



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

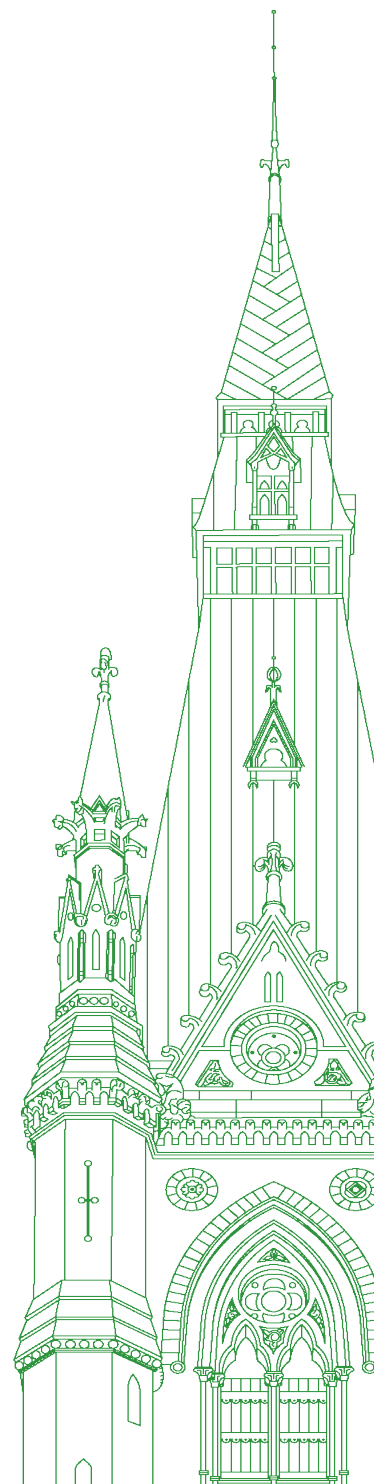
43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 150 No. 073
Monday, March 22, 2021

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 22, 2021

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[English]

The Speaker: The Chair would like to take a moment to provide some information to the House regarding the management of Private Members' Business.

As members know, after the order of precedence is replenished, the Chair reviews the new items so as to alert the House to bills which, at first glance, appear to infringe the financial prerogative of the Crown. This allows members the opportunity to intervene in a timely fashion to present their views about the need for those bills to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

[Translation]

Accordingly, following the February 22, 2021, replenishment of the order of precedence with 15 new items, I wish to inform the House that there is one bill that gives the Chair some concern as to the spending provisions it contemplates. It is:

Bill C-265, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act with regard to illness, injury or quarantine, standing in the name of the member for Salaberry—Suroît.

[English]

I would encourage honourable members who would like to make arguments regarding the need for a royal recommendation to accompany this bill or any other bills now on the order of precedence to do so at an early opportunity.

[Translation]

I thank hon. members for their attention.

* * *

[English]

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The House resumed from December 8, 2020, consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a pleasure it is to be able to address this very important issue for all Canadians. Often members move different motions or bills in recognition of important dates. This is one of those motions that is really necessary for the House to recognize and support. The motion calls for August 1 to be recognized in Canada as emancipation day.

As I wanted to provide some thoughts on this issue, I thought I would do a quick Google search to provide something very concise. I was really quite impressed with the BC Black History Awareness Society and wanted to cite something that is right on its website. The most interesting thing I saw really said a lot. We often hear that a picture is worth a thousand words, and there is an image of a poster indicating that here in Canada, in Halifax, there was to be a public auction on November 3, 1760: "To be sold, a boy and girl, about 11 years old".

I want to read the first couple of paragraphs to share with members. On the site it states that:

August 1 is important in Canadian history because the Slavery Abolition Act affected the lives of those enslaved and the lives of their descendants.

The first colony in the British Empire to have anti-slavery legislation was Upper Canada, now Ontario. John Graves Simcoe, the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada (1791–1796), passed an Act Against Slavery in 1793, which ended the importation of slaves in Upper Canada and manumitted the future children of female slaves at age twenty-five. Unfortunately, it did not free a single slave. It was superseded by the Slavery Abolition Act 1833.

Ontario was not the first of the British and former British possessions to enact legislation against slavery. Vermont abolished slavery outright in 1777, a full 16 years before Upper Canada's partial abolition. And Vermont was followed quickly by Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and several other northern states, well ahead of Upper Canada's 1793 law. In 1787, the United States Congress outlawed slavery in the territories that would become the Midwest states.

The Slavery Abolition Act 1833 abolished slavery throughout the British Empire....

That comes directly from the BC Black History Awareness Society website.

I watched a movie a few years back that was called *Amazing Grace*. It was about William Wilberforce. I loved the way in which the movie was put together to assist people in reflecting on the many horrific events during slavery when it was, I suggest, at one of its peaks when slaves were being captured and brought into the United States and other areas of the world.

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I believe that there are so many stories that could be told, but I see that I have run out of time. Suffice to say that I really appreciated reading the information on the BC Black History Awareness Society website and would encourage others to do so.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to speak to this important issue this morning.

It is hard for us to imagine now what it might have felt like to experience slavery in the past. It was a tragedy of untold proportions. Sophocles said, “of all human ills the greatest is slavery”.

Today I am talking about Motion No. 36, which recognizes the past and present contributions of people of African descent and proposes designating August 1 of every year as emancipation day. Naturally, I support this motion.

Designating a commemorative day sends two important messages. First, we recognize the harm caused by the practice of slavery in North America and clearly state that slavery was wrong. Second, we signal to the world that slavery is never acceptable, regardless of time, place or circumstance.

Despite what people might think, slavery has not been abolished. Contemporary forms of slavery still exist. For example, we have talked a lot about the Uighurs recently. They are being subjected to forced labour in camps in China.

Older forms of slavery are even re-emerging. According to a CNN news story from four years ago, African migrants in Libya were being auctioned off like cargo. This has also been observed in recent years in Syria and Iraq, where thousands of Yazidi girls and women have been held captive by Daesh and subjected to slavery. I think everyone agrees that slavery, whether in older or modern forms, must be abolished.

As the motion points out, the British Parliament abolished slavery in its empire as of August 1, 1834. This is an important event that needs to be commemorated, which is why the government should designate August 1 of every year emancipation day.

On August 1, 1834, the British Empire capitulated and ordered the emancipation of slaves, following many years of debate on the issue. In fact, the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada was the first British legislature in North America to propose the abolition of slavery.

People will not remember that. From the very first sitting of the first Parliament of Lower Canada in December 1792, MP Pierre-Louis Panet introduced legislation to abolish slavery, nothing less. The bill was introduced on March 8, 1793, and in principle was to be passed on April 19. Unfortunately, it died on the Order Paper. Still, this bill illustrates how concerned Quebecers were about this issue once they had a Parliament to express their opinions.

Another example of Quebecers' concern for the equality and liberty of all is the emancipation of Jews in 1832. That year, the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada, presided by the great

Louis-Joseph Papineau, passed legislation that was unprecedented in the British Empire to recognize the full civil, political and religious rights of Jews, finally allowing them to sit in Parliament, which previously had not been the case.

A few years later, in 1838, after the violent suppression of the Lower Canada Rebellion, the patriots enshrined in Quebec's declaration of independence that all individuals, including indigenous peoples, enjoyed the same rights. The patriots demonstrated their commitment to human rights and equality for all communities on their land. They went even further than abolishing slavery.

Obviously, August 1, 1834, is a significant date. It is important to understand that the abolition of slavery did not come out of nowhere, nor did it happen because of a sudden humanist awakening on the part of politicians of the day. Not much about this aspect is taught in history classes, but it should be noted that slavery was abolished as a result of decades of struggle by humanists and, more importantly, by slaves themselves.

Let us talk about that struggle. Today, we talk about the social struggle for human rights. This brings to mind things like petitions, protests and appeals to politicians and authorities. How can slaves fight for their cause when the very institution that wants to get rid of them deprives them of all their freedoms? Given that slavery deprives slaves of the possibility of open assembly or petition, how can they resist? It is not complicated. They disobey, flee, break their chains, sometimes literally. They suffocate the oppressor who denied their humanity, and they rebel violently.

• (1115)

Nelson Mandela said that “it is the oppressor who defines the nature of the struggle, and the oppressed is often left no recourse but to use methods that mirror those of the oppressor.”

There were dozens of revolts by slaves in America. The most well known is definitely the revolt that led to the independence of Haiti and the end of slavery in that country. Haitians suffered the horrors of war to free themselves from domination and gain their freedom. Other slave uprisings did not meet with the same success, but that does not mean they were in vain, including those revolts that led to bloodshed. I am thinking, for example, of the Stono rebellion, which took place in what was then the British colony of South Carolina.

In 1739, slaves gathered, took up arms and organized a great march. The word “Liberty” was written on a banner. This uprising was crushed, but it inspired another uprising in the neighbouring colony of Georgia the following year, and yet another in South Carolina the year after that. The colonial authorities ended up imposing a 10-year moratorium on slave importation in the region. It was a small victory, but a victory nonetheless.

Open rebellion was not the slaves' only form of resistance. When an unjust system forces a person to work for an owner, without compensation and without rights, the act of fleeing constitutes a heroic act of resistance. Many American labourers fled north after slavery was abolished in the British Empire, but before that, slaves would flee under both English and French rule.

Today I would like to talk about a Black slave from Montreal named Marie-Joseph Angélique. In 1733, she asked her owner to free her. When her request was denied, she fled with a companion towards the ports of New England, hoping to make it back to Portugal, where she was born. She was captured in Chambly two weeks later and returned to her owner. Not long after, in April 1734, Marie-Joseph Angélique was blamed for a fire that destroyed Montreal's merchants' quarter. She was accused of setting the fire to create a diversion so that she could escape once again. She was convicted, tortured and hanged. It is still not known whether she was responsible for the fire, but we can be sure that Marie-Joseph Angélique was right to want her freedom, to reject slavery and to flee.

Open revolt and flight were acts of resistance that hurt the system that was in place and contributed to its abolition. By resisting, slaves made it more costly to maintain repressive systems. Keeping the system in place was less profitable for merchants and slavers since they had to deal with escapes and the risk of violent uprisings. Slaves were the victims of this major historic crime, but, in a way, their resistance also made them agents of change. Obviously, they had to resist in order to overcome this injustice.

Militant abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass clearly illustrated the need to fight. He said, and I quote:

If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.

This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.

The bottom line is that, in the end, resistance and struggle pay off, even if the process sometimes takes time. Quebeckers are all too familiar with that fact: 200 years of oppression, struggle, fighting and two lost referendums. Our thirst for freedom is still present, still intact. In the end, every little contribution that is made to the cause of freedom bears fruit. It may not happen right away, but every contribution bears fruit in time.

I have a lot more to say about freedom, but I would like to close by saying that Motion No. 36 is an important one. I support the motion, as do all members of the Bloc Québécois.

• (1120)

[English]

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to add my voice in support of the motion put forward by the member for Richmond Hill, which calls upon the government to designate August 1 of each year as emancipation day.

As the member of Parliament representing the riding of Niagara Falls, it is indeed my pleasure to speak on this motion and share the

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incredible local history and important stories of our Black communities, which need to be heard. In my colleague's motion, as part of his rational on having this date designated as emancipation day in Canada, he references the British Parliament's decision to abolish slavery as of August 1, 1834.

I would like to build on this reference and actually take us a bit further in our country's history to the time of the first lieutenant governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe. In many places across Ontario, the August civic holiday has become known as Simcoe Day. However, this holiday has also been referred to by many within our Black communities as emancipation day as well.

Prior to running to become a member of Parliament, I had the pleasure of serving as the senior manager of communications and stakeholder relations for the Niagara Parks Commission. The commission is an Ontario government agency responsible for the environmental and cultural preservation of the lands located along the Niagara River corridor, which stretches from Lake Erie all the way to Lake Ontario.

One of the commission's holdings is the Mackenzie Printery, which contains a piece of important history in its collection: the Louis Roy printing press. According to the Niagara Parks, this 1760s press was operated by the king's first printer, Louis Roy, who was responsible for printing all official government documents in Upper Canada.

One of these documents included the printing of an act to prevent the further introduction of slaves and to limit the term of contracts for servitude, which is also known as the act to limit slavery in Upper Canada, printed in 1793. On March 14, 1793, Chloe Cooley, a Black slave in Queenston, Ontario, was forcibly returned by her owner to the United States.

Army veteran Peter Martin, a former soldier of Butler's Rangers and a free Black, bravely and rightly reported the incident and Cooley's protests to the lieutenant governor, John Graves Simcoe. This led Simcoe to introduce the 1793 act, which attempted to make slavery less common by allowing children born to female slaves to be freed at age 25 and prohibiting additional individuals to be brought into Upper Canada in servitude.

While the act did not abolish slavery outright, it was an early challenge against the legal status of slavery. It was also a critically important step in the fight to abolish slavery in Canada and the British Empire, which happened in 1834. For some, this is the reason Simcoe Day and emancipation day are celebrated together in many parts of Ontario.

Ms. Cooley's story and the resulting introduction of an act against slavery in Upper Canada was recognized by the Ontario Heritage Trust on August 23, 2007. Fittingly, it was former Ontario lieutenant governor Lincoln Alexander, Canada's first Black federal parliamentarian and first Black federal cabinet minister, who attended and unveiled this plaque in his capacity as chair of the Ontario Heritage Trust.

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This plaque dedicated to Ms. Cooley is one of many specific markers and monuments within Niagara parks that commemorate the significant contributions and impacts that Black Canadians have had on the development of rich history in Ontario and our country. On the site of Queenston Heights, there is a plaque dedicated to those Black Canadians who fought in defence of Canada from American invasion and for their own personal freedom during the Battle of Queenston Heights on October 13, 1812.

In the southern part of my riding there is another plaque that recognizes the starting point of Niagara's Freedom Trail. Slaves escaping the northern states would be ferried across the Niagara River from Buffalo to Fort Erie, where they would land on shore. They would then temporarily reside in a series of safe houses until permanent accommodations and jobs could be found. These communities and safe homes were major conduits of the Underground Railroad, and the landing site in Fort Erie was the point where many hundreds of escaped African-American slaves experienced freedom for the first time in their lives.

This leads me to part (c) of this motion, which recognizes that abolitionists and others who struggled against slavery, including those who arrived in Upper and Lower Canada by the Underground Railroad, have historically celebrated August 1 as emancipation day.

Again, the region of Niagara is rich in history and stories of significance to many in the Black community. Recently, the Niagara Parks Commission unveiled two interpretive plaques honouring Harriet Tubman and her efforts to end slavery and advance the rights and freedoms of all people. From 1851 to 1861, Harriet Tubman was a guide for freedom seekers making their way to Canada.

• (1125)

In November of 1856 she crossed the Niagara River with some of her charges in a train travelling over the new and very first railway bridge, the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge, an international bridge at the site of what is now the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge in Niagara Falls. Her courage and unwavering commitment to helping people escape slavery leaves one in awe. She truly was a remarkable woman and a role model for us all. It is in tribute to these actions and her role as the most famous conductor of the Underground Railroad that the Canadian federal government bestowed the honour of designating Harriet Tubman as a person of national historic significance in 2005.

In part (e) of my colleague's motion, he speaks to, "the heritage of Canada's people of African descent and the contributions they have made and continue to make to Canada".

As part of this, I want to quickly highlight the efforts and contributions of the Niagara Military Museum in my riding for creating an absolutely marvellous travelling exhibit, funded in part by Veterans Affairs Canada, that highlights the major role and contributions of Black Canadians in our country's military history. With a focus on those who serve from Niagara and local surrounding communities, the exhibit features the personal stories of service and commitment from Black Canadians from the various military conflicts. Canadians have participated in throughout our history. The sharing of these important stories would not have been possible without the involvement of the families, local historians and contributors who

came forward to see that the stories and legacies of these families' ancestors would never be forgotten.

As we speak to this motion and its reference to Canadians of African descent who have and continue to make Canada a great place to live, I would be remiss if I did not mention the late Wilma Morrison, the nurse, community volunteer and historian we all came to rely upon for her expert knowledge. Wilma worked tirelessly in our community promoting and preserving the culturally rich and important history of Black Canadians residing in Niagara.

In April of last year, Wilma passed away at the age of 91 after a courageous battle against COVID-19.

Wilma was a member of the Nathaniel Dett British Methodist Episcopal Church, which is now a designated national historic site. When the church was threatened with being sold and destroyed in the 1990s, Wilma helped save the chapel and the significant volumes of heritage, the genealogical books and records that document the many contributions of Black residents in our community. The church is now a focal point of the Niagara Freedom Trail tour, which Wilma played a large role in helping to develop.

I last saw Wilma in February of 2020 at the launch of the newly created Black military history exhibit at the Niagara Military Museum. In meeting her, one could not help but feel better because of the time spent together. One would also come away from discussions with Wilma realizing that there is so much more for us to accomplish as a community and country.

Wilma Morrison is greatly missed, but her legacy and contributions will live on forever in Niagara Falls and across our Niagara region. I believe Wilma would have been quite supportive of this motion, as it would have been an opportunity for us to share in our collective and rich history, which we all need to learn and celebrate.

For those reasons, I am pleased to support this motion. I thank my colleague for bringing the motion forward for our consideration.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be participating in this important debate with my colleagues this morning on a motion to designate an emancipation day. I would like to congratulate the member for Richmond Hill and thank him for moving this important motion, which gives us all an opportunity to discuss and debate not only recognition of Black history in Canada and Quebec, but also the history of slavery.

Typically, and with good reason, discussions about the enslavement of people of African descent focus on the United States, where the widespread use of Black slaves on cotton plantations and in other economic sectors left its mark on our collective psyche. It involved the cruel and violent exploitation of tens of thousands of people, who were ripped from Africa and the Caribbean and crammed onto ships under appalling conditions to go work in the United States. That is why there is such a strong association between slavery and the United States.

We tend to forget that we have our own history of slavery, a history that has left its mark on Quebec and Canada too. I think that the motion moved by my colleague from Richmond Hill gives us an opportunity today to remember certain facts and take a closer look at that history. Over the years, we have, in a way, erased that part of our history, as though it never existed or did not really have anything to do with Canadians, only with our neighbours to the south. Slavery in Canada may not have been practised as pervasively or with the same intensity, but it existed. It was allowed, it was legal, it was public, it was open. Human beings could be owned, sold, traded or treated as spoils of war. I think we need to be aware of that so we can do the right thing now.

Before getting into the history of Quebec and Canada more specifically, I would like to remind my colleagues of a basic phenomenon that can lead a person to commit enslavement or even genocide. It is a mental and intellectual process called dehumanization. It is when a group of human beings are stripped of their humanity and described as being other, inferior, more animal than human, or even vermin. We saw that with the anti-Semitism of 1930s Europe, when such comparisons were made about Jews. We have seen that in Quebec as well.

When a segment of the population is described by the colour of their skin, their religion, their gender or their sexual orientation and called by names that essentially deny their personhood, this dehumanization opens the door to viewing them as property, meaning slaves, or as people to get rid of. This in turn opens the door to genocide, such as the Shoah, the Armenian genocide and the events that occurred in Rwanda and Ukraine. It is also what we are currently seeing with the Rohingya in Myanmar. We must be aware of dehumanization and look out for cases where a segment of the population is being described and generalized as less than human, leaving them open to attack. It is a practice that is still used a lot by the extreme right. Let us all be aware of that. We must fight against dehumanization, the process that opens the door to abuse and anti-humanist or disrespectful acts.

In New France, slavery was introduced with colonization. It was not imposed or instituted afterwards. Although no slave ships stopped at Quebec City, Montreal or Halifax, there were slaves in New France from the outset, and the use of slaves continued under British rule.

● (1130)

It is important to know that the first slaves in New France were indigenous people from the Pawnee Nation, later known as the Pannis, who were captured and sold. Throughout history, there were thousands of Black slaves, but the first slaves were indigenous, and the majority of slaves in New France were always indigenous. I believe it is important to remember that.

At the peak of slavery in New France or under British rule, a total of approximately 4,200 slaves were being used on our land, including about 2,700 indigenous slaves. It was a very cheap source of labour because they were not paid, but whereas slaves in the United States were used in labour-intensive economic sectors, such as cotton plantations in the southern states, slaves in Canada were generally used as household servants. They tended to work in homes rather than in the fields.

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We are told that the first non-indigenous slave was a child from either Madagascar or Guinea, who was brought here in 1629 and went by the name Olivier Le Jeune. He was the first slave to be recorded in New France. Later, in 1689, Louis XIV authorized the importation of slaves into New France, and the purchase and possession of slaves became legal in 1709.

In 1760, the conquest of New France and its transformation into a British colony changed very little about how slaves were owned and used. Article 47 of the Articles of Capitulation clearly states that the same rules continue to apply in relation to the possession, trade and sale of slaves. Later, the Imperial Statute of 1790 explicitly authorized United Empire loyalists fleeing the newly independent American territories for Canada to bring their Black slaves, furniture, utensils and clothing, all duty free. Between 2,000 and 3,000 Black slaves came to Canada with those Loyalists.

Canada has a long history of slavery, with the last notice of a slave sale in New Brunswick dating back to 1816, and the last sale of a slave in Quebec taking place on September 14, 1799, at the end of the 18th century. It involved the sale of a nine-year-old boy. I want to remind the House that slavery is deeply embedded in our history. Unfortunately, we do not talk about it very much, but it has always been with us. There are many people among us today who are descended from indigenous or Black slaves. This emancipation day is extremely important, and I am so proud to say, on behalf of myself, the people of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and the NDP, that I support this motion, which is essential to our future. If we do not remember our past, we run the risk of repeating the same mistakes. I therefore congratulate my colleague from Richmond Hill.

● (1135)

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Motion No. 36, which seeks to designate August 1 of each year as emancipation day in Canada. Motion No. 36 reminds us of August 1, 1834, the symbolic day when slavery was abolished in the British Empire.

However, that critical date in Canadian history also reminds us that slavery did in fact exist in Canada for over 200 years. We know that Black and indigenous people were enslaved, but unfortunately, we do not know their names or their stories. The first African slave was named Olivier Le Jeune. He was only six years old when he arrived in Quebec. Were there other children? What were their lives like? The celebration of emancipation day requires a knowledge of the past, and this aspect of the past in particular. Acquiring such knowledge is a collective task and a societal duty.

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That is why the motion moved by the hon. member for Richmond Hill points out that it is important for our country to commemorate the past, remember sometimes painful events, such as slavery, and educate people by telling this story. Celebrating emancipation day in Canada is a step toward recognizing the positive contributions that people of African descent have made to Canadian history.

Historians report that on August 1, 1834, at the Port of Montreal, a group of staunch abolitionist Black Montrealers celebrated the implementation of the Slavery Abolition Act. One beautiful ritual that has emerged is that Black Canadians across the country have continued this celebration and have created their own traditions to commemorate this historic event. Our Black communities have adopted different customs for honouring the great passion of their ancestors who were forced into slavery.

Our history is a rich one, with its ups and downs, and I had the huge honour of learning about one important part of that history during a symbolic march on emancipation day last summer, organized as part of the campaign to reclaim and rebuild the Negro Community Centre in Montreal. This event started with a gathering at Place D'Youville, in honour of the Black Montrealers who met there to celebrate the abolition of slavery in 1834. Hundreds of us then marched through the streets of Montreal towards Parc Oscar-Peterson, a park dedicated to the famous pianist, that was the historic site of the old Negro Community Centre.

During the march, we had the honour of listening to members of the community, such as Quebec's first Black judge, the Hon. Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré, and the Hon. Marlene Jennings, the first Black MP elected to the House of Commons. The march represented the importance of our collective effort to remember and how meaningful and crucial it is to keep celebrating our communities and our contributions.

The 1834 law was a victory, but it did not mean the battle was won. For far too long, people of African descent did not enjoy the same rights as other British citizens of the colonies. Even in this day and age, the pandemic has exposed the magnitude of that gap, because Black communities across the country have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

• (1140)

[English]

If I may, I will borrow the words of Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard, who introduced Bill S-255, An Act proclaiming Emancipation Day, before the Senate in 2018. During the second reading of the bill in the Senate, she explained:

I propose for Emancipation Day to be federally recognized, as this acknowledgment is a necessary step toward healing the historical trauma endured by African Canadians. Our history has been repeatedly erased. Enslaved Africans were stripped of their names in an attempt to strip them of their identities.

Senator Bernard's point on healing greatly resonates with me. It acts as an important reminder that our communities have endured trauma spanning multiple generations, that the wounds from this historical harm require a proactive and collective healing approach and that while Emancipation Day marks a significant milestone in our history, we must remember that Black communities in Canada continue to face numerous challenges. Systemic racism experienced

by Black communities continues to cause suffering; widens divisions and inequities; and contributes to a climate of fear, intolerance and stigma in Canada. Our commitment to respecting our differences, overcoming our prejudices and finding new and better ways to build a more united Canada are the foundations on which Canada must rest.

If there is something the past year has taught us, it is the urgency of "now". We have seen unprecedented mobilization as part of the movement for Black lives from coast to coast to coast. Significantly, radical change is in order, because our constituents are expecting their demands to be implemented. The weight of change cannot be shouldered only by Black people. This work is deeply traumatic and, frankly, exhausting, and we need our non-Black allies to show up to do the work, especially when it is uncomfortable.

As chair of the Parliamentary Black Caucus, I have witness the extraordinary power that collective support brings when addressing anti-Black racism. We have made a lot of strides in the past six years, but there is still a lot more work that needs to be done, and I believe that it is with continued nonpartisan support in our fight against racism that we will be able to live up to the expectations set out by abolitionists in 1834.

• (1145)

[Translation]

Canada's Black communities have made important political, cultural and economic contributions to our country for over 400 years, which is more than 200 years before Canada even became a country. If diversity is our strength and defines us as Canadians as we celebrate emancipation day, let us pledge to commemorate our rich history and continue fighting for a better, more just future.

I thank all of my parliamentary colleagues for supporting Motion No. 36 to designate emancipation day.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, this morning we are debating the entirely uncontroversial proposition that the House should recognize and celebrate the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire. That abolition happened by act of Parliament on August 1, 1834.

Throughout most of human history, and in most parts of the world, slavery in various forms was simply normal. It was a given that people would be owned, bought and sold. Today, perhaps we are inclined to view abolition as the inevitable discovery of some obvious truth, but in historical terms we can see that the abolition of slavery was neither obvious nor inevitable.

In the 19th century, the idea that slavery should be abolished was controversial. Today, it is not. For some of us, this is an occasion to double down on Hegelian ideas about the inevitability of progress and to congratulate ourselves on our superiority over our ancestors.

However, the abolition of slavery, especially in the British Empire, was not part of some inevitable or irresistible trend of history. It was rather the result of a particular intellectual political and theological movement that successfully persuaded both decision-makers and the public. If that movement had failed in its efforts to convince Parliament and the British people, then slavery would have continued, just as other forms of violence and oppression have continued.

The ideas that led to the abolition of slavery were also contingent on a prevailing morality. This prevailing morality has been anything but universal in human history and has been rejected at times by both primitive societies and extremely sophisticated societies.

Today, we celebrate emancipation, but often without properly acknowledging the precariousness of the moral substructure that led to emancipation, or how the moral arguments that were used in this case should have implications in other cases.

With this mind, it might be worth asking ourselves where we would be if emancipation had not happened. What if slavery were still a live question in our politics today, either in terms of a continuing domestic slave market or an international slave market, with Canadians who invest in foreign stocks being able to profit from them? What might the arguments in this place look like if that were in fact the case?

Some, I assume, would argue for the abolition of slavery on the grounds that it violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but sadly slavery has often co-existed with constitutional doctrines of human rights. After finding that all men were created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, the United States persisted in permitting slavery for almost 100 years. So, demonstrably, the existence of human rights doctrines does not guarantee the actual protection of human rights; it simply increases the chances that public debates will be denominated in terms of human rights.

In a hypothetical era of modern slavery co-existing with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, some would certainly use the charter to argue for the rights of enslaved persons, but others would argue that enslaved persons should not be considered persons under the Constitution or that rights doctrines should be interpreted in a way that does not interfere with the cultural rights of slave-holding jurisdictions, or that certain rights could be abridged for the sake of the national interest in accordance with section one, and politicians would appoint judges who shared their interpretation of the idea of human rights in this context and then defer to those same judges when decisions were made that they agreed with.

As de Tocqueville observed in *Democracy in America*, the manners of a people are substantially more important than their laws. Any critics of slavery would hear a certain amount of “what aboutism”. “How can you focus on this issue”, they would be asked, “when there are many other problems as well?” They would be criticized as hypocritical for opposing slavery, if they did not al-

so advocate for the kinds of social programs and supports that would ensure a happy and comfortable life for people after they were free.

If slavery existed as a modern institution, its critics would likely face some forms of rhetorical cancellation. Their ideas would be called dangerous, and their descriptions of injustice called misinformation. Debates would be cancelled on the grounds that the issue had already been settled. Pseudoscientific arguments would be advanced to suggest that racism was grounded in empirical evidence. This has certainly happened in the past.

There would be economic arguments. Abolitionists would craftily make the case that abolishing slavery would be good for our economy, and perhaps build alliances with domestic labour groups who would see unpaid labour as a threat to the interests of their members. However, others would argue that the increase in production facilitated by slavery would create more cheap products for consumers. They would also say that some products would inevitably be produced by slave labour in an integrated global trading system. “Why abolish slavery here”, they would say, “when it would simply lead to an increase in slavery and slave production in other jurisdictions, hurting our economy and not actually doing anything to reduce the global aggregate amount of slavery?”

Some would argue that any restrictions on the importation of slave-made products would simply be an excuse for protectionism, which would violate the letter or at least the spirit of our WTO commitments, and that Canadian investors must be able to invest their money anywhere so as to maximize their return on investment, because any politicization of investment decisions would start us down a slippery slope and prevent the necessary diversification of investments that helps ensure the security of Canadians' retirement savings.

• (1150)

If we were speaking of slavery in an international context, would Canadian companies be willing to produce the implements and tools of human oppression for export, or would we intervene to prevent such export, even if doing so would cost us jobs, or might government decide to simply leave the question to individual conscience? Certainly if slavery were prevalent around the world today, we would hear the arguments of so-called foreign policy realists and international moral relativists. They would say that even if slavery runs contrary to Canadian values, we would have to engage with countries around the world to practice it and not seek to impose our ways on them.

Efforts to promote the abolition of slavery in other countries might be portrayed as a new form of colonialism. The pursuit of engagement would be used to justify turning a blind eye. Perhaps we would find it strategically necessary to align with slave-trading powers at moments where we were annoyed by the antics of other free nations. Who could doubt that if the Confederate States of America had successfully separated from the United States of America, we might find occasion to partner with the Confederate States of America in order to resist the thoughtless and boorish interventions by some administration or other of the United States that we did not like.

Private Members' Business

Parliamentary committees might hear from the Confederate States business council about how we should raise human rights issues in private, but not do anything that would damage its southern pride. Imagine if the Confederate States were hosting the Olympics, the 2024 Montgomery games. Would we use the occasion for taking a resolute moral stance or would we close our eyes and think of the athletes?

Grave injustices always look clear in the rear view mirror, especially when past victims or their descendants have the power to be heard, even in Parliament itself. Today Parliament will come together to celebrate the emancipation that took place in 1834. I doubt cabinet will abstain from this vote, but injustices that are before us instead of behind us never seem to be quite as simple or as clear, and too often the response of this place in those cases is simply the sound of silence.

There is slavery in our world today. Imagine half a million people forced to pick cotton under the hot sun. I am not talking about the antebellum south. I am talking about modern China, the world's most populous nation and second-largest economy, which is expanding its colonial footprint throughout the world with the help of Canadian investments, including our tax dollars in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and investments by the CPP Investment Board a couple of years ago in Chinese state-affiliated companies developing the technology for the administration of Uighur mass enslavement and genocide. Canada lags behind in its response to supply-chain slavery and we have a serious domestic problem of human trafficking, which has been widely ignored and the prevention of which has been badly underfunded in recent years.

I congratulate the member for Richmond Hill for bringing forward this motion, but I would challenge him to step up and do more to call for freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law for the people of Iran, rather than mischaracterizing their current repressive regime as democratic. Our world today is seething with injustice, present injustice and certainly complicated injustice. The solutions that we should pursue are not always obvious, but the stakes are no less high than they were 200 years ago.

In our present reality, I often find it frustrating to see that people are more willing to condemn injustice perpetuated by the weak than to condemn injustice perpetuated by the strong. It is much easier to condemn weak racists as part of a social pileup, a Girardian scapegoating ritual, rather than to be the first to stand up and condemn an injustice being committed by someone who is as yet still powerful.

Many of us will have grown up with the classic Disneyfication of good and evil. In old Disney films, good and evil characters are easy to identify right at the outset, but in real life, those committing or who are complicit in evil often think of themselves as doing good. This is something that Disney itself probably understands after producing *Mulan*. In real life, it is not so much that people start out good or evil and act in accordance with their nature; it is more that of people with the same natures and aspirations rendering themselves good or evil by their actions, which serve to degrade or elevate them.

I was reflecting on this point recently after reading the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. In one section, he discusses being purchased by a woman, whom he describes

as a generally kind and gracious person. He is the first slave she has owned. He also describes her becoming meaner and crueler as she is degraded by the institution of slavery. Slavery's contemporary critics never failed to notice the powerful degrading impact that the institution had on slave owners, people who begin life just as we all do, but who degraded themselves through their participation in it and evil actions, which were justified and normalized by the societies in which they lived.

William Wilberforce and others, including many of the oppressed who were themselves protagonists to the drum of their own emancipation, fought for the abolition of slavery in defiance of the spirit of the times. They were told to put aside their faith, their moralizing and their impoliteness and to get with the social program, but they refused. It is because they stood in Parliament and did what was hard, instead of what was easy, that we now find it so easy to celebrate Emancipation Day.

• (1155)

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to stand in the House for the second hour of debate on Motion No. 36.

I first introduced the motion about a year ago. Since then, we have experienced a global pandemic and a global protest for racial justice. We all watched as millions across the world marched peacefully to protest anti-Black racism and raise awareness of systemic discrimination and inequalities embedded in our institutions.

Witnessing these events and participating in the movement, I realize how imperative this motion is and how important it is for our government to take the necessary steps to address the systemic racism in our institutions and society.

The motion to have the House formally recognize August 1 as emancipation day would be a stepping stone in our effort toward building a more just and equitable society. Naturally, the next question we must ask ourselves is how we can move forward from here.

Through the three principles of acknowledgement, empowerment and engagement, we can progress forward and make a significant impact in the lives of Black Canadians. The acknowledgement principle is what we can accomplish with the motion. Recognizing the history of emancipation day includes recognizing the remnant of slavery and the multi-generational impact of slave trade.

Acknowledgement also includes formalizing Black history in our curriculum and through public awareness. With this motion, we could empower our schools and educators to develop lesson plans that highlight Black history in Canada.

From coast to coast to coast, Black Canadians have made and continue to make an immense contribution and it is vital we acknowledge them. This is an essential milestone for improving education awareness into issues of race and injustice.

The next step and principle on our path to justice is empowerment. By providing opportunities advocating for community and educating our society, we can empower equity-deserving communities. Empowerment includes eliminating obstacles that deter Black Canadians from stepping into their own power, seeing their own potential and contributing meaningfully to all aspects of society.

The third and last principle is engagement. This includes removing socio-economic barriers Black Canadians face, investing in education, funding innovation, creating affordable housing and providing safe child care spaces. We must also re-evaluate our criminal justice system. We must question the reasoning behind the high percentage of Black Canadians in our institutional system and why high recidivism rates exist. Only then can we create policies that address these issues.

As we strive to create an inclusive multicultural society, we cannot ignore this part of our past and its generational impact on our fellow Canadians. As Canadians, it is our collective responsibility to create a multicultural inclusive society informed by and sensitive to the experiences of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds.

As a first generation immigrant, I immediately connected with the underlying tone of racism and injustice experienced by the Black community. Though I can never understand the struggle that a Black person faces in our world, I can empathize and I can be a fierce ally. As an elected official, I have a platform where I can help amplify the voices of Black Canadians.

After the events of the past summer, it is evident how important a systematic approach is, an approach that addresses all aspects of our society. As an advocate for mental health, I also see an opportunity to advocate for those who feel an intense burden dealing with systemic racism on a daily basis. Emancipation day is a celebration of survival, human rights, equality, culture and resilience. Recognizing it would not only acknowledge the harms caused by slavery but also pave a path toward justice.

Motion No. 36 is only the first step. By empowering the principles of acknowledgement, empowerment and engagement, we can move toward progress and through equity.

I want to thank Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard for bringing this initiative forward in the Senate as well as all community groups and advocates who have advised me, educated me and helped me promote this motion. This is a testament to their work, activism and persistence. I hope to join them all in an emancipation day celebration this summer.

• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion. If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the chair.

Business of Supply

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to an order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 24, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1205)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP) moved:

That, given that,

- (i) during the first wave, 82% of COVID deaths in Canada happened in long-term care, the highest proportion in the OECD,
- (ii) there have been over 12,000 long-term care resident and worker deaths in Canada since the beginning of the pandemic,
- (iii) residents and workers in for-profit long-term care homes have a higher risk of infection and death than those in non-profit homes,

the House call upon the government to ensure that national standards for long-term care which are currently being developed fully remove profit from the sector, including by:

- (a) immediately bringing Revera, a for-profit long-term care operator owned by a federal agency, under public ownership;
- (b) transitioning all for-profit care to not-for-profit hands by 2030;
- (c) working with provinces and territories to stop licensing any new for-profit care facilities, and making sure that measures are in place to keep all existing beds open during the transition; and
- (d) investing an additional \$5 billion over the next four years in long-term care, with funding tied to respect for the principles of the Canada Health Act, to boost the number of non-profit homes.

He said: Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver East.

As members know, this pandemic has gripped the entire world and everyone in the world has felt the impact of it. However, what I have referred to as a “national shame” is the fact that in our country it was our loved ones in long-term care, particularly seniors, who bore the brunt of this pandemic with their lives. This should never have happened.

Today, we are calling on the House to recognize this national shame and to do something about it.

Business of Supply

What we have learned with incontrovertible evidence, an overwhelming amount of evidence, is that for-profit long-term care homes have had worse conditions of care, more rates of infection and more deadlier infection, which has meant that more people have lost their lives. I will be very clear: For-profit care means that more of our loved ones were killed. They did not get the care they deserved, because for those for-profit long-term care homes, profit was more important than people.

We know that 82% of COVID deaths in Canada happened in long-term care, which is a scathing statistic. This is the highest proportion in the entire OECD. We also know that this is not a new problem. The underfunding of long-term care homes has been chronic. The lack of care for our loved ones in long-term care has been chronic and long-lasting. COVID-19 simply exposed what was there for a long time.

[Translation]

The pandemic has shown us the effects of years of neglect and inaction on the part of past Liberal and Conservative governments. Our seniors in long-term care homes have been hit hardest by the pandemic. It is a national disgrace that our most vulnerable seniors, those in long-term care homes, are being hit the hardest. This is not only unacceptable, it is inexcusable. Our parents and grandparents built this country, and they deserve to retire with respect and dignity. There is clear evidence that conditions were worse in for-profit long-term care homes and more seniors died in those facilities.

• (1210)

[English]

What do we need to do? We need to immediately, with national and federal leadership, declare clearly that profit has no place in the care of our loved ones, that profit has no place in health care at all, but certainly not in the care of vulnerable loved ones in long-term care.

I will provide some of the clear and compelling reasons why we need to do this. For every dollar we spend on long-term care, if we spend that dollar on for-profit long-term care, not every dollar will make it to the care of our loved ones. Some of that dollar ends up in the pockets of shareholders, for profit. It ends up in the pay for executives. Not all of it will make it to caring for our loved ones.

We have some clear examples in two for-profit operators in Ontario, Extendicare and Sienna Senior Living. During this pandemic, during the worst outbreaks that our country has seen when it comes to long-term care homes, when our seniors were being ravaged by COVID-19, when workers did not have access to the necessary PPE and seniors were worried for their lives, instead of investing in caring for our loved ones, these two for-profit long-term care home operators paid out \$74 million in dividends. Imagine that. In the worst outbreak in the history of our country when it comes to long-term care, gripped with a global pandemic these two for-profit operators, who had horrible conditions in their homes, paid out \$74 million in dividends instead of investing in workers and in care. At the same time, they paid out \$98.3 million to shareholders and received the Canada wage subsidy. They took public money with one hand and with the other hand paid, they out dividends.

[Translation]

No one should make a profit from neglecting our seniors.

We have also seen some terrible numbers out of Quebec. Nearly 5,000 seniors have died in almost 300 residential and long-term care facilities in Quebec. A recent media report revealed that the death rate is higher in the non-unionized private sector than in public and private institutions with collective agreements in place. This must never happen again. We need to immediately do away with the profiteering in long-term care homes, full stop.

[English]

We need to take profit out of long-term care homes immediately. We also immediately need to fix the long-standing problems that the Liberals and Conservatives have contributed to. We need to invest more in our health care and we need to act specifically to fix this problem.

There are a couple of key steps. First, Revera is owned by a federal agency. We need to immediately make it public. We must work with provinces and territories to ensure that Revera is delivering care in a public model and make it public immediately. We also need to transition all of our for-profit long-term care homes to not-for-profit and public homes by 2030. That is our plan.

We need to work with provinces and territories to stop licensing any new for-profit care facilities, and make sure that measures are in place to keep all the existing beds and spaces. We need to invest an additional \$5 billion over the next four years in long-term care, with funding tied to respecting the same principles that are already agreed upon by all provinces and territories and are enshrined in the Canada Health Act. Those same principles helped us achieve what Canadians now are most proud of: universal health care. We can use those same principles to lift up our vulnerable seniors in long-term care homes.

We cannot go back to a health care system where making money and profit was more important than the care of our vulnerable seniors. We cannot go back to a time when, if a pandemic or an outbreak happened, our loved ones in long-term care would bear the brunt of it. We cannot go back to that.

Now is the time. This is when we can tell the people in this country that we are committed to moving forward in a way that honours the lives lost, by committing to never having it happen again. It is not enough to hear people in the House of Commons pay tribute to the lives lost. It is not enough for people to have moments of silence. It is not enough to talk about being sorry or to wring our hands. Here is the moment to do something about it. The evidence is overwhelming: We need to get profit out of long-term care homes. We need to protect our seniors and our loved ones, and we need to do it now.

I implore everyone in the House to support this motion, so that we can take a clear and bold step forward to protect our loved ones in long-term care homes. I do not want to hear excuses. We can work with the jurisdictions. We can work with the provinces and territories. People are not looking to hear excuses. They are looking for solutions. Here is a solution. The time for leadership is now. Let us see what leadership is.

• (1215)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question to the leader is in regard to the importance of recognizing that the provinces provide the administration and support for care home facilities.

Has the leader or his health critic had any discussions with any province about this motion? If so, can he give an indication of which provinces are supportive of this motion, given that the provinces would, in part, be footing the bill for many measures that might be indirectly or directly implied through this particular motion.

Has he got the support of any provinces?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, if we took the approach suggested by the hon. member, we would never have had universal health care. It is a fact that many provinces were opposed to universal health care. That did not stop Tommy Douglas and the leadership of the New Democrats from saying that they knew people wanted this, people needed this and people were crying out for this. Just because a province does not agree does not mean that we stop and give up. It means we have to continue to push forward. What we saw when we established our universal health care system was that provinces started signing on voluntarily and eventually all of the provinces joined in. They did not all join in right away. They did not all agree right away.

What we are saying now is that we have the same opportunity to provide leadership and convince the provinces that this is the right way forward to lift up our seniors and our loved ones in long-term care homes.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, I agree that long-term care homes have been the centre of the COVID-19 pandemic, but I missed a few things from his speech. I know that a workforce crisis, insufficient resources, limited access to care and aging infrastructure have all been identified as contributing factors to the outbreaks and fatalities in some long-term care facilities.

Business of Supply

Does the leader of the New Democrats agree that the systemic problems in long-term care require a collaborative approach and a comprehensive solution?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, it is going to take collaboration and it is going to take a comprehensive approach. One of the clear findings, in addition to the fact that for-profit homes were the worst, was that the conditions of work and the conditions of workers were directly tied to the conditions of care. We need to make sure workers are paid good salaries, make sure they have enough hours, and make sure there are enough staff members to provide the care necessary.

Let us be very clear: With for-profit care, all of those essential care elements are cut. Hours and pay are cut just to make a profit. We need to work together. The solution has to be comprehensive, but let us not ignore that profit is at the heart of many of the problems. We need to lift up the conditions of workers, which will directly lift up the conditions of the long-term care residents.

• (1220)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is time for a brief question.

The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a simple question for my colleague.

Why introduce a motion that sets standards to be imposed on the provinces when, for several months now, the provinces and territories have made a common request, which we support, to increase health transfers to 35%? As hon. members know, we are talking about passing legislation on health, but transfers to the provinces have gone down from day one. They currently sit at just 22%. The provinces have been clear: They do not want national standards. In every—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry to interrupt the member, but I did ask her for a brief question. There are just 15 seconds remaining out of one minute and 20 seconds of speaking time.

The hon. member for Burnaby South.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, we agree that health transfers to the provinces need to be increased.

I have talked to people in Quebec and in Canada. They are angry because they have seen the impact that COVID-19 has had on seniors in our long-term care facilities. We must improve conditions in long-term care facilities specifically by removing profit from the sector. It is clear that is what we need to do. There is a report on Quebec only. La Presse showed that it is essential that we do this.

We are here to stand up for the interests of everyday Canadians.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to second this motion and rise to speak in support of it.

As we heard from the leader of the NDP, the motion basically calls for the federal government to act now to take profit out of long-term care, put people before profit and say that we, as a society, value the lives of seniors more than money.

Seniors in long-term care facilities have been especially hard hit by the pandemic. In the first wave of the pandemic, more than 80% of all COVID-19 deaths in the country were reported in long-term care facilities and retirement homes. That means one in five of the total COVID cases in Canada was among long-term care residents.

Of course, COVID-19 also affected the workers in those facilities. In Canada, more than 9,600 staff in long-term care facilities were infected with COVID-19, representing more than 10% of the total cases.

The pandemic has exposed severe cracks in our system, and some of the elderly and most vulnerable people paid the ultimate price for that. Across the country, more than a quarter of Canada's long-term care homes are for-profit. We have learned that for-profit care homes were more likely to see extensive COVID-19 outbreaks, and more deaths, than non-profit facilities.

Things got so bad in Ontario that the military and the Red Cross had to be called in to help care for seniors. How did things get so bad? In the for-profit care homes, care aides and personal support workers are underpaid and are often part-time or casual workers, which means they often have to work at multiple job sites to make ends meet. This can be deadly in the face of a pandemic, when social distancing is an essential health measure. To be clear, the reason they are underpaid is so the company can have a larger profit margin. They are part-time or casual workers, which also means they are not paid benefits or sick leave. In addition, long-term care homes often subcontract out services such as laundry, cleaning and cooking, and it is also very likely that subcontracted staff do not have paid sick leave. Without paid sick leave, workers may be compelled to go to work even if they are feeling ill.

All of these conditions contributed to an increased risk of transmission. The outcome was devastating for far too many seniors and their families, as well as the workers. The horror stories we hear in the media of the conditions the seniors were in take one's breath away. It is not supposed to be that way. The seniors in our communities helped build this country. Their retirement years are supposed to be their golden years. They deserve to live in comfort, with dignity and safety, as do people with disabilities. However, because of decades of cuts, underfunding and privatization, our continuing care system is broken.

The bottom line is that Canada has failed to protect long-term care residents and workers throughout this pandemic. We have to ask ourselves how it is possible that seniors in some care homes were abandoned in their beds for weeks on end. Some cried for help for hours before assistance was provided. Some had to be bathed as they had not been bathed for weeks. Can members imag-

ine if those were their mothers or grandmothers? Such horrific stories are not just stories. They are the real experiences of loved ones.

Report after report revealed what we should know instinctively: that profit should never be the bottom line when it comes to continuing care. The evidence is overwhelming. It is undeniable that for-profit homes have seen worse results than other homes, with deadlier COVID outbreaks. However, at the same time, for-profit operators were getting public subsidies and paying out millions in dividends to shareholders while workers were underpaid, with some making minimum wage. Things were so desperate for some of them they had to resort to living in shelters. In fact, there was an outbreak in an Ottawa homeless shelter under exactly such a circumstance. It helps no one if essential front-line health care workers are pushed into homelessness. The colossal failure of the system is Canada's national shame.

• (1225)

Even outside of the pandemic situation, research has shown that homes run on a for-profit basis tend to have lower staffing levels, more verified complaints and more transfers to hospitals, as well as residents with higher rates of both ulcers and morbidity. We as parliamentarians have the power to do something about this. We must act now to prevent a repeat of this in the future. We must transition the for-profit model in long-term care to a non-profit model.

The NDP members want to see an end to for-profit long-term care by 2030. That is why we are calling for a national task force to devise a plan to get the job done. We must also set national standards. Let us work collaboratively with provincial, territorial leaders, experts and workers alike to set national standards for long-term care and continuing care that would include accountability mechanisms. Without national standards, the federal government is leaving the door wide open for the for-profit companies to cut corners and put profit first at the expense of our loved ones. That cannot be allowed to continue.

Those standards should be tied to \$5 billion in federal funding and the principles in Canada's Health Care Act. We can put in place a seniors care guarantee. Seniors deserve to know that they will have safe, dignified care both at home and in care homes available to them as they age. Families deserve to know that their loved ones will have the care they deserve, with inspections and appropriate levels of care and staffing ratios.

Workers deserve to know that their wages will reflect the value of their work and allow them to live in dignity without having to work multiple jobs or end up in a shelter because they cannot afford housing. They deserve to know that the government has their back and that they will have access to protective equipment and safe working conditions.

The federal government can show leadership by transforming Revera from a for-profit long-term care chain owned by a crown pension fund into a publicly managed entity. Public ownership of long-term care facilities would allow workers to work full-time at one home at competitive union rates, which would address understaffing and prevent the transmission of illness. The benchmark for quality long-term care is 4.1 hours of hands-on care per resident per day. However, no province or territory currently meets this standard of care.

Long-term care homes are chronically understaffed across Canada. Nurses and personal support workers at these facilities are often paid low wages, saddled with overwhelming workloads and are subjected to high levels of stress, burnout and even violence. Precarious and part-time employment often forces these health care workers to move between facilities to earn a living.

Waitlists for long-term care can have lengthy backlogs because the care facilities are not keeping pace with Canada's aging population. This shortage leads to overcrowding at long-term care facilities and overuse of the hospital system by those without access to appropriate care.

There is a lack of accountability for long-term care facility operators due to lax enforcement of standards and regulations. For example, a recent CBC investigation revealed that 85% of long-term care homes in Ontario have routinely violated health care standards for decades with near total impunity.

We have the power within us to end this for this generation and beyond. Seniors deserve better. Families deserve better. Workers deserve better. Let us never forget these words from Canada's Chief Public Health Officer:

I think the tragedy and the massive lesson learned for everyone in Canada is that we were at every level, not able to protect our seniors, particularly those in long-term care homes. Even worse is that in that second wave, as we warned of the resurgence, there was a repeat of the huge impact on that population.

• (1230)

For those who want to say that we cannot do it because of jurisdictional issues, I will quote Marcy Cohen, research associate for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, who said that "The setting of clear standards in health care as a condition of federal funding is not an attack on provincial jurisdiction—it is the only path"—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the member's time is up. I have been trying to give a signal, but I am sure she will have lots of time during the five-minute questions and comments to add to her remarks.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I just want to ask the seconder of the motion the same

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question that the parliamentary secretary did of the mover, and that is with respect to any possible consultation that has gone on with the provinces. The mover, the leader of the NDP, responded to that question by basically just saying that it is not as though we cannot do this without the provinces and that they could come on board later, but that is not the question that he was asked. He was asked whether any consultation had occurred, not how provinces feel about it.

We are just trying to figure out if any consultation occurred on this. Can the seconder confirm whether any of the provinces have been consulted on the motion?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, I know the government often says that we cannot move forward on anything unless the provinces and territories are also in agreement. Of course, if we actually lived with that kind of suggestion, we would never have had universal medicare.

I will just finish the quote by March Cohen, because it goes to the heart of the issue:

The setting of clear standards in health care as a condition of federal funding is not an attack on provincial jurisdiction—it is the only path forward to a universal public system of long-term and continuing care, the same path Canada took to universal hospital and physician care. Seniors and people with disabilities deserve nothing less.

This motion calls on us to do exactly that work to engage with provincial and territorial leaders, experts in the system, and health care workers to come up with those standards to put in place protection for seniors, so that what we saw happen in the pandemic, with the loss of lives, will never happen again.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I do not know if the member has had the privilege, as I have, of working in a long-term care home. I was a social worker and case manager in CHSLDs, the long-term care facilities in Quebec. I can tell her that national standards are not going to improve care. That is not what we need. I do not know who she consulted in Quebec, but I can tell her that that is not going to change things in CHSLDs in my lifetime.

Does the member realize that this motion is an affront to the Premier of Quebec and the Quebec National Assembly, which is unanimously opposed to national standards and any interference in its jurisdictions, in this case health? Is she aware that this is an affront to Quebec?

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● (1235)

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, what I see as an affront is what happened to seniors. What I see as a national shame is the very fact that we do not have national standards, and so many seniors lost their lives in the face of the pandemic. We know that for-profit long-term care facilities have contributed to the loss of lives. Report after report and expert after expert, who have looked into the situation, have said so.

Is it not time for us to set aside jurisdictional issues? Is it not time for us to say that we must do better and that seniors deserve no less? Is it not time that we ensured that the Canada Health Act is followed? Is it not time that we take profit out of care? Is it not time that we put people before all else and say very clearly that lives matter, that we value seniors and will do everything we can to protect them and never let this happen again?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank all of my colleagues in the House today who are speaking to this very important issue. I am pleased to rise to address the motion by the hon. member for Burnaby South. I share his concerns and, I can safely say, all members' concerns for Canadians living in long-term care facilities during this unprecedented COVID-19 health crisis. The Government of Canada recognizes the impact of the virus on many vulnerable populations, including those living in long-term care facilities.

As members know, the administration of long-term care falls under provincial and territorial jurisdiction. However, as committed to in the Speech from the Throne, the federal government is taking action and will continue to take any action we can to support seniors while working alongside the provinces and territories. From the outset, these facilities were hit hard in many parts of the country. During the first wave, approximately 81% of the fatalities from COVID-19 were residents of long-term care facilities and, to date, more than 66% of deaths due to COVID-19 have occurred in long-term care.

An analysis by the Canadian Institute for Health Information in June 2020 compared Canada's experience in long-term care facilities with that of other countries in the OECD. As the member has noted, this report found that the proportion of COVID-19 deaths among long-term care residents in Canada was higher than in other OECD countries. Of course, there was substantial variation in the experiences of people and long-term care facilities across Canada's provinces and territories. Some regions have fared better than others. Generally, jurisdictions with lower COVID-19 infection rates in the community reported fewer long-term care cases and deaths, but right across the country the pandemic has highlighted long-standing and systemic challenges in Canada's long-term care system, and has had a significant impact on residents and staff in these facilities, exposing gaps in infection prevention and control, staffing, infrastructure and testing.

In response the federal government is taking important steps to respond to the significant challenges faced by long-term care facilities across the country, and the Government of Canada recognizes the need to work with the provinces and territories to develop long-term care standards. The government has committed to establishing

national standards for long-term care as a means to address critical gaps in long-term care facilities, including the working conditions of lower-wage essential workers in senior care, particularly personal support workers, who have persevered in the face of adversity.

In the early stages of the pandemic, all levels of government began working in close collaboration to ensure that the public health measures being taken were in alignment. Public health authorities continue to closely monitor COVID-19 in Canada and carefully consider approaches to easing public health restrictions when and where possible. The epidemiology of COVID-19 is different in each jurisdiction, and this means that approaches across Canada will not all be the same and will need to be tailored to the unique challenges and context of the disease in each province and territory. Each jurisdiction in Canada is looking at different kinds of community settings, such as long-term care facilities, and developing risk-based approaches and assessments based on what is taking place within their own jurisdiction.

I would like to outline two key measures from the fall economic statement: the safe long-term care fund and the expansion of the long-term care plus initiative. Both measures would be implemented with funding provided through BillC-14. Unfortunately, in the House we have seen partisan games preventing this important legislation from passing.

Under the safe long-term care fund, up to \$1 billion would be transferred to provinces and territories to help protect people in long-term care facilities, by their implementing additional measures for infection prevention and control. Specifically, provinces and territories would have the flexibility to use these funds to help facilities retain and hire new staff, including through topping up wages. It would also help them upgrade infrastructure, such as increased ventilation to reduce transmission, as well as undertake needed assessments to determine what other infection-prevention and control measures might be required to prevent and mitigate the effects of COVID-19. To help Canadians better understand the significant efforts under way, provinces and territories would develop detailed action plans and would report on progress and results.

● (1240)

Officials are working out the details now with a view to getting these investments to provinces and territories as quickly as possible to further protect Canadians who reside and work in long-term care settings. This legislation is critical, and it needs to be passed.

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In July 2020, the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement published a report on lessons learned from the response to COVID-19 in long-term care and retirement homes. It was called “Reimagining Care for Older Adults”. The report is based on interviews with family partners, health care leaders and policy makers. It focuses on promising practices that have the potential to reduce the risk of future COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care and retirement homes.

From these findings, the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement and the Canadian Patient Safety Institute, now amalgamated and known as Healthcare Excellence Canada, launched a new program called the long-term care plus initiative. This program helps prevent and control infection in long-term care homes and seniors residences, allowing them to prepare for possible future outbreaks and mitigate the pandemic's effect.

Direct support is available through coaching and seed funding to help participating facilities address gaps identified through the program.

The fall economic statement committed an additional \$6.4 million over two years to further expand this initiative. As of March 10, 2021, a total of 1,086 facilities have submitted applications and are participating in the long-term care plus initiative. Of course, the safe long-term care fund and the long-term care plus initiative are only the most recent of many programs launched over the past year. I will provide a few examples of other initiatives that are already making a difference in long-term care facilities.

Last April, Health Canada, with support from the Public Service Commission of Canada, launched the COVID-19 voluntary recruitment campaign. The Government of Canada supported provinces and territories by facilitating this inventory of skilled Canadians to provide surge capacity in the following key areas: case tracking and contact tracing, health system surge capacity, case data collection and reporting. Provincial and territorial governments continue to draw upon the volunteer inventories as needed to support local public health responses.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the Canadian Armed Forces provided support in Ontario and Quebec for outbreaks in long-term care facilities. Now the Canadian Red Cross continues to be available for deployment to homes that are experiencing significant outbreaks and has already supported more than 130 long-term care facilities in Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba. The Canadian Red Cross is also overseeing the recruitment and training of workers to support infection prevention and control, basic care and facility management.

Last summer, the Government of Canada negotiated the safe restart agreement with the provinces and territories. The agreement provided \$740 million in funding to support vulnerable Canadians, including those in long-term care, home care and palliative care, who, as we know, are more at risk of severe cases of COVID-19.

The government is also providing comprehensive and evidence-based preliminary guidance on key populations for COVID-19 immunization, including residents and staff of congregate living settings that provide care for seniors.

Finally, a temporary COVID-19 resiliency stream was created to provide provinces and territories with added flexibility to use existing resources to fund quick-start, short-term infrastructure projects, including health infrastructure, such as long-term care homes.

Besides these activities, the Government of Canada is providing support to provinces and territories through the procurement and distribution of millions of authorized vaccines and rapid tests, which help protect long-term care residents and staff.

As well, the COVID-19 testing and screening expert advisory panel released a report this winter to help inform the development of robust testing and screening strategies in long-term care homes.

I would like to speak for a moment about the role of personal support workers. Now more than ever, Canadians understand that personal support workers are an integral and important part of the health care system, providing close direct support to residents. Every person entering a long-term care home, including essential visitors and volunteers, has a responsibility to prevent infections among residents of those facilities, who are at a high risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19.

It is because of this high risk that access to personal protective equipment and training is critical for the workers' own safety and the safety of residents. The Government of Canada is taking action to ensure that health care workers have the personal protective equipment and medical supplies they need. We have done this through collaborative bulk procurement with the provinces and territories, building domestic production capacity and identifying potential alternatives to extend product life.

● (1245)

We also need to recognize the contributions of workers in long-term care facilities and better compensate them for taking care of our most vulnerable citizens. Their work is essential in reducing the spread of the virus, and the government understands that. That is why up to \$3 billion of federal funding was provided in support to provinces and territories to increase the wages of low-income essential workers, which could include front-line workers in hospitals and long-term care facilities. Provinces and territories will also be able to use the funding under the safe long-term care fund to top up wages of staff members in long-term care facilities.

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Finally, the Government of Canada recognizes that we need to increase the number of personal support workers in the country, and we committed funding of \$38.5 million over two years for Employment and Social Development Canada to support training of up to 4,000 personal support worker interns through an accelerated six-week online training program. This will be combined with a four-month work placement to help address acute labour shortages in long-term care and home care.

As we have learned more about this virus and the populations at risk, we are doing everything we can to help protect citizens in long-term care facilities. The Public Health Agency of Canada has provided infection prevention and control guidance to help prevent COVID-19 infections among residents and workers in long-term care and assisted living facilities, as well as in home care, including the appropriate use of PPE.

Many facilities have already implemented their own measures, such as restricting visitation or other non-essential on-site services. Now, as we learn more about the impact of these restrictions on residents, more and more facilities are developing nuanced and compassionate approaches to visitation. The long-term care plus program has recently released a checklist for the safe re-entry of essential care partners in long-term care facilities.

Long-term care facilities should also follow the best practices developed by the relevant provincial or territorial health authority. Examples include daily screening of anyone entering facilities, rapidly testing people who are ill, widespread testing if there is an outbreak, and supporting people in isolation and quarantine.

We know these measures have to be followed diligently. We also know, now, that one of the best practices is to ensure support for the workers. Many personal support workers from racialized communities are not paid well and do not have sick leave benefits. Some of the federal supports, such as the Canada recovery sickness benefit, help with that, so that people can stay home if they are ill.

Our government is taking action to support residents of long-term care homes, but we do know there is more to do. The pandemic has highlighted challenges that the long-term care sector has faced for many years. The Government of Canada is working with provinces and territories to address these challenges and protect residents of long-term care facilities from exposure to the COVID-19 virus by helping the provinces and territories deliver on their health care responsibilities. Together, we are making progress.

After more than a year of living with the threat of COVID-19, provinces and long-term care homes across the country are ramping up vaccinations for their residents. Infections and death rates in long-term care homes are reduced. However, we still have to be able to quickly detect and respond to outbreaks if they occur. We need to be prepared for possible increases in the number of infections caused by new variants. This continues to require a coordinated effort.

As people can imagine, a lot of work is happening behind the scenes with our many partners across all levels of government, and indeed with non-governmental organizations that have stepped up. All of this work will deepen our understanding of the disease and

provide the data we need to inform our response and decision-making.

If we have learned anything over the past year, it is that we have to continue with strong public health efforts to reduce transmission of the virus and minimize its impact on the vulnerable residents of long-term care facilities, and we have to work together. We must also plan and be ready for the future, as there is a lot that we still do not know about COVID-19. We have to address the needs of residents in long-term care as the situation evolves.

I can assure this House that the Government of Canada will continue to do everything within our power and jurisdiction to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and protect the health, safety and well-being of all Canadians during these difficult and uncertain times.

● (1250)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, we heard, in the hon. minister's comments, that the government is willing to do absolutely everything it can to protect Canadians.

Pat Armstrong, a sociologist at York University who has studied Canada's long-term care homes for 30 years, firmly believes that Canada's dismal record stems from a historic decision to exclude long-term care facilities from Canada's networks of provincial and territorial public health systems.

She states that this exclusion has resulted in undertraining, poor treatment of workers, substandard and aging facilities, overcrowding, and poor infection control capabilities.

Given what the minister stated in her interventions, knowing that the vast majority of deaths from COVID-19 have been connected to long-term care—and not just our seniors, but also our workers—would the hon. minister support, within her government's power, the application of the Westray law to ensure that these corporations are held responsible for the unnecessary deaths of their workers?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, our government has always supported the use of the Westray law when appropriate and certainly would not stand in the way of charges that were applied. We believe that workers' rights are fundamental, and they are fundamental in not just the protection of those individual workers in this case but certainly of their families. We know that onward transmission in households has been another huge driver of case growth in this country.

I think our government has been very clear that workers' protections are paramount to us, and we would obviously support the application of any potential criminal charges, respective of the law.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question regarding the 4,000 personal support workers, or PSWs, who are being trained.

The trainees are being accelerated in an online program, and then they go into the field and receive the bulk of their practical training with already understaffed, overworked personal support workers who just do not have the time.

I am wondering if the minister thinks that this is an acceptable and compassionate way to approach the staffing crisis in our long-term care facilities.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, in the response that the government has taken to try to support provinces and territories in what I would call a significant staffing shortage, we have developed everything with provinces and territories, and that is the real difference between what the NDP members are proposing here today and what the government believes.

We know that the provinces and territories have not only the right to deliver health care but the responsibility to do so as well. Whenever we work with them in an area of their jurisdiction, it is with a full partnership model, and this is no different.

• (1255)

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, my question is for the minister.

It is true that the pandemic has laid bare all the deficiencies in long-term care facilities and that many lives have been lost. People throughout Quebec and elsewhere have been affected.

However, Quebec is fully capable of looking after its long-term care facilities. The burning question is this: Will the government proceed with health transfers to the provinces, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question, but I will say that the underlying premise is not necessarily correct, given that the Canadian Armed Forces were required for quite some time in Quebec to support the work of the province.

I think the Prime Minister has been very clear. We will be there for provinces and territories with money, as I have demonstrated through my remarks today; with practical support in terms of evidence, research and best practices; and with equipment and vaccines. That is exactly what we have done.

I want to congratulate the Province of Quebec for working so hard to immunize so many people in long-term care and the staff who work in those facilities. Certainly, I think it is on the right path in terms of protecting the most vulnerable among us. However, anything we do in terms of future—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Sorry, but we have to allow for other questions.

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Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the humanitarian crisis in long-term care homes has been a concern for all Canadians, and no one more than Green Party leader Annamie Paul, whose father died in a long-term care home in Toronto at the beginning of the pandemic.

We have been providing a lot of very specific recommendations, some of which are in the NDP motion today, but my question to the hon. minister is really around what more we can do in the approach the government is taking. I personally support the notion that we need an emergency summit of federal-provincial leadership to think about whether we can do better and overcome the jurisdictional barriers.

I listen to people like Sharleen Stewart, president of the Service Employees International Union, or SEIU, on what those workers were going through and continue to go through. They are not going to be able to absorb new people who are on a learning curve when we are still in a pandemic.

I ask the hon. minister what more can be done and whether she is open to some of the solutions that are before us today.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I wish to give my condolences to Ms. Paul. It is a tragedy to lose a loved one. I cannot imagine the pain she has gone through, like so many other Canadians.

First, let me speak to the treatment and pay for long-term care workers. My first job for the federal government was as minister of status of women. The House may remember the many debates we had about pay equity, the gender wage gap and the historic underpayment of people who provided care.

This is a really powerful reminder that we have a lot of work to do in how we value what we consider care work, whether it is care of seniors or care of children. Care work is undervalued, and there is a significant gender bias there. There is—

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

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. minister for helping me with my issues in Guelph. I have been working with long-term care facilities of different types. One issue that has come up is with the class C facilities, where people would normally share rooms and bathrooms. Now, with COVID, these facilities have had to drastically reduce the number of people under care, which also affects their funding models. Another issue is with testing and having more than just nose swabs, where Health Canada has approved saliva testing.

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How can we work with the provinces to help support class C facilities as well as expanded testing?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his work and advocacy in his community of Guelph.

The Government of Canada has adapted the investing in Canada infrastructure program specifically with the mind of trying to support provinces and territories to renew some of this aging infrastructure and address some of the most pressing issues, which might be things like shared washroom facilities but also inadequate ventilation, such as older windows that do not open.

People think of ventilation as something that is extremely complex, and it is, but there are also low-tech solutions. Sometimes it is about airing out rooms and having the ability to do that. Some of these older buildings do not have that capacity, so the flexibility of the COVID-19 resiliency stream allows provinces and territories the ability to do these quick-start short-term projects that can have great health benefits.

I thank the member again for his advocacy. There is a lot of work to do in improving the quality of care in Guelph and across the country.

• (1300)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary Nose Hill.

We know that Canadians have the right to live and age with dignity and every senior, regardless of where they reside, is owed it. Long-term care homes have been at the centre of the COVID-19 pandemic and this past year has been extremely difficult for our seniors in care, their families and the front-line workers in the long-term care community. We know that COVID-19 has led to too many families having to say goodbye much too early and that some families were not even afforded this opportunity.

We all know that the health crisis has left too many seniors neglected, with their care needs not being met, and too many families have missed out on precious time together. Too many seniors have been lonely and isolated for far too long and our long-term care workers have sacrificed so much, worked tirelessly on the front lines and many are, understandably, burnt-out.

Whether we have read the Canadian Armed Forces exit report, watched the news stories or heard first-hand accounts, we should all be gripped by the heartbreaking stories that have emerged during this pandemic. The inadequate living and working conditions that have been exposed in some of the long-term care facilities is unacceptable. With the most outbreaks, fatalities and the toughest restrictions, seniors living in long-term care homes have been hit very hard by this pandemic. The difficult truth in these outcomes is that the serious shortcomings in long-term care contributed to these outbreaks and fatalities.

Scarcity of PPE, delays in testing, staffing shortages and inadequate infrastructure all contributed to the tragedy in long-term care. These vulnerabilities had a direct impact on the health and safety of our seniors and those who cared for them. Delays in getting PPE, rapid testing and an efficient vaccine rollout all have a real human

cost and, shamefully, Canada's outbreak and fatality rate in care homes stands out on the world stage.

First-wave reporting showed that Canada had the highest proportion of deaths occurring in long-term care among OECD countries. Canadian seniors living in long-term care were more vulnerable than seniors in care elsewhere. That is unacceptable. Where we go from here matters.

We cannot ignore the aggravating factors that have contributed to the losses in these homes. While the pandemic has heightened and worsened the challenges in long-term care, the reality is that these problems are not new. The need for better ventilation systems, private rooms and updated spaces that allow for infection prevention control measures are not new, but the pandemic has put a spotlight on the human cost of not investing in long-term care infrastructure.

Just as the need for qualified and adequate levels of staffing in care homes is not new, it is not possible for a long-term care home to bring in surge staffing if the home is already understaffed. These gaps in the long-term care sector left our seniors and front-line health care and essential workers vulnerable. With an aging population and increasingly complex needs, the problems in long-term care will only grow without intervention. We need immediate and medium-term action to stabilize and address the vulnerabilities in this sector.

The pandemic has underscored the urgency of action. Ensuring the health and safety of seniors living in long-term care must be a priority for every level government. No one has the jurisdictional or moral right to neglect the serious shortcomings in this sector. The federal government owes it to our seniors and all Canadians to collaborate with provinces, territories, senior advocates and caregiving organizations to address it. It is important that all these voices are in partnership to ensure we find meaningful and appropriate solutions.

• (1305)

We are now more than a year into the pandemic. The Liberal government has announced its intention to deliver national standards for long-term care, but we have not seen progress made on that announcement. There needs to be a collaborative approach to move the needle.

The Conservatives understand that to deliver meaningful change in long-term care, we cannot have a top-down Ottawa approach. Not only do provincial and territorial governments need to be at the table, we need to include seniors' advocates and caregiving organizations. Their experience and expertise are critical to developing appropriate solutions for our seniors, solutions that are more than just patchwork responses. We owe that to our seniors who have helped build our great country. We owe it to them to care for them in their later years.

Financial gain cannot be the priority in delivering care to our seniors. We need a thorough response to address the many serious shortcomings in long-term care. There cannot be a siloed approach to addressing it. We must act to address the vulnerabilities in all models of care homes. Together, all levels of government, seniors' advocates and caregiving organizations must act to address the wide range of vulnerabilities in care.

A comprehensive response to the crisis in long-term care must consider best practices for quality and appropriate care. Seniors in care should never have their care needs neglected and should have access to quality and appropriate care, regardless of where they reside.

A comprehensive response has to tackle the growing staffing crisis in care, bring stability in the short term, but also find solutions over the medium term to increase the pool of skilled workers in this sector. It has to ensure there is adequate access to PPE, rapid tests and infection control measures. We need to ensure that care homes have the resources they need to protect the health and safety of our seniors and front-line health care workers in this pandemic and moving forward.

A comprehensive response has to include a plan to update our outdated infrastructure, so the brick and mortar is in place to allow for the implementation of infection control measures. There needs to be investment and support for more long-term care facilities. We cannot ignore the continuum of housing needs for seniors. We need to ensure our front-line health care workers have the supports they need.

The Conservatives know that the needs in long-term care are comprehensive. Therefore, we need a comprehensive plan to address the crisis in long-term care. With an aging population, that will only put more pressure on an already exhausted system. The need to act is immediate. Everybody needs to be at the table to address it and ready to act in areas of their responsibility. We need to move beyond announcements and toward meaningful action.

Our seniors, regardless of where they reside, deserve to live and age with dignity. The federal government should be in partnership with all levels of government, working together to provide not only better but appropriate supports for Canada's seniors who live in all models of care homes. That is why the Conservatives urge this government to work collaboratively with provinces, territories, seniors' advocates and caregiving organizations to take action on this important issue.

The Conservatives are ready to work collaboratively to provide better supports and appropriate care for Canada's seniors. We urge the government to take a leadership role in promoting best practices

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in long-term care, while recognizing the diversity of needs and challenges across the country. We need to work together in partnership with all levels of government, caregiving organizations and seniors' advocates. We need to develop immediate and medium-term solutions to address the critical vulnerabilities in the long-term care sector. We need to stabilize the long-term care sector as we continue to navigate the pandemic, but we cannot afford to narrowly focus on the pandemic.

We need to work toward a comprehensive plan that will deliver substantial solutions for our seniors in care and those soon to be in care. It is not just that our seniors in care need more care; we must ensure there is a quality of care that addresses the complexity of their care needs. Whether it is the quality of care, workforce shortages or adequate infrastructure, only a collaborative and comprehensive approach will address the systemic issues in our long-term care sector. There is no time to delay. We have seen throughout the pandemic the real human costs of neglecting this sector.

• (1310)

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Battlefords—Lloydminster for her speech on this issue that affects seniors.

She spoke about the important role the health care system plays in caring for seniors, and not national standards dictated by the federal government, since this is not a federal jurisdiction. Today's situation is the result of years of underfunding in health care, from both Liberal and Conservative governments. She said she was prepared to grant health transfers, but is she prepared to increase them to 35%, as Quebec and the provinces are demanding? Quebec and the provinces want health transfers to be significantly increased, so that they can truly address the issue.

[English]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, as I touched on in my remarks, first we need to have a collaborative approach. That has to be not only with all levels of government, including provincial, territorial and even municipal, but also with caregiving organizations and senior advocates, as they have so much to offer. Having met with so many of them from across the nation, I think they have first-hand experience that sometimes elected people in political positions do not have. It is so imperative that we hear what those needs are.

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, depending on what Conservative is addressing the issue of personal care homes, we often get differing opinions on whether there should be national standards and to what degree.

Can the member give any sort of a clear indication from her perspective on the Conservative Party? Does the Conservative Party support Ottawa having stronger national standards in home care services? Obviously we have to work with the stakeholders, particularly our provinces, in order to be able to achieve that, but to what degree does she believe that Ottawa needs to play a leadership role?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, I think a great thing about the Conservative caucus is that we definitely have different opinions. We are allowed to debate those opinions and we bring them to the table. That being said, as I stated in my remarks we absolutely need to hear from the people on the front lines, senior advocates and those caring for our seniors.

With best practices, I absolutely think there is an opportunity for all of these people to come together. Whether it is organizations, stakeholders or different levels of government, they can talk about best practices. Iron sharpens iron, and we can always learn something for better care for our seniors.

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, how important is it to look at more of a bottom-up strategy, rather than an Ottawa top-down strategy, in making sure that we have the support of these organizations, particularly the provinces, as we go forward?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, I never think that a top-down "Ottawa knows best" approach works for anything. This country is very vast and regionally has many differences, especially when we look at our seniors living in rural Canada. They have different needs and access to necessities than urban seniors do.

We absolutely have to have the stakeholders and front-line workers having this conversation and giving their input. I do not see any problem with all levels of government coming to the table and having that conversation.

• (1315)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know my colleague from Battlefords—Lloydminster is on the call, as she just debated, and I would like to thank her for her work on the issue of seniors. She has been tireless. I have been working with her, and she has met with dozens of affected groups from across the country. I know she brings a good perspective to this issue.

I would like to start my speech today by talking about what this issue is. In the last year, we have seen senior citizens under the government's duty of care die alone covered in their own feces. We have seen the military called in to deal with these situations. Nobody in Parliament, or any other level of government, gets to say that it is not our job to deal with this situation.

What happened in our long-term care facilities across this country during this last year of COVID should light the entire country

on fire. If we truly believe that every Canadian deserves to live with dignity, then we need to be talking about this issue. We need to be proposing solutions, and we need to be moving forward. Anything less than that, I would say, is un-Canadian.

This is not an issue that just affects seniors. This cuts across every generation. This is for the seniors who are living in long-term care. This is for Canadians who might be approaching the age when they have to consider long-term care. It is also for people from my generation who are starting to have hard conversations with their parents about what they want to have happen, how they are going to age, and whether they will age in place.

It also affects the workers in these facilities. I am tired of seeing articles, which are absolutely true, on the PTSD workers in long-term care facilities have experienced dealing with the COVID pandemic. We all need to wake up and understand that we have to push forward with proposing solutions.

I am very pleased that the NDP has decided to use one of its precious supply days bringing this issue forward to the House of Commons for debate. We have spent a lot of time in this Parliament, and in the last Parliament, talking about dying with dignity, which is an important topic. However, we also need to be talking about living with dignity. We also need to be talking about the conditions seniors in Canada who require long-term care are currently living in, right now.

I want to start by looking at the motion itself. The first part of this motion requires Parliament to recognize three deadly facts for which there can be no debate. The first is that "during the first wave of the pandemic, 82% of COVID deaths in Canada happened in long-term care, which is the highest proportion in the OECD".

The second fact is that "there have been over 12,000 long-term care resident and worker deaths in Canada since the beginning of the pandemic", and the third is that "residents and workers in for-profit long-term care homes have a higher risk of infection and death than those in non-profit homes". These are facts. We cannot deny them. The evidence is there. Parliament has to recognize that.

The first part to finding a solution is recognizing there is a problem. There were 12,000 deaths in long-term care homes during the first wave of the COVID pandemic. Let us quantify and think about that. That is greater than the population of some Canadian towns. I ask members to think about how many families were affected by that.

We also need to think about the workers who are affected by this. Many workers in these facilities are underpaid and undersupported, and many of them are new Canadians. Some are temporary foreign workers, and this is something a lot of people are willing to turn a blind eye to. I am glad the NDP put these figures in this motion. Parliament should be recognizing them and waking up to them.

The second part of the motion suggests that something must be done, so the NDP has proposed a solution. The fix this motion proposes is to move all privately owned long-term care facilities into public ownership. That is a spicy solution. At least there is a solution being proposed here.

• (1320)

My party strongly supports a well-funded, robust and publicly funded health care system in Canada, and it cannot be denied that there are significant issues with privately owned long-term care facilities. I want to talk about one example that the government has never rectified.

That is the approval of the sale of many long-term care facilities to Anbang. The purchase of long-term care homes by Anbang was approved by the Liberal government by the former industry minister, who scrutinized the investment review decision because it exceeded the \$600-million threshold.

In an article published earlier last year, the union head of B.C. said, "It's pretty clear that this company is in crisis and unable to provide adequate care at a growing number of its sites.... It's a big problem, because the company's also the largest contracted provider of long-term-care beds in B.C." There have been other articles during the pandemic about the high proportion of deaths in Anbang facilities.

We would think that the failure to uphold Canadian standards by the state-owned enterprise would have resulted in some sort of action by the federal government, and nothing has happened to date. It is highly problematic.

Therefore, will moving all long-term care facilities into public care fix all of these problems? There is a strong argument to be made that the process used to approve the Anbang sale was certainly deadly for many Canadian seniors. Moving to a fully public model would need a strong framework to evaluate what would change. For example, how would provincial governments absorb this responsibility and over what period of time? What would this mean for seniors and workers? What is the framework of that care guarantee?

As well, I think that for-profit care providers now need to show that clear evidence that making profit off of long-term care can be combined with a high certainty of standards of care. That needs to be presented, as more clarity is needed. I am glad we are having a discussion about how to move forward, and no proposed solution at this point should be outright dismissed. We should not be saying that this is not our job to look at.

On the issue of jurisdiction, which everyone is dancing around today, the reality is that the federal government has paid billions of dollars for health care and the federal government provides guidelines and best practices for all sorts of areas of care. The question becomes why the federal government has not moved in this regard. I am not saying that we need to take, as everybody is saying, an "Ottawa knows best" approach, but after overseeing the sale of Anbang and not doing anything about that, it is very convenient to just abdicate responsibility.

Business of Supply

At least we are talking about a solution here today. Again, there is more work to be done before moving to one conclusion or another on what the fix is, but I am glad that we are having this discussion today.

With that, and because I am always for finding solutions, I move, seconded by the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster, that the motion be amended by replacing all of the words after "the House call upon the government to" with the following: "collaborate and partner with the provinces, territories, seniors' advocates and caregiving organizations to: (a) improve long-term care standards including taking a leadership role and promoting best practices while recognizing the diversity of needs and challenges across the country; (b) ensure that long-term care homes have adequate access to PPE, rapid tests and an effective vaccine rollout; (c) direct existing federal infrastructure and housing funding toward new construction and the renovation of long-term care facilities; (d) develop immediate and medium-term solutions to address the critical staffing needs in long-term care facilities; (e) increase mental health supports for front-line health care workers, residents and their families."

Let us get to a solution today.

• (1325)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Burnaby South if he consents to this amendment being moved?

The hon. member for Burnaby South.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, respectfully, I say no. It is fundamental that we remove profit from long-term care given all the evidence. I appreciate the gesture, but I respectfully say no.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is no consent. Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 85 the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, fundamental to this motion and the issue we have seen with the pandemic is that for-profit long-term care facilities have resulted in a much higher rate of COVID infections and deaths of seniors.

Does the member support taking profit out of care for seniors?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, one of the things that makes Canada great is our strong and robust publicly funded health care system, which I strongly support.

Business of Supply

For profit or not, if it is government owned we need to have guidelines and best practices to ensure quality of care. I do not think a governance model, in and of itself, without those standards can guarantee anything. That said, I do think, given everything that I outlined in the speech, particularly the sale of many long-term care facilities to Anbang and the disastrous results of that, we need to have a strong discussion in this country about how we are treating our country's seniors in these facilities.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am disappointed that the NDP did not allow the amendment because the proposed amendment spoke to precisely the areas that our government had invested in from the first wave to the second wave, including in PPE and infrastructure to improve long-term care facilities, funding for staffing, and support for provinces and territories. With that said, I do agree with the member opposite's comments that every senior needs to live in dignity. It is precisely why the Prime Minister made long-term care national standards a priority in the Speech from the Throne as well as in the fall economic statement.

If the member is looking for solutions and her party supports solutions, why, on February 9 did her leader comment publicly that he does not support national standards and took that off the table for her and her party to work with us to establish long-term care national standards? Why does her leader not support those standards?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I have three points. Point number one, if somebody, over and over again, talks about how much money they spent and do not get results, we should not trust them to spend our money. That is the hallmark of the Liberal government, which should be ashamed for trying to say that. It has spent its way into a worse situation for seniors.

Number two, on the issue of moving forward and standards, the Liberal government has done nothing. It has said that it wants to deliver on guidelines. It has not done anything. The Minister of Health has not put anything forward on this. It is not a priority of the government, and she should be ashamed for raising this as a talking point. She should update her book.

Number three, with regard to my leader, the leader said that he, as much as everybody else has said in this debate today, that Ottawa has to respect jurisdiction, but at the same time there is room for guidelines and best practices for how to move forward.

I would encourage the member, in her new role, to encourage her ministers to deliver some action so that she does not have to keep having this debate with me, over and over again, in the House in the future.

• (1330)

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, the member surely knows that the three or four long-term care homes in Quebec that experienced serious problems have now been placed in trusteeship. Analyses have been conducted and investigations are under way, by the coroner, among others.

Does the member not think that the Government of Quebec is in the best position to find solutions and fix the serious mistakes that were made in long-term care homes in Quebec? Is it not up to the

Quebec National Assembly to make these decisions and not the federal government, which is interfering in provincial jurisdictions?

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, we need change. Canadian seniors in any part of this country cannot be expected to live under the circumstances they have been put over the last year.

Provinces have an important role to play and their autonomy needs to be underscored, but the federal government has a duty to work collaboratively with provinces on coming up with a solution. That is where our discussion should be squarely focused.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Montcalm.

As I rise to speak to this motion, which calls for national standards and the nationalization of long-term care homes, or CHSLDs, as we know them, I feel a sense of exasperation. As everyone might expect, we vehemently oppose the motion because it proposes outright interference in an area under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, which want nothing to do with federal standards.

It is up to Quebecers to choose the care model they want, be that public or private. The COVID-19 pandemic did expose the weaknesses in our long-term care homes, but Quebec is perfectly capable of improving its own system without handing over the reins.

A public investigation by the coroner's office and an investigation by the ombudsperson are under way. Quebec does not need federal standards to improve the situation, nor does it need Ottawa to tell it how to solve its problems.

I will focus on three points. I will explain our position as it aligns with that of Quebec and a number of seniors' organizations in Quebec.

At the beginning of the pandemic, it is true that Quebec made the decision to transfer patients to long-term care facilities, or CHSLDs, to free up hospital beds, believing that the entire hospital system would be overwhelmed by the pandemic. We also recognize that COVID-19 mainly affects seniors. This, combined with ongoing deficiencies in our CHSLD system, including a lack of staff, poor administration, and the movement of staff between care centres, has led to the devastation that we are seeing today, with just under half of the 10,087 COVID-19-related deaths in Quebec having occurred in long-term care homes.

Let us not forget that, last May, negotiations between Premier Legault and the Liberal government were particularly tense because the federal government refused to extend the military assistance in Quebec. The federal government then used Quebec's need for military assistance to announce its intention to impose Canadian standards in CHSLDs in the throne speech. This was a way for the federal government to impose its requirements when faced with the provinces joining forces and calling for a 35% increase in health care transfers.

Since then, the federal government has brought up this idea again in last fall's economic update and at the 20th first ministers' conference with the support of the NDP, of course. In all likelihood, the federal standards will be based on the guidelines for long-term care facilities, which were issued by Health Canada in April 2020 and updated on February 26, 2021. This document sets out the procedures to be followed in long-term care facilities to combat COVID-19.

I want to point out that Quebec is already debating the nationalization of its long-term care facilities, with the debate being led by Premier Legault and his minister responsible for seniors and caregivers, Marguerite Blais. Let us allow them to discuss and debate that.

The Bloc Québécois wants to reiterate that health falls under the exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. Sections 91 and 92 of the Constitution Act, 1867, set out how jurisdictions are shared between the federal government and Quebec and the provinces. It is clear.

Health is the exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec, except when it comes to the health of indigenous peoples, military hospitals, Health Canada drug certification and quarantine. The federal government has failed when it comes to indigenous health, vaccine nationalism and quarantines.

The Liberal Party of Canada and the NDP are always trying to interfere in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, especially in the area of health care, because it is close to the people and therefore seems like the right thing to do. However, federalism, which they champion, requires each level of government to respect its exclusive jurisdictions. Both parties are giving in to the temptation to get out of this crisis any way they can, including centralization and austerity through cuts, and this is obviously a direct affront to Quebec and the provinces. I will have a bit more to say on that later, when I talk about health transfers.

Federalists sometimes argue that health transfers must have conditions attached, otherwise provinces take advantage of them to lower taxes rather than provide better services to their people.

Our response to that argument is that it is not the federal government's job to lecture the provincial and Quebec governments. This paternalism must stop. In a democracy, it is up to voters to sanction their government. A unanimous motion adopted by the Quebec National Assembly condemned the pan-Canadian standards for long-term care and demanded an increase in transfers.

On December 2, Marguerite Blais, the minister responsible for seniors and informal caregivers, moved a motion to condemn the Liberals' desire to impose these Canadian standards :

Business of Supply

That the National Assembly reject the Government of Canada's desire to impose Canadian standards in Québec CHSLDs and long-term care facilities for the elderly, as this falls under exclusive Québec jurisdiction;

That it express its disappointment that the federal government did not include an increase in health transfer payments in its last economic update, while the provinces must cover significant health spending costs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic;

That it call on the federal government to commit to not imposing Canadian standards in Québec CHSLDs and long-term care facilities for the elderly and to increasing health transfer payments to the tune of 35% of healthcare network costs.

• (1335)

The Bloc Québécois obviously supports the unanimous opinion of the Quebec National Assembly and denounces the centralizing vision espoused by the NDP and the Liberals.

Quebec already has standards. Long-term care homes are regulated by Quebec's Act Respecting Health Services and Social Services. Furthermore, I remind members that the majority of long-term care homes in Quebec, 86% of them, are publicly run, while the Canadian average is 46%.

Let me be clear: The provinces and Quebec have the expertise and experience to manage long-term care homes. The federal government does not. The provinces and Quebec are also the ones paying for the vast majority of these services. In 2014, the Canadian Institute for Health Information estimated that 73% of long-term care home costs in Canada were covered by provincial, territorial and municipal plans and agencies, whereas 23% of costs were covered by residents or through their private insurance.

All long-term care homes must meet certain safety and quality of care standards to receive a permit to operate. They need to renew that permit every four or five years, depending on what category they belong to, by once again demonstrating that they meet the minimum standards. The government even conducts occasional site visits to verify the quality of the services provided. Every long-term care home also needs to set up a users' committee that is responsible for informing residents of their rights, defending their interests and trying to improve the quality of services. I saw this myself when I was managing a project to increase awareness of elder abuse.

Given the situation, the Government of Quebec has already announced that it wants to standardize the regulations governing long-term care homes and staff working conditions. This is clearly not a federal responsibility, since the federal government has neither the experience nor the expertise required to set standards for long-term care facilities in the place of the provinces and Quebec. Instead, the federal government should focus on doing what is expected of it properly and live up to its responsibilities. My colleague from Salaberry—Suroît, who was a manager in the health care system, could also talk about that. The Premier of Quebec even said that it was a mistake for the Liberal government to propose centralizing measures in an area of provincial jurisdiction like health.

Business of Supply

Last spring's report from the Canadian Armed Forces on their experience in Quebec long-term care homes was clear: There are already plenty of standards and rules governing PPE usage and infection control and prevention. Those rules were not enough to stop the virus, though, because long-term care homes had a hard time complying with the standards and rules. The reason for that was clearly a staff shortage. According to the report, long-term care homes are in dire need of medically trained staff.

If the federal government really wants to help the provinces and Quebec get through the pandemic and provide better care to our seniors, it should stop being so paternalistic. It should forget about imposing national standards that are not a good fit for a range of social and institutional contexts. Instead, it should increase health transfers, which would enable Quebec and the provinces to attract and retain more health care workers.

For my third point, let us look at where other seniors' organizations in Quebec stand on this. Representatives from the FADOQ network, the Quebec seniors' federation, reiterated to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women what they have long been saying in their pre-budget briefs to the finance committee: Quebec does not need standards, it needs financial resources to be able to take care of people.

It all boils down to health care funding. Health transfers have been slashed by successive Liberal and Conservative governments since the 1990s. Countless other organizations in Quebec agree, including the Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale, which advocates for women's rights and recognizes that underfunding has a direct impact on health care. Even Daniel Béland, the director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, felt that the idea of imposing national standards was just a way to make the Prime Minister look good. Some people might see it as a good idea.

However, the provinces and Quebec should really be in charge of this, and they need more money. The solution is simple: increase federal health transfers. The government's refusal to provide ongoing funding for health care is not unrelated to the difficulties that the provinces and Quebec are having in providing proper care for their residents.

It is inconceivable that health care professionals have had to prop up our health care system over the past year as we have combatted this pandemic. In the meantime, the federal government has stubbornly continued to tell us that it will wait until after the crisis to increase funding, even though increasing funding is the most obvious way to permanently overcome this crisis and to predict, plan for and respond to the next one.

The Canadian government needs to realize that Quebec and the provinces are not making a frivolous request. This funding is required immediately so that Canadians and Quebecers can receive the care they deserve and so that seniors can be treated with the respect they are owed for their contributions to our society.

Madam—

• (1340)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I apologize for interrupting, but your time is up.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to sincerely congratulate my colleague from Shefford for the professionalism she showed in her speech. She is a wonderful critic for seniors, and it is clear that she is well equipped to represent and reflect the needs of Quebec's seniors.

Can she reiterate for the members opposite and for the NDP how important it is that the government respect Quebec and its decisions in the National Assembly with respect to managing all health care services for seniors?

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît for her excellent question.

I did not have time to do so during my speech, but I had planned to give some examples of times when the federal government tried to interfere in matters in Quebec by asking the province to take action in the area of health. Every time, the action the federal government asked Quebec to take was not in line with its reality or that of the other provinces. For example, when it comes to drugs, injection drugs and marijuana were issues that caused conflict.

Quebec is clearly in the best position to understand the interests of seniors and the hard-working staff in its health care system.

I worked in the community sector. I worked with organizations and the health care system. What people repeatedly told me was that they needed funding.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, time and again we have heard the Bloc members passionately arguing on behalf of their province, yet I would like to think that all members in the House would want to ensure that all people across the country would have a standard through which we could protect our seniors.

Does the previous speaker not acknowledge the failures of long-term care within her province, given the death rates in Quebec? Would this member ever consider the possibility that Quebec might actually have lower standards than the national comparators across the country, or is its national assembly so perfect that it will always far exceed the rest of Canada?

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comment.

I would once again invite him to reconsider the attack that the Liberals and the NDP are making on the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, Quebec is already looking into solutions. It is looking at what happened during the crisis in order to come up with real solutions.

Long-term care homes were already a point of debate during Quebec's most recent elections. Since then, the minister responsible for seniors, the health minister and the premier have been looking into the issue. We need to recognize their expertise, not tell them that we are going to impose standards on them. That is paternalism and a slap in the face. That is telling them that they are unable to manage their health care system, and I think that is unacceptable.

[English]

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was wondering if the member could offer some comments on why the Liberal government chose to take no action in Quebec in particular.

Was there a particular instance when the Liberal government could have acted better in Quebec?

[Translation]

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche: Madam Speaker, as I said, there are some things that the federal government could have acted on much more quickly by looking after its own affairs.

I am thinking of the issue of border security. FADOQ told me that many seniors wondered why the federal government did not act sooner.

It also could have been transparent about vaccines. Seniors were first on the vaccination list, but there was a lack of transparency, which led to delays. People finally started getting vaccinated, but there were delays. Seniors wondered and are still wondering about this lack of transparency.

There was also not enough PPE. The government could have provided more.

Coming back to vaccines, we must develop a system to produce vaccines. The issue of vaccine nationalism was abandoned by the Liberals and the Conservatives.

• (1345)

Mr. Luc Th  riault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, what more can I say, after my colleague's magnificent speech? She really is an excellent critic for seniors.

She went over all the aspects of the NDP motion that are problematic. This motion presupposes that national standards are needed. I see that assumption as a contemptuous premise, not contemptuous of seniors but of those who provide care for them.

By moving this motion, which imposes national standards without having to debate them, the NDP is claiming that it would have done better. On what basis can they say they would have done better in these circumstances?

Obviously, what happened in long-term care facilities was catastrophic. At the beginning of the pandemic, Quebec made the decision to transfer patients to long-term care facilities to free up hospital beds, because many believed the pandemic would overwhelm the hospital system. Many believed that hospitals would become hot spots or red zones. Since some people were waiting for spots in long-term care facilities, Quebec thought it was a good idea to free up hospital beds so that the system would be able to respond to and withstand the first wave of the pandemic.

Business of Supply

The decision was made in good faith. No one wanted what happened in the long-term care facilities. Investigations by the coroner and the ombudsperson might provide more information on what was done well and what could have been done better.

It is a disaster, and it is unprecedented. Where was the personal protective equipment? Why was the national stockpile depleted? Why did we send PPE to mainland China when our stockpile was depleted? Why did we not protect those who infected the residents at the long-term care facilities? Why has the government failed to increase health transfers for the past 30 years, something that would have prevented PSWs from needing to work at two or three facilities just to make ends meet?

This pandemic has shed light on the weaknesses in the network. Every expert that testified at the Standing Committee on Health told us that the pandemic has laid bare the weak links in the system and that this is the result of chronic underfunding in health.

The government turning around and telling the provinces and Quebec what they must do, claiming they could have done better, is nothing short of contempt. I am a bit surprised because Quebec does not need national standards to take care of its people and re-evaluate itself. Investigations are under way and there will likely be others. The debate on nationalization has already started, but it is worth noting that in politics, universal standards are never very good.

In Quebec, 86% of long-term care homes are public. In Canada, the average is 46%.

• (1350)

The Canadian Institute for Health Information estimated in a report that 73% of long-term care home costs in Canada were covered by provincial, territorial and municipal systems and agencies, whereas 23% of costs were covered by residents or through their private insurance.

I want to get back to the notion of jurisdictions. Lucien Bouchard, who was the leader of the official opposition in the House and served as premier of Quebec, said that successive governments in Quebec have always set out to reaffirm Quebec's jurisdictions, to ensure that the people of Quebec retain control over their economic, social and cultural development. In response to my New Democrat colleague's claim earlier that our only concern was the Quebec nation, I want to point out that this objective is not in any way connected to a government's position on the status of Quebec.

Incidentally, it is shocking and rather odd to see the NDP, which rightly and aggressively advocates for indigenous peoples to gain control over their social, economic and cultural development, trying to diminish the Quebec nation's control over health care.

Business of Supply

When I spoke about my colleague's bill to establish a Canadian pharmacare program, I said that he had ignored Quebec. Today, that seems very obvious to me in this motion. However, what is needed is an increase in health transfers. If there is anything we can learn from this pandemic, it is that Quebec and the provinces must be able to plan for the future and rebuild their health networks.

Is the federal government's priority to give care providers the means to take care of our people? After 30 years of neglect, will it finally contribute its fair share once and for all in order to rebuild our health care systems and properly take care of our citizens? Have we ever seen a federal government lose an election on the issue of health? I have been interested in politics for quite some time and have never seen that. However, I have seen it at the provincial level and with a Quebec government. Why would a provincial government lose an election on the issue of health? Because that is a provincial jurisdiction.

All the federal government has to do is provide its share. Those with the expertise will provide the care. Claiming that they would have done better and that standards are going to solve the problems is just wishful thinking. Yes, there must be discussions, but Quebec is capable of having them and taking corrective action. Standards for Quebec's long-term care facilities, the CHSLDs, already exist, namely in the act respecting health services and social services. This legislation can be improved and it will definitely be improved as a result of the investigations under way.

The Bloc Québécois is here to apprise the House of Commons of the unanimous motions and the consensus of the National Assembly. The National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion condemning the idea of national standards for CHSLDs and demanding an increase in health transfers.

Madam Speaker, how much time do I have left?

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): You have 20 seconds left.

Mr. Luc Thériault: I will continue by answering questions, then.

In closing, this motion says that health transfers must be increased to 35%. Quebec and the provinces are united. Thinking that this debate can wait until after the pandemic is a fundamental mistake that must be avoided.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was really saddened by my colleague's speech, even though he is a great orator, because he failed to acknowledge the crisis in long-term care facilities. This network was particularly hard hit in Quebec, where thousands died.

Today's proposal from the NDP is about incorporating long-term care facilities into the Canada Health Act and increasing funding for long-term care. Over 75% of Quebecers support this initiative, so what the NDP is proposing today is certainly supported by public opinion in Quebec.

I do not understand why the Bloc Québécois—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Other members also want to ask questions. The hon. member for Montcalm.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I am surprised that the member for New Westminster—Burnaby is saying the motion passed unanimously by Quebec's National Assembly is in conflict with what Quebecers as a whole think. That is out of line. Not only is the member dismissing Quebec's jurisdiction and its ability to manage its own affairs, but he is also accusing the Government of Quebec of being out of touch with Quebecers. That is really something.

I am just saying that there was a catastrophe in long-term care facilities, but we are capable of managing it with the federal government's collaboration. Quebec and the provinces are currently demanding \$28 billion in health care funding so they can take care of their own.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Liberal members of Parliament in all areas of Canada recognize that what happened in long-term care homes through the pandemic is a good example of building back better, something the Prime Minister talks about. We need national standards that obligate us to continue to work with provinces and territories to deliver what Canadians want us to deliver.

Will the member not recognize that the federal government is at times called upon by citizens in all of our provinces to take specific action to protect the interests of seniors?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, as we all know, the Liberal federal government and the NDP have a centralist agenda, and they often try to leverage the crisis in long-term care homes to further impose their will on Quebec and the provinces. It is deplorable.

I cannot figure out why they do not understand that health transfers have to go up now to give the people in charge of care some room to manoeuvre so they can rebuild their networks and take care of seniors.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, one aspect I was not able to touch on in my speech was union leaders' support for the National Assembly of Quebec's demand for increased health transfers, which would help resolve the crisis. What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

• (1400)

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. As recently as March 1, 2021, the FTQ, the CSN, the CSQ and the CSD all stressed the importance of increasing health transfers to deal with the public service crisis brought on by the pandemic. Long-term care homes have certainly been affected by the crisis.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

WORLD WATER DAY

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, today is World Water Day. All living things need water to survive, but for many this basic need is not being met. Hundreds of millions of people around the world lack access to clean drinking water, including 41 first nations communities here in Canada.

Access to clean drinking water is a fundamental human right, but increasingly water is being treated as a commodity and profit centre. Corporations are buying up water rights around the planet. They control fresh water supplies, aquifers, rivers, streams and sometimes even the rain falling from the sky. They bottle water, privatize public water utilities and extract maximum profit from a basic human necessity.

We cannot stand by and accept this as normal. We must push back against the commodification of basic human needs. We must defend the human right to water.

* * *

FIRST NOVA SCOTIAN NBA PLAYER

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate Nova Scotia's Nate Darling on achieving a professional basketball first for our province.

Mr. Darling is originally from Bedford in the riding of Halifax West. On March 13, 2021, he became the first Nova Scotian ever to play in a regular season NBA game. A shooting guard for the Charlotte Hornets, Nate's debut rebounds with hope and excitement for his future as a professional basketball player. His entry into pro basketball is inspiring for many young Nova Scotian athletes with dreams of their own. In a recent statement, Basketball Nova Scotia referred to him as a role model for young basketball players in the province and said, "Nate is paving the pathway for basketball in Nova Scotia".

Best wishes to Nate Darling. We are hoping his career is a slam dunk.

* * *

COLONEL ROBERT DOUGLAS

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, late last month we lost a man who served his country and community with honour and distinction.

Colonel Robert Douglas grew up in Toronto. The son of a father who served in both world wars, he took up a military calling of his own, enlisting with the Royal Regiment of Canada and serving with the SAS of the British army in Malaysia in the 1950s. After returning to Canada, he made his way to the rank of lieutenant-colonel and became commanding officer of the Royal Regiment.

His career outside of the military took him from Toronto to Montreal with NCR and Merrill Lynch. It was a career generous in community service, from the World Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to St. John Ambulance, and as honorary colonel with

Statements by Members

several Canadian army regiments including the Grey and Simcoe Foresters and the Toronto Scottish Regiment.

Two years ago, he lost Anne, the love of his life of 61 years. To their children, Cameron, Katherine and Robert Gray, I send our deepest sympathies and our most profound thanks for the life of Colonel Robert Douglas.

* * *

[Translation]

LAVAL—LES ÎLES

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the efforts that our government makes every day to improve the lives of Canadians and ensure their well-being.

[English]

Despite this unprecedented difficult time, our government continues to tirelessly serve Canadians and protect their lives.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities for announcing a \$6.6-million investment to help build the Sainte-Dorothée pumping station in Laval—Les Îles.

[English]

This station will provide optimal waste water management and a better response to significant increases in flow during rain or snow melt episodes. Thanks to this investment, floods will be avoided and Laval—Les Îles residents will be more secure.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

KAYTRANADA

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to recognize the musical success of Louis Kevin Celestin, who is more commonly known by his stage name of Kaytranada. This young man who grew up in Saint-Hubert recently won two prestigious Grammy awards alongside artists such as Beyoncé and Taylor Swift.

His song *10%*, for which he won best dance recording, has over 40 million plays on Spotify. His album *Bubba*, which was voted best dance/electronic album of the year, is his second studio album. He has only two albums and he has already won a Grammy for best album in its category. That is absolutely phenomenal.

Statements by Members

As an actor myself, I am always pleased to celebrate the cultural achievements of Quebecers, particularly when they are from my riding. Kaytranada has already taken his place among the Quebec artists who have made their mark on the international stage, such as Xavier Dolan, Céline Dion, Denis Villeneuve, Robert Lepage and Arcade Fire. They are all amazing examples of the reach of Quebec culture throughout the world.

Kaytranada, Louis, Quebec congratulates you.

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STANSJE PLANTENGA

Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yesterday was International Day of Forests. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of Stansje Plantenga, a citizen of Pottton Township who has spent decades fighting to protect our natural environment.

It is a deep love of nature that pushed her and her husband to create a land trust in 1987. It was one of the first organizations of its kind in Quebec and it is modelled after the American Land Trust.

Today, more than 80 similar organizations protect our Quebec forests. Stansje's forest is a wonder to behold. Those who visit it describe it as heaven on earth.

This woman's story is a prime example of the power of the people when it comes to protecting the land. The entire Brome—Missisquoi region is benefiting from her hard work of the past 35 years. We are all extremely grateful to her.

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[English]

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I am proud to recognize the great work of volunteers in my riding of Yellowhead.

I want to give special recognition to the brand-new food pantry at the Edson United Church, which has already been supplying free nutritious hot meals to the community. I recently had the opportunity to visit the church and it was fantastic to see the shelves stocked and volunteers in action. It is working in co-operation with the Edson food bank so it is not duplicating services and the community gets the best of both organizations.

Another fantastic initiative I would like to recognize is Edson's new shelter pods for the town's homeless population. Once completed, this project will help some of Edson's homeless find a safe and warm place to stay. These shelter pods are a commendable initiative that should be considered in all corners of the country.

I am proud to represent a riding with such great organizations that have a strong sense of community and support people who are in need. Keep up the great work.

* * *

REID'S DISTILLERY

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask members if they have a favourite cock-

tail. If their answer is gin and tonic, then I would like to tell them about a gin distillery in my community that not only makes great-tasting gin, but deserves a shout-out for the amazing work it does for our community.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Reid's Distillery converted its operations to make hand sanitizer, which it distributed to community members for free. The sweet smell of juniper berries was flowing throughout our community. It is a wonderful example of how local businesses are a cornerstone for our community.

As I give a shout-out to Reid's Distillery, I also need to point out how it has stepped up to provide opportunities for Black and indigenous people who are interested in the distilling industry. Recognizing that Black and indigenous talent is under-represented in the industry, it has created a targeted scholarship.

I thank Reid's Distillery so much for the work it does. I am greatly happy to be able to say something about it today in the House.

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● (1410)

NOWRUZ

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to wish an exceptionally healthy and happy new year to the many Canadians celebrating Nowruz.

Over the weekend, many in our country joined 300 million people around the world with cultural roots in western and central Asia to welcome in a new year.

A 3,000 year old tradition, Nowruz is a festive holiday celebrated, among others, by Persians, Afghans, Turks, Kurds, Zoroastrians, Baha'is and Ismailis. Over the weekend, I had the pleasure to virtually join many around their haft-seen tables to mark the spring equinox and to embrace the promise of new beginnings.

Celebrated for several millennia, Nowruz is meant to bring together people of different cultures and languages to celebrate renewal, optimism and light, all essential qualities that can guide us as we emerge with all the necessary vim and vigour to put the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic behind us.

[Member spoke in Farsi]

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B.C. PUBLIC FISHERY

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, looking ahead to the upcoming fishing season, our B.C. public fishery is facing an uncertain future.

I have met with countless members of the B.C. fishing community who are gravely concerned that if the Minister of Fisheries continues to ignore sound science, their futures are at risk. The science tell us there are over 110 million hatchery chinook annually entering our Pacific waters, along with many rivers, showing strong and even record returns.

Closing the fishery simply is not required. There are other solutions, including increasing opportunities for a mark selective fishery.

I was honoured to be one of 25 B.C. members of Parliament to sign the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap's letter, calling on the minister to support this promising initiative. Mark selective fishing can help conservation efforts, while also supporting economic and social activities.

It is time for the minister to start listening to the science and the voices of British Columbians and to support our B.C. public fishery.

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[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, March 20, francophones and francophiles around the world celebrated International Day of La Francophonie.

More than 300 million people speak French around the world. French is the fifth most spoken language in the world. In Canada, nearly eight million people speak French at home.

This year we did not get to meet in person, but I want to thank all our artists who entertained us on Saturday.

Pandemic or not, our artists continue to enrich our francophone culture. Our artists show us that it is possible to create digital cultural content in French. Back home, whether it is Véronic DiCaire, Katherine Levac, Mélissa Ouimet or Les Rats de Swompe, to name a few, these artists have all chosen to create in French. That choice inspires the next generation to create in French.

I wish all francophones and francophiles in Canada who celebrated on Saturday a happy International Day of La Francophonie.

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[English]

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian case of the novel coronavirus was reported by Health Canada on January 25, 2020. That was 422 days ago, 422 days of temporary measures with no long-term plan; 422 days of business shutdowns and sector collapses; and 422 days of widespread unemployment and mass job loss. We are all united in the worst way possible.

Millions of Canadians from every sector, every province and every background have been left behind. The light at the end of the tunnel that we have been hearing about burned out long ago. People do not want to rely on government support. They would rather just get back to work.

Statements by Members

The path to the Prime Minister's reimagined economy veers off into the unknown, leaving nothing but shutdowns, uncertain futures and untested changes that will leave millions of Canadians behind.

Canada's Conservatives are offering another path: a plan, one of security and certainty. The Conservatives will secure jobs and secure Canada's future, delivering us a Canada where those who have been struggling the most to get through this pandemic can get back to work. We got Canada through the last recession and with Canada's recovery plan, we will ensure Canadians get through this one too.

* * *

[Translation]

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's future is at stake.

The Liberal Prime Minister was slow to roll out the vaccines and will be even slower to restart the economy. Now is not the time to reimagine the economy. The Prime Minister wants to be the centre of attention and wants to lead us into the unknown with economic experiments that will leave millions of Canadians behind. Every Canadian worker deserves to get their job back. Every Canadian worker in every sector of the economy deserves to be part of the economic recovery.

The Prime Minister has decided to choose which Canadians will have a future. That is not the right solution for the millions of workers who built Canada.

What the Conservative leader is proposing is a more secure future, a Canada with fewer slogans and more money in workers' and families' pockets. After months of hardship, Canadians want to rediscover hope for a better life. Abandoning thousands of workers in traditional sectors is not going to help us succeed.

As the leader of the official opposition stated in his excellent speech on Friday, we must rebuild Main Street. After COVID-19, only the Conservatives' economic recovery plan will provide Canadians with a stable economic future.

Oral Questions

● (1415)

*[English]***INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and I believe the government has failed to address the spread of misinformation and hate through social media and the growing divide in wealth and prosperity. I believe that the more disparity we see and the more people suffer and fight just to survive the greater all divides among us will grow.

In my community of London, Ontario, people from so many diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds have fought back against this divide. They come together when events happen here at home or abroad. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused even greater disparity.

I want to highlight a few organizations that have worked to counter it. I want to thank the Caring Canadians Society, Al Hyatt Mosque's soup kitchen, Canadian Cedars of Hope, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at group and the United Sikhs. There are so many more to which I want to give my gratitude. They all make us stronger. They are fighting for the change in progress we must achieve.

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*[Translation]***AMIR ATTARAN**

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is one minority about whom hate speech always goes unpunished. I am, of course, talking about Quebecers.

The most recent example comes from a University of Ottawa professor who thinks that Quebec is racist. He called the Premier of Quebec a white supremacist, no less, and called Quebec "the Alabama of the North". Why not? He flat out called "pure laine" Quebecers white supremacists.

This man is named Amir Attaran. He will not face any consequences, because Quebec-bashing is A-okay in Canada and can even be quite lucrative. I want to at least say his name because, on behalf of the people of Quebec, I at least want it on the historical record of the Parliament of Canada that Amir Attaran is an ignorant francophobe.

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*[English]***ANTI-ASIAN RACISM**

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has unleashed a surge of anti-Asian racism across North America. From Atlanta to Vancouver and even Markham, the Asian community, especially the Chinese community, have been victimized.

It began as hurtful comments at the beginning of the pandemic and grew into physical violence. The numbers are staggering. Major cities have seen the number of hate crimes grow as much as 700% and most of the targets are women. I encourage everyone to

confront racism when he or she sees it. Racists are only encouraged by silence.

Unfortunately, the federal government has not done much. A Liberal member of Parliament has admitted that the federal government has, to some extent, overlooked Asian communities in its recent anti-racism strategies. The Prime Minister needs to acknowledge the growing anti-Asian racism and do more to tackle it.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pretending a problem does not exist is not a solution and risks disaster, be it in relation to the pandemic or climate change. We are better in a competition of ideas, but we need to start from a reality that is based on science. Climate change is real, and all Canadians need to act.

That is why our government has put a price on pollution, the rebate from which puts more money in people's pockets; why we have made investments in things like public transit; and why we are growing the zero-emissions vehicle sector.

Canadians know that pollution has a cost and that when it is free to pollute, there will be more pollution. All of us would lose if the Conservative Party were allowed to move Canada in reverse as it continues to deny the very existence of climate change. I ask the Conservatives who know that climate change is real and that action is required to join us and the millions of Canadians who know it too, and are taking real action together.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

*[English]***HEALTH**

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are a year into COVID. Lockdowns were set initially across the world to give governments time to get the tools in place that they needed to protect their people. Those tools are now available to us, like rapid testing, vaccines and treatments, but our federal government has not delivered them as quickly as other countries. While the U.S., the U.K. and others are planning a final end to the restrictions and freedom once again, here in Canada there is no hope and no end in sight, only the threat of more lockdowns.

Where is the data-driven, detailed federal plan to end the lockdowns? Is there a plan?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before we respond to this important issue, I must underscore a matter of deep concern in this House.

This past weekend, the deputy leader opposite's party once again rejected science and reaffirmed its disbelief in the reality of climate change. I know it is discouraging to many Canadians that a major political party in this country will not acknowledge this basic scientific fact and the threat it poses to future generations, but let me assure Canadians that our government knows that climate change is real, and we will continue to implement our plan to address it.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians also know that what is real is that the government has no plan to end the lockdowns for them. That is what they know is real.

On another very serious matter that I hope we can get an answer to, for over two years the two Michaels have been held in prison in China. Now, while these Canadians are having their so-called day in court, Canada's ambassador in China is missing in action. Twenty-three other countries are there to show their support, but our ambassador did not show up. Why is that?

Maybe it is because he is hand-delivering that \$40-million cheque from Canada to China for the Asian infrastructure bank.

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course I reject the premise of that unusual question. I want all Canadians to know that the release of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig is our number one priority. Our thoughts go out to both of them and their families at this very difficult time.

We, of course, have said for the longest time that arbitrary detention is totally unacceptable, and we are very preoccupied by the lack of transparency in their court proceedings.

We thank other countries for joining us in front of the courthouse for today's trial.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actions speak louder than words. The Liberals have used the imprisonment of these Canadians as an implied reason not to deal with Huawei or to deal with genocide and the multitude of China's other abuses. Now, while the two are appearing in this kangaroo court, we have learned the Prime Minister has just sent \$40 million to China for the Asian infrastructure bank.

How can we have any confidence that the Prime Minister is actually acting in the best interests of the two Michaels when he is sending \$40 million to the Communist regime that took them captive?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been focused on the release of the two Michaels from the very beginning. We have said very, very clearly that arbitrary detention of innocent Canadian civilians on trumped-up charges is totally unacceptable. Now we are joined by many other countries that are also very concerned about arbitrary detention.

Oral Questions

My message to China is that if it is doing business with other countries, it is not acceptable to detain their citizens when it has a difference of opinion with that country. That is not how the international rules of law are applied.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when someone is accused of misconduct, there is usually an investigation. At the very least, caution is advised in dealing with that person during the investigation. I am obviously talking about General Vance.

When the Prime Minister's Office learned that there was an investigation, what did cabinet and the Prime Minister do? They gave him a \$50,000 raise.

How does this self-proclaimed feminist Prime Minister explain that?

● (1425)

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I need to be very clear that our government and I have no tolerance for any type of misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Let me be clear. I do not determine pay increases. That is done independently and is based on the advice and recommendation of the public service.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts.

First, the Prime Minister recently said that he was not aware of the allegations of misconduct. His story changed, since he admitted a few days later that his office had been aware, but that does not make a difference.

The Prime Minister's Office was aware of allegations of sexual misconduct against General Vance, and the Prime Minister, with the support of cabinet, gave him a \$50,000 raise.

Why?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, let me be clear that I do not determine pay increases. This is done independently and is based on the advice and recommendations of the public service.

Oral Questions

I also want to point out that today the defence committee heard from Stephen Harper's former chief of staff, who stated, "...the Prime Minister's Office is not an investigative body. Senior officials in the Privy Council Office are the ones responsible for interacting with the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces with respect to this matter."

Political staff and ministers currently aren't investigative entities in our system of government

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[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec will be tabling its budget on Thursday.

Unfortunately, despite the full-blown public health crisis, it will not be able to significantly boost health spending because the federal government is refusing to do its part. That makes no sense at all.

Having seen what our health care staff have gone through, and with a third, variant-driven wave a distinct possibility, the federal government cannot tell our nurses that it will wait until after the pandemic.

Will the government at least announce plans to increase health transfers?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, we have been there for provinces and territories. Whether it is billions of dollars in safe restart agreements, \$740 million of which was designated to long-term care, whether it was purchasing protective equipment, whether it was purchasing vaccines, whether it was supporting the payment of essential workers through \$3 billion in top-up wages, we have been there for provinces and territories and we will continue to be there for the Province of Quebec.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what we need is higher health transfers. We have to help our nurses and PSWs provide better care to patients and seniors. That is what needs to happen.

Our health care workers do not need to be told what to do. They do not need the Liberals to impose Canadian standards. They do not need politicians to meet 100 days after the election, as the Conservatives are proposing. Those parties are out of touch with reality. We need higher health transfers now, during the pandemic. That is easy to understand.

Why does Ottawa not understand that?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Quebec needed the Government of Canada, we were there for Quebec. We sent in the Canadian military to support the care for seniors in long-term care facilities across Quebec. We were there with the Red Cross, making sure that long-term care homes experiencing outbreaks had trained support staff to help the province in a very

difficult time for all Quebeckers. We will continue to be there now and into the future.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister learned that his former chief of the defence staff was the subject of a sexual misconduct complaint.

Rather than taking action or investigating, the Prime Minister gave him a raise. That sends a clear message to women in the Canadian Armed Forces that they are not taken seriously and that they are not safe.

Will the Prime Minister apologize and make sure that this kind of situation never happens again?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, our government has no tolerance for any type of misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, and let me be clear once again that when it comes to a pay increase, that is done independently and is based on the advice and recommendation of the public service.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, systemic racism hurts racialized people and, in particular, indigenous people. The RCMP civilian watchdog reached two very serious findings: one, the Boushie family was discriminated against by the RCMP, and two, the RCMP destroyed evidence in the case.

A year ago, the Prime Minister took a knee at a Black Lives Matter protest but has yet to take any action. People are fed up with the Prime Minister's symbolic gestures. When will the Prime Minister take concrete action to end systemic racism in the RCMP?

● (1430)

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me begin by acknowledging my deepest sympathy for the family, friends and community of Colten Boushie. We thank the CRCC for its excellent work in providing answers to the questions the family has had.

Let me also acknowledge that in the report, the CRCC addressed deficiencies in several areas of the RCMP response, including the manner in which the next of kin notification took place. I have spoken to the commissioner of the RCMP. She has accepted all of the recommendations and we will work very closely with her to ensure a full implementation of them to address the deficiencies in the police response identified by the complaints review.

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ETHICS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it originally came to light that the Prime Minister had given a half-billion dollar taxpayer funded grant to a group that had paid his family a half-million dollars, he blamed it all on a bureaucrat over in the employment department, saying that his office had nothing to do with it. Well, that was until last week, when it came to light that Craig Kielburger wrote a message to the Prime Minister's senior adviser: "Hello Ben, Thank you for your kindness in helping [to] shape our latest program with the government."

Will the Prime Minister agree to let his top adviser come to the ethics committee and explain what role he played in shaping this program that gave money back to a group that had paid off the Trudeau family?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe that committees do very important work in this Parliament and we have always worked very closely with all committees. Our ministers have appeared at committees and answered all of the questions. We provided the documents that have been requested: thousands and thousands of pages.

My colleague also knows that committees are masters of their own work and make their own decisions, and we will always respect that.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are so anxious to see committees do their work that the Prime Minister actually shut down committees and, indeed, all of Parliament for almost two months to stop them from answering those questions. The Liberals then began another two-month filibuster to block questions. Today, when we came forward with a motion asking for Mr. Chin to come to testify, Liberal members showed up and began filibustering all over again. If the government has nothing to hide, why does it not let us open up the investigation and find the truth?

[Translation]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is fishing. We are used to it because he does it on a regular basis. The government will always co-operate whenever it is asked to do so.

My colleague also knows that committees are masters of their own work. They make their own decisions. My colleague is well aware of that because he was on the other side of the House, the government side, at the time. I am sure that, at that time, he respected the autonomy and independence of committees, as we do today.

Oral Questions

I hope that he will continue to respect the excellent work done by these committees, which play an important role in Canada's democracy.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on National Defence is looking at serious allegations of sexual misconduct within our Canadian Armed Forces.

These testimonies are important, both for the committee and for the public. However, Zita Astravas, the former chief of staff of the Minister of National Defence refuses to appear.

Can the Minister of Public Safety confirm that his current chief of staff, Zita Astravas, will appear before the Standing Committee on National Defence?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the government believes in the extremely important work that all the committees are doing and supports that work.

We are working very closely with the committees. Our ministers appear before the committees and answer all the questions. We provide the documents that are requested—thousands and thousands of pages. We do that out of professionalism and with pleasure.

My colleague must know that the committees are the masters of their own fates. They make their own decisions. I hope she will respect that.

[English]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, understanding who knew what, and when, with regard to sexual misconduct allegations against the former chief of the defence staff is critical to achieving a Canadian Armed Forces where women can serve equally and without fear. As a public servant, Zita Astravas is in service to Canadians. As the former chief of staff to the defence minister, her testimony is required for the defence committee to do its work.

Will the public safety minister confirm when his chief of staff, Zita Astravas, will testify at committee?

Oral Questions

● (1435)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, we believe that committees do very important work in this Parliament and we always work closely with the committees and keep working closely with them. Our ministers are going there all the time. They are appearing and answering the questions. Very important questions have to be asked, and we answer those questions. When documents and minutes are requested, we provide thousands of pages of them. We do what has to be done. However, my colleague knows very well that committees are masters of their own work. She has to respect that, and I hope she will.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister says that as the Liberals are filibustering at the defence committee on calling Zita Astravas.

We know that the defence minister's chief of staff briefed the Prime Minister's Office regarding serious allegations of sexual misconduct by General Vance back in 2018. The Prime Minister admitted he learned of these allegations before he signed off on a pay increase for the accused general. The women and men who serve us in uniform deserve respect, but all they get from the defence minister are cover-ups. Will the defence minister tell Canadians why he failed to flag sexual misconduct allegations to cabinet before it approved General Vance's pay raise?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, I do not determine the pay increases. That is done independently based on the advice and recommendations of the public service.

When it comes to testimony, the chief of staff of former Prime Minister Harper stated that political staff ministers clearly are investigative entities in our system of government. He also raised the question regarding the Leader of the Opposition and what he knew about the rumours at that time about the former chief of the defence staff.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know from the testimony today that, unlike the defence minister who pushed away and refused to take evidence and do anything with it, and participated in a cover-up, our government took that evidence and fully investigated it.

The defence minister and the Prime Minister knew about allegations of sexual misconduct against Canada's top generals back in 2018 and refused to investigate. Now we learn that General Vance was given a significant pay raise right after the evidence was brought to the minister. The Liberal government's feminist credentials are a joke. Will the defence minister explain to the brave women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces why he failed to step in and stop that pay increase?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated before, when allegations were brought forward, they were immediately taken to the Privy Council Office for action to be taken.

We also have questions ourselves right now about what was known in 2015 by the member himself, because he was the parliamentary secretary to the minister of National Defence and also to

the opposition leader. Based on the testimony that the former chief of staff to Prime Minister Harper has raised, what did they know?

At the end of the day, what we are going to be focused on is making sure that we prevent these types of misconduct, but more importantly, hold people to account as well.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what members of the Conservative Party think, climate change exists.

What is nearly as disappointing as the Conservatives' denial is the Liberal bill intended to address climate change. The government has set no greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2030 and no interim targets for 2025. There is no independent reporting. Basically, the federal government can continue to do nothing for at least 10 years.

Will the Liberals strengthen this bill, or do they also question the climate emergency?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to say that I agree with my Bloc Québécois colleague for once. Climate change does exist, and what the Conservatives did this weekend is extremely worrisome.

When a major party like that refuses to acknowledge the existence of climate change, it is deeply troubling because, before we can try to find a solution, we have to acknowledge the existence of the problem, and the Conservatives refuse to acknowledge the existence of climate change.

This time I agree with my Bloc Québécois colleague in condemning what the Conservatives have done.

● (1440)

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed troubling that the Conservatives refuse to acknowledge climate change.

What is also worrisome is investing \$12 billion in the Trans Mountain pipeline, approving 100 wells during the pandemic and offering billions of dollars to the oil industry.

On my right, we have the Conservatives, who clearly do not believe in climate change. In front of us, we have a party that says it believes in climate change, but does nothing.

Is there a champion who can tell me the difference between the two?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change is a threat to our health, our way of life and our planet, and that is why our government is implementing climate measures right now.

We are keeping the promise we made to Canadians to present an improved climate plan that will meet our objective of creating thousands of jobs across the country and ensuring that we exceed the Paris target for 2030 and also lay the foundation for net-zero emissions by 2050.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for once I agree with the member for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

Even a Liberal government minister is admitting that it is her own government's fault if the fishing season in the Magdalen Islands is jeopardized. Ottawa is endangering the region's entire economy by eliminating 37% of the port's capacity. The federal government is responsible for the port's condition, and therefore it is responsible for maintaining it.

Ottawa must accept its responsibilities. Will the Liberal government promise to immediately compensate fishers and businesses for the losses incurred due to the Liberal government's negligence?

[English]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with our stakeholders and with our fishers to make sure we are doing everything possible to mitigate any challenges we are seeing with the port.

We will continue to work with all parties engaged. We will follow up with the member on this issue.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Friday was a sad anniversary for Canadians because it marked exactly two years, or 24 months, since Canadians have had a federal budget. For two years now, the Liberals have failed to be transparent and accountable.

While all of the G7 countries have presented at least one budget since the start of the pandemic, the Prime Minister would rather hide his incompetence than present a recovery plan to Canadians.

When will the Minister of Finance present a budget to Canadians?

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect, the Minister of Finance will be sharing details soon on the timing of this year's budget.

Oral Questions

However, I will remind the member that during the course of this extraordinary, once-in-a-century pandemic, we have gone to great lengths to make sure that Canadians have access to information about where their money is being spent. I can point to a 237-page fall economic statement, the regular practice of putting forward estimates and biweekly updates when the COVID-19 committee was meeting. Now reports are going to the government operations committee, in addition to most of the information being put on the Government of Canada's website. I would invite the hon. member to check it out.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is going behind closed doors with the Liberals is worrisome.

The government cannot control its spending and requested a \$663-billion increase to its line of credit. Yes, I said billion, not million. The government wants to charge \$663 billion more to Canadian families' credit cards, and the Minister of Finance refuses to explain why she wants to borrow so much money.

I am worried about the bill this government is going to leave behind because it has no respect for our grandchildren's future.

When will we get a budget with a real economic recovery plan?

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if my friend opposite thinks that the cost of action has been too great, I would ask him to consider the cost of inaction. It would have been paid for with bankruptcies of local businesses and individual Canadian households not being able to afford to put food on the table.

With respect to his assertion, I would point out that the recent report of the International Monetary Fund has explained that while the fiscal deficit and public debt have increased, sizable fiscal support was necessary to help avert larger economic and social consequences. Canadians can rest assured we will continue to be there for them through this pandemic, no matter what it takes and for as long as it takes.

• (1445)

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are excuses. The government has gone over two years without tabling a budget, which is a dubious record. What is worse, it wants to increase its line of credit by a staggering three-quarters of a trillion dollars, and the minister will not even tell us how she plans to use that money.

All we know is she has no plan to reopen our economy and no plan to secure our future. The only guarantee is that future generations of Canadians will be left holding the bag. Where is the budget, and where is the plan to reopen the economy?

Oral Questions

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. member for divorcing himself from the conversation on the reality of climate change at the convention over the weekend to bring the focus onto economic issues. Only the Conservatives would suggest our emergency benefits have been too generous and that Canada could not afford them.

The reality is that when the coronavirus stopped the Canadian economy in its tracks, it caused serious costs to our communities. The government decided we would be there to support households so families could keep food on the table and businesses could keep their doors open and workers on the payroll.

As we move forward, yes, there will be a need for continued investment, but as the chief economist at the IMF said, that can be fiscally responsible and economically sound.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, due to decades of underfunding and privatization, COVID-19 has cost the lives of thousands of Canadians in long-term care homes. Residents and staff are living and working in unsafe conditions so bad the army had to be called in to care for seniors and help overwhelmed workers.

Federal governments allowed this to happen by failing to regulate national standards of care and allowing companies to profit off vulnerable patients and those who care for them. Will the Liberals put the health of our seniors first and take profit out of long-term care?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite knows that it is not only the right of provinces and territories to deliver health care, but it is also their responsibility. Having said that, the member opposite knows the federal government has been there for provinces and territories and protecting seniors in long-term care homes throughout this pandemic. We have committed to the development and upholding of long-term care standards across this country.

In fact, we have been there to support workers who have been struggling with low wages and poor training with \$3 billion to the provinces and territories to increase the wages of low-income essential workers.

* * *

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 60% of student loan borrowers are women. They hold the vast majority of student debt, accrue more interest and have more trouble paying it off. The pandemic has only made the gender gap worse.

On Saturday, the NDP proposed a plan to cancel up to \$20,000 in student debt per person, stop loan payments until the pandemic is over and permanently cancel interest. Will the self-proclaimed feminist Prime Minister stop profiting off the backs of women and stu-

dents who are just trying to get an education and follow our lead by freezing loan payments, forgiving student debt and ending interest for good?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that student debt can be challenging for graduates. That is why, in response to COVID-19, we increased the Canada student grants by 50% to help Canadians from low- and middle-income families. We have improved the repayment assistance program so applicants would not have to repay their student loan until they are earning at least \$25,000 per year. We have expanded eligibility for Canada student grants and loans for part-time students and students with dependent children.

We will continue to be there to support students and remain committed to making post-secondary education more affordable.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, anti-Asian racism is on the rise. Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a significant increase in hate crimes against the Asian population, from verbal abuse to harassment, culminating in the violence we witnessed in the U.S. last week. COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on the lives of Canadians, and racism is further increasing challenges faced by the Asian-Canadian community.

Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness inform Canadians how our government is fighting back against hate, discrimination and racist violence?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for her tireless advocacy.

Recent events have reminded us of this tragedy and the need to end the unacceptable threats faced by the people of Asian descent, which have increased since the start of the pandemic. We strongly condemn these acts and we stand in solidarity with all Asian communities in denouncing racist violence.

Last Friday I convened a round table with members of Markham—Thornhill in Waterloo, along with leaders of law enforcement from right across Canada, to discuss ways to raise public awareness and to hold perpetrators to account. We will take action to keep Asian-Canadians safe, and that action will be informed by race-based data collection.

• (1450)

HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every single Canadian has felt the impact of pandemic restrictions on their mental health. Families are saying goodbye to loved ones on FaceTime. Business owners and gig-economy workers are unsure how they will make ends meet, and we are still seeing rises in the level of domestic violence. We need hope and clear advice from the government on the circumstances under which normal life can permanently resume.

For example, can a Canadian senior who is suffering the negative mental health impacts of isolation and who has received their vaccine give their grandchild a hug?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member opposite realizes this, but many of the situations she referenced are the purview of the provincial and territorial governments. In fact, it is the provinces and territories that, with support from the federal government, develop guidance to be used in all of our jurisdictions. As well, it is, in fact, the provinces, territories and local leaders who decide which measures need to be in place to protect citizens.

I will tell the House this: Our government believes in following science and evidence, including public health leaders, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are facing a mental health crisis that is worsening by the day. Lives and livelihoods have been lost, suicides rates have spiked, and depression and anxiety are at unprecedented levels. This crisis is real, and Canadians need real mental health resources now. They do not need another government website. They do not need to be placed on hold because of the government's failure to implement a three-digit national suicide prevention hotline.

Conservatives have a real plan to secure Canada's mental health and well-being. I have a simple question. Where is the government's plan?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way this government has invested in mental health supports, both pre-pandemic, and, indeed, throughout the pandemic, as the member opposite might realize. In fact, I want to speak today about wellnesstogether.ca. Unlike what the member opposite says, this is not just a website. This is actually direct connections for Canadians across the country to get paid, professional help, completely for free and in both official languages, translated into 60 others.

I encourage all Canadians to check out wellnesstogether.ca today. In fact, over a million individuals across Canada have used the program in over 2.9 million distinct sessions.

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister raised the issue of Line 5 with President Biden.

Oral Questions

Will he ask President Biden again to intervene to keep Line 5 open and save 50,000 jobs on both sides of the border?

[English]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Line 5 is non-negotiable. People will not be left out in the cold. Hundreds of thousands of homes on both sides of the border depend on it for heating. Tens of thousands of jobs on both sides of the border depend on it. We take threats to Canada's energy security very seriously. We are standing up for our proud energy workers. They are the ones who are leading our economic recovery. They are leading the way. As I say, Line 5 is non-negotiable.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vern Yu, the president of liquids pipelines for Enbridge, told our Canada-U.S. special committee that the company would appreciate the support of our federal and provincial governments by filing amicus curiae briefs in the lawsuit, declaring they support Enbridge's position that this is a federal matter of jurisdiction in the U.S.

Will our natural resources minister commit to filing such a brief in support of keeping Line 5 open?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Line 5 is a battle that we are fighting on every front, including legal and diplomatic. We are taking every tack that we need to in order to make sure that we protect Line 5.

Line 5 is the most efficient way to deliver the products that Michigan needs to heat its homes, fly its jets and power its economy. Shutting it down would mean 800 extra railcars and 15,000 additional trucks per day transporting crude and propane. We do not need more trucks on the road jamming up the 401 and our already congested border crossings. Line 5 is safe. It has been for 65 years and it will continue to be.

• (1455)

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on January 27, the House of Commons unanimously adopted a Bloc Québécois motion to call on the Minister of Immigration to grant citizenship to Raif Badawi.

However, almost two months later, Mr. Badawi is still in prison in Saudi Arabia, and he is still not a citizen.

My question is simple. What has the minister been doing for the past two months?

Oral Questions

Why is Raif Badawi still not a citizen, despite the request from all members of all parties of the House?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada will always defend human rights around the world, and we are closely monitoring Raif Badawi's case.

Canadian officials continue to raise his case at the highest level, and we have asked many times for clemency [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

The Speaker: We have a bit of a problem.

The camera is working again. To make sure that everything is understood properly, we will have the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean repeat his question, and then we will hear the minister's response with both cameras working.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to repeat the question, and this time, I hope the member understands it.

On January 27, the House of Commons unanimously adopted a Bloc Québécois motion to call on the Minister of Immigration to grant citizenship to Raif Badawi.

That was nearly two months ago. Mr. Badawi is still in prison in Saudi Arabia, and he is still not a citizen.

My question is simple. What has the minister been doing for the past two months?

Why is it that Raif Badawi is still not a citizen, despite the appeal from all members of all parties of the House?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are grateful to the members of the House of Commons and the Senate for the recent passage of the motion.

We will always stand up for human rights in Canada and around the world. Our immigration system is based on compassion and the rule of law, and we can be proud of that. We will continue to work with all members to reunite Mr. Badawi with his family.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that was not the question. I find that answer is disrespectful to Mr. Badawi, his wife, his family and his children and even to this House.

Every member is calling on the minister to grant citizenship to Mr. Badawi. This week, even the Senate wants to join the movement by adopting exactly the same motion as the House. The minister has the discretionary power to grant citizenship to a person in distress. Everyone knows that is the case for Mr. Badawi, whose life is in danger after nearly nine years in prison.

When will the minister grant him citizenship?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with the member.

We are concerned about Mr. Badawi's safety. We are working with our colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We will continue to defend human rights around the world and in Canada. We will

continue to engage with Mr. Badawi's family. That is very important. We will continue to work together.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals ignored allegations in the Canadian Armed Forces. They turned a blind eye to abusive behaviour on the part of former governor general Julie Payette. They did not want to hear about employees at Radio-Canada Québec who recently experienced a toxic work environment. They let a report on an investigation into a harassment complaint at the Canadian Museum of History drag on for more than two months. There are victims at the centre of each of these stories.

At what point will the minister take action?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are currently reviewing the independent investigation report and the recommendations of the board of trustees of the Canadian Museum of History, and we are discussing the matter directly with the board chair.

The Government of Canada expects national museums to manifest the highest standards of respect, healthy working relationships and inclusion. That means always prioritizing the physical and mental well-being of staff members. The Government of Canada has a zero tolerance policy for workplace harassment.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a Mexican immigrant has made it through the entire selection process. His employer, which is in my riding, is naturally eager to see him get here.

All he is missing is his biometrics appointment, but the subcontractor in Mexico, VFS Global, is closed until further notice. If we wait until the pandemic is over, we could be waiting a long time.

How does the government plan to fix this? I do not want excuses. When can this employer expect this immigrant worker to arrive?

● (1500)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has a strong record of meeting our immigration objectives.

Our 2021 plan is based on the economic recovery and on ensuring that we are recruiting the workers we need to meet to provide the health care, food and services Canadians need. We will continue to work with employers to meet all of our immigration planning goals.

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, offshore oil workers are hard at work keeping our economy running, yet the Liberals are sitting back and delaying regulations to keep these workers safe on the job. The Liberals waited until the last minute to introduce a bill in the Senate to keep offshore workers safe in their jobs. The Senate has finally done its job, but now the government is dragging its feet again on moving this bill through the House. Enough with the delays. Conservatives and thousands of offshore workers have been waiting for six years.

When will the government stop sleeping on the job and actually get to work to keep oil workers safe?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, workers in the offshore are currently protected. The legal framework continues to be in place: it has been since 2014. Workers are protected under the best health and safety framework in the world, and we continue to improve it, which is why it is the best.

We are working on permanent regulations with our partners. When it comes to the lives and safety of the noble men and women who work in our offshore, I can tell the member that getting it right is paramount.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they let the cat out of the bag last weekend.

Like many Canadians, I was shocked to see a supposedly modern national political party reject the simple fact that climate change is real. The reality is that we are experiencing extreme weather events such as floods and forest fires.

How can the Conservative Party and its leader claim to be ready to govern if they cannot accept such simple facts?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Bourassa for his question.

Climate change is real. We are experiencing extreme weather events such as historic flooding and forest fires in Quebec. However, the Conservatives have decided to put their heads in the sand and ignore the reality we are all living.

It is clear that the Conservative Party is taking a step in the wrong direction and, unfortunately, our future generations will suffer the consequences.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thousands of students across Canada are struggling to find summer employment in the middle of

Oral Questions

a pandemic. Families in my community are trying to make ends meet, and students need jobs to pay for their education. Last year, the Liberal government's brilliant solution to this problem was to try and pay their friends at WE Charity half a billion dollars.

Instead of paying their friends again this year, will the Liberals commit to supporting students by increasing funding for the Canada summer jobs program as Conservatives have called for?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is good news. Canada's prosperity in post-COVID economic recovery depends, we know, on young Canadians getting the education and experience they need to succeed, which is why the Canada summer jobs program is an important part of our government's youth employment skills strategy.

Last year, we funded 80,000 CSJ job placements, and this year we are aiming to create 120,000 job placements for young Canadians. We understand the importance of this program, and we will be there to support jobs for young people this year and in all the years to follow.

* * *

● (1505)

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government can only work effectively if it has the trust of Canadians. That trust, however, is eroding.

To access benefits, Canadians have to provide their personal information online. However, according to cybersecurity experts, the government is not doing an adequate job protecting that information. The CRA has now closed down 800,000 accounts because hackers are gaining access.

My question is simple. What is the government doing to beef up security measures to make sure bad actors are not accessing Canadians' personal information and using it against them?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly my colleague reads only the headlines and not the articles.

The protection of taxpayers' information is a priority for our government. For that reason, the Canada Revenue Agency has revoked user names and passwords in order to prevent identity theft. The agency acted before the data was compromised.

Oral Questions

I would like to thank CRA employees for their excellent preventative work and invite my colleague to become better informed and read newspaper articles in their entirety before spreading information that is wrong. Her constituents deserve better.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the minister had no clue about the numbers when asked today at committee, I will fill him in. Enbridge's Line 5 safely moves 540,000 barrels of oil to Sarnia each day to service Ontario and Quebec. If cancelled, replacing it will require nine extra 110-car unit trains or five barges, moving 118,000 barrels of oil each through the Mackinac straits and the Great Lakes every day.

Aside from spouting platitudes and scripted talking points, what concrete results has the minister received to ensure the continuation of Line 5?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everything that the hon. member brought up occurs in a place called reality. Reality is a place where Line 5 exists and where workers are on the line. Reality is where climate change is real.

It is time for action, not more studies. It is time to deal with reality as it is in a world where climate change is real and where Line 5 is something that is non-negotiable for this government. We know full well what is at stake: 5,000 direct jobs in Sarnia, 23,000 indirect jobs in the region. That is reality and that is where we live, and the job we will do.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I, like many Canadians, was deeply concerned when I saw this weekend that the Conservative Party, at its national convention, rejected adding "climate change is real" to its policy book.

Canadians know that a plan for the environment is a plan for the economy. Could the Minister of Environment and Climate Change please update Canadians on how this Liberal government is building a cleaner, stronger and more resilient economy?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Guelph for his tireless work on this subject.

On this side of the aisle, the debate truly is settled. Climate change is real. We stand with science and the scientific community on this important matter. I, too, was deeply disappointed when I heard the news this weekend that the Conservative Party was continuing to reject the reality of climate change.

Canadians expect their governments to protect the environment and grow the economy. That is why we brought forward a strengthened climate plan in December. It is a simple fact that in the modern world we cannot grow the economy without having a plan for the environment. Sadly, it is a fact the party opposite has once again rejected.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians pay some of the highest rates in the world for cellphone and Internet service. For decades, the Liberals and Conservatives have sided with the telecom giants, which has reduced competition and led to skyrocketing prices that many Canadians simply cannot afford.

Rogers cannibalizing Shaw will eliminate the little competition we have now, raise these outrageous prices, intensify gouging on consumers and continue to damage our economy. That is why there is a universal public outcry to stop this takeover.

Broken Liberal promises will not pay the bills. Will the minister stop this insane merger?

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear that greater affordability, competition and innovation all across the telecommunications sector in Canada are so important to us as a government just as they are important to Canadians who are concerned about their cellphone bills and their connectivity. These goals are going to be front and centre as we do the analysis necessary to figure out the implications of this proposed deal. The transaction will be reviewed by the CRTC, by the Competition Bureau, by the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology and by our own department. The work will be done.

Canadians can be assured that, as consumers, they will be protected as will the public interest be considered all along in these analyses.

* * *

● (1510)

HEALTH

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, last week, we passed the one-year anniversary of lockdowns only to hear of another breach of liberties gaining traction: vaccination passports. A forced "vaxxport" raises serious medical and ethical concerns.

Health Canada tells us it is unknown whether the vaccines prevent the spread of the virus or even how long the vaccine's effectiveness may last. Many are concerned about the leaking of personal medical information, religious freedom and personal consent. Canada cannot become a two-tiered country.

Will the minister oppose vaccination passports on behalf of all freedom-loving Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the member opposite, we believe in a response that is guided by science, evidence and public health expertise. In fact, that is the only way to get through this pandemic, to listen to those people who are putting their own lives on hold to help guide Canadians through this incredible challenge. It is important that we do not sow fear and distrust among the public health officials who are doing so much work to get us all through this safely.

I call on the member opposite to support a public health response that is based on science and evidence.

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[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been told that, during my member's statement, one of my colleagues was speaking over me. I am asking for permission to redo my statement.

The Speaker: I heard it.

I will take this opportunity to remind members who are here virtually, not physically, to pay attention to their microphone. When they do not have the floor, members must ensure that their microphone is on mute so as not to interrupt others as they deliver a speech or a very important message.

I would also ask all members to keep their headset on and place their microphone between their nose and lips for it to work. You may have to experiment with how it works best for you. Sometimes the way we exhale can cause a sharp noise that is hard on the interpreters' ears.

[English]

I would ask everyone to play with their microphones to determine whether the best place is between their noses and upper lips, because that avoids a lot of the pops, or to have it just below their lower lips so that the pops do not affect the ears of the interpreters, because it is rather painful on their part. That is my message for today.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, Canada's future is at stake.

The Liberal Prime Minister was slow to roll out the vaccines and will be even slower to restart the economy. Now is not the time to reimagine the economy. The Prime Minister wants to be the centre of attention and wants to lead us into the unknown with economic experiments that will leave millions of Canadians behind. Every Canadian worker deserves to get their job back. Every Canadian worker in every sector of the economy deserves to be part of the economic recovery.

The Prime Minister has decided to choose which Canadians will have a future. That is not the right solution for the millions of workers who built Canada.

Points of Order

What the Conservative leader is proposing is a more secure future, a Canada with fewer slogans and more money in families' pockets. After months of hardship, Canadians want to rediscover hope for a better life. Abandoning thousands of workers in traditional sectors is not going to help us succeed.

As the leader of the official opposition stated in his excellent speech on Friday, we must rebuild Main Street. After COVID-19, only the Conservatives' economic recovery plan will provide Canadians with a stable economic future.

* * *

[English]

HATE CRIME

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I hope that when you seek it, you would find consent for the following motion. I move:

That the House express its horror at the recent mass shootings in Atlanta and its solidarity with the victims of the shootings and their families, condemn the rise of anti-Asian racism and racist attacks throughout North America and urge the government to take further action to tackle hate crimes, including by (a) hosting a federal-provincial-territorial meeting to discuss the rise in hate crimes in Canada and to co-ordinate our collective efforts and identify best practices to countering this trend; (b) creating and properly funding dedicated hate crime units in every community in Canada; (c) establishing national standards for identifying and recording all hate incidents and their dispensation in the justice system; and (d) working in collaboration with non-profits to facilitate the reporting of hate crimes.

● (1515)

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

Hearing no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

The Speaker: We have another point of order.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

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PARTY REPRESENTATION IN THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a point of order regarding the COVID-19 safety protocols. I have two specific questions for you.

In a report submitted to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs dated June 30, 2020, entitled "Options for In-person Voting", the recommended number of members who can safely attend sittings of the House is 86.

Points of Order

As you are well aware, we, all parliamentarians, follow public health guidelines. We keep our distance, we wear our masks when we are not speaking, and we have far fewer than 86 members in the House at any one time. We have never exceeded that number, and no one has even thought of exceeding it. Everyone is doing their part and, generally, all political parties are working together—well, almost all.

I realize that the virtual chamber is an extension of the physical chamber. You will have noticed that, for several weeks now, here in the physical chamber, only two government members have been attending the sittings of the House—sometimes three, but very often only one.

As you know, in all House committees, the principle is that the number of members selected to attend meetings reflects the proportion of seats held by each of the recognized parties in the House. This principle applies to all membership matters involving the House of Commons.

I would say this principle should apply to the maximum number of members who can safely attend, in accordance with established standards and the maximum number of people allowed in the House. The government side should not be limited to two members. There is absolutely no justification for this, especially since there have been some disappointing contradictions on the government side for weeks now.

For example, the Minister of Justice always responds to questions virtually from his office, which is here, on Parliament Hill, two buildings away. In a specific sense, he is not physically in the chamber. He is in his office, 1,023 feet away. To get to that office, the minister faces all of the usual risks. He crosses the provincial border, he encounters security officers, he encounters people in the halls and in the elevator. However, he is not here, in the House.

He even came to this building, the West Block. He made a comment to the press a few days ago, not very far from here at all, in room 125-B. You are very familiar with the physical spaces in the House. Room 125-B is the one that is located just under the floor of the House of Commons. Since he was in the building, why was he not at his desk here in the House of Commons?

Here is another reality. When we leave the West Block at night and go out the side door, we often see a fair number of the ministers' executive vehicles or limousines, a word that might, in and of itself, give us pause. We do not see just one or two from time to time but a fair number. I do not have any proof, but if a minister's executive vehicle is at the door of the West Block, then the minister in question is probably in the building.

If ministers are coming to the West Block for cabinet meetings, why can they not come here, to the physical House of Commons?

I repeat: Members are allowed to participate from another place as long as it is by virtual means. Of course, we recognize that the virtual House is an extension of the physical House. However, like you, we have noticed some disappointing inconsistencies and contradictions.

Now the Prime Minister is leaving the national capital region. Last week, he went to Montreal. Today, he is in Trois-Rivières. If

he and his cabinet can make themselves available in places other than Ottawa, why can they not do the same here in the House, safely and in accordance with the rules?

We find the under-representation of the government party and cabinet in the House to be unacceptable. That should be remedied in order to ensure the integrity of our system of responsible government.

● (1520)

What is most troubling is that the very important doctrine that must guide our work is ministerial responsibility. Ministerial responsibility is a constitutional convention whereby ministers are responsible to Parliament for the actions of the government. It also means that they have a duty to be present in the House and to be accountable for their actions and failures.

For the third time, let me be clear: We recognize that the virtual chamber is an extension of the physical chamber. However, when we see, as you do, Mr. Speaker, incongruities, contradictions and appalling situations where ministers and government members come to Parliament Hill, even to West Block, but do not attend sittings in the House, that is very disappointing. That is why the under-representation of this group in the House makes a mockery of our system of government and the very institution of Parliament.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the fact that the member was addressing the physical presence of members in the House, I would point out that despite the fact he said that the virtual version of Parliament was an extension, his arguments do not support that. As far as the hybrid setting and the rules that have been laid out, the reality is there is no difference between sitting in the House and participating virtually.

The member is suggesting we have a two-tiered system. The reality of the situation is that this is not a two-tiered system, and I can hear some of them saying that it is. Whether someone is participating virtually or in the House, it is the exact same thing.

I would suggest this is not a point of order, but it is important to understand why that side of the House has chosen to do this. It is important not just for the safety of the members of the House, but more for the safety of the people who work here. I bring that to the attention of the member. I would bring that to the attention—

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt. I am having a hard time hearing the argument because there are some interruptions. It is something we have not seen in a while, so I think we are all going to have to get used to it or eliminate it right off the bat.

I will just stop now and hopefully I will hear the rest of the hon. member's argument.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, to conclude that point, with all due respect to the House leader of the opposition, we are not going to take lessons from him while he stands less than two metres away from House officers, without a mask on and speaking over top of them.

• (1525)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add to what my Conservative Party colleague was saying earlier.

I completely agree with everything he said. Over a month ago, at a meeting of the House leaders, I talked about the fact that there was just one Liberal Party MP in the House. At the peak of the pandemic, we talked about having 25 MPs in the House, and at the time, we had an agreement with the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons that the ministers who were most likely to be questioned would be physically present in the House to answer questions.

I hear my Liberal Party colleague. I agree with what he said about the virtual Parliament being an extension of Parliament. Everyone agrees. However, more and more often, parliamentary secretaries to ministers are the ones answering questions. When they are not here, the answers tend to be a little more evasive than usual, and that is saying something. If they were in the House, I think we would see better collaboration. That goes without saying. Nobody needs a dictionary to understand that.

For over a month now, the Bloc Québécois has been pointing out that the governing party has not really been present in the House. Today, as usual, there is just one Liberal Party MP, one who, unfortunately for us, never answers questions. We have to get our answers via videoconference, and, increasingly, we are getting those answers from parliamentary secretaries. We are in the middle of a pandemic here. The government should be absolutely transparent, but it does not want to answer questions. Great. Just great.

I completely agree with what my Conservative Party colleague, the esteemed House Leader of the Official Opposition, said. The Bloc Québécois completely agrees with his point of view.

The Speaker: I want to remind members that some have almost broken the rule on mentioning the presence or absence of a member in the House. They have come close. I want to remind members to pay attention to what they are saying.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Communities on a point of order.

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will come back with additional comments shortly.

The Speaker: I will take the matter under advisement and come back to the House with a response if necessary.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, two treaties.

Routine Proceedings

The first is entitled “Protocol to amend the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas”, done at Palma de Mallorca, Spain on November 20, 2019.

[Translation]

The second is entitled “General Coordination Agreement between Canada and the United States on the Use of the Radio Frequency Spectrum by Terrestrial Radiocommunication Stations and Earth Stations”, done at Ottawa on January 12 and 13, 2021.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government’s response to 53 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations concerning the mandate and the quorum of the committee. If the House gives it consent, I intend to move concurrence in the first report later this day.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, entitled “Main Estimates 2021-22: Vote 1 Under Office of the Auditor General”.

• (1530)

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Health, entitled “Supplementary Estimates (C), 2020-21”. The committee has considered the votes referred to it by the House and reports the same without amendment.

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources in relation to the supplementary estimates (C) for the year 2020-21. Our committee has considered the estimates referred by the House and reports the same back without amendment.

*Routine Proceedings**[Translation]*

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled “Supplementary Estimates (C), 2020-21: Vote 1c under Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Votes 1c, 5c, 10c and 15c under Department of Employment and Social Development”.

[English]

I will take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion for appearing before the committee along with their hard-working officials and for the excellent work of the members of the committee to get to this point in a collaborative way, including some rearranging of schedules. By all accounts, it was a moment that would make Parliament proud.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following three reports of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women: the third report, entitled “Supplementary Estimates (C), 2020-21”; and the fourth report, entitled “Main Estimates 2021-22”. The committee has considered the estimates referred by the House and reports the same.

The fifth report is, “Request for a Government Response to the 18th Report from the 42nd Parliament, 1st Session” on “A Force for Change: Creating a Culture of Equality for Women in the Canadian Armed Forces”.

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

The Speaker: On a personal note, I want to thank the hon. member for adjusting her mike perfectly so there is no popping and is loud enough. That engineering background has really worked out well.

* * *

[Translation]

HELLENIC HERITAGE MONTH ACT

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-276, An Act to designate the month of March as Hellenic Heritage Month.

She said: Mr. Speaker, as a proud Canadian of Greek origin, I am honoured to rise in the House today to introduce my bill to designate the month of March as Hellenic Heritage Month. This bill celebrates the dynamic culture of Canada's Greek community and recognizes the invaluable contributions of Canadians of Greek origin to our diverse and multicultural society.

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

[English]

This week, on March 25, as we celebrate 200 years of Greek independence after 400 years under the rule of the Ottoman empire, Greek Canadians can be proud of their heritage and look forward to national recognition of their culture, language and history during the symbolic month of March.

I ask my hon. colleagues across all party lines to support this bill in naming March Hellenic heritage month.

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

* * *

● (1535)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 1st report of the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations presented to the House earlier this day be concurred in.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

Hearing no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, special order or usual practice of the House, until Wednesday, June 23, 2021, during the taking of a recorded division on a Private Members' Business, when the sponsor of the item is the first to vote and present at the beginning of the vote, the member be called first, whether participating in person or by videoconference.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

Hearing no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as an Albertan and someone who grew up hiking, skiing and playing in the Canadian Rocky Mountains, I am deeply honoured to table this petition, which is signed by over 18,000 Canadians.

These Canadians are urging the environment minister to ensure that there is a fulsome assessment of the impacts of all proposed coal developments and exploration activities in the Rocky Mountains. In particular, the petitioners wish to see the government ensure treaty and aboriginal rights, water quality, species at risk and environmental impacts are assessed and adequately protected.

In addition, until the federal government does such a study, on behalf of the over 18,000 Canadians who have signed this petition, I urge the minister and this government to delay a decision regarding the proposed Grassy Mountain coal project until the cumulative impacts of all mining activity in the region have been adequately considered.

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in full solidarity with the Haitian people, I am tabling petition e-2448, signed by 148 citizens, to shed light on the role played in Haiti by the Canadian government and member countries of the “Core Group”, which many believe are propping up the current prime minister of Haiti, who is accused of corruption and repression, not to mention all the horrors to which the Haitian people are currently being subjected.

The petitioners are calling on the government to publish all documents relating to what is known as the “Ottawa Initiative on Haiti”, which was described on the Radio-Canada program *Enquête*, and to hold a hearing of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development to learn everything there is to know about the “Ottawa Initiative on Haiti”, including its link to the “Core Group”. In closing, I would like to congratulate Joseph Turenne, who officially started this petition.

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition signed by over 32,000 Canadians, including 471 of residents of NWT.

This petition was sponsored by the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and calls upon the Government of Canada to apologize for its role in the harmful legacy of Giant Mine. It also calls upon the government to ensure that the YKDFN are properly compensated and are able to fully participate in the site's remediation.

● (1540)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be back in the House. I am presenting six petitions today.

Routine Proceedings

The first petition is in support of Bill S-204. It is a petition that seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. I am very pleased to share that this bill has now passed second reading in the Senate, and will now be going on to be studied at committee.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am presenting is with respect to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or the IRGC. The petition notes that, in 2018, the House of Commons passed a motion to immediately list the IRGC as a terrorist entity. It also notes that, in response to the storming of Capitol Hill in January 2021, the Liberal government listed Proud Boys as a terrorist organization within less than a month, thus demonstrating that listing a group as a terrorist organization can be done quickly and efficiently. As well, the petition notes that it has been three years since the motion to list the IRGC was passed. Therefore, petitioners call on the government to immediately list the IRGC as a terrorist organization, and to explain why there has been a three-year delay.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition deals with Bill C-7. The petitioners are very concerned by the fact that this bill has removed vital safeguards associated with the euthanasia regime, safeguards which the government said were essential only a few short years ago.

The petitioners call on the government to restore the 10-day reflection period, restore the original requirement that a person must give consent to a life-ending procedure immediately before it is performed, restore the requirement for two independent witnesses, require medical professionals to do everything possible to enable the person to access life-affirming services to relieve their suffering, and accommodate persons with communication disabilities by clarifying their refusal of or resistance to administration of physician-assisted death.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition deals with the horrific genocide of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China. Petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada, not just Parliament, to recognize the genocide and to use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, the Magnitsky act, to sanction all of those responsible.

We have seen some tentative steps in that direction today, but the government needs to actually and finally join our allies in recognizing the genocide and holding accountable all those responsible.

Routine Proceedings

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fifth petition deals with Bill C-6, the government's conversion therapy bill. Petitioners note that they are opposed to conversion therapy and would like to see legislation banning it. However, they note that the government's definition of conversion therapy in Bill C-6 is deeply flawed and has many unintended consequences.

Petitioners join the calls from many groups and Canadians for the government to address the drafting errors, fix the definition, make sure the bill actually only applies to conversion therapy itself and then proceed with banning conversion therapy once there is a fixed, clarified definition.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the sixth and final petition is with respect to the situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Petitioners are concerned about human rights violations as well as the humanitarian situation. They are calling for an end to violence, humanitarian access and international investigations. They are calling on the Government of Canada to engage directly and consistently with the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments with respect to the issues around this conflict, and to promote short, medium and long-term election monitoring in Ethiopia.

I commend these petitions to the consideration of all hon. members.

COVID-19 VACCINES

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House this afternoon to present e-petition 2961, with over 41,000 signatures of concerned Canadians. This petition calls for greater awareness and action overseeing all aspects of the COVID vaccination program across Canada currently under way.

The main points of the petition call upon the federal government to protect the ethical, legal and moral rights of Canadians to informed consent; to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are voluntary as opposed to mandatory, and the choice must be without prejudice; create an independent committee with a broad range of stakeholder representatives, including citizen vaccine safety advocates; ensure no committee member has intellectual or financial conflicts of interest with the pharmaceutical or medical industry; and grant this committee the power to independently review applications for approval of all vaccines, including those for COVID-19.

One of the key points within this petition is to develop a vaccine injury compensation program related to compensation for those injured or killed by vaccines, and this was actually acted upon by the federal government shortly after I authorized this petition in December of 2020.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of concerned Canadians, including my own constituents, who are tired and frustrated with inaction by the government to clamp down on illegal marijuana production, including the exploitation of medical mari-

juana permits. Our communities are becoming less safe and less liveable as organized crime outfits are taking advantage of a system full of loopholes and absent of any real compliance and enforcement measures.

A simple Google search on the topic reveals numerous paid ads from companies guaranteeing access to production permits even without a demonstrated medical need. This needs to be fixed now.

The petition calls for the Government of Canada to reform the licensing and oversight of the production of cannabis for personal medical use and to grant resources and authority to provinces and municipalities to regulate and enforce the production of cannabis for personal medical use.

• (1545)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition today, which is World Water Day. The petitioners note that almost all community drinking watersheds on the east coast of Vancouver Island are privately owned because of the E&N land grant, which was part of the agreement to bring B.C. into Confederation 150 years ago this year. They point out that the E&N land grant violated aboriginal rights and title. They also observe there is a high risk of drinking water contamination due to industrial and human activity in these watersheds.

The petitioners are calling on the government to work with first nations, all levels of government and private landowners to begin the process of bringing these community drinking watersheds under public ownership and control to maintain a secure source of clean drinking water for future generations.

I would like to thank the members of my constituency in Nanaimo—Ladysmith for putting forward this petition.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a number of petitions today.

The first petition is signed by Canadians from across Canada. They are calling on the government to recognize the genocide happening to the Uighur people in China and to use the Magnitsky act to hold those who are perpetrating this heinous genocide to account.

• (1550)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from Canadians from across Canada who are concerned with the illegal organ harvesting that is happening around the world. The petitioners are calling for the speedy passage of Bill S-240.

I believe it has passed through the Senate. I look forward to it coming to this place.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I present the third petition on behalf of Albertans who want to draw to the attention of the House a recent StatsCan report, which highlights that a disproportionate number of young men died between May and October. The petitioners are calling on the government to recognize that men are three times more likely to commit suicide.

Albertans have suffered an energy downturn, an oil price war and a federal government that is unwilling to support major pipeline and investment projects. Alberta has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada.

The petitioners are asking the House to approve shovel-ready projects across the country to get Albertans back to work and ensure that the Trans Mountain expansion is completed, that local communities and organizers are supported and that the 988 national suicide hotline is quickly created.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition is from Canadians from across the country who are concerned about the accessibility and impacts of violent and degrading sexually explicit material online and its impact on public health, especially the well-being of women and girls. The petitioners recognize that we cannot say we believe in preventing sexual violence toward women while allowing pornography companies to freely expose our children to violent, explicit sexual imagery day after day, which is a form of child abuse. As such, they note the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires Canada to develop the means to protect children from forms of media that are injurious to their well-being. As such, the petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to require meaningful age verification on all adult websites.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fifth petition is from Canadians who are concerned about the current definition of “conversion therapy” in Bill C-6. The petitioners, like most Canadians, want coercive and degrading therapies banned. They are concerned that private conversations would be limited and ask the government to avoid criminalizing voluntary services, including professional and religious counselling. They ask for a clear and fixed definition of “conversion therapy”.

FIREARMS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the sixth petition is from Canadians from across Canada who want to support the health and safety of Canadian firearms owners. The petitioners recognize the importance of owning firearms. They are concerned about the impacts of hearing loss due to the damage caused by the noise levels from firearms. They acknowledge the need for noise reduction and that sound moderators are the only universally recognized health and safety device that is criminally prohibited in Canada. Moreover, the majority of G7 countries have recognized the health and safety benefits of sound

Routine Proceedings

moderators and allow them for hunting and sport shooting and to reduce noise pollution. The petitioners are calling on the government to allow legal firearms owners to purchase and use sound moderators for all legal hunting and sport shooting activities.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last petition I am presenting today is with respect to the importance of the lives of the elderly and the passing of Bill C-7. The petitioners are calling on the government to support measures to protect human life, as all life should be regarded with great respect. They believe we should support the most vulnerable and defenceless Canadians instead of facilitating their death. The petitioners are concerned about the passage of Bill C-7, especially with the inclusion of mental health.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Questions Nos. 360-362, 369 and 370, 372-378, 380-385 and 389.

[Text]

Question No. 360—**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:**

With regard to the support units and bases of the Canadian Armed Forces and subcontracts, broken down by fiscal year since 2011-12: (a) what are the details of each contract, including (i) the supplier, (ii) the amount, (iii) the commodity description, (iv) the sourcing, sole or not; and (b) for each contract in (a), why was this work not performed by the Department of National Defence?

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Department of National Defence issues thousands of contracts each year to facilitate its operations and to better serve Canadians at home and abroad. These contracts are subject to national defence’s procurement processes, which allow the department to deliver the right equipment and quality service to the Canadian Armed Forces in a timely manner.

As part of its commitment to openness and transparency, the Department of National Defence proactively discloses all of its contracts over \$10,000. Details of these contracts, ranging from 2011 to 2020, can be found at the Open Government website using the following link: <https://open.canada.ca>.

National defence does not centrally track subcontract data broken down by location. Providing the requested details would require a manual search and validation of over 160,000 contracts, which could not be completed in the allotted time.

Question No. 361—**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:**

With regard to private debt guaranteed by the government: what is its total value, including all Crown corporations like the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Export Development Canada?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the outstanding principal under loan guarantees issued by the government on the borrowings of third parties stood at \$14.5 billion at December 31, 2019. At September 30, 2020, the date of the most recent finalized quarterly data available, the outstanding principal under loan guarantees totalled \$15.8 billion.

In addition, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, CMHC, and the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation, CDIC, operate insurance programs related to third-party debt for the government. CDIC operates the deposit insurance fund, which provides basic protection coverage to depositors for up to \$100,000 of eligible deposits with each member bank, trust or loan company. CMHC operates the mortgage insurance fund, which provides insurance for mortgage lending on Canadian housing by private institutions. At December 31, 2019, total insurance in force amounted to \$1,280,849 million. At September 30, 2020, the date of the most recent quarterly data available, total insurance in force amounted to \$1,405,991 million. In the event that the corporations have insufficient funds, the government will have to provide financing. The government expects that the corporations will cover the cost of both current claims and possible future claims.

Question No. 362—Mr. Randall Garrison:

With regard to the government's commitment to expunge the criminal records of LGBTQ2+ Canadians for historical offences that are no longer criminal offences as part of the Expungement of Historically Unjust Convictions Act: (a) how many people have applied to have their records expunged for unjust convictions; (b) what percentage of the applicants have been successful in having their records expunged; (c) of the unsuccessful applications, what reasons have been given for their rejection by category and how many rejected applications fall into each category; and (d) is there a deadline for applying for expungement under this act and, if so, will that deadline be extended to take into account the impact of the pandemic on the ability of those affected to complete applications?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from December 2019 to January 26, 2021, with regard to (a), PBC received 37 applications for expungement.

With regard to (b), 10 applications were accepted as eligible, and expungement was ordered for nine of them, 90%. The remaining application was refused because, upon investigation, the activity for which the person was convicted remains a criminal offence under the Criminal Code.

With regard to (c), 27 applications were returned or were not admissible because the individual did not meet one or more of the legislated eligibility criteria—i.e., their convictions were not on the list of eligible convictions for expungement. Additionally, the board did not have jurisdiction—i.e., expired absolute/conditional discharge—over two of the ineligible applications.

With regard to (d), there is no deadline for applying for expungement under this act.

Question No. 369—Mr. Jack Harris:

With regard to Global Affairs Canada, from August 2020 to the present: (a) how much funding was (i) allocated, (ii) spent by month to promote the candidacy of Bill Morneau to the presidency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; (b) how many public servants were involved in substantial activities related to Mr. Morneau's candidacy; and (c) how many person-hours were dedicated to substantial activities related to Mr. Morneau's candidacy?

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following reflects a consolidated response approved on behalf of Global Affairs Canada ministers.

The Government of Canada was disappointed to learn that Bill Morneau did not obtain sufficient support to become the next Secretary General of the OECD. Bill Morneau was an ideal candidate to lead the OECD in these difficult times and his commitment deserves to be recognized. Although this result was not what Canada hoped, Canada will work with the next Secretary General of the OECD, Mr. Mathias Cormann, and would like to congratulate him on his appointment.

In response to (a), consistent with its goals to contribute to an effective and high performing rules-based system that serves Canadians and Canada's interests, the government campaigned for a Canadian to become the next Secretary General of the OECD. It provided diplomatic support, advocacy and strategic advice.

As is the case in campaigns for leadership positions in multilateral organizations, outreach with key decision-makers in members' capitals and members' representatives to the organization is required. Based on the Treasury Board's special travel authorities and the approach taken for travel-related costs in similar campaigns supported by the department in the past, existing resources of up to \$98,385.19 were budgeted. No new resources were allocated. As of January 27, 2021, the total costs incurred by the government in relation to the campaign are \$10,899.73.

In response to (b), the department has not assigned any officials exclusively for the purposes of the OECD Secretary-General campaign. Nevertheless, as the lead department responsible for the relationship with the organization, to varying degrees and in line with their regular duties, 19 officials in the department and at the permanent delegation of Canada to the OECD provided punctual support to the campaign at different moments in time.

In response to (c), the work performed by government officials is part of their regular duties, such as preparing briefing or communications materials, managing relations with the OECD and undertaking outreach with foreign countries.

Question No. 370—Mr. Rob Morrison:

With regard to the negotiations between Canada and the United States to renew the Columbia River Treaty: (a) what is the current schedule of the negotiations; (b) which organizations and individuals have been granted observer status for the negotiations; (c) which organizations and individuals have requested observer status but were not granted it; and (d) what is the government's specific reason for denying the request for each organization or individual in (c)?

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following reflects a consolidated response approved on behalf of Global Affairs Canada ministers.

With regard to (a), Canada and the United States have held 10 negotiation rounds on modernization of the Columbia River Treaty, the CRT. Round 11 has not yet been scheduled.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (b), in April 2019, the Minister of Foreign Affairs granted observer status to representatives from the Ktunaxa, Okanagan-Syilx and Secwepemc nations. These three indigenous nations work closely with Canada and British Columbia as part of these treaty negotiations.

With regard to (c), the member of Parliament for Kootenay—Columbia has requested observer status. This status has not been granted.

With regard to (d), the negotiating teams from both Canada and the United States are made up of non-political public servants. There are no political representatives from federal, provincial or state governments or other political representatives.

The Canadian delegation consists of personnel from the federal government, provincial government, BC Hydro and the three indigenous nations official observers covering the range of CRT-related issues. The Global Affairs Canada negotiating team and chief negotiator continue to engage with and update Columbia River basin community groups, the Local Governments Committee and political representatives at provincial and federal levels. The provincial members of the team provide regular updates to the responsible minister and B.C. political representatives and host regular town hall meetings to ensure local communities are briefed on the negotiations and to receive feedback from people in the basin. The representatives from the Ktunaxa, Okanagan-Syilx and Secwepemc nations engage their leadership and communities on the CRT and bring back their interests to the Canadian delegation.

Question No. 372—Ms. Michelle Rempel Garner:

With regard to COVID-19 vaccines: (a) how many will Canada receive, broken down by week, between January 29, 2021, and the end of 2021; and (b) what is the breakdown by manufacturer with whom Canada has procurement agreements, including those manufacturers whose vaccines have not yet received Health Canada approval?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), as of March 16, 2021, the quarterly breakdown of expected deliveries of approved vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, AstraZeneca and Janssen is eight million by the end of March, 28.5 million between April and the end of June, and 81.5 million between July and the end of September, for an aggregate total of 118 million by the end of September 2021. This includes accelerated doses of 1.5 million in March and one million in April and May. PSPC continues to work with vaccine suppliers to negotiate the early delivery of doses to Canadians, and as such, the information is subject to change.

In addition, information about the quantities of COVID-19 vaccines that have been delivered to provinces and territories to date is published by the Public Health Agency of Canada on the Vaccines and treatments for COVID-19: Vaccine rollout website at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/covid-19-vaccine-treatment/vaccine-rollout.html#a4>. This information is updated weekly.

With regard to (b), information on Canada's COVID-19 vaccine agreements, including a breakdown by supplier and number of doses, is published on Public Services and Procurement Canada's Procuring vaccines for COVID-19 website at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-services-procurement/services/procuring-vaccines-covid19.html>.

www.canada.ca/en/public-services-procurement/services/procuring-vaccines-covid19.html.

To protect Canada's negotiating position and to respect confidentiality clauses in our vaccine agreements, Public Services and Procurement Canada cannot unilaterally disclose details of specific agreements. We continue to seek opportunities to be as transparent as possible about our procurements in support of Canada's COVID response, while respecting confidentiality agreements and protecting our negotiating position.

Question No. 373—Mr. Bob Saroya:

With regard to illegal firearms entering Canada: what is the government's estimate of the number of illegal firearms that have entered the country since 2016, broken down by year and by method of entry (air cargo shipments, land passenger vehicle smuggling, etc.)?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that our border remains open to legitimate trade and travel while closed to those who seek to traffic or smuggle weapons or drugs.

Following significant cuts by the previous Conservative government to our security agencies, in the last Parliament our government announced an investment of \$327 million to combat gun and gang violence, with \$86 million to prevent cross-border smuggling of illegal firearms. Of this, the CBSA is being provided an extra \$51.5 million to enhance screening, detection and training around firearms smuggling, and \$34.5 million for the RCMP's integrated criminal firearms initiative to enhance intelligence gathering, technology and investigations.

Upon the introduction of new legislation that will strengthen gun control at our borders, we announced additional anti-smuggling investments for the RCMP worth \$42.4 million over 5 years, with \$6.1 million ongoing. At the same time, for the CBSA we announced enhanced intelligence and investigative capacity of \$21.8 million over 5 years, and \$3.3 million for ongoing AI threat detection, with \$1.7 million over 5 years.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss ways to prevent cross-border firearms smuggling, considering that during the study of Bill C-71 study at SECU, the Conservative MPs proposed amendments that "there be no punishment for include 'false statements to procure licences', 'false statements to procure customs confirmations'—so, importing or trafficking", as seen at <https://openparliament.ca/search/?q=%22randall+koops%22&page=3>

Routine Proceedings

At every point in the travel continuum, the government undertakes activities to prevent the smuggling of illicit firearms. Pre-border, the government works closely with domestic and international law enforcement agencies to identify and disrupt criminal networks involved in smuggling or facilitating the smuggling of illicit firearms, through intelligence sharing and operations. The Canada Border Services Agency's, CBSA's, national targeting centre also uses intelligence, information and other indicators to conduct pre-arrival risk assessments of goods and people entering the country to identify high-risk shipments or travelers.

If firearms are smuggled into Canada, the CBSA works closely with its law enforcement partners to identify smuggling routes and individuals involved, and to lay the appropriate criminal charges after a thorough criminal investigation. Where a foreign national may be involved, the CBSA can also remove the individual from the country, as such criminal involvement would likely deem the individual as inadmissible to Canada. From January 1, 2014 to September 6, 2020, the CBSA seized 4263 undeclared firearms at the border.

Just recently, we announced that we will be re-establishing the cross-border crime forum with the U.S. while exploring the creation of a cross-border task force to address gun smuggling and trafficking.

To fight the criminal act of gun smuggling and trafficking at our border, under Bill C-21 we will increase the maximum prison sentence to highlight how serious this offence is. Additionally, we will increase sharing of data between the RCMP and local law enforcement agencies to better prosecute trafficking offences, and will table an annual report for greater transparency and accountability.

We welcome the support of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police who "wholeheartedly endorse all efforts to strengthen border controls and impose stronger penalties to combat firearms smuggling and trafficking".

Question No. 374—Mr. Pierre Poilievre:

With regard to ownership of government bonds: what is the total ownership of bonds, broken down by wealth quintile?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a search of the records of the Department of Finance did not produce any results, as neither the department nor the Bank of Canada collects data regarding holdings of government bonds, either in general or by wealth quintiles.

Question No. 375—Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:

With regard to the directives outlined in the Supplementary mandate letter of January 15, 2021, addressed to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence and signed by the Prime Minister: (a) what are the specific programs and services that will be reviewed to ensure veterans, their families, and their primary caregivers receive the best possible mental health supports, including timely access to service; (b) what are the metrics by which each program and service will be reviewed; and (c) when will a review of each program and service begin and end?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs Canada recognizes the impact that military service has on the mental health and well-being of both veterans and their family members, and understands the importance of family to the overall health and wellness of veterans. As emphasized in the Prime

Minister's supplementary mandate letter to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Veterans Affairs is committed to ensuring that eligible veterans, their families and their primary caregivers have access to the mental health support they need, when they need it. Veterans Affairs Canada fully supports these efforts and is engaged in activities that are working towards delivering on this mandate commitment, including a review of mental health supports to ensure that veterans, their families and primary caregivers have the best possible mental health services. The timing and metrics are still being determined.

Question No. 376—Mr. Michael Kram:

With regard to the decision to layoff air traffic control workers at the Regina International Airport and the statement by the Minister of Transport in the House of Commons on January 28, 2021, that "No decision has been made. It is important to note that any changes in the level of service proposed by Nav Canada will be subjected to a rigorous safety assessment by Transport Canada": (a) why were layoff notices provided to workers prior to January 28, 2021, if "no decision has been made"; (b) on what date was the decision made; (c) on what date was Transport Canada first notified of the decision; (d) what are the details of how the "rigorous safety assessment by Transport Canada" was conducted; and (e) what were the results of the safety assessment?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), Nav Canada is a private, arm's-length entity and Transport Canada is not involved in the company's day-to-day management decisions. That said, Transport Canada assesses service level reductions to ensure that they do not have a negative impact on safety.

With regard to parts (b) to (e), no decisions have been made by Transport Canada on a potential service level reduction. Transport Canada is still awaiting receipt of Nav Canada's aeronautical study, which it will review to determine if the department is supportive of any proposed service level reduction at Regina International Airport. This assessment will begin once the study is received from Nav Canada.

Question No. 377—Mr. Michael Barrett:

With regard to the various travel restrictions and border measures put into place during the pandemic: (a) what is the government's criteria or exit strategy regarding when each restriction or measure will be eased, including the targeted number of vaccinations, cases or hospitalizations before the government will consider easing each measure; and (b) does the government have any projected timeline for when each criteria in (a) is expected to be met and, if so, what is the timeline?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada's top priority is the health and safety of Canadians. To limit the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in Canada, the Government of Canada has taken unprecedented action to implement a comprehensive strategy with layers of precautionary measures.

Between February 3, 2020, and February 14, 2021, the Governor in Council has made 45 emergency orders under the Quarantine Act to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in Canada, to reduce risks from other countries, to repatriate Canadians and to strengthen measures at the border to reduce the impact of COVID-19 in Canada. Together, these measures have been effective. By limiting incoming travel to Canada, requiring mandatory quarantine for asymptomatic travellers, with some exceptions, and requiring mandatory isolation for symptomatic travellers, the number of travel-related COVID-19 cases in December 2020 was a fraction of the travel-related cases seen in March 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic.

In consultation with provinces, territories, and industry stakeholders, and in recognition of the low number of domestic cases, some travel restrictions were eased in October 2020. These include restrictions for extended family members of Canadian citizens, permanent residents and persons registered as Indians under the Indian Act; compassionate entry and limited release from quarantine for reasons such as funerals or to provide care to someone residing in Canada; international students; regular cross-border students; children in shared custody agreements; and residents of isolated border communities.

However, as the numbers increased again and new variants of concern emerged, more stringent measures were introduced once again. In December 2020, the Minister of Transport announced a 72-hour emergency travel ban on all incoming flights from the United Kingdom, and by January 7, 2021, travellers flying into Canadian airports were required to provide proof of a negative molecular test taken prior to departure, with exceptions. This was followed later in January with the ability of travellers to provide proof of a positive COVID-19 test taken at least 14 days and not more than 90 days prior to travel. At this time, strengthened measures continue to be necessary as new variants of the virus that causes COVID-19, which are more transmissible, may have an impact on the efficacy of some vaccines and drugs. Therefore, additional testing and quarantine requirements for travellers arriving by both air and land, as announced by the Prime Minister on January 29, 2021, came into effect on February 14. Under these new measures, travellers arriving at Canada's land ports of entry are required to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 molecular test, and as of February 21, all travellers arriving in Canada will be required to take a COVID-19 molecular test on arrival and again later during their quarantine, with exceptions. Also as of February 21, travellers arriving by air will be required to reserve and stay in a Government of Canada-approved hotel for up to three nights, at their own cost, while they await the results of the COVID-19 molecular test they took upon arrival, with limited exceptions.

A certain proportion of travellers will require the use of clinical resources for care. In addition, infected travellers can cause secondary transmission to household members or in the community. Therefore, travel continues to present a risk of importing cases, including cases of new variants of the virus, and increases the potential for onward community transmission of COVID-19. To increase monitoring for importation of variants of concern, and to allow our health care system to recover, these stricter measures are necessary to reduce immediate risks associated with new variants and to protect Canadians.

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Border measures are developed through consultation with provincial, territorial and international governments, and are based on national and international evidence-based risk assessments, including evaluation of available scientific data and assessment of domestic and international public health measures. The Government of Canada continues to review the available scientific evidence to determine future border measures, including the use of both testing and vaccination to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

The Government of Canada recognizes that entry prohibitions, mandatory quarantine requirements and testing protocols place significant burden on the Canadian economy, Canadians, and their immediate and extended families. However, these measures remain the most effective means of limiting the introduction of new cases of COVID-19 into Canada. The Government of Canada continues to work with provinces and territories to gather evidence to guide policy and decision-making and to incorporate all available options to permit further easing of border measures. While approved COVID-19 vaccines protect an individual from the severe effects of illness, there is limited evidence regarding the ability of a vaccinated individual to transmit the virus to others. Questions also remain regarding the effectiveness of vaccines in preventing illness related to new variants of concern of COVID-19. We continue work towards a time where measures can be eased for those who are vaccinated.

With the advent of new, more transmissible variants of the virus, the Government of Canada continues to take a precautionary approach to border measures in an effort to preserve domestic health capacity and reduce the further introduction and transmission of COVID-19 in Canada.

Question No. 378—**Mr. Marty Morantz:**

With regard to the impact of interest rate hikes on the government's finances: what are the Department of Finance's projections on the amount of interest the government will have to pay to service the debt in each of the next 10 years under the (i) current interest rate levels, (ii) increased interest rate levels, broken down by rate?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the most recent projections for Government of Canada debt charges can be found in the fall economic statement 2020, which was released on November 30, 2020, and is available at <https://www.budget.gc.ca/fes-eea/2020/home-accueil-en.html>. Specifically, the projection for interest paid on the federal debt for the current and following five years can be found in Table A1.5 on page 126, in the row labelled "Public debt charges". The Department of Finance does not produce 10-year projections.

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These public debt charge projections have been calculated using interest rate projections provided by private sector forecasters through a survey conducted in September 2020. Further details and the results of the September survey can be found on pages 119-121 of the fall economic statement 2020, including the private sector projection of the Government of Canada three-month treasury bill and the 10-year bond rates.

Question No. 380—Mr. Bob Zimmer:

With regard to the planned layoffs at the air traffic control towers in St-Jean, Windsor, Sault Ste. Marie, Regina, Fort McMurray, Prince George and Whitehorse: (a) how many air traffic controllers have received layoff notices, broken down by each airport; (b) does the Minister of Transport agree with the decision to lay off these air traffic controllers, and, if not, has he asked Nav Canada to reverse the decision; and (c) did Transport Canada conduct an analysis on the impact of these lay-off decisions, and, if so, what methodology was used, and what were the findings, broken down by airport?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a), Nav Canada is a private, arm's-length entity, and Transport Canada are not involved in the company's day-to-day management decisions.

In response to parts (b) and (c), and having said that, Transport Canada assesses service level reductions to ensure that they do not have a negative impact on safety. No decisions have been made by Transport Canada on potential service-level reductions currently under consideration. The department is still awaiting Nav Canada's aeronautical study, after which the assessment will begin.

Question No. 381—Mr. Chris Warkentin:

With regard to the government's response to Order Paper question Q-313, regarding SNC-Lavalin and COVID-19 programs and spending measures, and the \$150,000,000 contract awarded on April 8, 2020, to SNC-Lavalin to design and deliver mobile health units: (a) was this contract solesourced, or was there an open competition; (b) if the contract was awarded through an open competition, how many other competing bids were received; (c) was the tender for this contract advertised and, if so, between what dates was the contract advertisement online, prior to the bid deadline; (d) on what date did the Minister of Public Works and Government Services approve the contract; (e) did this contract receive sign off or approval at any cabinet committee and, if so, on what date, and at which committee; (f) what are the terms of the contract, including any delivery dates; (g) what are the start and end dates of the contract; (h) has the value of the contract been amended since it was originally signed and, if so, what is the (i) original contract value, (ii) revised contract value, (iii) date of amendment; and (i) what specific products, and how many, have been delivered to date as a result of the contract, and where are each of the products currently located?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), a contract in support of the government's COVID-19 response was awarded to the SNC-Lavalin PAE Joint Venture, SNC-Lavalin PAE Inc., on April 9, 2020, to design and deliver mobile health units following a limited tender solicitation. This contract is valued at \$150 million.

With regard to (b), two Canadian contractors were invited to submit proposals based on their proven record on complex logistics work: SNC-Lavalin PAE Inc. of Ottawa, Ontario, and Weatherhaven Global Resources Ltd. of Coquitlam British Columbia.

With regard to (c), the tender was not publicly advertised. The two contractors were invited to submit proposals based on their proven record on complex logistics work. SNC-Lavalin PAE Inc. was invited because of its past and current contracts related to supporting the Department of National Defence with camp logistics for deployed military operations, e.g., in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

With regard to (d), the deputy minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada approved the SNC-Lavalin PAE Inc. and Weatherhaven Global Resources Ltd. contracts on April 9.

With regard to (e), the \$150,000,000 contract awarded on April 8, 2020, to SNC-Lavalin to design and deliver mobile health units did not receive approval from any cabinet committee.

With regard to (f), in accordance with the statement of work, the supplier is to provide up to 10 transportable 100-bed mobile health units, MHUs, with an option for additional units, and to also provide services, as and when required, through task-authorizations. Each MHU is to be a fully self-sufficient unit that can provide targeted care for persons with acute respiratory disease and distress.

During the MHU contract period, the supplier may be asked to provide and warehouse up to 10 MHUs deployable kits; establish a program management structure and team to execute the work; and provide logistic support services, on an as and when required basis.

With regard to (g), the contracts were issued with a six-month term and two six-month options. The award date for the two contracts was April 9, 2020. Both six-month extensions have been exercised on both contracts, which now have an end date of October 8, 2021.

With regard to (h), the maximum contract value of both contracts has not increased from the original value of \$150 million.

With regard to (i), for the SNC-Lavalin PAE Inc. contract, the contractor was required to provide up to five MHUs' worth of medical consumables and medical equipment. The contractor has delivered three designs for different MHU configurations, including a container and pod solution. Project management services and warehousing of products continues.

Some of the medical equipment has been transferred to the Public Health Agency of Canada for distribution to provinces to address provincial needs. The rest of the medical equipment and consumables remain within the contractor's warehouse.

Question No. 382—Ms. Michelle Rempel Garner:

With regard to the government's contracts for COVID-19 vaccines: (a) what recourse or financial penalties were written into each contract for (i) a delayed delivery schedule, (ii) deliveries with fewer doses than stated in the delivery schedule; (b) what was the original vaccine delivery schedule written into each contract; (c) what is the current vaccine delivery schedule for each contract; and (d) what intellectual property provisions were included in the contracts related to licensing for domestic manufacturing?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to protect Canada's negotiating position and to respect confidentiality clauses in our vaccine agreements, Public Services and Procurement Canada cannot unilaterally disclose details of specific agreements. We continue to seek opportunities to be as transparent as possible about our procurements in support of Canada's COVID response, while respecting confidentiality agreements and protecting our negotiating position.

For further information regarding vaccine procurement, please see <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-services-procurement/services/procuring-vaccines-covid19.html>

Question No. 383—Mr. Jamie Schmale:

With regard to procurement practices applied to contracts during the COVID-19 pandemic: (a) what constitutes a COVID-19-related contract or supplier; (b) what policies or requirements have been paused, removed, suspended, or deferred for contracts related to COVID-19; (c) have integrity checks been downsized or compacted to accommodate tighter supply timelines; and (d) what policies or requirements have been waived for companies bidding on COVID-19-related contracts?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), as a common service provider for procurement, PSPC has been engaged by its clients to procure a broad range of goods and services related to the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has included requirements such as personal protective equipment; medical/laboratory equipment and supplies; vaccines, logistics; professional services; software; health related services; guard and security services; cleaning services; and communications, advertising, and contact center and construction services.

PSPC has been disclosing supplier names and contract values for contracts that it has entered into on behalf of other government departments and agencies for personal protective equipment, PPE, as well as medical/laboratory equipment and supplies at <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/comm/aic-scr/contrats-contracts-eng.html>. The information released will be adjusted over time as the procurement environment evolves.

With regard to part (b), no policies or requirements have been paused, removed, suspended, or deferred for contracts related to COVID-19. However, the Treasury Board amended the contracting policy to confer time-limited increased emergency contracting limits to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement for COVID-19-related procurements.

In addition, the Public Health Agency of Canada made a request on behalf of the federal government that PSPC invoke a national security exception, NSE, with respect to the acquisition of goods and services required in order to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. That invocation, which covers a broad range of goods and services, is time-limited and applies only until the World Health Organization no longer declares the COVID-19 pandemic a public health emergency of international concern. An NSE invocation removes procurements from the obligations of Canada's trade agreements for reasons of national security. NSEs are provided for in trade agreements to ensure that parties to the agreements are not required to compromise their national security interests through application of the trade agreements.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to part (c), the Government of Canada's integrity regime and its verification process have been consistently applied throughout the pandemic, including for applicable COVID-19 related procurements. The verification process has not been impacted and the department continues to provide high-quality services to complete all requests within its prescribed service standards.

With regard to part (d), no policies or requirements have been waived for companies bidding on COVID-19 related contracts.

Question No. 384—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to the consultations conducted before the tabling of Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: (a) what are the details of all in-person and virtual consultations and meetings conducted by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations or the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs with all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis stakeholders, between August 1, 2018, and December 3, 2020, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) name and title of the First Nations, groups, organizations or individuals consulted, (iv) recommendations that were made to the minister; and (b) what are the details of all in-person and virtual consultations and meetings conducted by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations or the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, with all provincial ministers of Indigenous Affairs and all third-party stakeholders, between August 1, 2018, and December 3, 2020, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) name and title of the groups, organizations or individuals consulted, (iv) recommendations that were made to the minister?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question was interpreted as referring specifically to consultations conducted on Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Consultations on this bill began in early 2020, with a focused engagement period from September 2020 to November 2020. Between October and November 2020, the Government of Canada held 28 sessions with modern treaty and self-governing rights holders on a nation-to-nation, government-to-government basis as reflected in their agreements. The Government of Canada met bilaterally with the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and the Métis National Council. Our government also met with other national and regional organizations, including indigenous women's organizations, LGBTQ2S+ groups, indigenous youth and indigenous law students.

Justice Canada, with the support of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, CIRNAC, will publish a what-we-learned report, which will be made available to members of the public soon.

Question No. 385—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to offers or proposals received by the government to manufacture or produce COVID-19 vaccines in Canada, or to develop facilities for such production, since January 1, 2020: what are the details of any such offers or proposals, including (i) the name of the individual or firm making the offer or proposal, (ii) the summary of the offer or proposal, including the timeline, (iii) whether or not the offer or proposal was accepted by the government, (iv) the reason the offer or proposal was rejected, if applicable?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada does not comment on whether specific applications for federal funding, including from the strategic innovation fund, SIF, may be under consideration. Details related to applicants and/or applications are subject to commercial confidentiality and cannot be disclosed. The process for strategic innovation fund projects can be consulted on the program website at <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/125.nsf/eng/00023.html>.

In the course of the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development's efforts to map the vaccine and therapeutic manufacturing landscape in Canada, departmental officials conducted a comprehensive outreach across a range of companies to better understand their capabilities in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The nature and content of these conversations are commercially confidential. The Government of Canada also established the Vaccine Task Force, Therapeutics Task Force and the joint manufacturing subcommittee, comprising scientific experts and industry leaders, to make evidence-based recommendations to the government. All promising leads and offers to the government have been thoroughly evaluated for their specific scientific and technical merits and their ability to make a timely contribution to Canada's biomanufacturing landscape, and investment decisions are made on that basis.

To date, more than 20 proposals have been submitted that are related to biomanufacturing, vaccines and/or therapies. The Government has announced three of these projects, Precision NanoSystems, Abcellera and Medicago, and multiple others are in various stages of due diligence or other consideration, in consultation with some of Canada's leading scientists and industry experts in vaccinology, immunology, therapeutics and commercialization. Further projects will be announced in due course.

On May 3, 2020, the government announced a \$175.6-million investment in AbCellera through SIF to support its antibody therapy discovery and to establish a good manufacturing practice facility in Vancouver.

On October 23, 2020, the government announced an investment of up to \$173 million in Quebec City-based Medicago through SIF. The project, valued at a total of \$428 million, will involve developing a vaccine through clinical trials, including phase 3, and establish a large-scale vaccine and antibody production facility to increase Canada's domestic biomanufacturing capacity.

On February 2, 2021, the government announced an investment of up to \$25.1 million in Vancouver-based Precision NanoSystems Inc. for a new biomanufacturing centre to expand Canada's capabilities in the production of ribonucleic acid, RNA, vaccines and future genetic medicines.

A backgrounder that highlights the list of investments that have been made can be found at the following website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/innovation-science-economic-development/news/2021/02/backgrounder—government-of-canada-investments-in-covid-19-vaccines-and-biomanufacturing-capacity.html>.

Question No. 389—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to the agreement between the government and the Enoch Cree Nation related to the Yekau Lake Practice Bombing Range: (a) what is the summary of

the terms of the agreement; and (b) is the text of the agreement publicly available and, if so, how can the public access the agreement?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, insofar as Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada is concerned, the response is as follows.

With regard to (a), the Enoch Cree Nation submitted its Yekau Lake Practice Bombing Range specific claim in November 2007, on the basis that the Crown breached both its fiduciary and statutory obligations under the Indian Act in respect of the lease of the former Yekau Lake Bombing Range as part of Canada's war effort during the Second World War. Canada has provided \$91 million in compensation to fully and finally resolve the Yekau Lake Practice Bombing Range specific claim. Please see <https://orders-in-council.canada.ca/attachment.php?attach=39817&lang=en> for additional details.

With regard to (b), the text of the agreement is not publicly available and is protected by settlement privilege.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 363-368, 371, 379 and 386-388 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the aforementioned questions be made orders for return and that they be tabled immediately?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 363—Mr. Randall Garrison:

With regard to the Royal Canadian Navy's frigate replacement program and the National Shipbuilding Strategy: (a) how critical is progress on the modernization of the Royal Canadian Navy to the defence of Canada and its allies; (b) what is the status of the Canadian Surface Combatant procurement project, including the (i) timelines, (ii) costs, (iii) target dates for the Royal Canadian Navy to take delivery of the frigates; (c) has the government conducted an inquiry in regards to the management, costs and associated production delays of the Canadian Surface Combatant procurement project and, if not, will the government commit to holding such an inquiry and make the results public; (d) what measures are being taken by the government to make sure that the National Shipbuilding Strategy remains on track to provide Canada's armed forces personnel with the equipment they need to do their work in a timely and cost-effective manner; and (e) has the government considered appointing a single minister responsible for defence procurement, similar to our allies in the United Kingdom and Australia, in order to streamline military procurement and to provide better accountability to the public and, if not, will the government commit to establishing such a position?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 364—Mr. Eric Duncan:

With regard to individuals entering Canada since April 1, 2020: (a) how many were (i) required to quarantine, (ii) exempted from quarantine requirement; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) (i) and (ii) by month and by type of entry point (airport, land crossing, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 365—Mr. Eric Duncan:

With regard to the Canada Summer Jobs program since 2016, broken down by year: (a) how many applications for funding under the program were rejected or denied due to (i) incomplete or incorrectly filled out application forms, (ii) failure to meet the eligibility requirements, (iii) lack of funding, (iv) another reason, broken down by reason, if possible; (b) what is the total number of applications rejected or denied; and (c) what was the total dollar value applied for by the applications in each of the subcategories of (a)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 366—Mr. Kerry Diotte:

With regard to the government's support for the campaign to make Bill Morneau the next secretary-general of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: (a) what are the total expenditures or costs incurred by the government to date in relation to the campaign; (b) what are the projected final expenditures or costs, if different than in (a); (c) what is the breakdown of expenditures by type of expense; (d) what are the details of all contracts signed related to the campaign, including the (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date the contract was signed, (iv) location of the vendor, (v) description of goods or services, (vi) start and end date of the contract, if applicable; and (e) what was the total number of individuals assigned to work on or assist with the campaign, including those assigned on a part-time basis?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 367—Mr. Kenny Chiu:

With regard to federal sponsorship of youth anti-drug programs: (a) does the government currently have plans to expand anti-drug programs for youth in Canada and, if so, what are the details; (b) how much funding has been given to support the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's Drug Abuse Resistance Education programs in Canada in the last three fiscal years; and (c) how much funding will be provided for the fiscal year 2021-22?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 368—Mr. Kerry Diotte:

With regard to delays in the processing of immigration files submitted through the traditional hard-copy paper method: (a) how many files had their processing delayed as a result of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada employees not having access to paper files while working from home during the pandemic; (b) what is the number of files still (i) not being processed, (ii) delayed as a result of employees working from home, broken down by type of application; (c) what is the current backlog and processing times for applications submitted via (i) paper, (ii) online, broken down by type of application; and (d) what was the backlog and pro-

cessing times for applications submitted via (i) paper, (ii) online, prior to the pandemic, or as of March 1, 2020?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 371—Ms. Raquel Dancho:

With regard to Visa Facilitation Services Global (VFS Global) processing visa applications for the government: (a) what is the list of countries in which VFS Global currently processes visas for the Canadian government; (b) what guarantees, if any, does the government have with VFS Global to ensure that any information collected from visa applicants is not shared with the company's Chinese state-owned investment funds or the Chinese government; (c) does the government have any way of monitoring whether personal information provided to VFS Global is being shared or disclosed to any third party or state-owned organization; (d) how is the government notified and what processes are in place for when a data breach occurs with information in the possession of VFS Global; and (e) is the government aware of any such data breaches occurring and, if so, what are the details, including how individuals' whose information was compromised were informed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 379—Mr. Marty Morantz:

With regard to the government's decision to grant a travel exemption to family members of Meng Wanzhou: (a) on what date was the exemption granted; (b) which minister signed off on the exemption; (c) why was the exemption granted; (d) did the family members also receive an exemption from the 14-day quarantine requirement and, if so, why was such an exemption granted; and (e) has the government provided any other travel exemptions since April 1, 2020, for family members of individuals awaiting extradition and, if so, how many were granted, broken down by month?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 386—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to the announcement by the Prime Minister on April 7, 2020, that the government would team up with manufacturers to domestically produce up to 30,000 ventilators: (a) how many of those ventilators have been produced to date, broken down by manufacturer; and (b) how many of those ventilators are currently in Canadian hospitals, or similar types of facilities, broken down by (i) province, (ii) municipality, (iii) hospital?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 387—Mr. Larry Maguire:

With regard to the renovations and upgrades at the Prime Minister's country residence and surrounding area at Harrington Lake: (a) what was the total amount spent on renovations and upgrades in 2020; (b) what is the itemized breakdown of the expenditures in (a); (c) what is the description of all work conducted at Harrington Lake in 2020; (d) what is the budget or projected costs for renovations and upgrades in 2021; and (e) what renovations and upgrades are planned for 2021?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 388—Ms. Rachael Harder:

With regard to the government's decision to require airline travellers arriving from outside of Canada to quarantine at a designated airport hotel: (a) what specific evidence or facts did the government use as a basis for the decision; (b) what is the detailed breakdown of how the more than \$2,000 collected from each traveller is spent, including what amounts went for (i) transportation to the hotel, (ii) security, (iii) the hotel room rate, (iv) testing, (v) other type of expenditure, broken down by type; (c) is the government operating on a strictly cost-recovery basis or will the government be making a profit from the funds collected from the travellers; (d) how were the hotels chosen; (e) is the government paying a premium for the hotels over the regular government room rate and, if so, why; (f) were the hotels chosen through an open tender process or were they sole-sourced contracts; (g) if the contracts were sole-sourced, what specific measures were taken to ensure that the contracts were awarded fairly and without political bias; and (h) what are the details of each contract with the hotels, including (i) the name of hotel, (ii) the location, (iii) the amount of the contract, (iv) the contract start and end date, (v) the number of rooms provided?

(Return tabled)

S. O. 52

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am asking, under Standing Order 52(2), that we have an emergency debate in the House of Commons with regard to the takeover of Shaw Communications by Rogers Communications.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it became obvious that online Internet and cellphone services are paramount to Canadian society, business and even to this chamber. We pay some of the highest prices among the OECD, and have some of the most challenging environments among ourselves, to be connected. There is no doubt that the elimination of Shaw by Rogers would reduce services. We have four major providers and that would reduce them to three.

I am calling for this debate because this was the first opportunity to bring this into the chamber. This takeover was announced during our break week, or our constituency week, and members did not have a chance to raise it at that time. That started the gears in motion of the process that is now in play.

This will be the only opportunity for all members to participate in this debate because the CRTC, the Competition Bureau and other factors independent of this chamber are all starting their reviews. This is something that affects every Canadian, especially during the pandemic. Before this, New Democrats had declared the connection of Canadians to be an essential service. It is critical at this time that the expense, the connection and the type of connection are debated thoroughly, especially because telecommunications are a regulated industry. It has affected all Canadians as we continue to go through this pandemic. It will also affect the rollout of the spectrum auction that is taking place. This is definitely an essential service.

I would also argue that there has been a democracy change with regard to this issue. Our chamber will even vote this night with our own cell phones and devices. Mr. Speaker, you have been around almost as long as I have with regard to this. We can remember the old days with the BlackBerry and the track that we would get as part of our things. Today, it is different. Our cell phones, our Internet connectivity and the competition for it are crucial and paramount, and we have transitioned to them even in this chamber for the inclusion of society.

The reality is that some people still cannot follow Parliament right now either because they cannot afford the service or they do not have it in their community. The elimination of the fourth major service provider would reduce competition, and significant changes would take place out of this chamber. This will be the only opportunity for members to get on the record about that. There will be other vehicles to have some comment and discussion, but it will be af-

ter all those things. Those different agencies will be looking to Parliament for direction.

As a quick example, and I will not go on too much longer, Freedom Mobile would be affected. Two million people would be directly affected by that. Freedom Mobile has been known to reduce prices and provide additional services. The government and Canadian Parliament set the rules of how we connect Canadians. Whether using access rights through our ground communications or through selling our spectrum, those auctions to allow companies to do so are part of public policy.

Debating this is urgent, because this will be the only opportunity to do so for members of Parliament whose constituents are connected not just for social information or entertainment purposes, but for school, business and inclusion in society, as simple meetings have now moved to Zoom and other online platforms. It has been well documented that Canada has some of the highest prices for online services and some of the most difficult outreach problems. This affects all of us.

The fact that we would go from four players to three would set in motion a series of manoeuvres from other companies. We have even witnessed public policy, which was supposed to expand competition, result in previous takeovers. At that time, there were no voices raising this in Parliament. We did not deal with it at that point, but here is an opportunity for us to do so.

With that, I am calling for this section to be observed and for us to have this debate today. If we do not have it, it will be a missed opportunity. Canada has a closed market: We do not allow foreign competition to come into our telcos to own and operate with a dominance of shares. This is our only opportunity to have a public voice for the public policy that we set, including an investment of tens of millions of dollars into expanding broadband to rural and remote communities.

● (1555)

Again, this affects every member of Parliament. Even in urban settings, there is a lack of competition and service for some people. On top of that, there are the prices and costs, and our movement and democracy under COVID-19 have intensified things more than ever before.

I believe this chamber would do well to give members the chance to express the concerns of their individual ridings as this is debated among the structures we have and the minister starts to review the situation.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Windsor West for his intervention. However, I am not satisfied that his request meets the requirements of the standing order at this time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—LONG-TERM CARE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

COVID-19 has been a tragic time for many, especially for the people working and living in for-profit long-term care homes. In fact, during the first wave, 82% of COVID deaths in Canada happened in long-term care. Over 12,000 long-term care residents and workers have died in Canada since the start of the pandemic. We know that residents and workers in for-profit long-term care homes have a higher risk of infection and death than those in non-profit homes, and the unacceptable and poor living conditions for individuals living in for-profit long-term care have been further highlighted during the pandemic.

Elders and many disabled adults have been denied the right to live in dignity as a result of cuts, underfunding and privatization. Profits should never be gained from the violation of an individual's dignity.

It is beyond time that we take profit out of care. It is beyond time that individuals residing in long-term care are provided with a care guarantee that ensures a safe and dignified life. It is beyond time that young disabled persons are provided with a choice about whether they wish to reside within residential care. As Dr. Abraham Snaiderman, director of the neuropsychiatry clinic at the University Health Network's rehabilitation institute, noted, "Essentially it's a default scenario because there is nowhere that a young person can go for long-term care, except a nursing home".

We must do better, and the pandemic has highlighted the issues. Lives have been lost, and loved ones, friends and family members are lacking the safety, care and resources to stay safe. They find themselves in the most dire of circumstances, some just trying survive.

We know, through what we have seen in long-term care, that we cannot leave it up to companies whose purpose is to make profit over individuals to determine who is worthy and who is not. All beings are sacred and worthy of care, but unfortunately for-profit care homes have not demonstrated this, as witnessed in Parkview Place, a Revera care home in my riding of Winnipeg Centre, where too many lives were lost. One life is too many. Friends, family, loved ones and workers were lost. I extend my condolences to all those who have been impacted in my community and across the country.

All of this is alarming because while for-profit care homes have only one-quarter of nursing home beds in Manitoba, they account for 44% of deaths that have occurred so far during COVID-19. We have heard stories about poor quality food and individuals with COVID left in rooms without care. So many lives have been lost. This is a crisis. Life is precious.

Business of Supply

I want to be very clear: This is not the fault of workers. Many lost their lives as a result of the poor working conditions in long-term care. We certainly knew it before the pandemic, but we know even more now that care work in this country is not nearly valued enough.

• (1600)

We also know that some groups are more predominantly impacted, such as women, and in particular poor, BIPOC and immigrant women, who are often in precarious work situations and face exploitative working conditions. This is unacceptable and needs to end now. In fact, there are numerous reports indicating that many personal support workers were not even provided with adequate PPE during the pandemic. They had to supply their own protective gear from home. This is totally wrong and totally unacceptable. It is a total disrespect to workers and residents.

Care workers who are entrusted to care for residents in long-term care at the very least deserve a living wage, benefits, safe working conditions and security. That is why I am proud that today the NDP is proposing to take profit out of long-term care and put an end to public subsidies going to for-profit operators, which have paid out millions in dividends to shareholders. That money needs to be invested in caring for people, loved ones, friends and family members, and in ensuring safe working conditions for care workers.

The NDP understands this. It is why we have called for the development of a regulated system of long-term care, with national care standards that would include accountability mechanisms supported by federal funding. We need to improve working conditions for front-line workers in the long-term care sector. It is time for a living wage and for the proper training and resources required to improve working conditions, which in turn support better quality care for residents of long-term care. The way forward is to immediately work toward putting an end to for-profit long-term care.

Business of Supply

Seniors and elders have inherent value in society, and in indigenous cultures globally, they are the backbone of our societies. They guide and direct decisions, and even today they are key decision-makers in our nations. Seniors did not just build this country; they continue to be leaders in our communities. Their knowledge and wisdom are essential for learning how to understand the world around us and how to live and thrive, not just survive. They are the ones who give us guidance about how we must move forward.

When I think about my ancestors and the many elders I look to for guidance even today, I have to acknowledge, as I think we must all acknowledge, their profound wisdom. For this reason, it is so disturbing that elders and seniors in our communities in long-term care are almost treated as though they are disposable. They are locked away in institutions where they are not even afforded basic human dignity. This needs to end now. I wanted to share that because we often speak about the vulnerability and weakness of our elders, but rarely do we look at their strength, resilience, wisdom and leadership, which make up an essential part of our communities. Elders are critical.

I want to end by taking a bit of time to talk about the culture of ableism, because I think, with everything we have been debating in the House, it is important to talk about it.

● (1605)

For far too long ableism has shaped long-term care, and this is seen through how we fund and organize institutions from—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry, but we are out of time.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the leader of the government in the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I posed a question to the leader of the New Democratic Party, and it is a very important question that needs to be answered directly.

We recognize that the need for national standards for long-term care is there. It is very real. It is tangible. It is something on which this government has committed to move forward, but we also need to recognize that the provinces, as the administrators of health care, have an absolutely critical role. If we were to automatically do what the NDP wants us to do at the national level, that would then have additional costs and impacts on all the provinces.

Does the NDP have any provincial support for this particular initiative?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, it seems that the Liberal government moves swiftly on things like pipelines, but when we are talking about life-and-death matters related to seniors, there is nothing stopping the federal government right now from putting in place national standards and ending for-profit care for seniors across the country.

As for the money aspect, when we are talking about people who have perished in for-profit long-term care, certainly our seniors and disabled persons—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could pick up on where she was at the end of her speech in talking about issues of ableism and the implications of that. Many in our caucus have been very concerned about provisions in Bill C-7, and we have joined with people in the disability community in highlighting the ways in which the mechanics of that bill could really perpetuate the kind of ableism that people with disabilities experience when interacting with our health care system.

I know the NDP members supported Bill C-7 at third reading, but then they opposed the message to the Senate. I wonder if that was in response to hearing feedback from all the disability groups that were speaking out about the bill.

What does the member think we can do in this context to fight ableism in our health care system?

● (1610)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I agree. Disability organizations from across the country have been very clear. They are denied their basic human rights every day, such as the right to adequate housing and health support.

When we are talking about long-term care, we must first of all take profit out of long-term care, but that also needs to be coupled with an expansion of community-based care, such as home care to support those who wish to live at home in their community—particularly young disabled persons who are often not given a choice between living with home care or in nursing homes. That is why I am proud to stand in support of my—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed the hon. member's speech.

Last spring, the Canadian Armed Forces carried out Operation Laser in long-term care homes. The report that was written indicates that the problem was not the standards themselves. The problem was that the standards were not met because of a lack of funding. Recently, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion denouncing the implementation of Canadian standards in long-term care homes and calling for an increase in health transfers.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the fact that the Quebec National Assembly has unanimously spoken out against implementing Canadian standards in long-term care homes.

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, it is important to point out that we knew there were issues in for-profit long-term care facilities long before the pandemic and we refused to act. What it resulted in was thousands of people losing their lives. This is unacceptable.

It seems that the federal government can find billions of dollars for pipelines and for helping its corporate friends while turning a blind eye to offshore tax havens, but when we look at expenditures that will literally save lives, putting in place national standards in long-term care to ensure that people are able to live with dignity and human rights, it seems to be an issue that we immediately need to address. It is beyond overdue. We are not out of the pandemic yet, and seniors and disabled persons deserve better.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, COVID-19 has been hard on everyone, but we know it has been hardest on one group of Canadians. More than anyone else, our seniors and those who care for them have borne the brunt of this deadly global health pandemic, and seniors and staff in for-profit long-term care have been impacted most of all.

I know everyone in this House has heard the devastating statistics. We know that over 80% of deaths in Canada occurred in long-term care homes. We know that 12,000 residents and workers have died in long-term care homes since the beginning of the pandemic. We know this is the worst record among comparable countries and double the OECD average. We know Ontario's for-profit nursing homes have 78% more COVID-19 deaths than non-profit homes. We know that if long-term care facilities are owned by a chain, they are far more likely to have serious outbreaks.

In my riding of Edmonton Strathcona, at one point in November, over 90% of the residents at South Terrace Continuing Care Centre, a for-profit centre, tested positive for COVID-19. Heartbreakingly, many of those residents have lost their lives.

These facts and figures are alarming. They are shocking, but much more importantly, each number represents seniors our government has failed. Each percentage represents a loss of life and grieving families left behind, unable to say goodbye, unable to share final days.

What happened and what continues to happen in Canada's long-term care homes is a national disgrace. The thousands of seniors we lost to COVID-19 did not have to die. They are dead because the government failed to protect them. How many more thousands of seniors must die before we finally fix our long-term care system, before we finally decide to actually care for our elders, before we put the care of our loved ones and the workers who care and support them first?

Each December I deliver poinsettias to the long-term care centres in my riding to bring a little festive cheer and holiday spirit to the community. I pop in to say hello, I share a cup of coffee with some of the residents, I chat about how they are doing and how I can help and I talk to the staff and thank them for their incredible work. It is one of my favourite things to do.

Obviously, this December it had to be different, but I still wanted to do what I could to brighten the day of the residents and staff in long-term care homes in Edmonton Strathcona and let them know

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that while I cannot visit like I used to, I am thinking of them and am fighting for them in the House of Commons. Knowing I could not enter the residence, I put on my PPE, wore my mask, called ahead to make sure I was following every safety protocol and dropped those poinsettias and holiday cards off outside the long-term care centres.

That was a very hard day. I saw family members who were standing in the bitter cold waving at their loved ones through windows to keep their fathers, mothers, grandmothers, uncles and aunts safe. I saw those same seniors isolated, lonely and terrified. I spoke to long-term care workers who broke down in tears because they were so tired and scared. They had been through so much and they felt let down by their government. They were scared; they were tired, absolutely, but they were also mad.

One caregiver, a young woman named Claire, a woman who had worked at a for-profit care centre, explained that before the pandemic she had worked at several different long-term care centres in Edmonton just to pay her bills. While she and her co-workers were doing everything they could to help residents stay safe and healthy, she felt like the government had let her and the seniors in her care down.

This young woman on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, who literally risked her life to take care of our seniors, spoke of the deplorable conditions in long-term care before COVID-19. She told me of cost-saving measures that resulted in the deterioration of care over the years, the understaffing, the increased workload. She told me that the need to increase profit for corporations that owned these homes meant seniors and staff who cared for them were already in a precarious and dangerous situation before the pandemic.

Increasing privatization has moved the focus from caring for our seniors to creating profits for shareholders. I have said this many times in this House, but let me reiterate it: Care and profit are two oppositional forces.

● (1615)

The only way to profit from providing long-term care is to cut the care itself, to cut the number of people providing the care, to cut their wages, to cut the time spent providing care and to cut money from the design and maintenance of the homes themselves.

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Long-term care was not working in this country before COVID-19. Experts had warned us. Seniors advocates had told the government over and over again that the level of care was deteriorating and that the profit model in many care centres resulted in massive profits for corporations and increasingly dangerous conditions for seniors and staff.

The fact that there were no national standards of care also meant that there was a huge discrepancy in the quality of care provided, and this was all before the worst global health pandemic of our time.

COVID-19 hit our long-term care centres like a tornado. Every flaw in our system—every unheeded warning about overworked staff, about under-resourced centres, about dangerous conditions—was exposed.

We heard from the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions. They spoke of appalling conditions, overworked staff, rampant profiteering and a devastating loss of life. Further, they stated:

Canada's long-term care is in crisis. Frontline health care workers have been sounding the alarm on conditions for years, but governments have failed to take responsibility and act....

The refusal to take responsibility for the crisis in long-term care has gone on for far too long and its true cost is measured in lives lost.

In my riding of Edmonton Strathcona, the vast majority of residents and staff at the South Terrace Long Term Care Home tested positive for COVID-19. Very many of those residents and staff got sick, and the loss of life was not just at South Terrace, but also at Carlingview Manor, Montfort long-term care home, Forest Heights Long Term Care Home, and McKenzie Towne Continuing Care Centre, just a few of the long-term care centres that had outbreaks and high levels of infection and death.

What do all of these long-term care centres have in common? All of these long-term care facilities are owned by one very large corporation, Revera. In fact, Revera owns more than 500 long-term care facilities worldwide. While it is not the only for-profit with large COVID outbreaks, it is unique because it is owned by the Canadian pension fund, and its board is appointed by cabinet.

It is because of this that I am joining my colleagues within the NDP to urge the government to immediately bring Revera under public ownership, and not just Revera. We have heard from specialists, we have heard from families, we have heard from workers, and we have heard from seniors themselves just how dangerous and deadly for-profit long-term care has been.

We need to work with provinces and territories to transition all for-profit care to non-profit care no later than 2030. We need more than just words and we need more than just a throne speech: We need long-term care that guarantees standards of care for our seniors regardless of where they live, regardless of how much money they have.

We need to ensure adequate funding for long-term care. The NDP would invest an additional \$5 billion over the next four years in long-term care, with funding tied to respect for the principles of the Canada Health Act.

We need to ensure that workers who are caring for our seniors earn wages that reflect the value of their work and are honoured for the support they provide to our families and our seniors.

We need to begin. We need to finally begin to take profit out of long-term care, starting with Revera, by 2030.

● (1620)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a government, we will continue to fight for national standards. We recognize that. We are responding to the whole idea that we can in fact build back better.

The issue that I have with the NDP, is that it would appear, based on my questions, that it has not had any consultations with provincial entities. Our provinces are responsible for the administration of health, and that includes personal care home facilities. We have had New Democratic governments in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, none of which have ever taken that direction.

Has the NDP done its homework and gotten any support from any province, or is it hoping that Ottawa would do those negotiations on its behalf?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I find it interesting that the member is talking about our doing our homework when he speaks about fighting for national standards, as if he were not a member of the government that could in fact put in national standards right now. Does he actually know that he is part of the government and that they could do that?

As for working with the provinces I am going to quote André Picard, a journalist who specializes in health care, who tweeted, "Can we please, in the name of all that is good and holy, stopped pretending there is some kind of constitutional impediment to improving care for elders".

The federal government has a role to play in working with the provinces to make this happen. It has the work to do. It has a job to do and it has not done it. It has been decades.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and the NDP for bringing this issue forward. Like many other Canadians, my mum is in a long-term care residence, and I think this issue is a very important debate to have today.

I do want to follow up with what my Liberal colleague was saying, though, because we do want to make sure that these standards are effective. When bringing up a topic of national standards, it can be very complicated.

I wonder what my colleague would say would be an NDP plan to respect the diverse needs and challenges of our vastly unique country in bringing forward these standards for Canada.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I extend my best wishes to my colleague's mother. I hope she is doing well during this very difficult time for seniors in this country.

I think it is important that we recognize that while we have diverse realities across the country, there is a level of care that every senior, regardless of where they are located, deserves to have, with a level of dignity and a level of respect. That is why I think is so important that we make sure that is in those standards of care.

Of course, we need to be convening and having conversations across the country, but there are those standards of what we feel or know about seniors and the dignity that they deserve to live with. I think it is so important that it does not matter if someone is in—

• (1625)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Drummond.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend and thank the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona for her touching speech, which was very sincere, like her.

Oddly enough, my question relates to that of the member for Winnipeg North and follows up on the question of my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean. Health falls under provincial jurisdiction. The specifics or problems that my colleague mentioned in her speech are generally the result of a lack of funding, and the care provided by long-term care facilities for seniors falls under provincial jurisdiction, even if those facilities are privately owned.

I have a highly relevant question. Has the NDP discussed this proposal with the provincial governments to see how it would be received? If not, it would be like literally shoving rules and standards down their throats, which I do not think is the intended purpose.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I think it is very important that we recognize that, regardless of where someone lives in this country, their standard of care should be the same. I can tell colleagues that I come from a province where I am deeply concerned that our provincial government is not doing nearly enough to protect our seniors. I do not trust the current provincial governments to care for seniors, and there is oversight capacity within the federal system. This is the way that the system was designed. It is the way our health care system works—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council.

Business of Supply

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Brampton South.

I want to start by expressing what I believe is a general feeling from all of my Liberal colleagues, that there is so much love and appreciation for the fine work, day in and day out, seven days a week, 24 hours a day, by our health care providers, in particular those who have been there in our long-term care facilities.

I know that in saying that, we should also recognize, as has been pointed out, that there have been far too many deaths over the last 12 months in our care-home facilities. It is one of the reasons why it is such an important debate to have. The issue, for me, is establishing national health care standards, something that the Prime Minister and our entire caucus and I believe is absolutely essential. It is one of the things we have learned through this pandemic, namely, that there is a genuine, tangible need to have national standards when it comes to long-term care facilities. That is something we will continue to push and strive for.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have had close to 4,000 staff members from the Canadian Red Cross who have provided care, or support of some sort, in over 150 long-term care facilities based in Ontario, Quebec and my home province of Manitoba. We are also indebted to the members of the Canadian Armed Forces who came to the table in the spring of 2020 to provide support for 50 or so long-term care facilities, again in Quebec and Ontario. We understand the value and importance of this issue to all Canadians, no matter where they live in our beautiful country.

I am a bit surprised by my New Democrat friends. Surely to goodness they understand the issue of health care and responsibilities. I have tried to point out what I believe is a fundamental issue with what the NDP members are proposing to do. I would cite the example that in health care Ottawa plays a critical role, as it should, through the Canada Health Act, which we can look at ways of enhancing. We finally have a government that has worked to get agreements on health care accords, unlike Stephen Harper's government, which ignored the issue. We see that in some of the comments by the Conservatives, who do not want to get engaged in the issue of health care. Conservatives will just say that it is a provincial or territorial issue.

We recognize that Ottawa does have a role to play. However, we also recognize that the only way we are going to have the optimal service that Canadians deserve is to get Ottawa working with provinces to recognize the problems and to work toward positive, creative solutions. That is the way we can maximize the benefits.

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I am very disappointed in my New Democrat friends for not coming to the table and saying that they have consulted and worked with the provinces and have some of their support. The best I can tell is that the New Democrats have achieved zero support for this idea. It is almost as if they had a caucus meeting and said, "Let's do this, because we want to do this". Even though, as they say, the NDP favours 100% public ownership of all care home facilities, it is only the national NDP that is talking about that. I have pointed out that we have had NDP governments in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, British Columbia and Alberta, and I cannot recall any of them, and definitely not in my province of Manitoba where, in the last 20 years, the New Democrats have been in government for 15 of those years, who have supported that.

● (1630)

The provinces are the ones who will ultimately administer this and they play a very strong leadership role. We, on the other hand, can influence them as well. What we can say here is what we, as a national government, want to see across the nation. No matter where someone lives in our country, they will feel comfortable in knowing that there is a national standard when it comes to care-home facilities.

I have confidence, and all members should have confidence, in provinces because it is their jurisdictional responsibility to provide these services. I have confidence in their ability to recognize what is in the national best interest. What the pandemic highlights is that it is in the national best interest. It is in every Canadian's interest to establish national standards. I suspect that over the coming months and years, there will be dialogue between Ottawa and the provinces. Based on what I have heard from the Conservatives, I sure hope it will not be the Conservatives in power then because, at the end of the day, much like the Bloc, they would argue that they just have to give the money. Giving the money is important, but not tying it to anything or providing those standards would be a grave mistake.

We should be sitting down with our provincial counterparts and making the argument that we should all look at what we have learned in the last 12 months. As one member has already pointed out, the serious issues at long-term care facilities even pre-date the last 12 months of the pandemic.

We represent constituents. We are supposed to bring their concerns to Ottawa and debate them in terms of public policy, whether in our standing committees or on the floor of the House or within our respective caucuses. I can tell members without betraying any caucus confidences that the concern for our seniors aged 55 and over is very real, and we want to continue to move forward with a number of initiatives.

One of the most important initiatives, whether it is the Prime Minister, the Minister of Health or individual members of the Liberal caucus talking about it, is ensuring that we have standards. We recognize that we have lost lives. As a consequence, we can improve the system. However, to jump to the conclusion that the only way to improve this system is to have 100 per cent public ownership might be a stretch.

If we look at our current health care apparatus and the many services that feed into that apparatus, would the NDP advocate that all

100 per cent of it should become publicly owned? As a party, when bringing in an opposition motion, there is also a responsibility to do one's homework. Part of that homework is being to expand on how what one is suggesting can be implemented.

That is why I posed the question. Sure, here is an idea and I have a lot of ideas. Time will not allow me to go through all those ideas, but at the end of the day, we want to make a difference and we are going to do that. Whether via legislative or budgetary measures, this government has made seniors a top priority. On that list we have got to deal with long-term care facilities and standards. We have to deal with issues like pharmacare, the OAS, the guaranteed income supplement and at how we can support our seniors tomorrow by enhancing CPP benefits.

There is so much we can do. A lot of it involves Ottawa working with the different provincial jurisdictions in order for us to maximize the benefits for all seniors from coast to coast to coast. To me, that is what we should be striving to achieve.

● (1635)

Members will get a good sample of that when they read some of the documents we have provided. Last September, we talked, through the throne speech, of ways in which we can—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will now go to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do not know where to start. I heard the member say that we need this Ottawa approach, and I am very much against an "Ottawa knows best" approach. I do not think that actually works. However, he also talked about jurisdictional responsibilities. I am a little confused if it is the "Ottawa knows best" approach that he is coming at this with or a jurisdictional approach, which would allow the provinces, in regards to national standards, to make the decision.

The member talked about funding when it comes to national standards. I am just wondering if the Liberal government is planning on giving money to the provinces tied to national standards. Is that something we could expect in the upcoming budget?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am sure the member can appreciate that she, like all other Canadians, including myself, will have to wait for the federal budget. I am sure that there will be a lot of good things coming out of it, and an opportunity for Canadians to get a sense of where this government wants to continue to build back better, give more strength to our economy and so forth.

In terms of the member's question, the bottom line is that I recognize, as the government recognizes, that there are provincial responsibilities and jurisdictions, but we also have to listen to Canadians, as we did through the Canada Health Act, for example, where we received from constituents—

● (1640)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will continue with questions and comments.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am overwhelmed by the parliamentary secretary's cynicism. Everyone can see that long-term care homes had difficulties.

These problems are the result of massive cuts to the health care system. The Liberals played a part in that. The infamous fiscal imbalance did not create itself. That the government is now saying it will implement national standards and the problem will magically go away is the epitome of cynicism.

I have two suggestions for the parliamentary secretary. If he is serious about seniors, he can increase health transfers to 35% and increase old age security.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I recognize that it is important for us to listen to what our constituents have to say. I can tell the member that my constituents want to see national standards in long-term care and they support the Canada Health Act, which means that Ottawa needs to do more than just give cash to provinces. At the end of the day, I believe that the institution of health care and the services it provides are things that Canadians in all regions want Ottawa to always have some form of a vested interest in.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member said that he has confidence in the current system. Well, last June, the Canadian Institute for Health Information found that 81% of the deaths in Canada due to COVID-19 were in the long-term care sector. This compares to countries such as the Netherlands at 15%, the U.K. at 27%, Australia at 28%, Donald Trump's U.S. at 31% and Germany at 34%. In fact, the OECD average is about 38%. Canada has the worst record of any comparable country.

I do not know if the member has not read the motion or if he is purposely staying away from this, but we are not talking about public delivery, we are talking about non-profit delivery. How does my colleague and the Liberal government justify such an appallingly poor record when we compare Canada to comparator countries? Does he or does he not agree that we should be making profit off of the care of our seniors, which is what the motion talks about?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect that if we were to canvass all of the regions in the provinces, we would find variances in different standards. That is one of the reasons we should be moving toward national standards on long-term care. This way, we would hopefully see better overall service throughout the nation.

I would also indicate to the member that even in the personal care home facilities, a lot has changed in the 30 years that I have been a parliamentarian in terms of clients, the delivery of service and it really varies. One has to be very careful with statistics.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 38, it is my duty to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan, Employ-

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ment; the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Natural Resources; the hon. member for Bow River, Small Business.

[English]

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Winnipeg North for sharing his time with me. Today, I will be speaking on a very important issue following the motion brought forward by the hon. member from the NDP. I would like to thank my hon. colleague for moving it forward.

Let me start with a clear statement. I support national standards for long-term care, but I support standards that have been designed correctly and in consultation with the provinces and territories. The motion we are debating today is unfortunately not the correct course of action to take today to support our seniors in the long-term care system.

Canadian seniors have built this country. Many of them literally fought for it. They deserve our respect and care. As a society, it is important that we have open and serious conversations about the care we provide our senior citizens. There is no doubt that the impact of COVID-19 on long-term care facilities across the country has been devastating for Canadians. It has been especially difficult for those who have lost loved ones. As a country, we need to ensure that something like this never happens again. Our government is taking concrete steps in this regard, which I will speak about shortly.

Members of the House know that I have been a vocal advocate for improving long-term care and bringing the national standards in consultation with the provinces and territories. Last May, five of my Liberal colleagues from the GTA, other Liberal members and I sent a letter to the Government of Ontario calling on it to form an independent inquiry into the conditions of these homes and how COVID was able to spread through them so rapidly. From the start, we were sounding the alarm that something needed to be done. In the letter we demanded that the province work with the Government of Canada in creating national standards for long-term care, which I strongly support.

The report by the Canadian Armed Forces described truly horrible conditions at the homes they assisted in, including Grace Manor in my riding of Brampton South. The stories we have heard in the report were tragic. I have met with many families and advocates from across Ontario. This is why my colleagues and I have been working toward progress on LTC standards and our government has committed to work on this long-term solution. It is the responsibility of the provinces to regulate, protect and inspect long-term care homes in Ontario. The province promised an iron ring around them, but this never materialized. Our seniors deserve better.

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As of Saturday, Ontario has seen the death count of 3,891 long-term care residents and 10 staff due to COVID-19, and 413 of these have been in Peel. Too many of these deaths were preventable. I truly support bringing in national standards for long-term care, but the motion before us today, I would argue that the first part of it seeking to bring Revera under public ownership is not the right solution to address this important problem.

With my time here today, I would like to explain why. It would be helpful to explain the federal government's role, or lack thereof, in this context. First, allow me to provide a bit of background. PSP Investments is mandated with investing net proceeds from the pension contribution of the public service, the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP pension plan in capital markets in the best interests of the contribution and beneficiaries under those respective acts. It reports to Parliament through the President of the Treasury Board, who is responsible for its legislation. The organization does include certain information about Revera in its annual report as well.

Under the Public Sector Pension Investment Board Act, the President of the Treasury Board is responsible for establishing and nominating a committee whose mandate is to establish a list of qualified candidates for proposed appointments as the director of the independent Board of Directors of PSP Investments. Based on the nominating committee's selection, the President of the Treasury Board makes a recommendation for appointment to the Governor in Council, and that is an important distinction.

● (1645)

The fact is that PSP Investments is not part of the federal public administration. It is not a government department or agency of the Crown. It does not receive parliamentary appropriations and it is not a part of the public administration of Canada.

PSP Investments is a non-agent Crown corporation that operates at arms' length from the Government of Canada. Part of the motion brought forward by my hon. colleague asks the government to interfere in the investment decision and strategy of this fund to make one long-term care group, namely Revera, public. It implies that the Government of Canada has authority to enact such a process, but the fact is that PSP Investments is intentionally structured to be at arms' length from the government. It is what ensures its independent and non-partisan role. PSP Investments must be, and is, responsible for its own investment decisions.

The President of the Treasury Board therefore does not have the authority to issue investment direction. Nor can he force PSP Investments to sell or transfer ownership of any of its assets. The organization's investment decisions are not influenced by political direction; regional, social or economic development considerations, or any non-investment objectives. In fact, such kind of interference would put PSP Investments at a competitive disadvantage and could impact its ability to achieve its legislative mandate.

The limitation also extends to Revera, which, as my hon. colleague well knows, is a private company that owns, operates and invests in the senior living sector. It is a wholly owned operating subsidiary of PSP Investments, which operates, develops and invests in senior housing facilities. Importantly, it is subject to the same rules as other businesses operating in the industry and its Canadian homes must be licensed or approved by applicable

provincial or territorial government bodies. As such, its services are subject to provincial regulations on the quality of care and services. It is also self-funded, meaning that it has its own sources of financing and prepares independent audited financial statements. Since it is a wholly owned operating subsidiary of PSP Investments registered under the Canada Business Corporation Act, it is not a part of the federal public administration.

Our government is taking concrete steps to help seniors in long-term care homes. In last September's Speech from the Throne, our government announced important measures aimed at doing just that and committed to working with the provinces and territories to set new national standards for long-term care, so we could ensure that seniors would be safe, respected and could live with dignity. We all want that. We are taking additional action to help seniors stay in their homes longer. We are pleased to work with Parliament on Criminal Code amendments to explicitly penalize those who neglect seniors under their care, putting them in danger.

In last fall's economic update, our government announced funding of up to \$1 billion to establish a safe long-term care fund to help provinces and territories protect people in long-term care and support infection prevention and control. More recently, we are seeing progress with vaccinations. Thousands of seniors in long-term care facilities across the country have received their first doses of vaccines, and many have already received their second.

This is not a partisan issue. Our NDP colleagues know that the responsibility of delivering and regulating long-term care falls to the province and territories. A motion that does not recognize this fact does not bring us closer to the national standards. To be successful—

● (1650)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

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Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my colleague a question specifically about the government's record on palliative care. Many people I have heard from are very frustrated by the fact the government has continually made commitments. There was a private member's bill from my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton, which passed with unanimous support, calling for a national framework. The government has not acted on or funded this. Opposition members from multiple parties, certainly from our caucus, have been talking about the need for appropriate funding for palliative care since prior to the pandemic. While the government has continued to pay lip service to that, it has failed to do anything on it.

I wonder if the member can account for the government's inaction on this.

• (1655)

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the member opposite spoke passionately about a way to support seniors.

We all know there have been tragic stories coming out of the private, public and not-for-profit homes. All providers need to be accountable for protecting those in long-term care. However, our focus is in getting seniors the care they need no matter where they live. That is why we all want a national standard, but in the right way.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. colleague talked about the government's role. I am a little alarmed that the government has become an expert at deflection, shirking and buck-passing. For example, the sexism occurring in the military was not its responsibility. The vaccination delays are the fault of the premiers. We have no pharmacare because the provinces are stalling.

Sometimes the government can not make up its mind. Just today I asked the government to take the profit out of long-term care. The minister lectured me that this was a provincial responsibility, but then proceeded to outline the Liberal commitment to national standards, training and wages in long-term care. Which is it?

Does my hon. colleague believe that the federal government can play a role in taking profit out of long-term care or does she think it is the responsibility of someone else?

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Madam Speaker, the member for Vancouver Kingsway and I work together on the health committee. I want to thank him for his passion.

Regardless of where seniors live, those living in long-term care deserve quality care and to be treated with dignity. I agree with that. We heard how the for-profit homes failed seniors from families and advocacy groups. All for-profit providers need to be accountable for protecting those in long-term care. I hear about vaccinated residents not able to see their loved ones still—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech, but it made me very confused.

During question period this afternoon, the Minister of Health said that it was the right and responsibility of Quebec and the provinces to deliver health care. If health care is Quebec's responsibility, how can this government now tell us that it wants to set national standards? The government cannot simply take that right; it has to do so through legislation.

I remind my colleague that sections 91 and 92 of the Constitution Act, 1867, state that health care is the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. I would like to know what the federal government can do that Quebec is not capable of doing. After all, the federal government does not run any hospitals and has no experience in delivering health care.

[English]

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Madam Speaker, we have worked with Quebec and the provinces and territories since 2015. Our government has made a historical investment to support health care for Canadians, including new target funding for provinces and territories. In 2020, our government provided almost \$41.9 billion cash support to the provinces and territories through the Canada health transfer. Over the next five years, the Canada health transfer funding to the provinces and territories is expected to total approximately \$235 billion.

I thank the member for his passion and agree that we need to do a lot, but we need to do it in the right way.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, in politics, it is imperative to speak truth to power. This is especially the case when matters of life and death are involved.

Today, I rise to speak this truth. Canada has utterly failed to protect vulnerable long-term care residents and workers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and this failure has cost the lives of thousands of Canadians.

According to the National Institute on Aging, 2,611 long-term care facilities and retirement homes across Canada have been ravaged by COVID-19 outbreaks. This has led to the deaths of 14,802 residents and 27 workers, representing 67% of all COVID-19 deaths in Canada to date. This is the worst record of any nation in the OECD. Worse, successive governments allowed this to happen with eyes wide open. Despite repeated warnings, we did not act in time to prevent or meaningfully abate this humanitarian disaster.

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During the first wave of this pandemic, more than 840 outbreaks were reported in long-term care facilities and retirement homes across Canada, accounting for more than 80% of all COVID-19 deaths in the country in the first six months. Again, this represented the worst record among all comparable nations and double the OECD average.

The situation was so dire that the Canadian Armed Forces had to be called in, and what they found was appalling. Residents were discovered underfed, abandoned and afraid. In some cases, they had been left to die alone in bed covered in their own urine and feces. These stories shocked our conscience and challenged our self-image as a compassionate and humane society. However, the shock quickly turned to outrage as Canadians learned that for-profit operators were paying out millions of dollars in dividends to their shareholders, while accepting public subsidies and neglecting the residents under their care.

Last fall, as Canada sat on the crest of a second wave of COVID-19, the federal government pledged to “work with the provinces and territories to set new, national standards for long-term care.” It also pledged to bring in “Criminal Code amendments to explicitly penalize those who neglect seniors under their care.”

Unfortunately, it has failed to make any meaningful progress on these commitments to date. As a result, the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be even deadlier than the first for long-term care and retirement home residents. In total, 7,470 residents succumbed to COVID-19 throughout the recent resurgence compared to 7,022 deaths during the first wave.

As Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. Theresa Tam, recently noted:

I think the tragedy and the massive lesson learned for everyone in Canada is that we were at every level, not able to protect our seniors, particularly those in long-term care homes. Even worse is that in that second wave, as we [were] warned of the resurgence, there was a repeat of the huge impact on that population.

There is simply no excuse for our country's repeated failure to act. This carnage was entirely foreseeable and avoidable. We must ensure this never happens again. If we cannot come together now to address the systemic deficiencies in Canada's long-term care system, when will we ever? COVID-19 has laid bare a fragmented and under-resourced long-term care system across Canada that is heavily reliant on for-profit—

• (1700)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I apologize to my hon. colleague, but I believe he failed to mention he will be splitting his time with the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay and I would like to provide him with the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, I should have said that at the beginning. Yes, I will be splitting my time accordingly.

Several studies conducted throughout the pandemic have found that outbreaks at for-profit facilities have been more extensive and have led to more resident deaths. Indeed, decades of research have demonstrated that long-term care facilities run on a for-profit basis tend to have lower staffing levels, more verified complaints, more transfers of residents to hospitals and higher morbidity rates. This should come as no surprise since for-profit management practices

are designed to generate returns for investors rather than provide high-quality care. These include paying the lowest wages possible and hiring part-time casual workers and those defined as self-employed in order to avoid paying benefits or providing other protections.

These workers often cannot afford to stay home when they are sick and can carry infections from facility to facility, as we learned was so deadly. For-profit models incentivize and reward cost-cutting. Indeed, we have heard countless stories of for-profit operators locking up personal protective equipment, leaving staff exposed, and rationing vital items like soil pads for incontinent seniors.

A recent review of the contracted long-term care sector in British Columbia, titled “A Billion Reasons to Care”, found that while receiving, on average, the same level of public funding, there is a pattern in the contracted long-term care sector for-profit operators paying lower wages, with care aides in for-profit facilities being paid up to 28% or \$6.63 less per hour than the industry standard. Not-for-profit care homes spend \$10,000 or 24% more per year on care for each resident compared with for-profit facilities, and for-profit care homes failed to deliver 207,000 funded direct care hours per year, whereas not-for-profit care homes deliver 80,000 hours of direct care beyond what they were publicly funded to deliver.

New Democrats believe that every dollar that flows to long-term care should be spent on residents, not siphoned off for corporate profits and shareholder dividends. We know that health care is best delivered through a non-profit model, both on health and access grounds. Research clearly demonstrates a systemic pattern of lower-quality care in for-profit care homes, while there is little, if any, evidence demonstrating benefits from providing public funding to for-profit facilities.

That is why the NDP motion before the House today calls on the federal government to implement national standards for long-term care that fully removes profit from the sector. New Democrats know that this will not be accomplished overnight. However, with federal leadership, we believe it will be possible to transition all for-profit facilities in Canada to not-for-profit management by 2030.

As a first step, New Democrats are calling on the federal government to work with the provinces and territories to freeze licensing of new for-profit facilities and to ensure that measures are in place to keep all existing beds open during the transition. After decades of underfunding and cuts in Canada's long-term care sector, this strategy must be backed up by significant new federal funding tied to binding national standards of care and the principles enshrined in the Canada Health Act.

The Conference Board of Canada estimates that an additional 200,000 long-term care beds will be needed across Canada by 2035, requiring \$64 billion in capital spending and \$130 billion in operating spending. However, the Conference Board's cost-benefit analysis found that the benefits of these new beds would be greater than the costs, even without considering the improved health outcomes. In fact, these investments are projected to have a positive impact on the economy, contributing a net \$235 billion to real GDP and supporting 120,000 jobs every year. Similarly, the demand for nurses to provide continuing care for seniors would create an increase of nearly 80,000 full-time jobs.

Simply put, our parents and grandparents built this country. They sheltered and nurtured us when we were young and vulnerable. In turn, we have a duty to take care of them as they age, but COVID-19 has revealed a bitter truth: We have abandoned this responsibility as a country. Let no one claim that we do not understand the consequences of this collective neglect. It is time to make this right. I ask every colleague in the House to join New Democrats today to start the work to do so.

• (1705)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our New Democrat colleagues have been asked throughout the day whether any consultation or buy-in exists from the provinces. As we know, legislation like this would have a massive impact on provincial jurisdiction, so when we bring forward stuff like this, we really need to make sure that a buy-in is there.

Every time the question has been asked, New Democrats just come back and answer it by saying that they know we can do things without the provinces, because the provinces will come onboard. We just have to give them the time. We have to bring this forward and then they will come onboard.

However, New Democrats are neglecting to answer the question. The question is this: Has there been any consultation with the provinces and have they provided any feedback on this particular motion the New Democrats have brought to the House today? Can the member answer with a “yes” or “no” as to whether consultation was done with the provinces, and what is their feedback?

• (1710)

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, as my hon. colleague well knows, this is a motion brought before the House that calls on the Liberals to commit to a principle. The principle we are asking the Liberals to determine today is whether they do or do not believe that we should be making profits off the care of our seniors. That is the question before the House today.

Once we know the government is committed to that, then we need national leadership backed up by \$5 billion in funding tied to

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the provinces and territories agreeing to meet national standards. This member well knows that his government committed to national standards six months ago, but has yet to do a single thing about it. This motion is calling for a clear commitment to move this file forward and the first—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Vancouver Kingsway for his speech.

As I understand it, the NDP motion targets primarily private centres to ensure that they do not have an unfair advantage. However, health being a provincial matter, does my colleague not think that problems at long-term care homes are caused mostly by the health transfer imbalance?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, the member is right that it really is a multi-faceted problem. We need more resources, both financially and otherwise, and an improvement in standards. When we talk about national standards, we are talking about things like making sure there is a minimum number of care hours per day per resident and that there is a minimum ratio of care aides to patients. We would tie the federal funds to provinces that agree to meet those standards while finding their own local solutions and recognizing that there may be many pathways to meeting those standards.

There is a wide diversity in care, and surely we can make sure that every senior in this country has access to minimum standards of care backed up by the federal government. That is what we are asking the Liberal government to do today.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have heard again and again that women have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Women perform some of the major roles within long-term care. They are those care providers.

Could the member talk about the fact that women are often underpaid in these roles? What would removing for-profit care within long-term care do to help women in this sector?

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, this gives me a chance to thank the member for London—Fanshawe for her tenacious advocacy on behalf of women in this country. There is an incredible gender aspect to this issue today. It is a heavily gendered workforce. It is a heavily racialized workforce. Most care is provided by women and women of colour. Of course, most of the seniors are women.

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We have a government that constantly claims to be a feminist government, but when we call on it to act by taking concrete measures that would actually be of tangible benefit to improving the lives of women, it balks. I was shocked at the comments by the hon. colleague from Brampton South, who talked about the need to preserve profits, as opposed to our passing this motion that would make tangible improvements for women and seniors everywhere across this country. It is time to put them first, not the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank the member for Vancouver Kingsway not only for sharing his time with me today, but also for spearheading this very important NDP motion on why it is essential that we take the profit out of Canada's long-term care sector.

I want to pay my respects to the thousands of Canadians who have died in the last year in long-term care, the most vulnerable victims of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, I would like to say a heartfelt thanks to all of the workers in long-term care in Canada. These caregivers, cleaners and other staff have worked in very difficult conditions for the past year. They have been at the front of the front lines. Many have come down with COVID themselves and, tragically, some have lost their lives. This is hard work. It is stressful work and it is done by people who truly care for the people they work for. I want to make it crystal clear from the start that these workers are not the problem in the long-term care crisis. They are working as hard as they can to make the best of what is an almost impossible situation.

We hear a lot about the ravages of the pandemic in care homes in Ontario and Quebec, but the pandemic has hit long-term care facilities across the country. In my riding, McKinney Place Extended Care in Oliver was home to 59 residents. Fifty-five of them contracted the virus, as well as 23 staff members. Seventeen residents died before the outbreak was declared over in mid-January. In the nearby Sunnybank Retirement Centre facility, 27 residents, 10 staff and one essential visitor contracted COVID; and six residents died in that outbreak. Across Canada, 42%, or almost half, of Canada's long-term care homes have experienced COVID outbreaks. Those outbreaks represent about 80% of the deaths from this pandemic in Canada.

The fact is that our most vulnerable citizens found themselves in situations from which they could not escape. They were often being cared for by people who were paid so little and given such minimal shift times that they had to work in two or three care homes to make a living. Despite all of the precautions within the homes, some of these workers inadvertently passed the virus from one facility to another.

A recent article by Paul Webster in *The Lancet*, the world's most respected medical journal, puts a lot of this into perspective. Webster reports that Canada had the worst record of fatalities in long-term care homes for any wealthy country in the world, a situation that many called a national disgrace. He cited Pat Armstrong, a sociologist at York University in Toronto, who has studied Canada's

long-term care facilities for almost 30 years, in saying that this terrible record comes from the historical decision to exclude long-term care facilities from Canada's public health system. Armstrong pointed out that "This has resulted in under-training and poor treatment of workers, substandard and ageing facilities, overcrowding, and poor infection control capabilities."

Armstrong also found out that there is a lot of evidence to support the contention that privately owned facilities supply lower-quality care in Canada, and that there should be much more government oversight of all facilities. Indeed, researchers from Toronto's Mount Sinai Hospital found that, on average, privately owned care homes in Ontario delivered inferior care and had higher rates of death during the pandemic. These problems existed before the pandemic, and have simply been exacerbated by the ravages of COVID.

In 2013, eight years ago, I met with a family who had lost both their mother and father to substandard care at a privately owned care home in Summerland, British Columbia. After their concerns became public, the province investigated and found that staffing levels at the facility were far too low. Months later, the company that owned the facility, Retirement Concepts, reported that it was trying to hire more staff but was having trouble filling those new positions. As Mike Old of the Hospital Employees' Union has said, Retirement Concepts is known for paying low wages and that has resulted in chronic under staffing at many of its facilities.

Retirement Concepts operates 17 facilities in B.C., two in Alberta and one in Quebec. In 2016, Retirement Concepts was sold to Anbang Insurance Group of China for more than \$1 billion. Since then, problems at Retirement Concepts homes seem only to have gotten worse. In the last two years, the operation of its properties in Courtenay, Nanaimo and Victoria was taken over by the provincial health authority, and last year the Summerland facility joined that list, all because care levels were inadequate, mostly due to under-staffing.

• (1715)

Retirement Concepts is not alone in understaffing problems. A mother of a good friend of mine moved into a long-term care home in Penticton when she could no longer take care of herself. My friend reported that the staff was hard-working and attentive, but completely overworked. There was always a "now hiring" sign out front. Apparently the home could not afford to pay workers as much as the local hospital, and so it was constantly losing the most experienced staff whenever a job opened up at that hospital.

I remember visiting that facility in 2015, six years ago, and talking to the staff about working conditions. I was shocked to find out that some of the staff had worked there for 20 years but were making less money in 2015 than they were making when they started in 1995. No wonder they were tempted to leave whenever they could.

One last story about care in a for-profit home is about Louise, a constituent of mine. Her brother was living in a care home in Ontario run by Revera, another big company, but one owned by the Public Sector Pension Investment Board, the Crown corporation that manages public service pensions. Louise praises the staff at the care home. Her brother died suddenly last May, apparently not from COVID, and when Louise heard the sad news, she asked the staff if there was anything she needed to do to alert the Revera office about her brother's death and was told no. Imagine her surprise when she was later charged not only for the May rent but also for June and half of July. Being charged for months not used at \$5,000 a month is not the news one likes to hear after the death of a loved one, but it is indicative of the profit motive that these privately owned care homes have.

We must take the profit out of long-term care facilities. Because Revera is owned by a Crown corporation, it could and should be the first step in government action. Yes, we need better national standards for care homes, but that by itself will not fix the situation. Every province has minimum standards, but they are not being met, as the examples I have just gone through have shown, and they are not being met because of the pressure to maintain profits for shareholders.

Canadians want to get the profit out of long-term care. An Abacus poll in May found that 86% of Canadians are in favour of bringing long-term care facilities into the Canada Health Act.

Our parents and grandparents deserve to live in dignity in the last years of their lives. They should not be warehoused in facilities where the number one priority of management is not their mental and physical health but the financial benefit to shareholders.

We can change this. We must create a long-term care system in which both workers and residents are valued, a system that would get rid of the fear that most of us have about moving into a care home in our last years, and the first step to building that new system is to take the profit out of long-term care.

• (1720)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to the discussion today and I think it is safe to say that all members in this House, or at least those who have spoken, recognize the fact that something has to be done differently. Most are talking about national long-term care standards, and I think it is extremely important that we look towards ways the federal government can work with our provincial partners to do something significant when it comes to taking care of the elderly in Canada.

My problem with the motion before us is that it says, "The House call upon the government to ensure that national standards for long-term care which are currently being developed fully remove profit from the sector". National standards, at least the way I see them, if I can equate them to something like the building code,

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are standards that are established and then put forward to be adopted by provinces throughout the country, but the motion is calling for profit to be fully removed. I feel that the motion is not in the right place, because it is asking to fully remove the profit, to put something in there that would not be recommendations given to the provinces.

Can the member explain to me where the language for this motion is coming from when it comes to putting these enforceable measures into something that would just be standards?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, first of all, as I said in my speech, national standards are important, but by themselves they are not sufficient to build a better system of long-term care. We need to provide the funding to provinces to develop that system, but we are not going to give the funding, \$5 billion, without standards. It is like our Canada Health Act. The federal government provides funding to the provinces to create the medical system that we use, but there are standards, and that is where I think we need to work with—

• (1725)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

Does he feel that, if the Canadian government agrees to our colleagues' demands, that could result in a paternalistic approach? It would not necessarily help retain staff. The only way to limit staff retention is for the government to agree to the premiers' demands to increase health transfers. What does he think of that?

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I think the Bloc knows full well that the NDP is right behind them in demanding more health transfer money to make sure that our health care system is the best that it can be. It has been falling behind over the past few years under both Conservative and Liberal governments, and we have to increase funding. This would be another example of it. Let us put more funding into long-term care and make sure the standards we all believe in are met so that our senior citizens can live in dignity.

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Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a deep concern about this. I know where the member is coming from when he talks about overarching goals and providing a level of service to seniors. Where I live in central Newfoundland, we have 10 to 15 seniors homes that are level one and level two. They are privately delivered. However, this is not so much about the for-profit part; it is about the for-service part. Some of these places actually provide a substantial service. They are of good quality. They have a long waiting list and they do well by the clients they provide a service for.

I am not going to focus on the provinces so much, but I have a very specific question about the short term. What does the NDP hope to accomplish by taking these private institutions out of the sector altogether? This is going to be a huge thing for the people who are providing a fairly good service. That is what I am concerned about.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I made sure to say “on average”. Some of the for-profit centres are doing good work and people are not being left behind, but on average, many bring down the level of service. The poor service those people are getting is really shocking. That is what we want to take out.

In the short term, we are saying let us do it in the next 10 years. Let us take 10 years and gradually move those—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is no surprise that I want to speak on this item, and not only in my new role. I and several of my colleagues have been discussing the conditions in long-term care homes and are outraged by them. My riding in particular was hit very hard, with over 70 residents passing away from COVID in the first wave at Orchard Villa, and we saw, even after the second wave, a continuation of our community members getting sick and dying.

We also saw the horrible conditions. My riding was one of the ridings that had the Canadian Armed Forces in their long-term care homes, and we had to read about the unbelievably deplorable conditions that our community members and elders had been left in. Families were feeling helpless and hopeless about being able to provide their family members with care and to be able to be there with them.

We had been advocating support for provinces and territories and for national standards in long-term care and talking about those needs, and those are things I continue to advocate to this day. I was really pleased, along with my colleagues, when I saw the Prime Minister in the Speech from the Throne recognize and acknowledge moving forward with national standards on long-term care, and then that was backed up again in the fall economic statement by providing a \$1-billion safe long-term care fund.

Unfortunately, opposition members have been holding up Bill C-14—

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I hate to interrupt the parliamentary secretary and I congratulate her on her new role, but I think she forgot to mention that she would be sharing her time with the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge. Maybe she wants to take the opportunity to do that.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the reminder. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

It is imperative that Bill C-14 and the fall economic statement make it through the House. If members are supportive of creating better conditions in long-term care homes, then they need to support and work with us so we can provide \$1 billion that will do just that.

I agree that we do need to look at profit models in long-term care homes. Like my hon. colleague who asked at question in the last round, I have family in Newfoundland. There are private long-term care homes there. My family members talk about how incredible they are as is the service that is provided.

I worry about a motion like this, with a one-size-fits-all approach. I come from Ontario where we were very hard hit with the lack of protections for our seniors. With a one-size-fits-all approach, what happens in other provinces and territories that do not have the same conditions, that have homes where the level of service is quite high?

I support looking at the idea of how we change funding models to ensure that service is at the core of what is being offered in our communities, that any federal funding or government supports is actually going to services and not just to the profits of shareholders. I think this is a fundamental approach with which we could all.

However, what I take exception to in this motion is that it feels like the NDP wants to move forward with policies written on the back of a napkin. There is no background. This motion is not based on evidence or what happens after. We have not looked at how we take the profit model and turn it into a service model or what will happen with the facilities? Would these operators just close up and leave these seniors homeless? Would they get passed on to municipalities and the public service? How would municipalities absorb that?

While I support the idea of looking at ensuring our standards are increased, I cannot get behind a motion that essentially creates a blanket approach, without looking at what would happen to our seniors. Our seniors deserve a policy that is thoughtful, one we can all understand and one that can be worked on with provinces and territories to ensure the delivery and the outcomes we want are delivered.

What we have seen from the government has been reaction and support. There has been a lot of accusations around the federal government claiming that it is not its responsibility. We have stepped up. We have provided \$19 billion for the safe restart agreement, which was to help long-term care homes. In my home province of Ontario, the federal government provided funds and supports to the Government of Ontario to prepare for the second wave. These funds went unspent. These funds did not make it into the long-term care homes to protect our community members. Instead, the funds sat there.

We need standards to ensure that every Canadian across the country can access the same level of care, no matter where they live, that Canadians can hold provinces and territories accountable if they do not live up to those standards and that the funding is set up to hold these service providers accountable.

• (1735)

In my community, we saw PPE under lock and key. That is absolutely outrageous, but the federal government was there to support these community members. We also invested in increasing wages for workers, but if provinces and territories do not move forward with legislation, then we do not see changes. This is why it is critically important.

The member for Kingston and the Islands continues to ask about consultation with provinces and territories and has yet to receive an answer. This is crucial because families deserve to know that if we are going to move forward on a policy, it can actually be enacted. If we were to pass this NDP motion without any details of how it would impact our communities and family members, if a province said it was not going to pass legislation that would change the funding model, then what would happen?

It is absolutely disingenuous to say that one wants to support seniors and increase standards in long-term care and then come forward with a motion that is nothing but optics and would do nothing to actually create the change we need to see. We need to see changes in infrastructure and national standards to ensure that every Canadian across this country gets a standard of care, and stop playing politics with seniors' lives and move forward on policies that would actually make a difference in this country.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay talked about Chinese state-owned Anbang taking over Retirement Concepts and the Liberal government rubber-stamping that sale.

We saw the deterioration of service in retirement homes in my riding of Courtenay, and evidence is clear that across Canada that, even before the pandemic, for-profit long-term care homes led to worse outcomes for residents and staff alike. The pandemic has made the differences even clearer. Companies operating for-profit care homes across Canada made hundreds of millions of dollars this year and paid them out to shareholders, even to state-owned companies.

Does my colleague not agree that every single one of those dollars could and should have gone to improving care and making residents and staff safer in communities like the ones I represent. Parksville and Qualicum have the highest median age in the coun-

try and there are lots of private care homes. Does my colleague not agree that money should be there improving care and making residents and their staff safer?

• (1740)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree that funding needs to go to service levels. What I disagree with, again, is the NDP coming forward with policies written on the back of a napkin that would not achieve the outcomes they genuinely want to see.

We cannot say that about every single for-profit provider. We heard examples from my colleague from Newfoundland, where service levels are quite high.

We need to look at this with a holistic approach to service standards. I agree that funding should go into services, but we need to do this with a holistic approach to ensure that seniors receive high-quality care and there are no unintended consequences from an ill-proposed policy by the NDP

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but think that what just transpired was a little arrogant. As if a parliamentarian would write proposals on the back of napkin. I have no desire to get mixed up in all that.

I thought it was especially arrogant when my colleague said in her speech that the provinces are incapable of providing services, that they need to take action and do things properly, that only the Canadian government is capable of doing things and knows how to do them.

All the provinces have come out against national standards for long-term care facilities. The Quebec National Assembly even passed a unanimous motion to condemn these national standards and demand health transfers instead. That was the federal government's job, and it was never done.

I will therefore ask my hon. colleague the following: Does she consider the motion unanimously passed in the National Assembly to be valid, the motion condemning the national standards for long-term care centres and calling for health transfers?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, the member can call me whatever names he wants. I will not apologize for being forceful and speaking up. Over 70 residents in my community died because we do not have national standards. We have national standards for buildings, but not for seniors.

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Let me correct the record. Not every province has said it does not support national standards. In fact, provinces have come forward saying they agree. They want to see standards for seniors. They do not ever want to see Canada live through a tragedy like this again, and they want to work with us to see what those standards are. If buildings can have national standards, I think our seniors deserve that as well.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her speech and congratulate her in her new role.

We in the Green Party have been very active on this issue. Our leader Annamie Paul lost her father in one of these long-term care homes. It was an avoidable death, like so many deaths across this country. We have the highest record of deaths in the OECD. It is an appalling record to have. We had a long-term care facility in my riding that was sold to Anbang Insurance Group, a foreign owner. That sale was approved by the government.

From the experts we have talked to, we have heard about getting a basic care guarantee, so every person in one of these long-term care facilities has a minimum of four hours of care. Does the hon. member think we should have a national long-term care act so we can set standards across this country and deal with—

The Deputy Speaker: We have time for a quick answer.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his kind words.

I think we need to fully study and be open to the idea of having national standards, whether through an official act or some sort of standardized system. I agree our system needs to be based on a standard of care. I think seniors and our loved ones need to be at the centre of these policies, but we need to bring the experts to the table to determine whether it is hours of work, a living wage for these workers or infrastructure improvements. There are a variety of things that need to be changed, including funding models. However, it needs to be looked at in a complete package. That is why I am going to continue to push for national standards.

I thank my colleague for his advocacy on this as well.

• (1745)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue for my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge and for me. Much like many of my colleagues across this beautiful country, many of the individuals in my riding who reside in long-term care facilities were impacted.

I first want to thank the Canadian Armed Forces members who assisted at Woodbridge Vista: one of the long-term care facilities in my riding where, unfortunately, many residents passed away. I want to thank the Canadian Armed Forces for going in and assisting the staff there and getting things under control. I also want to thank William Osler Health System. It managed the Woodbridge Vista facility for a period of time. The same thing happened at Villa Gambin: the CAF did not go in there, but assistance was required.

We want our seniors to be taken care of. These seniors literally built this country. They are in their 80s and 90s. They toiled away building the beautiful cities and towns we live in and made Canada what it is. We owe it to them to do the right thing. We owe it to them to take care of them.

We know in Ontario, approximately 70% of the seniors in long-term care facilities suffer from dementia, Alzheimer's or a related condition. We know that they are there. They need to be safe, they need to be healthy and they need to be protected. We need to ensure that.

What went on in the early stages of the pandemic was horrifying for Canadians across the country in terms of the death toll, how people passed away and how people could not see loved ones. These are our seniors we are talking about. They are some of our most vulnerable citizens. We know we need to do better, and I wish to thank the Canadian Armed Forces again, the Canadian Red Cross and the individuals who have gone in and assisted.

Our government has stepped up to the plate by working with the provinces. That is very important. Whether it is with the government of Quebec, Ontario or whichever province, we have been there to assist with things such as the safe restart agreement and \$740 million to purchase PPE. We have been there to work with the provinces and we will continue to do that.

I am very respectful of this. We have a fiscal federation in Canada. There are certain responsibilities the federal government has and responsibilities the provinces have. Those responsibilities include the delivery of services. With the Canada health transfer, we have transferred literally billions of dollars to the provinces. We did that, but at the same time, the provinces are still the majority funders of health care, specifically in the province of Ontario. We need to recognize that.

I believe in national standards. We need to bring them in, but we must do so in a way that co-operates with each province. We can only do that as such. That is the way our system is built. That is the way we have built such a great country and we will continue to do so. We have seen that co-operation.

I know the Province of Ontario is committed to investing over \$2 billion per year into long-term care facilities, hiring 27,000 PSWs over the next four years and committing to a gold level standard of four hours of care for each person residing in a long-term care facility. We need to make sure that is implemented.

I appreciate the NDP's motion today and the member who brought it forward. I wish to speak to the fact that we have a system in place in this country. Yes, there are for-profit operators of long-term care, there are municipal operators of long-term care and there are provincial operators. Each model has its shortcomings and each model has its strengths.

We have seen many long-term care facilities managed for-profit. On average, they have not performed as well as others. That is a fact. However, some of them performed decently. I know the NDP would like to nationalize everything. They would like to nationalize all parts of the economy. Sometimes, it sounds like the NDP cannot even support a trade agreement with the United Kingdom, or CETA or the USMCA. Even when people like Jerry Dias step forward and say we need to support these trade deals, the NDP members still cannot bring themselves to support them.

I would like to go back to comments related to this motion and what is in the motion, specifically with regard to PSP Investments. As well-intentioned as this motion is, I would argue that the first part of it, which seeks to bring Revera under public ownership, is not the right solution to this important issue.

With my time here today, I think it will be helpful to explain the government's role, or lack thereof, in this context. First, allow me to provide a bit of background. We, as Canadians, believe in having a secure and dignified retirement for all Canadians. That is why we enhanced the CPP in our first term in government. That is why we have committed to increasing OAS by 10%.

However, we also have a number of pension funds in this country and one of them is PSP Investments. PSP Investments is mandated to manage the pension contributions of the public service, including the Canadian Armed Forces and Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It is mandated to manage these pension plans and capital markets in the best interests of the contributors and beneficiaries of those respective plans. PSP reports to Parliament through the President of the Treasury Board, who is responsible for its legislation. The organization includes certain information about Revera in its annual reports.

• (1750)

Under the Public Sector Pension Investment Board Act, the President of the Treasury Board is responsible for establishing a nominating committee. Its mandate is to establish a list of qualified candidates for the proposed appointment of director of the independent board of PSP Investments. Based on the nominating committee's selection, the President of the Treasury Board makes a recommendation for appointment to the Governor in Council. It is an important distinction. The fact is that PSP Investments is not part of the federal public administration. It is not a government department or agency of the Crown. It does not receive parliamentary appropriations. It is not part of the public administration of Canada.

PSP Investments is a non-agent Crown corporation that operates at arm's length from the Government of Canada. That is a very important point to make to my colleagues who wish to nationalize everything, like those in the NDP. PSP Investments needs to operate and needs to invest its dollars for the benefit of its members. Who are these members? They are union members. They are public sector employees, whether RCMP members, Canadian Armed Forces

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members or others. The list goes on. They can pull the reports off the website and see that there are literally hundreds of thousands of current beneficiaries and also what are called persons making contributions, or contributory.

Part of the motion brought forth by my hon. colleague asks the government to interfere in the investment decisions and strategy of this fund in order to make one long-term care group, namely Revera, public. It implies that the Government of Canada has the authority to enact such a process. However, the fact is that PSP Investments is intentionally structured to be at arm's length from the government, and thankfully so. That is the right way it should be. This ensures its independent and non-partisan role. PSP Investments must be, and is, responsible for its own investment decisions.

The President of the Treasury Board therefore does not have the authority to issue investment direction, nor can he force PSP Investments to sell or transfer ownership of any of its assets. The organization's investment decisions are not influenced by political direction; regional, social or economic development considerations; or any non-investment objectives. In fact, such kinds of interference would put PSP Investments at a competitive disadvantage, which could impact its ability to achieve its legislated mandate.

This limitation also extends to Revera Inc., which as my Liberal colleague well knows, is a private company that owns properties in, operates in and invests in the senior living sector. It is a wholly owned operating subsidiary of PSP Investments that operates, develops and invests in senior housing facilities. Through its portfolio partnership, Revera owns and operates more than 500 properties across Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. Importantly, it is subject to the same rules as other businesses operating in the industry. Its Canadian residences must be licensed or approved by applicable provincial and territorial government bodies. As such, its services are subject to provincial regulations on the quality of care and services.

That in no way means that I am not in favour of national standards. I am in favour of national standards. Our seniors need to live in a secure, safe environment. The last few years of their lives need to be dignified. We all know that and we all want that as parliamentarians. I do not think there is any disagreement there.

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Revera is also self-funded, meaning that it has its own source of financing and prepares independently audited financial statements. Since it is a wholly owned operating subsidiary of PSP Investments, registered under the Canada Business Corporations Act, it is not part of the federal public administration.

Our government has committed, as we saw in the September Speech from the Throne, to ensuring that our seniors are taken care of. We want to make sure that people entering retirement have a safe, secure and dignified retirement. We want to make sure seniors who need to be transferred to a long-term care facility are healthy, safe, secure and protected.

It is great to see that the vaccines are out. It is great to see that in the province of Ontario specifically, to my knowledge, the number of deaths in long-term care facilities has actually diminished to near zero and in some days has registered zero.

• (1755)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am really disappointed to hear my colleague call out the NDP for wanting to nationalize seniors care. This is about taking care of our seniors.

We can remember when the Liberal government rubber-stamped the sale of Retirement Concepts for \$1 billion to Anbang, the Chinese-state owned company. I know, from my riding in Courtenay, what happened. I love the question by my colleague from Chilliwack—Hope: “Are seniors about to find out that their landlord is actually the People’s Republic of China?”

I will tell the House how it turned out. It was so bad that in February 2020, the retirement home in Courtenay was taken over by the province because it failed to provide proper care for those very same seniors we are talking about protecting and bringing under the umbrella of universal health care.

Do my colleague and his party regret approving the sale of Retirement Concepts to the Chinese-state owned company that failed to provide proper care for seniors in my riding and across this country? Does he regret that, or does he stand by the Liberal position of supporting private care when it comes to our seniors, which has clearly failed? We saw that throughout this whole pandemic.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I hear the question, loud and clear.

All operators of long-term care facilities, much like with the safety standards we put in place for food, building codes, cars imported into Canada and operated, need to uphold those standards.

With regard to the Investment Canada Act, when foreign corporations wish to invest in Canada and purchase assets or do anything of the such, they need to be held to very high standards. We need to make sure those standards are always enforced.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge thanked the previous questioner for the question and said he thought it was an important one, but he did not answer it. I will give him a second chance to say whether he regrets the unfortunate decision on Anbang?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I have worked with the member extensively over the years on the finance committee and appreciate his response.

All entities investing in Canada should always be held to the highest of standards. We need to enforce those standards and make sure that we do so all the time.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member and I served together on the public accounts committee.

As I was listening to his discussion of third party oversight, I was thinking about the Office of the Auditor General in Canada, as well as the offices of auditors general across Canada, and the role of third party oversight of government expenditures to see that action items are being implemented and implemented effectively.

Could the hon. member comment on how there is an accountability piece built into our own government, as well as governments across the country?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on getting his vaccine shot over the weekend. It is awesome. Let us get more jabs into the arms of Canadians. It is great to see.

There are mechanisms, and the Auditor General's office is one of those very important agencies within the federal government that provides oversight and auditing of many institutions. It is very important that it continue that job.

With regard to further analysis and details, when it comes to long-term care facilities, I would repeat that national standards are one of those components. We need to have a multi-pillar approach to ensuring that seniors residing in long-term care facilities are safe and secure, have their dignity and are protected.

• (1800)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to point out the enormous irony of my colleague telling us, on the one hand, that the NDP, through its motion, is interfering in the affairs of PSP Investments and Revera, and on the other hand, that we need national standards, when standards would be the worst example of interference in provincial jurisdictions. My ears practically started bleeding when I heard that. Can he explain that to me?

[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I would like to state for the hon. member from the Bloc Québécois that I believe in the fiscal federation. I believe in respecting the rights of the provinces, but also in working with the provinces to ensure that Canadians who reside in long-term care facilities, whether in Quebec or Ontario, have standards we can be confident about and that are comparable.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate having this opportunity to participate in today's debate on behalf of the good people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. I have been listening to the debate throughout the day. It has certainly been, at times, very frustrating to listen to. We have taken this opportunity to identify a clear problem. We know the solutions that are out there, but we still seem plagued by the government's inertia to actually step up and do the right thing.

I want to start by expressing one very key point, which is that our parents and grandparents built this country. Whether they were born here or they immigrated here, this country is the way it is today, with all of its strengths, because of the work they put in. As they age, they deserve to live in comfort, dignity and safety. However, because of decades of cuts, underfunding and privatization, our continuing care system, our long-term care homes system, is broken.

This pandemic has very much revealed so many shortcomings in our society. It has shown the precariousness of work. It has shown where the gaps are in our social safety net. It has shown how vulnerable workers, those with the most to lose, are often at the front lines of the pandemic. They have most often been the ones at risk of both contracting COVID-19 and of bringing it home and spreading it to their loved ones. We really need to take a hard look at ourselves as a country and make some notes of what went wrong, and most important, how we can improve.

We have seen the cost of government inaction and neglect. We have seen the devastating loss of loved ones in long-term care centres across the country. In fact, it was so devastating that we actually had to send in the army to help out. The reports that emerged from those interventions were absolutely shocking. We had army medical staff finding residents who were dehydrated, who were starving, and who were left lying in their own feces and urine. There were residents who had fallen on the floor and could not get up, and some who had passed away in their beds with no one noticing. We have utterly failed to protect long-term care residents and workers through this pandemic, and it is absolutely a national disgrace. We owe our seniors so much more.

Today, New Democrats are using our one opposition day in this supply cycle to highlight the sorry state of our long-term care system and the fact that 82% of COVID deaths in Canada happened in long-term care, the highest proportion in the OECD. There have been over 12,000 long-term care resident and worker deaths in Canada since the beginning of the pandemic.

By acknowledging these incontrovertible facts, we are calling on the House today to take action. This is an opinion of the House. The House is calling on the government to take action. We want to see the transition of all for-profit models to non-profit models by the year 2030. We want to see our federal government working with the provinces and territories to stop licensing any new for-profit care facilities. We want to make sure that measures are in place to keep all existing beds open during that transition. We also want to see an additional \$5 billion invested over the next four years in long-term care, and we want that funding tied to the principles of the Canada Health Act. We want to boost the number of not-for-profit homes.

Business of Supply

There is a very clear precedent in what we are trying to do. In fact, our public health care system is based on this type of federal leadership. When we look at the for-profit model, unfortunately the facts are there for everyone to see. It is impossible for us to argue with them. This has been documented in the news. We have heard the harrowing stories of families who have had to deal with the loss of a loved one in a long-term care facilities, of the grandparents whom grandchildren are no longer going to see, and of the entirely avoidable deaths.

● (1805)

For-profit homes have seen, tragically, worse results than other homes. They have had far more deadlier COVID outbreaks. At the same time, we see these big, for-profit operators getting public subsidies, like the Canada emergency wage subsidy, though I acknowledge it is an important measure in this pandemic and has helped many workers keep their jobs. However, when we have a large corporation taking the wage subsidy while paying out dividends to its shareholders and also experiencing this loss of life, that, to me, goes against the spirit of the COVID interventions that our federal government is providing. It is a part of this national disgrace, and we need to have a full reckoning of how that money was spent.

Research has shown that the homes run on a for-profit basis tend to have lower staffing levels, more verified complaints, more transfers of residents to hospitals as well as higher rates for both ulcers and morbidity. This is the fundamental problem here, because when we come to this relationship between profit and care, I think that care is always going to lose out, because shareholders need their dividends, executives need their pay increases and stocks need to climb in value. When it comes to making a profit, it is a fact that private enterprises are going to be managing these facilities with an eye for what they call "efficiencies". These efficiencies are usually found with the chronic understaffing, low worker pay, reduced investments in equipment and so on. When it comes to profit and to care, I am sorry, but those two concepts do not belong in the same sentence together. I believe that national standards could include basic references to the standards of care that we want to see in our facilities, including in employee health and well-being and pay.

I have been listening to today's debate, and I hear my Liberal colleagues repeatedly falling over themselves to find a reason to vote against the motion. What they often bring up is provincial jurisdiction. We all acknowledge provincial jurisdiction in the delivery of health care services, but there are ways to show federal leadership.

Business of Supply

I believe that the Liberals' motto these days when it comes to bold, innovative leadership on the health care file is: Why go all the way when we can go only go half the way? We saw that with their vote against Bill C-213, brought in by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, on something that was based on their own report and that would follow the principles of the Canada Health Act. We have another proposal to bring forward on national dental care. Here we are using our opposition day motion to propose some basic standards for long-term care homes in the for-profit model.

When we look at the Canada Health Act, it very clearly recognizes provincial jurisdiction, but it puts in place basic principles for provinces to comply with if they want those federal transfer funds, and we are proposing something similar for long-term care. We already have the principle of public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability and accessibility, and no one argues about those principles anymore. They are an enshrined part of our health care system, fully recognizing the provincial jurisdiction over health care delivery, but also recognizing that the federal government can play a leadership role with its power of the purse. I remain disappointed in my Liberal colleagues for finding yet another way to vote against a bold proposal when it comes to health care, because health care is top of mind for so many Canadians today, whether it is pharmacare, dental care or serious reform of our long-term care system.

I will conclude by saying that families really want to know that their loved ones are getting the best possible care. If we poll Canadians, we will see an overwhelming majority of Canadians in favour of bringing long-term care facilities under the jurisdiction of the Canada Health Act. An overwhelming number of Canadians want to see government investments to rebuild health care and other public services that were previously cut. We have promised Canadians that our seniors are going to have safe and dignified care, and that families will know that their loved ones will have the care they deserve with proper standards in place.

I appreciate the opportunity to have taken part in today's debate, and I welcome any questions.

● (1810)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, if I have let down my colleague by asking questions about this motion and trying to scrutinize it. The reality is that New Democrats are doing what they did with a number of issues. They oversimplify them, write them down on the back of a napkin, as has been suggested earlier, and then bring them forward without doing any of the work, such as talking to provinces or figuring out what the effects will be. I am in favour of getting profit out of long-term care. I have stood in the House and said it on a number of occasions already. We need to do something significant. I just cannot support a motion that comes to us in the form of having absolutely no background from a data-driven perspective.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I kind of chuckle at the member for Kingston and the Islands. I have heard his interventions all day long. Let me be very clear. This is not legislation. This is not even detailed policy. This is a motion of the House of Commons and it is simply asking members of the House to express that the federal government needs to start embarking on this.

I fully realize the limitations of an opposition day motion. It is what we have to work with. What he has to explain to his constituents is why he is voting against what I think is a road map to sustainable and eventually very detailed measures to actually fix this problem when so many Canadians care so deeply about it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the NDP motion is all about the well-being of our seniors and long-term care workers. This concern does the NDP credit, since it demonstrates the party's humanity. However, does the NDP recognize that health transfers are insufficient and do not give the provinces and territories sufficient resources to do their job properly?

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct that this specific motion does not give wording to that aspect, but I think she will find through our previous interventions in the House on other days and through our votes that we fully support increased transfers to the provinces. The two are not mutually exclusive.

What we are calling for in the motion today is recognition of the sorry state of Canada's long-term care system and using an existing model, the Canada Health Act, respecting provincial jurisdiction, but also acknowledging that we need more intervention. We need better standards of care and there is plenty of room for the federal government to show some leadership on this issue.

● (1815)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

The Deputy Speaker: In the usual fashion, if a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request either a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them now to rise and indicate so to the Chair.

The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote on the motion by the member for Burnaby South.

[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau: Mr. Speaker, there is no interpretation.

The Deputy Speaker: Was the interpretation not working just for the statement by the member for London—Fanshawe?

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau: No, there has been no interpretation for a few minutes now.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: I will indicate such by way of a statement.

[Translation]

Is the interpretation working now?

[English]

I will ask again if the interpretation is working for those who are listening to the French channel. It is okay.

I will now go back to the hon. member for London—Fanshawe if she does not mind.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I would like a recorded vote on the motion by the member for Burnaby South.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, March 23, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, before I get to the awkward question that you and I seem to have an exchange over quite often, I wanted to take the opportunity to thank you for your incredible service to the House, in particular over the last session. When I have been here you have sat in that chair. I know you told me a couple of weeks ago you were not planning on running again. The House will certainly miss your presence.

I will never forget that, within the first couple of months of me being here, I accidentally brought a drink into the House that was not water and placed it in my holder. I then got a note from the page that said, “Mark, I hope you are doing well and are settling into the House well, but I noticed that you had a drink that did not look like water.”

You have been so good, and you have done an incredible job of being a Speaker. I wanted to have the opportunity, because in a minority government you never know when the House will fall, to thank you for the incredible work you have done.

With that, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:30 p.m.

• (1820)

The Deputy Speaker: I realize it is a rather roundabout way of requesting the clock be seen at 6:30 p.m., but I appreciate very much the heartfelt comments of my colleague.

Is it the pleasure of the House to see the clock at 6:30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Adjournment Proceedings

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1825)

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments by my hon. colleague from Kingston and the Islands, foreshadowing the big desire the Liberals have to go to an election, sooner rather than later, in the upcoming months. I wish a fond farewell. That is an interesting conversation, but we will have that on a later date.

Today, I want to address a question that I brought to the House in question period a few weeks back. Referring to the Minister of Finance, I said, “Canadians do not believe a word that comes out of the minister’s mouth. There are 213,000 more unemployed Canadians. The government has the worst job-creation record in the G7. Canadians are tired of empty platitudes and broken promises. It is time for the Liberal front benches to get to work so that Canadians from coast to coast to coast can get back to earning paycheques” instead of receiving pink slips.

Right now people across the country have a desire to go back to work and one of the things that is holding them back is a plan from the government. I cannot believe that more people are not talking about the fact that the Liberal government has not brought forward a budget for two years. That is two years without a financial plan for Canadians during a pandemic. People are looking for hope, optimism and a safe return to work. The government has sat on its hands and not brought forward that safe plan.

When I asked the finance minister when would the Liberals get to work and deliver a plan, this was her rebuttal:

...if the member opposite does not want to believe my words, let me quote David Parkinson from The Globe and Mail. Here is what he has to say: “For the economy as a whole, there are remarkably healthy signs. Unlike last spring’s lockdowns...it appears we’ve learned how to keep the economy rolling.... The underlying recovery remains largely intact.” Thanks again to all the hard-working, innovative Canadian business owners...

Regarding the comment “remains largely intact”, a CTV article says, “One year into the pandemic, Canada’s job market is 599,100 short of where it was in February of last year, or 3.1 per cent below pre-pandemic levels.” We saw a bit of optimism in the return of jobs in February, but we are still almost 600,000 jobs short of where we were last February. It is incumbent on the government to bring forward a plan so Canadians can go back to work.

Canadians are desperately wanting some hope and optimism from the government and it has failed to bring anything forward. The Conservatives have a plan to secure jobs, secure our future and bring back jobs that we lost, not only the 600,000 but the million jobs that were lost during the pandemic. Canadians are looking for that. They are looking for a government that is ethical. We know ethics problems are running rampant in the front benches of the Liberal government. Canadians want to have some certainty and clarity on where we are going in the future and how the government is going to help lead them in the direction of jobs and prosperity.

Adjournment Proceedings

The answer I received to my question was far from satisfactory. I am hoping that whoever stands up for the Liberal government tonight can answer this question. I do not want the member to trumpet the fact that the Liberals had one good month of job creation. Where are the 600,000 jobs that Canadians were going to before the pandemic hit in February 2020?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin with my rebuttal, let me first echo the comments of the member for Kingston and the Islands on your superior service in the chair as Deputy Speaker over the past five years, my entire time as a member of Parliament.

I will begin out of the gates by doing what I can to debunk the approach laid out by my Conservative colleague opposite.

He went to great lengths to try to diminish what has been one of the most successful economic responses to COVID-19 globally. The reality is that the Conservatives' argument hinges upon the belief that the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada are responsible for the economic cost of COVID-19. The reality that we know is true is that the cost stems not from government decisions to spend in response to the pandemic but from the fact that a virus swept across the planet. This virus created an economic cost that we could not have comprehended just a few years ago.

What matters is not necessarily the existence of the virus, in terms of our debate in this House, but how we responded to it. When we had the opportunity to take calls, as I know he did, from family members who were worried about putting food on the table and from business owners who were afraid they could not keep workers on the payroll, we responded swiftly and effectively. We advanced a Canada emergency response benefit that reached the kitchen tables of nine million Canadians. We advanced the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which kept over five million workers on the payroll. We extended the Canada emergency business account to provide liquidity support to nearly a million small and medium-sized businesses in Canada. As a result of the measures that we have advanced, we have seen a serious economic recovery in Canada that many of our comparator economies around the world would be jealous to have within their own borders.

The reality is that the member diminishes the month of February, which saw 259,000 jobs return to the economy. However, that is only part of the success story of our response to date. If he is not satisfied with one month's job number, let us pick a comparator. Let us look at the United States, which has seen 57.6% of the jobs lost during the peak of this pandemic recovered today, and compare it to Canada, which has now in excess of 80%.

We know it may not be perfect, but many of the jobs that are still to be recovered are not back in their communities because of the public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The reality is that we know that certain communities are doing the difficult thing, but the right thing: closing their doors, limiting their services, and yes, sometimes reducing the hours of their employees to keep their communities safe. In fact, the best economic policy that we could adopt is a strong public health response.

I would urge the member to dig into the job numbers, where he will realize that we do not just have 80% of the jobs recovered but also a higher labour force participation rate than our neighbours. If we actually look at certain provinces, including my own province of Nova Scotia, which has seen literally a world-leading public health response to the pandemic, we have recovered almost all of the jobs that we have lost during the course of this pandemic. In fact, there are more full-time workers in my home province today than there were in February of last year, before the pandemic. The reason is that the province took the right steps to manage the public health conditions, and the federal government was there to support households and businesses so they could come back when it was safe to do so.

The long-term impact of the economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic will be told a few years from now, but from where I sit and given the statistics that I am observing month over month over month, I have all the confidence in the world that Canada's pandemic response will be held up on a pedestal as an example for what the rest of the world ought to have done.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a tremendous orator and I know he has won awards for being able to spin numbers. People really enjoy listening to this member speak.

One question he did not answer is how come it has taken two years to bring forward a budget? Other countries across the world have delivered budgets. My home province of Saskatchewan delivered a budget. Actually, it is probably going to deliver two budgets before the federal government delivers one, which goes to his comment about how this country will be looked to for how we handled the pandemic.

Are we that far ahead of everyone in vaccinations? Is our safe reopening plan that far ahead of other jurisdictions? Did our Prime Minister deliver a plan, like Boris Johnson, who delivered a data filled plan of how the U.K. was going to unveil and reopen its economy? Maybe I missed it. I do not remember our Prime Minister standing in this House delivering a scientific plan with data points on how our economy was going to open.

If I missed it, please, I would love to have the parliamentary secretary refresh my memory of how well that plan is going to roll out for the people of Canada.

• (1830)

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I will not be lectured on the importance of following evidence and data from a party that muzzled its own scientists, tried to end the long-form census and literally destroyed research in my home province at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography. If the member is looking for a reason that we did not have a budget last year, I remind him that he voted in favour of a measure that allowed the government to launch an emergency spending response. The COVID-19 special committee provided parliamentary scrutiny over those spending measures.

Since that time, we have launched a fall economic statement that is 237 pages and includes a five-year fiscal outlook with varying scenarios that could come to pass. The estimates process, which the member is still able to take part in to provide scrutiny, remains available to him. In addition, the government operations committee is receiving monthly reports on spending from the government, and, in fact, most of the details of our spending are available online.

Our plan from day one remains the same today: support households and businesses to get through the pandemic, spare no expense to defeat the virus and ensure that households and businesses are here to contribute to the economic recovery when the pandemic is behind us.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, several months ago I asked a question on behalf of the thousands of workers and their families employed at Chalk River Laboratories in the upper Ottawa Valley, and on behalf of the thousands of other Canadians who are employed in the nuclear sector.

I asked the Minister of Natural Resources to talk about Canada's world-class nuclear industry and the tremendous opportunity that awaits Canada in the new build nuclear power market. Specifically, my question focussed on small modular reactors, SMRs. I acknowledge that after I prompted the federal government with my question, the minister announced the government's Canadian small modular reactor plan.

I want to assure the Minister of Natural Resources that he has my continuing support when it comes to good jobs in the nuclear sector. The nuclear industry is a big employer in my constituency and has been since the dawn of the nuclear age.

Not only does the Minister of Natural Resources have my full support for Canada to get into the game and join the other advanced western nations, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, which are investing in next-generation builds, he has my full support to fund a replacement for the National Research Universal reactor, or NRU. That piece of critical infrastructure was recently decommissioned after almost 60 years of faithful service. Canada should be investing in national infrastructure, like a modern version with NRU capabilities.

Canadians are suffering today from the short-sighted policy decision made in the 1970s by the Liberal government of the day to cripple medical research by reducing patent protection. Decisions today affect the generations of the future. We do not want to make the same policy mistake with nuclear.

Adjournment Proceedings

Canada will be a poorer country if we have to wait for the benefits of nuclear research done in other countries in the same way Canadians have had to wait for medicines manufactured in other countries due to our limited domestic capacity to produce safe Canadian vaccines in Canada using Canadian know-how.

Whether we like it or not, energy will be the currency of the future. I recognize, as do many Canadians who respect the science, that the only way Canada can make a real contribution to a clean environment is through the use of dependable, greenhouse gas-free nuclear energy to generate the electricity that lights our streets, heats our homes and powers industry.

Unlike the members for Ottawa Centre and Ottawa South, who are opposed to real action against pollution by opposing SMRs, I agree with the founder of the environmental group Greenpeace, Dr. Patrick Moore. Dr. Patrick Moore has written another book recently called *Fake Invisible Catastrophes and Threats of Doom*, which I recommend all MPs read.

I agree with James Hansen, the NASA scientist who is held in high esteem by environmentalists, when he states that based on science and facts, the world cannot tackle threats to the environment without nuclear energy in the mix. I urge members to trust the science and the facts.

I am pleased to quote Deep River mayor, Suzanne D'Eon. Deep River, in the Ottawa Valley, is a willing community to host a demonstration of small module reactor. Mayor D'Eon said:

As both a mayor and concerned global citizen, I believe there is a need for more urgency by the federal government and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission in the development and safe deployment of SMRs [and] vSMRs in Canada and I wholeheartedly endorse the Statement of Principles for the SMR Action Plan.

The town of Deep River is keenly interested to do more to encourage and facilitate the accelerated development and roll-out of SMRs locally, throughout Canada, and globally. We are passionate about becoming the first host community of a vSMR in Canada and to be ambassadors and a real-life demonstration example for small or remote northern communities who may not yet have a comfort level with nuclear.

The town's interest and motivation in vSMRs comes both from our history as Canada's first nuclear community and our vision for the future.

• (1835)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by saying that it may not be often that we find ourselves in agreement, but I thank the hon. member for her statements of support for the government's direction at the beginning of her remarks.

I am pleased to address an issue that is important to Ontario and New Brunswick, and indeed the entire country. The timing of this question could not possibly be better.

Adjournment Proceedings

We are contemplating the building of a low-emissions energy future for our entire country. We need energy systems that are reliable, secure, clean and affordable for Canadians. They have to be competitive as well, with the potential to attract investment, as financial markets are increasingly looking toward jurisdictions that value strong environmental, social and governance principles, also known as ESG.

This is where small modular reactors fit in, an emerging technology that holds the potential to deliver the baseload power that can pull more renewable electricity into our energy mix and help us move away from conventional coal and fossil fuel power generation. This is the context in which our government launched an action plan for small modular reactors in December. It is an initiative that involves a range of partners, including industry and provincial and territorial governments.

This action plan builds on our support for an industry that sustains more than 76,000 Canadian jobs. As the member opposite knows, Canada is among an elite group of nations that have the full spectrum of nuclear capabilities, from building reactors to the manufacturing of fuel to conducting world-class research and development in establishing long-term solutions to radioactive waste. We also happen to be the world's second-largest source of uranium, and our regulatory system is internationally respected for its commitment to evidence-based decision-making that places safety at its core. All of this contributes to our global brand, making us ideally placed to tap into a vast market, one expected to be worth \$150 billion to \$300 billion annually by 2040, delivering \$19 billion in economic benefits to Canada between the years 2030 and 2040 and creating in the process over 6,000 Canadian jobs annually. Demand is driven by the growing need for smaller and affordable nuclear energy sources to generate electricity with zero emissions, to power resource extraction in remote places, to desalinate water, to replace coal and to offer clean alternative sources of light and heat in indigenous, rural and remote communities.

For Canada, SMRs could help us meet our Paris targets, all while creating good middle-class jobs and continuing to advance reconciliation with indigenous peoples at the same time.

We are making significant progress. I think back to 2018, when we hosted our first international conference on SMRs, where we launched our SMR roadmap. We now have more than 100 partners in the nuclear industry and in other sectors of the economy, including petroleum and mining, and among indigenous leaders, universities, labour groups, civil society and most provincial, territorial and municipal governments. They know Canada has what it takes to be a world leader.

I want to cite just a few examples of our progress.

First, we announced a \$20-million investment in SMR development by Terrestrial Energy. This funding will help the Oakville, Ontario-based company reach a new milestone in the exciting development of its generation IV reactor project. Second, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission is focusing as I speak on a number of SMR vendor design reviews, including Terrestrial's. This will allow commission staff to provide feedback early on a company's design process to ensure it is on the right track.

I will conclude by sending my thanks to two people in particular. One, the member for Saint John—Rothesay, I will thank for his advocacy for SMRs in his home province of New Brunswick. Second, thanks go to my former physics professor at St. Francis Xavier University—Go, X, Go—Michael Steinitz, who continues to provide advice to me in my own community on energy policy and what the future may look like for Canada 10, 20 or 50 years from now.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I also am pleased to confirm the County of Renfrew passed a resolution regarding small modular reactors, stating that:

County Council supports Canadian Nuclear Laboratories Ltd. in their efforts to pursue research and development initiatives for Small Modular Reactor and very Small Modular Reactor; [and that] the County of Renfrew supports and encourages the hosting and safe operations of SMR and vSMR technologies at Chalk River Laboratories....

What is needed now is a funding commitment from the Government of Canada to make this happen. Canada cannot afford to be not in the game. Too much is at stake. Canadians should not have to wait for an election budget full of short-term spending promises. The time to build for the future is now.

● (1840)

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I will point out that there is no conversation about SMRs that will be short-term spending. This is a long-term part of the energy mix as we go forward to establish a potential for a net-zero Canada.

Just to wrap up, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories is moving closer to its goal to help prove the commercial viability of SMRs. It wants to host a demonstration project at one of its sites in 2026. The most advanced among the applicants is the Global First Power joint venture that includes Ontario Power Generation. The project is now undergoing an environmental assessment.

If the member wants to talk about funding commitments, just last week our government announced that it has invested over \$50 million in Moltex Energy Canada Incorporated to support production of emissions-free energy through its "Waste To Stable Salt" process, which recycles existing used nuclear fuel to produce non-emitting energy.

Canada is on the path of this global trend to ensure that SMRs play a key role in the energy mix of our future and that they will be compatible with the net-zero legislation that we put forward last year.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see my colleague from Nova Scotia on this tonight. I appreciate his ability to respond to some good questions.

Small business is what I am talking about. The hon. member would understand this first issue. It is March, and spring is coming. We have tractors out. The planting season is already beginning in southern Alberta, but we are short some very skilled agricultural workers. These are not the temporary foreign workers whom he may have seen coming into the Annapolis Valley. These are Mexican and Mennonite people who have status in Canada, but are stranded in Mexico. We need to find a way to support our small businesses in the ag sector with these highly skilled people who, while back in Mexico, are working on their properties there. They have properties, extensive homes and places that they need to leave to come here, but they are stranded in Mexico. In southern Alberta, we probably have 100 families who need to return to Canada to be in our ag sector. This is a critical piece to our ag sector, as it is in many parts. These are not temporary foreign workers, like the member might be familiar with in the Annapolis Valley.

Another small business sector with a huge issue is the travel agencies. The travel agencies are small, independent businesses. When the airline industry was shut down about a year ago, they had their commissions withdrawn and clawed back by the major airlines. Not only can they not get an income, but they have also lost the commission income they had from the year before. Do they qualify for programs? No. That is another small business sector in our communities that is suffering greatly because of the clawback from the airlines. The bailouts that the government talks about do not help those small business people in our communities.

Another one in our ag sector is irrigation. The irrigation industry is huge in part of my riding where people farm only 8% of the arable land, but produce 20% of the agriculture GDP in Alberta. With the \$30 in carbon tax in one irrigation district out of the 13, and five in my riding, it has been calculated very precisely that they pay a million dollars in carbon tax. That is just in that one irrigation area, and there are 13. With the clean fuel standard carbon tax being increased by 500% now, can my colleagues imagine the tens of millions of dollars that will be leaving those small business operations in my riding?

There will be those operations that cannot spend the money in their communities. They cannot buy machinery parts. They are not going to shop at the stores. The ripple effect into the volunteer part of the community is huge. These small businesses need power for irrigation. There is no rebate or exemption for that power; none. These are small businesses whose impact is huge in my riding. They need the support, and yet the government with that 500% increase is taking the money out of the riding with no rebates and no exemptions. This is huge for these small businesses in the Bow River riding.

• (1845)

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to applaud the incredi-

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ble work you have been doing for the past five years. It is non-partisan work and you do it brilliantly in both official languages.

[English]

I am very pleased to respond to the question and comments from my colleague, the member for Bow River, regarding small businesses generally and some specific small business sectors in his community. I will go through some of the many ways that our government has supported and is continuing to support small businesses throughout the country, including in his riding. However, before I do that, I will respectfully point out a recurring inconsistency in the comments and questions from Conservative members.

On the one hand, there is often huge criticism and even some outright rejection of the approach taken by our government to spend in order to support our small businesses. Yes, that does cost money, and we are incurring a deficit that, to my understanding, the Conservatives are opposed to. However, many members seem to have found new ideas and programs for additional spending in order to support the small businesses in their ridings.

I hope that at the end of the day we can agree that we do need to spend money to support Canadians, and that one, three or five years hence, those same Conservative members are not going to accuse the government of having spent inappropriately. We all know, and are all rising in the House to confirm, the importance of spending to support our economy and our small business owners.

Some of the things we have done over the course of the last year are extremely innovative. I think back to the conversations that I had with entrepreneurs across the country. They regularly told me that thanks to government programs, they were able to keep the lights on, keep their workers employed and pay their rent, for example. All of these programs are supporting businesses in the agricultural sector, in the tourism sector and in all sectors of the Canadian economy, and we believe that is very important.

Our small businesses employ more than 10.8 million Canadians. They are by far our largest employers. It is enormously important for us to continue supporting them. I am thinking particularly of the wage subsidy, which is literally subsidizing the paycheques of Canadians right across the country.

I will point out a few other programs before getting into further specifics.

The rent subsidy program, which we recently changed so that our subsidy would go directly to small business owners, has a top-up that covers up to 90% of the rent of small business owners who are under lockdown.

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I will also talk about the importance of our tourism sector. The member opposite mentioned the travel industry, which of course has been experiencing huge hardships over the last year because of the health and sanitary measures that we and the provinces and territories have put in place. In that regard, I will point the member to the regional relief and recovery fund, which is there to support all businesses but has an earmark specifically for tourism operators.

I will point to the very recently released HASCAP program. This is a new program, and thanks to the feedback and comments from the tourism sector, we were able to put it in place to provide 100% government-backed loans to tourism operators in particular. I have heard from credit unions and financial institutions that there is pick-up on this program and that our tourism operators are being supported by it.

I will also point out that we added an additional \$20,000 to our very popular CEBA loan program, which provides loans at a 0% interest rate. They include a portion that is non-refundable, which is, in order words, a grant. That came as a huge relief to small business owners who were concerned about taking on too much debt.

The range of supports we have for small businesses is the envy of the world. They have shown themselves to be—

• (1850)

The Deputy Speaker: The member is over her time.

We will go back, for the last minute, to the hon. member for Bow River.

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, the member did not touch on getting skilled workers back to Canada. There are no flights going from Mexico to Canada. What about the clawback of commissions at travel agencies? No, that is not part of the deal the government is talking about with the airlines. This is about people who booked

tickets on airlines. It is not the travel part she is talking about. Then there is irrigation and the carbon tax, and the tens of millions of dollars that we are going to lose in our ridings. Small businesses are not going to gain from that. No, she did not touch on that either.

Let me go to one more issue. Several businesses in my riding have had stranded assets for a year because in May, gun legislation was brought in by order in council and it stranded assets for small businesses. They cannot sell them; they are stranded assets. Now the government has gone into the airsoft gun business and we have more stranded assets in businesses. These are small, local businesses, and the government has changed regulations to introduce legislation that leaves their assets stranded.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to apologize to my colleague. The time does go by very quickly. I had many more notes to share with him. I know in this second round I only have one minute.

Suffice it to say that on the new issues my colleague raises, we cannot find a stronger proponent of our measures to support tackling climate change. I will not apologize for the carbon tax. It is critical that our government take real action in order to stem what is the biggest issue of our generation. I followed closely the events of this weekend, and I am sorry the Conservative Party chose not to recognize that climate change is real and is something we need to address, but I certainly will not apologize for that.

The Deputy Speaker: Before I close off, I would like to thank the hon. parliamentary secretaries for their kind words.

The motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:52 p.m.)

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