERB has now been taken over by a new CRB. People will be moved into EI seamlessly so they can be supported. Interestingly enough, individuals who are self-employed or in the gig economy were not covered by EI before but now they will be.

We looked at how we would support seniors who had fallen between the cracks in the old system. A lot of the system is about innovation and WiFi and many seniors are too poor to afford that, at least they are in my riding. We have looked at how we can help them get more financial stability during this difficult time because

they were afraid they would be kicked out of the places where they live.

We looked at people who were very vulnerable, the homeless and people who have substance use disorders, and how we could help them. We brought in an emergency rapid response fund. Homelessness increases our susceptibility to COVID, so we want to get rapid money for those who have no place to live to get them into shelters and other places to live. This is the kind of thing we are doing.

It is not a rehash of what was happening. If anybody understood what was going on, they would realize that this is about helping to protect people and looking at how we diminish the spread of COVID. We have put money into protective equipment. We have millions for testing and tracking. We have given \$2.2 billion to provinces to make it okay for kids to go to school and be safe.

That is all provincial jurisdiction that we are putting money into: housing, homelessness, schools. We do not care. We are the Government of Canada. We want to help all Canadians. We are not discriminating against what province they come from. That is what we are doing in this Speech from the Throne.

We are there. We have vaccines now lined up, millions of vaccines so every Canadian, no matter how poor, no matter how rich, no matter what they do will be able to have access to a vaccine. We have upgraded the tracking and testing mechanisms and sent more money to the provinces so they will be able to test and track quicker and to move forward. We have now just got a new test that is for quick testing. We are always guided by science as we look at how to protect people against COVID, against the spread and against spreading it to each other, etc.

People complain about it, but we are looking at a national standard for long-term care homes. The COVID does not care if we live in one province or another. The provinces think it is okay for the federal government to contribute 87¢ on every dollar to provinces to help them make decisions in their jurisdictions.

• (1720)

This is not about interfering with the provinces. This is about recognizing the reality of a pandemic and a virus that does not care. We have moved forward on all of that. Then we talked about how, in the interim, we were going to try to support businesses. We have extended the Canadian wage subsidy and we have expanded it until next summer. We are working on the details of some of the things businesses told us did not work for them. We are trying to deal with that.

We are looking at how to help the tourism industry, which is stranded. The industry used the CEWS, and that is there for them until next summer so businesses can at least be sustained and look at how they can transform into the new economy through innovation. They are going to have to do business differently now. The government is here to help them with all the things they need in terms of innovating for business, in terms of Wi-Fi, looking at schools and how we are able to do things differently to keep citizens safe. This is part of a plan. This is not business as usual.

This is the worst crisis we have had since the Second World War. In fact, all of the things we put in place after the Second World War to sustain Canadians economically, socially and culturally have not been upgraded for 50 years. They are not valid anymore. They are not working anymore.

We now have to look at how to reinvent the wheel by looking at what other countries are doing. We are putting money into innovation so we can have far more companies shift from what they were doing to new, innovative jobs. We are going to be helping young people connect with their first jobs, because some of them cannot find jobs in this new environment. We are looking at how we rescale and train people for the current economy.

This is a forward-thinking document. The economy is always something we have to keep resilient and sustainable. We are saying that we have to do it differently, because the old ways do not work anymore. COVID-19 has exposed all of the cracks in our system. We needed a Speech from the Throne to make sure that we did not just cover those cracks, but filled them in so people would not fall into them anymore.

This is saying that yes, people need to get jobs. Yes, we have to look at the economy. Yes, we need to protect people from illness. Yes, we have to strengthen the health system, which we talked about. We have to look at how mental health fits into the Canada Health Act, and how people access pharmaceuticals when they need them. We are working on all of those tranches at once, so that people do not fall between the cracks.

What is also important to remember, when we start talking about provincial jurisdiction and what we have not been doing, is that we are dealing with a pandemic. All over the world people are suffering. We have also decided it is time for us to step up and help countries around the world so they can develop health care systems, access vaccines and have the equipment needed to test and track.

We are sharing and building alliances with like-minded countries because we can no longer talk about our country alone. We have to talk about how we work with other countries to strengthen the global economy. We have to look at how we fight a pandemic together,

The Address

and how we shift and change. This is not the first pandemic. Speaking as a physician, it is not going to be the last. If we do not want to have more pandemics, we need to make sure that when diseases start around the world, they remain as epidemics and that countries are able to cope with them.

We need to look at how we trade differently. We need to look at human rights. We need to look at rising fascism around the world and right-wing extremist governments that are denying human rights to people. We have to look outward, as well as inward. COVID-19 does not really care what country one lives in, what borders are between provinces or whose jurisdiction it is. I do not know that COVID ever read the Constitution.

We are here as a federal government responsible for all Canadians and remembering that it is our duty to make sure nobody falls between the cracks, whether because of the health system, which needs to be there to support them, or because of the economy. We are focusing on job creation and new ways of building an economy. If one reads the Speech from the Throne, one would find out that is exactly what we are doing and what we need to do now.

It might be a time for us to sit down and stop talking about partisan politics. All of us need to do what countries around the world are doing. Countries around the world are saying, let us get together and look at how we work together to prevent this from happening. This is a global problem. We might want to say this is a Canadian problem. Let us all come together—

• (1725)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is now time for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Provencher.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, the speech we just heard from the member for Vancouver Centre was, if anything, interesting. It gives a little picture for Canadians to see into the mindset of the Liberals: how they view money and how they look at finances.

We heard earlier from the Prime Minister that he believes budgets balance themselves. In this latest throne speech, we heard that it is better for the government to borrow money, because Canadians cannot afford to.

I have two questions for the member. First, whose money does she think it is? Second, does she really believe that Canadians do not understand when they are being bribed with their own money?

The Address

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, that is such a cynical question. It is not about bribing Canadians. We can borrow from ourselves, and if the member read *The Globe and Mail* this weekend, the Governor of the Bank of Canada was saying that we cannot take half measures right now. Also, we are borrowing at 0.25%. We are one of only two countries in the world with an international AAA rating, and we have the credit to be able to help Canadians.

I would ask my hon. colleague, if we do not help Canadians, who will?

We are the government. We are responsible for assisting Canadians in a crisis and in a time of need, just as we did in World War II. This is that kind of crisis.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member, who is a doctor by training, if I am not mistaken.

She knows that when we talk about health and a pandemic or an epidemic, the question is how can we help ourselves. Does she not believe that prevention is just about the only way we can have lasting, sustainable solutions? When it comes to Canadian health transfers, that is exactly the question we are asking. The last great commission of inquiry in Canada was the Romanow commission in 2008. According to its report, the minimum contribution needed to be 25%. A few years later, if the government had assured Quebecers and the people of the other provinces—

[English]

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

• (1730)

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, I think it is interesting to talk about prevention. I do not think anyone could have prevented COVID-19 from occurring, but what we could have done was prevent it from being a pandemic. It might have been contained within any one country. Now we know that we have to do that. Now we have to strengthen the World Health Organization so that we can be warned early when there are pandemics. Now we can prevent it by investing in poor countries so they can have health care systems and health care infrastructure, and so they can have access to vaccines and medications, so they can contain epidemics before they become pandemics. That is how we prevent it.

This government, since this pandemic, has been distributing money to every single province, as I said earlier on, 87¢ on the dollar to help provinces cope. Yet, what we have seen is a mishmash of each province having very different outcomes and very different protections. We need to look at—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford has the floor.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Vancouver Centre will know full well the ravages of the opioids crisis, given that both she and I are from the wonderful province of British Columbia, where this year already the opioids crisis has killed five times more people than COVID-19 has. In fact, in three out of the last four years over

1,000 people have died in British Columbia. Yet, what do we see? We see a passing reference to the crisis in the throne speech.

The Liberal government has still yet to declare a national public health emergency, and it continues to ignore organizations, like the chiefs of police, which are calling for decriminalization.

I have a simple question: Why?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member does not even understand the opioid crisis. It is a very complex issue. It is linked with mental health problems, homelessness, poverty and intergenerational trauma. We do not fix it with a silver bullet. This government has been working with provinces since we formed government. We have been helping them with the ability to have access to naloxone universally. We have been helping them with forming front-line workers to be able to work in the communities. We are now in our second year of making sure that there are safe supplies available, and this is because, after 10 years—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Etobicoke North has the floor.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Deputy House Leader of the Government, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the throne speech. However, first I would like to recognize the wonderful families of Etobicoke North and our caring, resilient and strong community.

Our families matter. They are good people and they work hard. What makes Etobicoke North such a special place to live, work and play is that we welcome the world. We are proudly one of the most diverse communities in the country. We learn from one another, and we learn each other's beautiful cultures, languages and religions. We look after one another and lift each other up.

I thank the tireless front-line health care workers of the William Osler Health System for their life-saving services, as well as the Rexdale Community Health Centre and Rexdale Community Hub and their partners for their important community care, including providing health services and legal services, delivering food and providing computers and Internet access. I thank all workers who provide essential services, such as those working in grocery stores, personal support workers, truck drivers and taxi drivers, and everyone who worked to keep our community and country going.

The Address

I also thank our tremendous community organizations for their work during COVID-19, organizations like Albion Neighbourhood Services, which found new ways to deliver programs to youth and deliver hundreds of meals weekly. The Sikh Spiritual Centre Toronto provided langar as individual packed meals to our community. The International Muslim Organization and the Lions Club joined forces to serve hundreds of families and provided food and essential supplies each month. Trust 15 kept in constant contact with families and continued inspiring and mentoring our amazing youth.

I wish I had time to thank all our organizations and volunteers. I see their life-changing work and am grateful for the work they do each and every day. As I said, we are a community that cares and we are there for one another.

Before I ever came to Parliament, my own research area was on pandemic influenza, particularly on the 1918 influenza, and preparing for pandemics. I helped businesses, non-governmental organizations and industry prepare for a pandemic. I ran pandemic exercises. My priority will always be protecting the health and safety of the people of Etobicoke North and all Canadians, in particular our most vulnerable.

The plan outlined in the throne speech is good for our Etobicoke North families and our community. We will take bold action on health, the economy, building back better and building a more inclusive Canada. The throne speech outlines our plan for continuing to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

In Etobicoke North, in July and August, parents and teachers told me their concerns about their children heading back to school. As an educator, I understand. Our government listened and invested \$2 billion to help provinces protect the health and safety of our children, teachers and indeed our families as they returned to school. Our government also invested in and shipped personal protective equipment across the country. We sent the Canadian Forces into long-term care homes to help look after our loved ones. We will make sure Canadians will be able to get a vaccine once it is developed, tested and ready.

Our priority is to look out for all Canadians, especially our most vulnerable. Poverty, hunger, good health, well-being, gender equality and economic status play a role in who gets sick, who gets treated and who survives. We must keep taking COVID-19 seriously to stop the second wave. We must all make sure we do our part to slow the spread of the virus by limiting our contact bubble, physical distancing, handwashing and wearing a non-medical mask or face covering as needed. Ensuring Canadians are supported through this health crisis is the best thing we can do for the economy.

• (1735)

The second part of our plan for the future is to do whatever it takes to support Canadians and businesses through the pandemic. That is why our government invested more than \$19 billion to help the provinces and territories restart their economies, ensuring increased testing and contact tracing, increased personal protective equipment and support for our most vulnerable in long-term care.

To rebuild from job losses and strengthen our economy, we will launch a campaign to create more than a million jobs. We will extend the Canada emergency wage subsidy to next summer, rebuild

an EI system that works for all Canadians and introduce further support for industries that have been hit the hardest, including hospitality, and travel and tourism. Families in Etobicoke North should not have to choose between their health and their jobs.

The third part of our plan is to build back better to create a stronger, more resilient Canada. The last six months have been hard for many families and have shown fundamental gaps in our society and in societies around the world. We must do everything possible to address these gaps.

This means we will keep strengthening the middle class and helping people working hard to join it. We will continue to invest in our communities, public infrastructure and, importantly, affordable housing. Our government brought in Canada's first national housing strategy and, more recently, the rapid housing initiative, which will build or purchase 3,000 affordable homes across Canada.

We will also invest in health care and address gaps in our social systems. High-quality, affordable child care is not a luxury; it is a necessity. That is why we will build a Canada-wide child care system that meets the needs of all Canadians. For our seniors, we have committed to increasing the old age security benefit at 75 years of age and to boosting the CPP survivor benefit. We will also set new national standards for long-term care so that seniors get the best support possible.

We will also build long-term competitiveness through clean growth while fighting climate change. Throughout COVID-19, we have been reminded of just how important our natural world is and that we are not apart from nature but a part of it. We live in a finite world with no planet B. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to protect our environment.

The Address

The fourth part of our plan is to stand up for who we are as Canadians and defend our values. We will continue to walk our shared path of reconciliation and will continue to welcome newcomers and support family reunification. We embrace our two official languages and celebrate our communities' and country's diversity.

However, we know there is more work to do to achieve gender equality and address systemic racism. We know that anti-Black racism is real, we know that systemic racism is real and we know unconscious bias is real. They all happen here in Canada. Our community will always stand against racism, and our government will always stand with it. We will always work to build a better, more equitable country for all.

My Etobicoke North families should know that they matter to me. My office and I will always be there for them. We have worked tirelessly for them throughout the pandemic.

We must learn what we always learn following a pandemic, namely that science and public health matter, not just when we are in a crisis. We must share lessons, update and test pandemic plans, and ensure that we are doing everything possible to protect the most vulnerable.

Finally, we are one small planet with one human family. Disease knows no borders, and through the pandemic and beyond, we are truly in this together.

● (1740)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is a long list of issues in this empty shell of a throne speech that the members from the government's side have been talking about. It is also quite surprising that members talked about unity. Alberta was mentioned only once in the whole throne speech. Where is the unity?

Western alienation is at the highest level we have ever seen. We are on the ground. We know what is going on. The government seems to be 30,000 feet above our level, looking down and telling us in the throne speech that it is aiming for unity. Where is the unity, when Alberta was mentioned only once in the whole throne speech?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, we have been clear from the very beginning that we are all in this together. The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs have worked very hard with the premiers of the provinces and territories. We have provided \$19 billion to the provinces and territories so that we can safely restart the economy. The throne speech tackles the major crises we are seized with in our communities, our country and globally, namely COVID-19, the economic crisis and climate change. The throne speech also tackled how to build back better and ensure that everyone is included.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, the member's speech was rather redundant. We have heard the same thing many times.

The government talks about improvements and actions, but how does it plan to put an end to tax evasion by corporations that use tax

havens? How does it suggest we force web giants to collect sales tax on their services and to pay a 3% levy on all of their activities in Canada to the arts and media sector, 40% of which would be for French-language content?

As the Bloc Québécois' critic for indigenous affairs, I want to point out that we need to implement a five-year plan to build 8,000 housing units for first nations in Quebec. Does the government have an update on that?

How about ensuring that all indigenous nations in Canada have immediate access to potable tap water and passing a law to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

I would like an update on these files.

● (1745)

[English]

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, there is no relationship more important to us than that with indigenous peoples: first nations, Métis and Inuit people. The throne speech is very much focused on the crises we are facing in our communities, our country and the world, which are COVID-19, the economic crisis as a result of COVID-19, climate change and building back better.

I will take this time to say we are in wave two. It is important to remember that there is a time lag in the data, so the numbers we are currently seeing are from 10 to 14 days ago. On Friday, we were at 2,000 cases. Asymptomatic spread is a threat. This is a virus that hospitalizes people. It still kills people. It is challenging to treat. It is disrupting—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think we all respect my colleague deeply in this place for her research expertise and her expertise on epidemics and pandemics. I want to ask her a question about that other epidemic, the opioid epidemic. In British Columbia it has killed five times more people this year than COVID, and over the last few years, over a thousand people each year. I want to ask her what she thinks about the hundreds or thousands of people being poisoned by fentanyl and whether they would benefit from a safe supply and decriminalization so that we could bring them in to get them well. This is a medical problem, not a criminal problem.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, I would also like to thank my hon. colleague for his decades of research and expertise.

The question he asked is so important. There is a pandemic because of COVID-19, and we are also facing the opioid crisis. We must work together. This does not take one simple fix. It is a very complex problem. Our government has taken numerous actions, and we must work together to do more.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the fabulous MP for Vancouver East.

Today, we are in debate on the reply to the Speech from the Throne. It is a throne speech that the government said was necessary, because the pandemic has transformed our economy and way of life in six short months. Whether a five-week prorogation, a complete shutdown of Parliament, was necessary to write this speech is another question entirely, and to which the answer is almost surely no. However, COVID has indeed impacted every riding across the country, and I would like to spend most of my time on experiences in my riding.

South Okanagan—West Kootenay, as everyone here knows, is one of the most beautiful ridings in the country with mountains, forests, sparkling lakes, sandy beaches, mighty rivers, bountiful orchards and the best wine in Canada. It is a wonderful place to live and a great place to visit. It is no wonder that tourism is one of the major drivers of the economy.

When COVID-19 hit in March, tourism was hit immediately. People stopped travelling. Within weeks, Air Canada stopped flying into Penticton and Castlegar. Pacific Coastal stopped flying into Trail. WestJet cut back most of its flights. While a few of these flights have returned, my constituents remain very concerned about the continuation of air service into regional airports. A recent announcement by NavCan about possibly closing towers across the country brings extra concern.

As travel stopped, motels and hotels emptied, restaurants closed and up until June. Things looked very bleak for tourism in the South Okanagan—West Kootenay, but after travel guidelines were relaxed in June, tourism was surprisingly busy. Many restaurants did well. Hotels and motels along the beaches in the South Okanagan were packed. Private campgrounds, public campgrounds, rough campgrounds back in the woods were filled beyond capacity. Boat and RV dealers were busy, and bike dealers sold stock as fast as they could get it.

Every year, I ride my bicycle around the riding in the last week of August. Before I left this year, I dropped into one of the local bike shops to get a spare tire just in case something untoward happened along the trails. The dealer said that he would lend me one, but made me promise that I would bring it back if I did not use it. He was happy that I already had extra tubes, because he said that he had not had any normal tubes in months. People wanted to get out and enjoy the South Okanagan—West Kootenay. They came from all over B.C., Alberta and the rest of Canada. I cycled over 400 kilometres of trails and roads while going around the riding, and those trails were very busy. One of the common complaints I heard in the Slocan Valley was that there were so many tourists, they were taking up all the secret campgrounds that used to be used only by locals.

The Address

I do not see this changing significantly after the pandemic subsides. People have really discovered the joys of getting out into the woods, hiking mountain trails, and boating on the lakes of Canada. It is clear that we need to invest more in trail and other outdoor infrastructure to provide proper camping, hiking and biking experiences for the future.

I also want to mention the performing arts, which is a sector that does so much to make our lives worth living, and COVID has brought that sector to its knees. Any facility based on a live audience and live performance has been hit hard all spring and summer, whether it is the big South Okanagan Events Centre in Penticton, the small but mighty Dream Cafe, the Venables Theatre in Oliver, Gold Fever Follies in Rossland, the Bailey Theatre in Trail or any event held in any of the community halls across my riding. These theatres and the workers, musicians and actors who work in them have seen their professional lives come to a halt. Most of these workers are gig workers, living precariously from job to job. They, like millions of other Canadian workers, generally do not qualify for EI. They would have literally been out on the street with no support if the NDP had not pressed for broader benefits that resulted in the creation of CERB.

I spoke with representatives from a coalition of performing arts workers from B.C. last week, and while they were very grateful for those supports, they were concerned about what lay ahead and how we would rebuild our social safety nets that COVID has exposed as entirely inadequate.

● (1750)

The agriculture sector was hit by delays and difficulties getting foreign workers in to work in the orchards and vineyards. I want to thank the BC Fruit Growers' Association, the Government of B.C., and the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen for their hard work in coming up with protocols and funding supports, so that at least some of these workers could quarantine and work in conditions that were safe for them, as well as safe for the broader community.

The Address

The forestry sector was already hurting from low prices and illegal tariffs when COVID-19 hit. There were some shifts cut back in some mills, but fortunately lumber prices rebounded through the summer. I want to give a big shout-out to Kalesnikoff Lumber. In the middle of the pandemic, it finished building a new mass timber facility in South Slokan that is now producing engineered wood products for projects in Victoria, Vancouver and Toronto. Along with Structurlam in Penticton, I now have two of the top mass timber facilities in North America in my riding. They are part of a trend that is changing how we build large buildings that are safe, beautiful and good for the environment.

I want to talk now about some of the health impacts of COVID. I have to say that my riding was relatively untouched by the virus, thanks in large parts to the steady guidance of Dr. Bonnie Henry and the Government of British Columbia, and it will hopefully remain so.

We all saw the horrific news from long-term care facilities across the country, especially in Ontario and Quebec. I have been concerned about long-term care centres for years. Even before COVID, it was clear that funding and staffing at these sites was often completely inadequate. We need to bring long-term care centres into our national health care system, with national standards and adequate funding. We need to pay care workers, and all the other workers on the front line of COVID, fair wages, so that they will know that we value them as the heroes they truly are.

I was shocked to find out, when I first talked to care workers pre-COVID, that many of them who had worked for over 20 years at the same facility were now making less money than when they had first been hired.

Once COVID is behind us, we must once again focus on the real crisis facing the world, and that is global warming. We must focus on renewable energy, electrification and energy efficiency. For the past five years, I have pressed the Liberal government to seriously invest in building retrofits. It passed that responsibility on to the provinces in the pan-Canadian framework and then on to the municipalities in the last budget.

The government needs to take direct action now so that all Canadians can access funds to make their homes and businesses more energy efficient, and so that workers can find good jobs across this country.

If the infrastructure minister is looking for shovel-ready projects that need federal investments, there is an irrigation canal in Oliver that has been seeking that support for the last four years. I am happy to see that irrigation has finally been added to the list of qualifying projects for the latest program.

The NDP has been completely focused for the past six months on finding solutions that will make life better for Canadians. We pointed out that the initial COVID benefits would have let many workers and businesses fall through the cracks, and we presented positive solutions to improve those benefits.

When the government said it was going to reduce CERB by \$400 in the new CRB, we forced it to keep the payments the same, so that Canadians who still have no jobs to go back to could continue to live in dignity. We forced the government to put forward a mean-

ingful paid sick leave program, so that workers will not go to work with COVID.

We will continue that focus as we face the second wave of COVID, and as we build for a better Canada.

Does the Speech from the Throne give us confidence in that future? It is the actions that flow from the speech that will count. The speech mentions pharmacare, something the Liberals promised back in 1997. It mentions child care, something the Liberals have been promising since 2005. It mentions pay equity, something the NDP forced the Liberals to act on in 2015. They are still talking about it.

We look forward to real action. The NDP has been and always will be a party that strives for a fairer, greener and more prosperous Canada for all Canadians.

• (1755)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I just want to say how much I appreciated the speech from the hon. member across the way.

I, too, share his concern about seniors in long-term care facilities. This is a particular concern in my home province of Quebec. I would like to know what the hon. member would suggest. How does the hon. member think the federal government could work with the provinces and territories to improve long-term care for our seniors?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, it is very obviously one of the things that COVID has exposed that has been a problem all along. As I said in my speech, we have all heard in previous years about issues around long-term care. I have heard it from friends and workers. We have to do something. What the NDP is proposing is that we bring long-term care, something that keeps our seniors healthy in their final years, into the Canada Health Act so that we can provide money to the provinces. As the member mentioned, this would involve negotiations with the provinces. We could provide federal funding in return for national standards that would make sure we have proper staffing levels and funding for staff salaries. It is very difficult in many places to find people willing to work in long-term care centres because the pay is so low.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, a couple of years back, the Liberal government decided it was just fine for senior care homes in British Columbia to be sold off to a Chinese company, eventually taken over by the Chinese government. The care in those facilities certainly became an issue. Conservative members pointed out the problem with this and opposed the purchase of these long-term care homes by the Chinese communist regime that the Liberal government seemed to support. Even the Prime Minister has an admiration for the way things are handled in China.

I would like to know why NDP members were not as vocal about this and why they continue to prop up the Liberal government that seems to be hell-bent on supporting this communist regime.

• (1800)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I will start by saying that we are not propping up the government, we are dragging it, kicking and screaming, to do the right thing for Canadians.

With regard to Anbang and senior care centres in British Columbia, the main one that was part of that sale was in Summerland. It was a care facility I knew very well. When I was running in a provincial election, I went to talk to the families who had loved ones who died there due to various levels of lack of attention by the staff. That is when I was first exposed to the problems in long-term care facilities. This was years before it was sold. Therefore, those problems are inherent in how we run our long-term care facilities and that is why we need to change the system completely.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague on his speech. I must say that I found certain parts of it rather entertaining, particularly when he talked about the gains his party made over the past few months by supposedly improving various programs.

In his speech, he talked about artists in his region who said they felt reassured by and satisfied with the measures that have been put in place. Either the reality in his region is starkly different from that in Quebec or he did not really speak with artists. Artists are not at all reassured by the way this government is handling their situation during this pandemic.

I asked the government some questions earlier and I did not really get the answers I was expecting. Existing programs for artists and culture do not at all meet the needs and expectations of this sector, which I would remind him brings in \$53 billion a year.

Given the obviously different realities across this country, I want to ask my colleague whether he agrees that it would perhaps be simpler to give the money to the provincial and Quebec governments so they can manage the culture file, their culture, themselves.

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I do not know where to begin with that one, because I was going to answer the first question and now I have another one.

I think the performing arts, as I said in my speech, are often forgotten and often neglected. I think the current government has neglected them as well. I think we have to support the performing

The Address

artists in British Columbia. I met with them last week. They presented a five-point plan on what the federal government can do, using federal powers, to support them. Those are the kinds of things that we need to bring forward, whether they are from Quebec or British—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Vancouver East has the floor.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to join the debate in reply to the throne speech. When I heard the government deliver the throne speech, I thought, what has the government been doing since it prorogued the House? Surely the speech is more than just reciting commitments on a variety of different topics, and to their standard, which is to always make commitments on a variety of issues and then to never deliver on them. Sure enough, as I listened to the throne speech, it was a repeat of that pattern yet again.

I was looking to hear the government address the issue and the crisis that many small businesses are faced with. I know that I am not the only person in my riding who has businesses that are struggling with this. For example, they were looking for the government to say that the commercial rent subsidy program is not working and that the Liberals would ensure and allow small businesses to apply for the commercial rent subsidy. They did not hear that. It was not in the throne speech, even though the government should have acted whether or not it was in the throne speech.

The small business community has waited and waited. It has been more than six months and still there is no action with respect to that. So many of the businesses in my riding had to close because that help was not forthcoming. Even this week, I had constituents phoning and contacting me, saying, “Please help, we need the federal government to come to the table and allow us to apply for the commercial rent subsidy because our landlords will not do it.” They are being penalized for that and they are suffering. If we do not support the small business community to survive this, all of us will be impacted and the recovery for the economy will be that much longer and that much slower. That needs to change.

The other thing I was hoping to hear was that the government would do something to address a critical issue in my riding of Vancouver East. It is an issue that has been brought to their attention, but the scale of which applies to other communities as well. The PNE in my riding is a 110-year-old institution. It has been left out of pandemic help from the federal government and as a result of that the institution may not survive the pandemic. It is a fair in our community that has provided thousands of jobs to young people.

The Address

The throne speech talked about the value of young people and the need to support them. How about ensuring that the PNE survives the pandemic? It hires thousands of young people every summer for employment. Throughout the course of the year, it has some 4,200 workers engaged with the PNE. If we do not take action to save the PNE, we will lose this historic institution, the economic driver that it is in our community, the supports for young people and the enjoyment of so many families across the Lower Mainland and beyond. I was looking for the federal government to do something for institutions like that, yet it failed again.

Similarly, we have a beautiful Chinatown in Vancouver. The federal government acknowledged the value and the history of it by declaring it a national historic site, yet there was no help for Chinatown, even though the federal government saw fit to provide support to Granville Island as it should. However, I was calling on a variety of different ministers to support Chinatown and to ensure it can survive the pandemic, but no help came to Chinatown. It too was left to battle the issue on its own, yet this is a national treasure, which the federal government by its own admission has acknowledged and recognized as a national historic site.

• (1805)

Why would the federal government not provide the much-needed help that is required for the survival of Chinatown, as well as other sectors that are desperate for help from the federal government?

My colleague just before me talked about gig workers in the performance arts industry. They were the first to shut down in the pandemic and fear that they will be the last to reopen. They need help from the federal government not only to survive the pandemic, but to move beyond it. The government can take real action to ensure that industries have the supports they need to get through the pandemic and thrive in the future.

In the throne speech, the federal government talked about housing. I listened very hard to its message. There was a lot of vague language and promises that it has yet to deliver on.

Take a look at the national housing strategy. The Prime Minister announced with much fanfare back in 2017 that adequate housing is a basic human right, yet we just have to look around the community to see people who are homeless today. They are desperate to get into safe, secure, affordable housing, especially in the face of a pandemic. We talked about the prescription for safety required to flatten the curve: social distancing, washing hands, all of those measures. However, many people cannot access them because they do not have a home to go to.

I have the largest encampment in the entire country in my riding of Vancouver East. Both people in the Strathcona encampment, as well as the residents in the neighbourhood, are absolutely desperate for the federal government to come and help them.

The Government of British Columbia has reached out to the federal government on a number of occasions. I, myself, with the mayor of Vancouver and MLA Melanie Mark, wrote to the minister before the election. We called for the minister to step up, be a partner and join the city, community and non-profits to address this crisis. To this day, there has been no help from the federal government to address this crisis.

We are at a crisis here in Strathcona on all levels, from safety, health and security points of view. The winter months are coming. The rain is coming. The wet, cold weather is coming. How can it be that we would allow people to live in a camp at this time in the middle of a pandemic?

The federal government said that it would have a pandemic response to address the housing crisis. Just prior to the throne speech it had made an announcement of 3,000 units of rapid housing. Let me just put that in context. In Vancouver alone, based on the last count of homeless people, we have more than 2,000 people who are homeless today, so 3,000 units is not going to cut it. It is entirely deficient to address the housing crisis across the country.

My riding is not the only riding with a homeless encampment. Encampments can be found throughout the entire country. The government needs to do more than just say that adequate housing is a basic human right. It needs to act, delivering a flow of money while creating programs that are accessible. It needs to address this housing crisis in an effective way instead of just with words.

The throne speech—

• (1810)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always encouraging when MPs on both sides of the House are focused on the issue at hand, that being the pandemic, and coming up with ideas. I appreciate the fact that the NDP will be supporting the throne speech and the many fine initiatives within it. That is a very strong positive, and shows that even though we might disagree at times, we can come together in a time of need for Canadians.

We have introduced Bill C-4, which passed, that reinforced the importance of the CERB program being brought into EI and the wage subsidy program.

I wonder if the hon. member would provide some thoughts on that particular piece of legislation and how it complements the throne speech.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, Bill C-4 was a piece of legislation the government introduced, and it was flawed. It was the NDP who went to the table and worked hard to get the government to make the necessary changes to ensure that the amount of money for CERB was not cut to \$400 per week, which the Liberals wanted to proceed with, but rather that it honoured the required amount, which is \$2,000 a month or \$500 a week. We pushed forward to ensure people could get sick leave, but even then, Bill C-4 is not a perfect piece of legislation. Much work needs to be done. The government could have easily made those programs permanent if it wished to, but it chose not to. That is what the NDP did.

With respect to the throne speech, it—

• (1815)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her advocacy on these issues.

I am really concerned about affordable housing and the effect that the pandemic is having on small business, but my question is about disability. Three months into the pandemic, there was finally a one-time payment promised to people on disability. For four months now they have been waiting, and apparently the cheques are going to be sent out at the end of this month. We learned in March that there was a backlog of disability applications for 50,000 veterans. It is going to take three years for those applications to go through.

The Disability Tax Credit Promoters Restrictions Act regulations have not yet been implemented, six years after the enabling act was passed. This means that people who are applying for disability are vulnerable to vultures. Someone in my riding with a brain injury was paid \$1,000 and it was sent to collection.

Is the hon. member hearing the same kinds of things from her constituents, people with disabilities who are sick of waiting and sick of being left behind?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, for seniors in need and members of the community with disabilities, the government has always approached them as an afterthought. The NDP had to push hard even for that one-time payment to come through. Even then, the government was slow-walking in that delivery, yet it does not hesitate with friends and insiders, as we saw in the WE scandal. It is also slow-walking the wealth tax, as an example. In fact, I do not even know if the government will bring in such a thing, so—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Vancouver East and I sat on opposite sides in the B.C. legislature, so it is good to see her here.

I concur with her about the crisis being faced in British Columbia, in her riding of Vancouver East and my riding of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, of drug addiction and the opioid crisis. Five times more people have died this year from opioids as from COVID-19, so it is very serious and we should not undermine the numbers with COVID-19.

How do the member and New Democrats feel about the Liberal government placing more emphasis on recovery and treatment than primarily on safe injection sites?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, we have two other health emergencies: the housing crisis and the opioid crisis. The truth of the matter is we need a full continuum of services. We need safe supply. We need harm reduction sites. We need harm reduction initiatives. As well, with the mental health supports we need recovery. We need all of it. Then, at the base of that, we also need affordable housing. The federal government has refused to act on this in a

The Address

comprehensive way. No one every suggested harm reduction and decriminalizing are silver bullets; we need all of those—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade.

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Richmond Hill.

It is an honour for me to rise in the House for the first time in this Parliament, to respond to our government's Speech from the Throne.

I would first like to address my constituents in Outremont, Côte-des-Neiges and Mile End. More specifically, I would like to address the parents who, like me, are worried. The guidelines are changing every day, and I know that it is not easy to keep up.

• (1820)

[English]

As a mother, I understand the uncertainty mothers are facing; their fear of waking up to the latest news, the latest numbers, the latest closures; their anxiety of waking up to their child with a runny nose; the explanations they give their little ones about why and what is next; and the concern they have for their own aging parents and their health and well-being. I understand this and our government understands this.

Last week at around 3 a.m., my colleagues and I voted on legislation in order to address these very concerns. The caregiving benefit, which opened early this morning, provides income support for parents who need to stay home with their children because maybe their class is closed temporarily or their school is completely closed. Maybe they need to stay home and take care of a parent with COVID-19 or a loved one. They should never have to choose between bringing home a paycheque and being there for their family.

[Translation]

I believe that these benefits are absolutely necessary because we must be there for one another. Despite the challenges, despite the worrisome increase in cases back home in Outremont, we are nonetheless very fortunate. We are fortunate to have so many organizations in our community that help the vulnerable and all of us.

The Address

I am thinking of the organization Outremont en famille and its entire team, which is working hard not just for our young families, but also for our seniors. I am also thinking of Maison des jeunes d'Outremont, which is there for our teens. Of course, I am thinking of the community leaders from our riding who work for the Welcome Collective.

[English]

The welcome collective is helping pair Montreal families with refugee families arriving here for the first time.

[Translation]

Every day, I think of André, Bernard and the whole team at the MultiCaf community cafeteria, where I like to volunteer.

[English]

I also think of Lou at the Mile-End mission, who works with such a small team of volunteers in order to bring healthy, nutritious food to families in need in the Mile End. Of course, Sid Stevens at Sun Youth, a veritable institution in Montreal, bringing urgent care to those in need.

[Translation]

As parliamentary secretary, I am also thinking of our entrepreneurs on Bernard Avenue, Laurier Avenue, Parc Avenue, Saint-Laurent Boulevard and Saint-Denis Street. I am also thinking of entrepreneurs across Quebec who are currently in red zones. I know that the uncertainty they are feeling is extremely hard to take. I do not know when the pandemic will be over, but I can guarantee that our government will be by their side for as long as it takes. We are there for entrepreneurs with storefronts, such as the Jérôme B hair salon on Côte-des-Neiges and the beloved pastry shop Duc de Lorraine, for which the emergency wage subsidy has been indispensable.

It was feedback from entrepreneurs that convinced us to extend the emergency wage subsidy until next summer. The program has already helped cover the wages of over 3.6 million workers across the country, including 85,000 workers in Quebec.

We are also going to extend the Canada emergency business account. This interest-free loan, part of which is non-repayable, has already helped more than 760,000 small businesses in Canada. Thanks to the expanded eligibility criteria, Aude and État de Style, her one-of-a-kind boutique on Duluth Avenue, were able to take advantage of this extremely valuable support.

[English]

Just as we did before, we will have the backs of hard-working Canadian entrepreneurs in this second wave of the pandemic. We have extended the wage subsidy, we are expanding the CEBA loan program, we have topped up the regional relief and recovery fund, and the federal government will be paying for two weeks of sick leave that employees may need.

As we have seen, this pandemic has worsened pre-existing inequalities in this country. There are people who have been excluded from our social safety net for far too long. Many of them have been part of the nine million Canadians for whom the CERB was invaluable.

The CERB is ending, but our commitment to a broader and more comprehensive safety net is steadfast. The expanded EI is there for workers who cannot find a job at the moment. Our new Canada recovery benefit is there for our gig economy workers and independent workers. They will be able to apply for this benefit of \$500 a week or \$2,000 per month.

In Canada, the wealthiest 1% owns almost 25% of our total national wealth. The bottom 1% owns almost none of it. This gap is widening. Our government is acting on this data and is fighting this growing wealth inequality. This includes identifying additional ways to tax extreme wealth inequality, addressing corporate tax avoidance by digital giants and more.

The rising income disparity is not dissociated from the social inequality that has been capturing the hearts and minds of Canadians and of people around the world. Following the death of George Floyd, we saw people take to the streets and demand reform, and we have heard their cries. In the Speech from the Throne, we have committed to addressing the systemic inequalities in all phases of the criminal justice system; enhancing civilian oversight of our law enforcement agencies; modernizing training for police, especially surrounding the use of force; moving toward community-led policing; and collecting better disaggregated data.

In this context, I would like to give a shout-out to the work of Tiffany Callender and her team at the Côte-Des-Neiges Black Community Association, who bring the demands for justice and equality to every level of government every single day. This includes their incredible work on the Black entrepreneurship program, a first in Canada, a program that needed to be created because of the barriers that Black entrepreneurs continue to face. I hope we do not need this program in the future.

Equality of opportunity and income parity are also top of mind for me as a woman, because still in 2020, women are at a disadvantage in the workplace.

● (1825)

[Translation]

When I talked to people at the Le Chaînon shelter in my riding, I realized how much demand for women's shelters is growing.

Why? Because asking a woman who is experiencing domestic violence to isolate at home is simply not feasible. That is exactly why we announced additional funding to support women and children fleeing violence during this pandemic.

[English]

In the Speech from the Throne, our government also recommit-
ted to reconciliation with first nations, Inuit and Métis people. We
will introduce legislation to implement the UN Declaration on the
Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the end of this year. This was con-
firmed, once again, by our justice minister in the last several weeks.
Only a few short days ago, footage from a hospital in my home
province, Quebec, shocked the soul of the country. In this fight
against injustice I do not like to speak of victims; for me, Joyce was
a warrior.

There are warriors everywhere, fighting for a better and a more
just Canada, and they do not fight in vain.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed
to have been moved.

• (1830)

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speak-
er, Canadian billionaires hold nearly four and a half thousand times
the wealth of the average Canadian family. By 10 a.m. on January 2
this year, top CEOs in Canada made as much money as the average
Canadian worker would earn in the entire year. Unlike those aver-
age workers who pay their taxes and contribute to all the infrastruc-
ture and services we depend on, Canada's wealthiest citizens are not
paying their fair share.

What is wrong with this picture? Why are some people hoarding
obscene amounts of wealth, while so many are struggling to make
ends meet in the country?

During the COVID-19 lockdown this past spring, Canadians
across the country stood on their balconies and doorsteps and
banged pots and pans to show their appreciation for front-line
workers. Health care workers and first responders worked through
the lockdown, separated from their families and risking their own
health and safety for our communities.

We also banged pots and pans for the essential service workers
who were keeping grocery stores open and shelves stocked during a
difficult and frightening time. Most of these service workers earn a
modest income at best and many earn minimum wage. They had to
travel to and from work during the pandemic, often on public tran-
sit, and then serve the public all day long, with the stress of the pan-
demic hanging over their heads. After seniors in long-term care fa-
cilities, low-wage workers, who live in crowded housing and rely
on public transit to get to their service jobs, were most affected by
COVID-19.

While these essential workers in our service economy continued
to work and while millions of Canadians lost their jobs and felt the
economic stress of the pandemic, the rich got much richer. Accord-
ing to Forbes' annual billionaires list, Canada's 20 richest billion-
aires increased their wealth by \$37 billion during the first six
months of this pandemic. Let us think about that. Twenty Canadian

Adjournment Proceedings

billionaires increased their wealth by \$37 billion during the most
economically catastrophic six months in Canadian history.

Two of those billionaires own Canada's largest grocery store
chains. Galen Weston's fortune grew by \$1.6 billion and Jim Patti-
son increased his wealth by \$1.7 billion. During the pandemic,
many low-wage workers, including workers in the grocery stores
owned by Mr. Weston and Mr. Pattison, received a short-lived \$2
an hour top-up as danger pay. When that \$2 an hour wage increase
was terminated by those grocery chains, the stock value of those
companies shot up and Mr. Weston and Mr. Pattison reaped the
benefits.

Tax dollars pay for the public infrastructure and services on
which these billionaires rely. Their companies use our roads,
bridges, water and sewer systems. They benefit from an educated
workforce paid for by tax dollars. The public transit system that
carries their workers to and from the job is built and subsidized by
tax dollars. They benefit from our public health care system be-
cause they do not have to pay for private health insurance for their
workers.

When successive Liberal and Conservative governments have
cut taxes, it has predominantly benefited the ultra-wealthy. It is
time to reverse that trend and introduce a wealth tax. Keep taxes
reasonable for working people, but increase taxes on the ultra-
wealthy and institute inheritance tax on the transfer of large for-
tunes. If we had greater income equality in the country, we could
easily afford the social safety net that Canadians deserve: universal
pharmacare, universal dental care, universal child care, free post-
secondary tuition and a guaranteed livable income so we could
eliminate poverty.

Canadians deserve better.

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of
Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and As-
sociate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate
the opportunity to take part in this evening's debate. I thank my col-
league from Nanaimo—Ladysmith for raising the question, which
ultimately touches on the subject of fairness within the Canadian
economy.

I will agree notionally, and I expect most members of the House
of Commons would as well, that it should be a priority for the Gov-
ernment of Canada to support our nation's most vulnerable. If that
means we have to ask the wealthiest members of our society to pay
their fair share, then that should be a consequence we readily accept
for the benefits that will accrue to our society by supporting our na-
tion's most vulnerable.

Adjournment Proceedings

I will note, in particular, in the recent Speech from the Throne on the subject of taxing extreme wealth, the government has committed to limiting the stock option deduction for some of the wealthiest members of Canadian society and has decided to move forward on the issue of avoidance of taxes by digital giants. However, this is not a party that we have arrived to recently. Members will recall, having been in the previous Parliament, that the very first thing our government did when we were elected to office in 2015 was to raise taxes on the wealthiest 1% of Canadian income earners so that we could provide an income tax cut to nine million middle-class families.

We also moved forward with a plan with respect to the Canada child benefit. We stopped sending child care cheques to millionaires and put more money into the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadian families. This is a theme that has been a golden thread throughout the various policies we have adopted over the past five years. However, the inequities that exist within the economy have been made more readily apparent by the ongoing pandemic. That is why we made the decision, at the onset of this public health emergency, that we would be there for Canadians.

The Canada emergency response benefit has supported nearly nine million vulnerable Canadians in their time of need. The Canada emergency wage subsidy has supported millions more in maintaining a connection to their employer so that they can keep their job on the back end of this pandemic. There are countless examples of policies that have used Canadian taxpayer dollars to support our nation's most vulnerable during a time of unprecedented uncertainty.

Going forward, we need to recognize that the best thing that we can do to support our economy and prevent the need for this extraordinary amount of revenue to support the programs on the back end is to launch a world-class public health response so that we can limit the cost of the coronavirus to our society. That is why we have made major investments in personal protective equipment for front-line staff. That is why we are investing in the research and development of vaccines. That is why we ordered 7.9 million rapid testing kits as soon as Health Canada approved them, and that is why we are continuing to support the provinces in the delivery and administration of health care during this pandemic.

We do not need to just double down on a public health strategy. We also need to be investing in measures that will prevent households and businesses from bearing the enormous costs of this pandemic. By moving forward with some of the policies that I mentioned, whether it is the CERB, the wage subsidy or the emergency business account, we are going to be able to make an investment up front that will prevent us from suffering the worst consequences of inaction, leading to millions of additional dollars that we do not need to spend if we make smart investments now.

On a forward-looking basis, there will come a time when we need to examine how we are going to finance many of the policies that we have put in place now or we plan to going forward. By targeting policies that will promote growth and support Canada's most vulnerable, we will be able to save the system billions of dollars and support Canada's most vulnerable. If it means we have to ask the wealthiest to pay a bit more, then so be it.

• (1835)

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, as a society, we can no longer afford the growing inequality in Canada. Extreme wealth inequality has proven to have a corrosive effect on our society, as well as on democracy. Inequality harms our economy, damages health and well-being, decreases disposable income and entices middle-class individuals to incur debts they cannot pay. Extreme inequality also plays a factor in increased crime.

We need to crack down on wealthy tax cheats. We must stop the tax avoidance schemes that allow people and corporations to offshore their wealth and avoid paying taxes in Canada. We need an inheritance tax on massive fortunes, and we need a wealth tax. Northern European countries tax the wealthy and ensure their citizens are taken care of from cradle to grave. We should do the same in Canada. We can do better.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I agree entirely with the hon. member, insofar as his argument suggests that wealth inequality is a priority the government must tackle and that we should continue to focus our efforts on supporting the vulnerable. Throughout this pandemic, it has become apparent that the inequalities that have long plagued Canada's economy continue to exist and need serious investment by the government. That is why, when we saw the emergency rear its head and create costs for society, we decided the government was in a better position to bear those costs than households and businesses. Vulnerable Canadians can rest assured we will be there in their time of need to reduce income inequality and support them with their most basic needs in our communities. If that requires us to ask the wealthy to contribute a bit more, we will not be afraid to make that demand.

HEALTH

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to follow up on a question that I asked last week of the Minister of Transport concerning Transport Canada's rescission of the order that allowed BC Ferries to keep passengers on the lower car decks. I want to start by saying it is not debatable that minimizing public contact is the best way of preventing the unnecessary spread of COVID-19. This is an accepted fact among public health officials and indeed our own federal government.

I want to also recognize the leadership that has been shown by the B.C. NDP government, Premier John Horgan, Health Minister Adrian Dix and of course Dr. Bonnie Henry, the chief medical officer for the Province of B.C. They have been instrumental in shepherding B.C. through the crisis. What we are now seeing, however, is an expected uptick of cases as that second wave starts to hit our province. That is why the recent decision by Transport Canada does not seem to make any sense.

Last Thursday, the minister stated he had legitimate concerns over marine safety. I agree: There is always the potential for fire when one is on a large ferry. We have seen ships sink in the past. These are legitimate concerns. However, if we look at the safety record of BC Ferries over the last number of years, there have been no recorded incidents of fires, and there was only one major incident reported. I think we can recognize that BC Ferries has an excellent safety record. A large part of that is due to the amazing crew, who form part of the BC Ferry and Marine Workers' Union, so I really want to thank them for their efforts in keeping passengers safe and for the professionalism with which they do their jobs each and every day.

What is important to highlight here, in this adjournment proceedings debate, is not only the track record of BC Ferries and the professionalism of its crew in keeping passengers safe, but contrasting that with the expected second wave that is about to hit our province and the knowledge that maintaining physical distancing is important in stopping the spread of COVID-19.

I am a proud Vancouver Islander. Everyone else who lives on Vancouver Island and in the Gulf Islands understands how important and vital BC Ferries is as a transportation link. It is an accepted fact that, if one of the larger ferries is at full capacity, it is impossible to maintain the kind of physical distancing required to stop the spread of COVID-19 on the passenger decks. When Transport Canada allowed people to stay on the lower car decks, it was an important measure that in large part helped stop the spread of COVID-19, especially on our ferries. I do not think there is any way the Minister of Transport can tell passengers who have used BC Ferries that this kind of physical distancing can be maintained when their own government accepts the science behind physical distancing, and that we want to keep the minimum number of people from going above deck.

All I ask of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport is that I hope he reconsiders the decision, in light of the expected second wave, and that Transport Canada saw that this policy was good enough for the previous number of months. To have it rescind that order, right on the doorstep of an expected second wave, is a real head-scratcher. I implore him to listen to the asks of the B.C. government, and that Transport Canada gives BC Ferries the freedom to do so again.

• (1840)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for bringing forward this important issue, which I am sure he is hearing from his constituents.

I know he understands that passenger safety is one of Transport Canada's highest priorities. The minister is taking advice from the maritime experts at Transport Canada to provide the best safety for those who are sailing. It is not to question the safety record of BC Ferries. Transport Canada is aware of the marine safety risk and the protection of passengers and workers' safety on any mode of transportation is at the core of our mandate.

Staying on enclosed decks is very dangerous and banned both internationally and in Canada following high profile accidents. The effects of a fire, explosion or collision could be catastrophic. These

Adjournment Proceedings

decks are designed to contain smoke, heat and fire. In the event of an accident, passengers on this deck would be at great risk of serious injury or fatality. While these incidents may be rare, the consequences are severe.

In response to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, in March, the Government of Canada temporarily relaxed enforcement of regulations requiring passengers to leave their vehicles on enclosed car decks. Since March, we have learned a lot about COVID-19 and how to protect ourselves. Operators have implemented practices recommended by public health officials, including physical distancing, enhanced cleaning and health practices, and requiring masks. By taking these precautions, it has been demonstrated that the risk of COVID-19 transmission can be mitigated on ferries.

Consequently, as of September 30, that is why ferry passengers no longer have the flexibility to remain in their vehicles on enclosed decks during the voyage. Although records from last summer show that less than 10% of ferry passengers took advantage of this temporary flexibility, Transport Canada recognizes the concerns raised by residents and officials in British Columbia. Throughout September, Transport Canada officials have worked very closely with BC Ferries and recently with British Columbia health officials to prepare reactivation of this safety prohibition.

Passengers are still allowed on open vehicle deck and with additional measures now in place, the designated passenger areas have sufficient space to accommodate these additional passengers while respecting public health guidelines.

Our government recognizes the vital link that BC Ferries plays. Through our collaborative work with BC Ferries and provincial officials, we are ensuring that even in the face of COVID-19 that link will remain secure.

• (1845)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's response, but I am trying to contrast that with the fact that Transport Canada saw fit to allow this exemption over the last six months. The dangers on board a ferry with fire and possible flooding were always there, but we are in a unique public health emergency and we would not be requesting this exemption unless we were facing something significant.

All the experts agree that the second wave of COVID-19 coming this fall could be worse than what we saw in March or April, yet we will not have the ability on BC Ferries to maintain that physical distancing. This is not only about the passengers; it is also about the people whose livelihoods depend on the ferries and have to be there every day.

Adjournment Proceedings

I ask again for the parliamentary secretary to consider those safety measures and ask him to reconsider Transport Canada's decision so we can keep people safe.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that BC Ferries and their crew do exceptional work and they are doing excellent work on safety related to COVID-19. To limit the spread of COVID, the government banned large cruise ships from Canadian waters, pleasure crafts in Arctic waters and took measures to temporarily relax enforcement of regulations requiring passengers to leave vehicles on the decks.

Now, like other countries in the world that depend on ferries, it is time to transition back to normal operations and accepted safety practices. Incorporating well-accepted physical distancing, cleaning

and mask wearing practices into existing maritime requirements will ensure the safety of the Canadian public. That is the core of this decision to ensure the safety of passengers in the event of a catastrophic incident.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:48 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, October 5, 2020

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Resumption of Debate on Address in Reply

Mr. Kusmierczyk	511
Ms. Gladu	513
Ms. Michaud	513
Mr. Masse	513
Mr. Sidhu (Brampton East)	514
Mr. Aboultaif	516
Mrs. Charbonneau	516
Mr. Green	516
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	517
Mr. Lamoureux	518
Mrs. Vignola	518
Mr. MacGregor	519
Mr. Kent	519
Mr. Lamoureux	520
Mr. Thériault	520
Mr. Kent	520
Mr. Masse	520
Mr. Schiefke	521
Ms. Michaud	522
Mr. MacGregor	523
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	523
Ms. Khalid	523
Mr. Lawrence	525
Mrs. Charbonneau	525
Mr. McGuinty	526
Mr. Bragdon	526
Mr. Lamoureux	527
Mrs. Vignola	527
Mr. Arnold	528
Mr. Melillo	528
Mr. Lamoureux	530
Mr. Simard	530
Mr. MacGregor	530
Mr. Fergus	530
Mr. Berthold	531
Mrs. DeBellefeuille	532
Mr. Green	532
Mrs. Zahid	532
Ms. Gladu	534
Mr. Fortin	534
Mr. MacGregor	535
Mr. Bezan	535
Mr. Lamoureux	536
Mr. Simard	537

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Green Party of Canada

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	537
--------------------------------------	-----

Al Gardner

Mr. Scarpaleggia	537
------------------------	-----

World Teachers' Day

Mr. Dalton	537
------------------	-----

Small Business

Mr. Morrissey	538
---------------------	-----

World Teachers' Day

Ms. Pauzé	538
-----------------	-----

Hellenic Home for the Aged

Mrs. Zahid	538
------------------	-----

Mental Illness Awareness Week

Mr. Doherty	538
-------------------	-----

WISH Drop-In Centre

Ms. Fry	539
---------------	-----

Gatineau's Local Economy

Mr. MacKinnon	539
---------------------	-----

John Pritchard School

Ms. Dancho	539
------------------	-----

World Teachers' Day

Mr. Samson	539
------------------	-----

Manitoba COVID-19 Response

Mr. Morantz	539
-------------------	-----

Natural Resources

Mr. Soroka	540
------------------	-----

COVID-19 Emergency Response

Mr. Green	540
-----------------	-----

Alcohol Education Campaign

Mr. Thériault	540
---------------------	-----

COVID-19

Mr. Berthold	540
--------------------	-----

Community Organizations in Vaudreuil—Soulanges

Mr. Schiefke	541
--------------------	-----

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health

Mr. O'Toole	541
Ms. Freeland	541
Mr. O'Toole	541
Ms. Freeland	541
Mr. O'Toole	541
Ms. Freeland	541
Mr. O'Toole	541
Ms. Freeland	542
Mr. O'Toole	542

Ms. Freeland.....	542	Air Transportation	
Mr. Therrien.....	542	Mr. Barsalou-Duval.....	547
Ms. Freeland.....	542	Mr. Garneau.....	547
Mr. Therrien.....	542	Mr. Barsalou-Duval.....	547
Ms. Freeland.....	542	Mr. Garneau.....	547
Mr. Singh.....	542	Health	
Ms. Freeland.....	542	Mr. Doherty.....	547
Mr. Singh.....	542	Ms. Hajdu.....	547
Ms. Freeland.....	542	Mr. Doherty.....	548
Mr. Deltell.....	543	Ms. Hajdu.....	548
Ms. Hajdu.....	543	Natural Resources	
Mr. Deltell.....	543	Mr. Soroka.....	548
Ms. Hajdu.....	543	Mr. Schiefke.....	548
Mr. Deltell.....	543	Infrastructure	
Ms. Hajdu.....	543	Mr. Sidhu (Brampton East).....	548
Ms. Rempel Garner.....	543	Mr. Fillmore.....	548
Ms. Hajdu.....	543	Health	
Ms. Rempel Garner.....	543	Ms. Shin.....	548
Ms. Hajdu.....	544	Ms. Hajdu.....	548
Ms. Rempel Garner.....	544	Foreign Affairs	
Ms. Hajdu.....	544	Mr. Barrett.....	549
COVID-19 Emergency Measures		Mr. Champagne.....	549
Mr. Savard-Tremblay.....	544	Federal-Provincial Relations	
Ms. Freeland.....	544	Mr. Motz.....	549
Mr. Savard-Tremblay.....	544	Mr. LeBlanc.....	549
Ms. Freeland.....	544	Indigenous Affairs	
Mr. Champoux.....	544	Ms. Sahota (Brampton North).....	549
Mr. Guilbeault.....	544	Mr. Lametti.....	549
Health		Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River).....	549
Mr. Paul-Hus.....	545	Ms. Bennett.....	549
Ms. Hajdu.....	545	Ms. Wilson-Raybould.....	550
Mr. Paul-Hus.....	545	Mr. Miller.....	550
Ms. Hajdu.....	545		
COVID-19 Emergency Response		ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
Ms. McPherson.....	545	Criminal Code	
Ms. Freeland.....	545	Mr. Lametti.....	550
Health		Bill C-7. Introduction and first reading.....	550
Ms. Kwan.....	545	(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	550
Ms. Hajdu.....	546	Criminal Code	
Housing		Mr. Garrison.....	550
Mr. Regan.....	546	Bill C-247. Introduction and first reading.....	550
Mr. Hussen.....	546	(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	550
Employment		Petitions	
Mr. Poilievre.....	546	Foreign Affairs	
Ms. Freeland.....	546	Ms. Gladu.....	550
Mr. Poilievre.....	546	Small Business	
Ms. Freeland.....	546	Ms. Gladu.....	551
Public Safety		Agriculture	
Mr. Barrett.....	546	Mr. Schiefke.....	551
Mr. Blair.....	546		
Mr. Barrett.....	547		
Mr. Champagne.....	547		

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>