



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 150 No. 085
Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[Translation]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, our community celebrated the 100th birthday of George Markow, a Second World War veteran and a community hero.

At the start of the pandemic, George vowed to walk 100 kilometres around his retirement home in Newmarket, and to raise \$100,000 for medical research before his 100th birthday. A year later, George has raised over \$160,000 and walked more than 150 kilometres. At 100 years young, he says that he will continue to walk and fundraise to help fight the coronavirus.

May George's kindness motivate all of us to help those in need, and may his determination to give back to his community inspire all of us today and into the future.

On behalf of Newmarket-Aurora, I wish George a happy birthday, and I thank him for his service.

* * *

COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada-U.S. border agreement includes an exemption for Campobello. Residents of this New Brunswick island must drive through the state of Maine to re-enter Canada for essential reasons.

On April 9, Ottawa decided that islanders must comply with its new registry, ArriveCAN, each time they drove on and off the is-

land or risk fines. This means the responsible minister wants to know whenever islanders go to and from work, buy groceries or fuel, go see a doctor or comply with child custody arrangements.

However, New Brunswick already collects this health and travel data. Ottawa's work is redundant. Campobello should be exempt from ArriveCAN given its unique situation.

Canada is in a troubling third wave because of Ottawa's incompetence securing vaccines. From April 4 to 16, 120 international flights with COVID-positive passengers arrived in Canada. Leave Campobello alone. The provincial government has it covered. Ottawa should instead do its job.

* * *

• (1410)

RAMADAN

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Muslims in Etobicoke North and across Canada are celebrating the holy month of Ramadan. It is a month-long religious journey, a time of spiritual reflection and an opportunity to show gratitude for the many blessings we share, through fasting, prayer and charity.

While fasting during the daytime, many Muslim Canadians continue to be on the front lines of our fight against COVID-19. During these unprecedented times, we remember the many contributions Muslim communities have made to our country since the pandemic began, as they have done for many generations.

I would like to especially recognize Omar Farouk, president of the International Muslims Organization that provided food weekly to the community, and Osman Ali of the Somali Canadian Association of Etobicoke for providing groceries to families.

As we continue to follow public health guidelines to keep our communities safe, I wish all those celebrating a blessed and peaceful Ramadan.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]***RAIL TRANSPORTATION**

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, people in Saint-Basile-le-Grand, Saint-Bruno-de-Montarville and Saint-Hubert are extremely concerned about rail safety, and they are probably not the only ones, given the very preventable Lac-Mégantic tragedy, which I had first-hand experience with as the Quebec minister of public security at the time.

My predecessor and current mayor of Saint-Basile-le-Grand, Yves Lessard, managed to limit the number of cars per consist travelling through the riding to 100 by publicly raising the issue again and again.

However, that number has been rising since then, and we are now sometimes seeing up to 200 cars per consist. In addition to the annoyance the passage of a long train causes in terms of vibrations and traffic disruptions, this situation raises some real safety concerns, not only because of the potentially hazardous materials travelling through our communities, but also because Saint-Basile-le-Grand is literally cut in half for increasingly longer periods, which could prevent emergency services from travelling from one side of town to the other when needed.

Canadian National needs to stop turning a deaf ear and start responding to the legitimate concerns of those affected.

* * *

MONTREAL NORTH RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about how religious leaders are helping to fight COVID-19 in Montreal North, in the riding of Bourassa.

Thirty or so religious leaders, including pastors, imams, priests and a Buddhist monk, participated in a virtual meeting that I had the honour of organizing. These leaders were joined by experts such as Montreal's regional director of public health; Senator Mégie; Mr. Boisrond, a sociologist; medical associations serving the Haitian community; and officials from the Montreal Island North health and social services centre, the CIUSSS.

In order to foster positive attitudes toward vaccination among members of religious communities, they suggested a communications campaign to counter misunderstandings and misinformation about the vaccine. Many expressed an interest in having the CIUSSS set up temporary vaccination clinics in their places of worship. I applaud the religious leaders who participated in the meeting for their dedication and involvement.

* * *

*[English]***MENTAL HEALTH**

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, improving access to mental health care is essential for all Canadians, now more than ever, especially for our youth.

Right behind me is Simcoe Street United Church, home of the Back Door Mission. Since COVID, those seeking help are younger than ever, as young as 15 years old, and almost all are struggling

with mental health issues. Clarence Keesman, head of The Refuge Youth Outreach Centre, said that this week they lost another of their beloved youth. That brings the total deaths to five since last fall.

My daughter Grace, like too many young women, has seen the prolonged COVID shutdowns play havoc on her mental and physical health, jeopardizing her education and healthy future. She asks, "For young people is the cure worse than the disease?"

I am very thankful to the Oshawa organizations that are working every day to help these young people, but they cannot do it alone. Access to mental health care must be a priority. Let us set aside the politics of division and recognize our common humanity. Let us stand together and improve access to mental health care for all Canadians.

* * *

ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Hon. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a real privilege for me to thank essential workers in my riding and across Canada.

Essential workers bravely go to work every day in these very challenging times. I thank our Canadian Armed Forces, first responders, day care workers, teachers and school staff, grocery store clerks, pharmacists and their staff, automotive technicians, truckers, municipal workers, bus drivers, waste collection employees, taxi and ride-share drivers, pilots, warehouse workers, delivery drivers, veterinarians, farm workers, food processing plant workers, security guards, pharmaceutical manufacturing workers, restaurant employees preparing takeout, HVAC technicians, plumbers, electricians, roofers, contractors and so many more.

We will never forget the sacrifices that all our essential workers are making, and I thank them on behalf of all our neighbours.

* * *

● (1415)

*[Translation]***NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK**

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is National Volunteer Week, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank the thousands of Canadians who give generously of their time and energy to help their communities.

I especially want to recognize the support of volunteers in Châteauguay—Lacolle as well as organizations like our volunteer centres in Châteauguay, Napierville and Saint-Rémi and others like Sourire sans fin, La Rencontre Châteauguoise and Entraide Merci.

[English]

Volunteering is the oxygen our country needs to thrive. We see how much volunteers do for all of us, and this is all the more true during this pandemic.

*Statements by Members***THE ENVIRONMENT**

I would like to thank each and every person who chooses to volunteer for this precious gift of his or her time.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like all communities across Canada, Barrie—Innisfil has not been immune to increased anxiety and mental health issues because of this crisis. The pandemic, resulting lockdowns, restrictions and failures of the government have taken an unimaginable toll on everyone's mental health, sparing no one and no age group. Therefore, it should not surprise anyone that we have seen a marked increase in suicides in every community, including ours.

As we approach Canadian Mental Health Week and Children's Mental Health Week, I encourage the Liberal government to move quickly and implement a national 988 crisis and suicide hotline. Let me remind the Prime Minister that a motion was passed unanimously by Parliament 129 days ago to implement the hotline.

I was glad that both Barrie City Council and Innisfil Town Council recently moved motions in support of a 988 hotline, and I thank them both for their endorsement.

Finally, everyone who is suffering, no matter where they live, their age or the reason, should know there are resources within their communities across Canada that they can access. They are not alone, and there is always someone to talk to.

* * *

[Translation]

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN OF CANADA

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 95 years ago today, a princess was born in London. Her future looked rather ordinary, but she went on to make history.

[English]

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, today marks nine and a half decades of a life so profoundly dedicated to service that few, if any of us, can ever begin to imagine or comprehend.

However, today, Her Majesty is also living her greatest loss. Mourning for the Duke of Edinburgh, her closest companion for 73 of those 95 years, can only be a profoundly painful reminder that the solitude of her reign is now total.

[Translation]

My lifelong monarchist leanings aside, today I wish to salute our extraordinary sovereign, Her Majesty the Queen of Canada. I want to commend her sense of duty, her undeniable dedication as the head of the Commonwealth to foster harmony among its member states and, above all, her refusal to let adversity conquer hope.

[English]

With deep respect, Your Majesty, my heartfelt wishes for a day blessed with the affection of millions of people throughout the Commonwealth.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, climate change is real. Constituents in my riding and across Canada are committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions at home and abroad.

Canadians know that an environment plan that is realistic, proportional and achievable is long overdue. Over five years, the Liberals have made grand pronouncements but failed to deliver concrete results. Canada has the highest environmental standards in the world, but we must do more.

A Conservative plan with a carbon border tariff would deliver results. It would reward industries for their emissions reduction innovations while incentivizing other nations to strive to meet Canadian standards. If other countries were to adopt Canadian practices, worldwide greenhouse gas emissions would be reduced by 25%.

Real progress on climate change will come when Canadian companies can remain competitive and other countries move closer to Canada's world-class standards. Only the Conservative plan would secure our environment and our future.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is facing the worst health and economic crisis in a generation.

While the government has announced record spending in its budget, what it did not introduce was a responsible recovery plan. Many of my constituents are rightfully concerned that the debt introduced by the government will be felt for generations.

Canadians deserve a government with a plan to secure jobs, accountability, mental health, our environment, economy and, indeed, our country. Now is the time to get back to work and secure the future for all Canadians.

* * *

● (1420)

CHILD CARE

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after 28 years of broken promises, the Liberal government announced plans to invest \$30 billion into a national child care program.

Oral Questions

Today, I want to thank organizations such as Child Care Now and the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba for their efforts in this long fight; however, I am not holding my breath. It has been 28 years since the Liberal government promised a national childcare program.

Our party is ready to push the government to finally implement a child care system that must be universally accessible and affordable, and of high quality. It must be publicly and sufficiently funded and publicly managed, and it must provide fair compensation that respects this critical and vital profession.

This system must be tied to national standards developed with those on the front lines who have expertise in the field, including early childhood educators, child care staff, unions and activists. As a former child care educator, I know that children, caregivers and workers deserve nothing less.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to inform the House that the Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted the following motion in response to the budget:

THAT the National Assembly note that the Canadian budget tabled yesterday represents an unacceptable encroachment on its exclusive jurisdictions;

THAT it reaffirm its utmost confidence in the Québec network of childcare services and that it refuse outright any condition that may be imposed on Québec in future negotiations on the full amount of compensation that it should be paid;

THAT it reiterate its resolution of 2 December 2020 that denounced Ottawa's desire to impose Canadian standards in Québec CHSLDs and long-term care facilities for the elderly, and that requested that health transfer payments be increased to the equivalent of 35% of healthcare network costs;

THAT it deplore the fact that this issue was not addressed in the Canadian budget;

THAT it recall that mental health is the exclusive jurisdiction of Québec and that the National Assembly is opposed to the establishment of Canadian standards in this field.

This is the unanimous voice of Quebec, and the House must acknowledge it.

* * *

[English]

HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is the Queen's birthday. Her Majesty is 95. This birthday takes place at a sad time, following the death of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip.

Her reign began on February 6, 1952. At that time, Louis St. Laurent was prime minister. Since then, the Queen has worked with 12 Canadian prime ministers and has been Canada's Queen for almost half the time since Confederation.

At 18 she joined the armed forces, training as a driver and mechanic during the Second World War. At 21 she said:

My whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service.

That is a commitment she has more than fulfilled.

[Translation]

Queen Elizabeth II has supported Canada through some watershed moments in our country's history and has established herself as a protector of our traditions.

[English]

Today, I know the House and the country join with me in wishing Her Majesty the Queen all health and strength on her birthday.

Long live the Queen. God save the Queen.

* * *

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Ms. Marci Ien (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he cried for his mother. He begged to breathe with a police officer's knee pressing on his neck. Minutes later he was gone, and everybody knew his name: George Floyd.

There were marches around the globe. A sea of people took to the streets, chanting "Black lives matter" and demanding justice. For anyone who ever questioned systemic racism, George Floyd was an answer. Even with the video captured from the cellphone of a brave 17-year-old girl, who chose to stop and record what the world would see, I was not sure what would happen. Would there be a guilty verdict?

Yes, on all three counts. I wept not tears of joy, but of relief and resolve. This is not an ending, it is a beginning. There is no joy. There is no complete justice. There is only work and we have much more to do.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Fifty-eight per cent capacity, Mr. Speaker: that is what the Public Health Agency of Canada says the vaccine rollout is operating at because we do not have the supply to do more. It was operating at close to zero when the third wave started building in January and February.

Why does the Prime Minister think that 58% is good enough for Canadians?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working closely with the provinces and territories to support them in their responsibility of administering vaccines. We have sent more than 13.6 million vaccines to the provinces and territories, with millions more arriving in the weeks and months to come. We know that in the month of May there are at least two million Pfizer vaccines and more others coming in every single week. In the month of June, there will be tens of millions coming in. That is why it is important that the provinces be ready, as they are, for the ramp-up as we move forward on getting everybody vaccinated.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more will be coming when the countries that had a plan are finished vaccinating their populations.

We are in a race against variants in this third wave, and we are losing because we did not have the vaccines needed in January and in February. In fact, we still do not. However, the Prime Minister is now not even restricting flights from COVID hot spots to stop the entry of new dangerous variants.

The Prime Minister failed at the border last year. Why is he failing again?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have delivered more than 13.6 million doses of vaccines to provinces and territories. We actually passed, by about 50%, our target of delivering six million vaccines by the end of March, and we will continue to deliver more vaccines to get Canadians through this.

At the borders we have some of the strongest measures in the world, but we will also continue to look at other ways based on science and data to keep Canadians safe. Importation from the border is a fraction of the cases that are coming in, but we will still make sure that we are doing everything necessary to keep Canadians safe.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): It is a sad day, Mr. Speaker, when a Canadian Prime Minister celebrates making his targets by stealing vaccines from the developing world.

Having no vaccines in January or in February means we are having a third wave in April. No border measures immediately means that the third wave could last until June. The Americans have introduced new border measures against Canada because of the lack of control of variants by this Prime Minister.

What is it going to take for Canadians to finally see action on COVID from this Prime Minister?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): First of all, Mr. Speaker, once again we see Conservatives pedalling falsehoods when they say “no vaccines in January or February”. That is simply not true. We have continued to deliver. We have continued to increase our vaccine supplies and we actually went well beyond the predicted targets.

At the same time, we see once again that the Conservatives are not asking any questions about the budget. Why? It is because they must support it. They must think that it is excellent, and they recognize how targeted it is for Canadians, how it is going to get us through this COVID recession and how it is going to build us back better. I thank the Conservatives for their support.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question about the budget.

The third wave and the variants are out of control. That is a fact. Canadians are tired. That is the reality.

The Prime Minister is promising to increase health transfers to the provinces, but not until after the pandemic. He is sending water after the fire has been put out.

Why is the Prime Minister abandoning the provinces yet again when they need help right now?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to see that the Conservative leader asks questions about the budget only in French. I am sure there is something to that, but let us move on to something else.

Then he just keeps talking nonsense. We have transferred billions of dollars to help the provinces and their health care systems during this pandemic. With this budget, we are providing an additional \$4 billion.

We have been there for Canadians despite the fact that the Conservatives say that we are spending too much, that we should spend less and that we should not be there for Canadians so much.

That is not right. We will always be there to support Canadians.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the provinces need a leader, not a father.

Last year, the Prime Minister failed to close the border because he had no plan to slow the spread of the virus. Yesterday, the United States introduced new measures for our border because this government is slow to take action to stop the variants.

We are in the third wave, and the Prime Minister is still slow to take action in the hot spots.

When will he take action?

Oral Questions

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, the Leader of the Opposition asked five questions and invented facts for each one. I understand that parliamentarians have a responsibility to debate in this place, but when he says, for instance, that the United States has just changed their position on Canada, that is simply not true. The United States has expressed concerns about many countries, including Canada, since November and continues to do so.

The Conservatives feel the need to spout falsehoods to play politics. That is not the way it should be.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to The Globe and Mail, Canada's Prime Minister promised to approve long-term provincial health transfer increases. That is all well and good, but the budget is here and now. That does not show up in any of the next few years in this budget. How strange.

My question is very simple: Are these health transfer increases happening now? Will they cover 35% of costs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois appears to have forgotten that, in December, we met with all the provincial and territorial premiers. I stated very clearly at that time that, yes, we will be there to increase health transfers for the long term, but not until we have gotten through the pandemic. I also said that we will continue to be there throughout the pandemic with billions of dollars in support for the provinces. We are allocating \$19 billion for the recovery, \$4 billion of it now, in this budget, for health transfers and all the help the provinces need now.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I realize that, in the Prime Minister's mind, the pandemic is going to last even longer than five years.

I would like to repeat something we heard earlier today. The Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted the following:

That it reiterate its resolution of 2 December 2020 that denounced Ottawa's desire to impose Canadian standards in Québec CHSLDs and long-term care facilities for the elderly, and that requested that health transfer payments be increased to the equivalent of 35% of healthcare network costs;

That it deplore the fact that this issue was not addressed in the Canadian budget;

I am not the only one who missed it. Quebec has voted unanimously against the Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Quebecers and all Canadians are concerned about what happens to seniors across the country. They recognize that all seniors across the country must be able to retire with dignity and security. That is precisely why we are working with the provinces and territories to ensure that our seniors have a secure retirement and are properly protected in long-term care homes.

We recognize and respect provincial jurisdictions, but we will provide funding to help the provinces ensure that all seniors are protected.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a doctor in Ontario wrote to the Prime Minister, urging the Prime

Minister to invoke the Emergencies Act and to step in and help. She writes of how the situation in Ontario is so bad that not only COVID-19 patients, but all patients seeking health care, are limited in the health care they can receive.

Specifically, she wrote, "How angry would you be, if your loved one had a heart attack and there was no hospital or ICU bed for them?"

Will the Prime Minister declare a public welfare emergency and immediately get the help that people need to get vaccines to those who need it most?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the federal government is here to help all Canadians. We have their backs. That is why we have indicated to the Government of Ontario that we are there to provide more supports. Whether it is through Red Cross, more vaccine doses or investments in health care, we will continue to be there to support Canadians right across the country.

I find it interesting, however, that the NDP is now calling on us to invoke the Emergencies Act, when Tommy Douglas famously criticized my father for doing the same thing. We believe in working with the provinces and delivering concretely. That is what we will continue to do.

• (1435)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows that is a completely different act. The Prime Minister also knows that having someone's back means actually stepping in and helping, not standing back and watching. Radhika, from the greater Toronto area, lost her father to COVID-19. Her father worked for 26 years in the same factory in the greater Toronto area before getting COVID-19, getting sick and then dying. She says that the way forward is to make sure people have paid sick leave.

Will the Prime Minister, if he believes he can have people's backs, improve access to paid sick leave and protect workers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tragedies faced by far too many Canadian families over these past many months have been heartbreaking.

Every step of the way, governments have been there to support people. We have been working hand in glove with provincial and territorial governments. We have been delivering direct supports to families, and we know that there continues to be more to do.

We moved forward with paid sick leave to make sure that people did not have to face the impossible choice between going to work and putting food on the table, and we will continue to work to do more. We know that people need us to continue to have their backs, and we will.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a 10-day period in January and February when Canada did not receive any vaccines and we are seeing the results of that now.

As a result of that gap created by the Prime Minister, the third wave is much worse in Canada than anywhere else, resulting in very strict lockdown measures being imposed on Canadians. They are being told not to travel. Not so long ago, however, the Prime Minister said he was getting ready to travel to Great Britain this summer.

Why does the Prime Minister say one thing and do another?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is amazing to see the lengths to which the Conservative Party will go to make political comments and attacks.

I was hoping to attend the heads of government meeting, the G7, in person in June. Obviously that will very much depend on the situation when the time comes. That is exactly what I said.

We will be responsible and we will continue to work with our counterparts around the world to get through this global crisis and work on the vitally important global economic recovery.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not need to go to great lengths to find examples. In fact, let us look to another country and talk about CNN.

Not long ago, CNN said that this was a real failure by the Prime Minister's government and that Canadians deserve better.

That is what other countries think about the Prime Minister's management.

The spokesperson for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the same thing. He chided the Prime Minister for saying that Great Britain was having serious problems, which was not true. Canada is the one having serious problems, because the Prime Minister did not do a good job with the vaccines in January and February.

Can he at least recognize that?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party health critic told Canadians that they might not get vaccinated until 2030.

We got people vaccinated in 2020, even before the new year. At the same time, we recognize that there is still work to be done. We have now passed the threshold of having vaccinated 25% of Canadians, but we know that we need to do more. That is why, in a week and a half, in May, we are going to start getting more than two million vaccines per week, and those numbers are going to keep going up. We are working hard on this every day.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians remember that we received vaccines in December 2020.

The Prime Minister put on a dog and pony show, but Canadians also remember that there were no vaccines for 10 days in January and February. Today, the consequence is that the third wave is hitting harder in Canada than elsewhere because the Prime Minister

Oral Questions

created unfavourable conditions for this third wave, which has caused Canadians to suffer.

Can the Prime Minister acknowledge his failure to deliver vaccines in January and February?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to stick to the facts.

We promised Canadians that we would receive six million doses of vaccines in the first three months of 2020. We exceeded that by 50% and received nine million doses. We are exceeding our projections, but we do acknowledge that there is much more work to be done. We will continue to work day and night to deliver more and more vaccines so we can get through this pandemic.

● (1440)

[English]

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 4,000 Manitoba essential workers will be fully vaccinated months earlier than the Prime Minister planned, thanks to the kindness and generosity of the North Dakota people. While transporting goods within the United States, Manitoba truckers will receive both recommended doses, two doses, within a short six-week period. Full credit goes to Manitoba's premier for his visionary leadership on this.

Will the Prime Minister admit that it is in fact his vaccine shortages that caused the third wave of the pandemic and encouraged multiple premiers to go cap in hand to the governor of North Dakota?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives would do well to pay a little more attention to science rather than grounding everything in their partisan attacks.

I would like to remind the hon. member that we have worked every step of the way with the provinces and territories throughout this pandemic, including on procuring and supplying them with vaccines. Provinces are free to make their own decisions on who should be prioritized for vaccination. We are happy to see the Province of Manitoba making essential workers such as truckers a priority.

As I have said many times, every Canadian who wants to be will be fully vaccinated by September.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister would do well to remember that the third wave is raging in Canada, and Canadians are tired of waiting for vaccines. We are seeing dual citizens in Ontario crossing the U.S. border to get vaccinated. Many Canadians know snowbirds who have done the same. Everyone but the Prime Minister can see that success in the U.S. and the U.K. has allowed them to begin reopening, yet Canada has resorted to taking vaccines from developing nations, which is an international embarrassment.

Oral Questions

Canadians deserve far better than the Prime Minister's mediocrity. Will he admit that his failure to deliver enough vaccines in January and February led to the third wave of the pandemic in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, instead of talking down the hard-working Canadians across the country, in the provinces, the territories and the federal government, who have been working unbelievably hard to get people vaccinated, they should respect and reflect on the fact that Canada is now third in the G20, in terms of people who have been vaccinated. In terms of the G7, we are also third, behind the U.S. and the U.K., indeed, but ahead of many of our European counterparts.

We will continue to do even better. We will continue to bring in even more vaccines because we know that vaccination and science is the way through this pandemic.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is serious. People are getting sicker, and they are dying. Provinces are heading back into the third wave of the pandemic with lockdowns. ICUs are overwhelmed, and field hospitals are being built in Ontario. A Vancouver nurse is asking for prayers because the situation is worse than she has ever seen. She is seeing people as young as 20 years old in her ICU. Canadians are frustrated, and they are tired. It is costing more Canadian lives and livelihoods.

This is the COVID-19 legacy of the Prime Minister. Will he show humility for once and acknowledge that his failure to get vaccines to Canada adequately in January and February led to the third wave of the pandemic and is costing Canadian lives?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this we can agree. Canadians are tired of this COVID pandemic. People are frustrated about the restrictions that continue, but we need to get through this as quickly and as best as possible. That is why we are working day and night to bring in even more vaccine doses, so we can end this pandemic. In the meantime, we are going to need to continue to follow local public health guidelines.

We actually, as a federal government, brought in measures so that premiers across the country could make tough decisions around closing down various sectors of the economy, knowing that the federal government would be there to support workers and small businesses, and to have Canadians' backs.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a ruling on Bill 21 has finally been handed down.

The justice recognized that the Quebec National Assembly has viable and legitimate authority over such matters, but ruled that the National Assembly does not have authority over one aspect. Quebec will obviously be appealing.

Does the Prime Minister recognize Quebec's jurisdiction over such matters? Will he commit to not funding its opponents?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are of course aware of the ruling. We will let the legal pro-

cess take its course and will continue to monitor this situation closely.

• (1445)

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to read something out, to get some more details from the Prime Minister.

That the National Assembly recall that the Québec nation has never consented to the constitutional order imposed in 1982 by the Government of Canada;

That it affirm that the Québec nation can legitimately establish its own rules for living together, in accordance with its own history, culture and institutions;

That it reiterate that all Québécois are equal before the law and that the law applies to all;

That it recall that the laws passed by the National Assembly apply across the entire territory of Québec.

This was a motion unanimously adopted by every single member of the Quebec National Assembly. Will the Prime Minister respect Quebecers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are of course aware of the ruling. We will let the legal process take its course and will continue to monitor this situation closely.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot get over this. The Prime Minister is standing in question period today while millions of Ontarians are under lockdown again. The third wave is raging and he is speculating about his own international travel. It is not the time for international travel unless it is FOMO for the Prime Minister missing out on a cocktail party or some sort of photo op.

The reality is that by the end of February, only 5% of Canadians had received even their first shot. That is unconscionable. Will the Prime Minister admit that if he had—

The Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is 25% of Canadians have received at least their first shot of the vaccine. In the coming weeks we are going to start getting more than two million vaccines every single week and those numbers are going to keep going up. We know how important this is.

On the issue of international travel, it is amazing to see the lengths to which the Conservative Party will go to make attacks. I highlighted that I was hoping to attend the G7 heads of government meeting in June in Cornwall to work on the global recovery, but the Conservatives certainly cannot have any of that.

Oral Questions

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of Canadians who want to travel to go to funerals, to visit ailing loved ones, but they are not having any of that, and that is because the Prime Minister only delivered enough for 5% of Canadians to get their first dose of vaccine within the first two months of the year, that critical time when we could have stopped the third wave. He spent last summer covering up the WE scandal and shutting down Parliament instead of negotiating contracts that could have gotten us those vaccines.

Will he admit that his failure to procure vaccines in January and February led to the third wave?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we have now passed the threshold of having vaccinated 25% of Canadians. We need to continue to do more, and that is something we are going to continue to do.

In terms of opportunities for the global community to come together, particularly the leaders of the seven largest economies, as I said, it is not certain, but I am hopeful to be able to sit with them in person. I would do it wherever it was. Whether it was in Cornwall, whether it was held in Oklahoma, I would be there for the G7.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister can mock his international travel against people who need to travel to see ailing loved ones who are separated from their families, but that is not going to cut it. He cites statistics, but one statistic is fact: only 2% of Canadians have been fully vaccinated. That is abysmal. That is not going to stop the third wave. There is not enough supply. We are having to administer first shots of vaccines off-label for four months because he did not produce enough vaccines.

We could have stopped the first wave if he had gotten us vaccines in January and February, but he did not. Why?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the Conservatives demonstrate that they will never let the facts get in the way of a good political partisan attack.

The reality is that we have been working diligently. Indeed, experts on the National Advisory Council on Immunization made a recommendation that Canada follow a one-dose strategy with a larger stretch point between the two doses so that we could ensure more Canadians are protected. Those decisions are grounded in science and even the Conservative health critic has to recognize that rather than make partisan attacks.

• (1450)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is just ridiculous. It is off-label. No other country is separating doses by four months, only Canada because he did not get us enough vaccines. Fact, only 2% of Canadians are fully vaccinated. Fact, only 5% were fully vaccinated by the end of January. That is his partisan fault. Enough with the partisan games. He did not get us these vaccines and now we are in the third wave. Now ICUs are overflowing and it is because he did not negotiate these contracts.

Why did we not have enough vaccines in January and February? For shame.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I do not want to tell the health critic for the Conservative

Party how to do her job, but if she looked around, the U.K. was actually the first country to expand that four-month spread strategy. It is a way of getting more people protected as quickly as possible. That is the strategy that Canadian scientists and experts have recommended and that is what we are continuing to do.

We have now passed the threshold of 25% of Canadians vaccinated, we have millions more vaccines coming in the coming weeks and months and we look forward to getting through this pandemic by working together.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sadly, people are still faced with the impossible choice of going into work sick or staying at home and not getting paid because the Prime Minister refuses to fix the paid sick leave.

The Ontario Science Table agrees paid sick leave saves lives, yet the Prime Minister continues to refuse to improve access to paid sick leave. He is not listening to the scientists, he is not listening to workers and he is not listening to families who have lost loved ones.

What will it take for the Prime Minister to improve access to paid sick leave and save workers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of this pandemic, we have had Canadians' backs with unprecedented supports for workers, for families, for small businesses, for seniors and for young people, and we have continued to do that.

In discussions with the provinces and territories at the end of last summer, we moved forward with two weeks of paid sick leave, knowing it would make a big difference across the country and we continue to work on that. We expanded it to four weeks.

We also recognize the provinces themselves have a role to play, and I hope a number of them will continue to step up on paid sick leave. There is work for all of us to do, but eight dollars out of every 10 dollars to support Canadians came from the federal government.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has finally tabled a budget that responds to the NDP's concerns and signature demands. I congratulate him, but the Prime Minister forgot to address an urgent demand from the provinces and territories to increase health transfers.

Oral Questions

We are in the middle of a health crisis, and our health care system has to meet the needs of the people. Will the Prime Minister promise to increase health transfers, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, I promised that last December during conversations and meetings with the provincial and territorial premiers.

I also acknowledged that our health care system has urgent needs in the short term. That is why we transferred billions of dollars more to the provinces and territories to get through this pandemic.

Once this crisis is behind us, we will sit down together and figure out how we will continue to increase health transfers for the long term. That is what we will do.

* * *

[English]

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the global pandemic has been tough on all Canadians, but particularly on women, who tend to be the family caregivers, especially during a crisis. Research shows many women have had to exit the workforce, risking decades of women's hard-fought gains in the workplace. We know this often due to a lack of affordable, accessible and quality early learning and child care.

Can the Prime Minister please tell us how much we are investing in a national child care program, why it is so important for parents now and how this will support women right across Canada?

• (1455)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Cumberland—Colchester for raising this important issue.

Child care should not be a luxury, it should be something everyone can afford. That is why budget 2021 commits up to \$30 billion over five years to build a Canada-wide child care system. This plan aims to cut fees by 50% by the end of next year, and in five years, we aim to reach an average of \$10-a-day day care right across the country.

We look forward to working with all the provinces and territories to ensure all Canadians have access to early learning and child care.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the United Kingdom, restaurants are beginning to reopen. New Zealand and Australia are accepting international passengers without a quarantine. In the United States, major sports and music venues are beginning to reopen safely.

Here in Canada, we are dealing with a huge third wave. Why is Canada faring so poorly compared to some of our international allies?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that many Canadians are going through extremely tough times because of this third wave.

We also recognize that there are places in Canada that have been spared this third wave, including the Atlantic provinces, where the federal government's work with those provinces has led to a different pandemic reality, and the far north, where the federal government's work with the territorial premiers has led to a different pandemic outcome.

We recognize that there are places that need more help, and the federal government is going to be there for Ontario and any other places needing that assistance.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what they needed is vaccines. That was the one job he had at this point in the crisis.

Now he tries to throw on a cape and say he is the hero who is going to solve the problem that he caused. The reality is, the rest of the world was being vaccinated in January and February. Vaccination rates in the U.S. and U.K. are twice what they are here in Canada. The rest of the world is reopening while we are being confined to our basements because of the wave of variants that the Prime Minister allowed.

Why did the rest of the world have access to vaccines in January and February while we did not?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, it should come as no surprise that that particular member has a way of inventing facts.

The reality is, we did get vaccines in January and February, unlike what the member is saying. Indeed, we need to continue to increase it. Although, for January, February and March, we actually surpassed our target of six million vaccines by almost 9.5 million vaccines total.

The reality is, we will continue to deliver vaccines to Canadians as quickly as possible. We are now third in the G20 in terms of the number of citizens vaccinated with at least one dose. We will continue to accelerate our vaccination.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, inventing facts? This from the Prime Minister who has been embarrassed, again, on the international stage for stating falsehoods.

The Independent of London stated that the Canadian Prime Minister:

...has bizarrely claimed that the UK is facing a "very serious third wave" of Covid-19, despite cases in Britain currently being much lower than in Canada.

He spreads misinformation here at home and embarrasses us abroad, when he should be apologizing for his colossal failure to deliver vaccines.

Why were Canadians not vaccinated in January and February, like everyone else?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have answered that question.

It is fascinating to me that the former finance critic for the Conservative Party, the now critic for jobs and growth, has absolutely nothing to say about our federal budget. We just put forward an ambitious plan for jobs and growth. I am quite aware that the Conservatives have taken issue with it, but they are choosing to not use this opportunity for debate and for discussion in this House of Commons.

I know the member for Carleton never shies away from debate, but why is he not asking any questions about our plan to grow the economy? Is it because it is that good?

• (1500)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is because I looked through it, and there was no plan for jobs or for growth to debate.

All the Prime Minister has done is lock down the businesses that provide the jobs and growth. He has locked them down through his failure, and his failure alone, to deliver the vaccines that are opening up economies around the world.

The President of the United States said every single adult in America is now eligible for vaccines. Here in Canada, we have not even had 30 vaccines for 100 people. That is the contrast.

If the Prime Minister wants to know why we have 300,000 missing jobs and so many people seeing the end of their lives as a result of COVID-19, it is because of his failure. Why did we not get vaccinated in January and February, like everyone else?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I now understand why the hon. member for Carleton is not asking questions about the budget; he has not actually read the budget.

Let me inform him that in this budget, we are extending emergency supports to bridge Canadians and Canadian businesses through to recovery. We are extending employment insurance sickness benefits from 15 to 26 weeks. We are revitalizing Canada's tourism sector with a \$1-billion investment. We are funding to enhance initiatives, like the Black entrepreneurship program and the women entrepreneurship strategy. We are establishing a \$15 minimum wage, enriching the Canada workers benefit, and investing in our small businesses and the transformation of supports they are going to need for the future.

This is a jobs and growth budget, and we are all, apparently, very proud of it in this House.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one of the Prime Minister's marquee commitments in this budget is for a universal child care system inspired by Quebec, which became a global pioneer when Pauline Marois and the Parti Québécois created early learning centres in 1997.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister is following Quebec's lead, so of course he would not presume to tell Quebec what to do with its share of the money. As they say, students do not correct the teacher's work.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that Quebec will get its fair share of the funding, no strings attached? Will it be unconditional?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebec and Quebecers have been child care trailblazers for some time now.

We know it is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do for the economy, for equality, for opportunity and for economic growth. That is exactly why we are going to take what we have learned from Quebec and apply it across the country.

However, I can assure the House that budget 2021 includes an asymmetrical agreement with Quebec that will allow for further improvements to its system.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we want to know whether there are any strings attached to this asymmetrical agreement. Quebec wants it to be unconditional. We want confirmation of that.

Will the agreement be unconditional or not?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for several years, we have been investing tens of billions of dollars across the country to improve the child care system.

Every time, we have been able to come to a very positive agreement with Quebec in order to send the province money so that it can invest in families and children.

We are confident that the work that we will do together, with Quebec, will meet the needs of families across the country and that the funding that we will send to Quebec will be invested properly.

We are happy to be coming to an agreement with Quebec, and I am sure that it will happen.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some transparency and humility would be in order.

Since the beginning of question period, the Prime Minister has continued to claim that he did not make any mistakes with regard to the procurement of vaccines for Canadians.

Unfortunately, he is the one responsible for the third wave that Canada is currently experiencing. We are seeing an average of 8,000 new cases per day. Quebecers are dealing with a curfew that restricts their ability to leave their homes and prevents them from seeing their families.

Oral Questions

If the Prime Minister had done his job properly, this would not be happening. Why did he not provide vaccines to Canadians in January and February as he should have?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, let us look at the facts. During the first few months of the year, we promised Canadians that we would deliver six million doses of the vaccine. We delivered 9.5 million doses.

We are keeping our word, but we recognize that we need to do more. That is why we are working hard every day to deliver even more doses of the vaccine across the country.

• (1505)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from the start of oral question period, the Prime Minister has been telling us about his vaccine supply targets.

Who set those targets? He did.

Where are the contracts showing that the targets are based on something? We are not allowed to see them.

Who does not believe the Prime Minister? Canadians, including restaurant owners.

In my riding, the restaurant La Bourgade was forced to close after throwing out all the inventory it had purchased for Easter. Children cannot have a social life because they have had to go back to school on Zoom.

Why did he not do his job in January and February?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small and medium-sized businesses across the country have received unprecedented support from the federal government.

With regard to support during the pandemic, \$8 of every \$10 spent has been spent by the federal government.

We are there for families, we are there for students, we are there for small business owners, and we will continue to be there even as vaccines arrive—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we had gotten vaccines, we would not still be providing loans to small businesses that will have to pay these loans back in six months, a year or two years.

If we had gotten vaccines, Quebec would not have had a curfew preventing families from getting together and children from going to school.

If we had been able to vaccinate at the same rate as the United States, at least 26% of Canadians would have already gotten both doses.

Today, the U.S. President was proud to announce that 200 million Americans had been vaccinated in just 100 days. Now, that is something.

Why was the Prime Minister not able to get vaccines to Canadians in January and February, to prevent the third wave we are in right now?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working to help Canadians, small businesses and families from the beginning of this pandemic. We have been developing a strategy to vaccinate as many Canadians as possible as quickly as possible.

Every week more and more vaccines are arriving in Canada. Everyone will be vaccinated by the end of September. Many provinces will be able to get the vast majority of Canadians their first dose before the beginning of the summer.

We will keep going. We need to hold on through this third wave.

* * *

SENIORS

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the older seniors get, the more financially vulnerable they become, especially women.

We know that seniors over 75 are often unable to work, that they have disabilities and greater health needs. The combination of higher expenses and lower income means that seniors over 75 need additional support.

Can the Prime Minister explain what our government is doing to make life more affordable for aging Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his hard work on behalf of seniors.

Seniors are more likely to deplete their savings, have disabilities and be widowed at a time when their health needs are on the rise.

In budget 2021, we kept our promise to increase old age security by 10% for Canadians 75 and up. We will also support them in the short term with a one-time payment of \$500 in August.

Seniors built our country and they can rest assured that we will be there for them.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when confronted with facts, the Prime Minister screams out that it is fake news, but he justifies Canada going off label on the vaccines with a four-month dosing by saying that the Brits did the same, when in fact they used a three-month dosing interval.

Instead of spreading misinformation, can the Prime Minister stand up and admit that Canada is in its third wave of lockdowns because he failed to deliver enough vaccines for Canadians to get both doses in January and February?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a year ago, there was no COVID-19 vaccine. Now there are many. Canada, because of our procurement strategy, was able to sign deals with seven different potential vaccine makers, many of which are now able to deliver vaccines, including to Canada. We continue to increase the pace of vaccine doses arriving in Canada. Indeed, in about a week and a half, we will switch to more than two million doses of vaccines arriving every single week. We will have close to 50 million vaccine doses by the end of June here in Canada. We are on track to get through this pandemic.

• (1510)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a real shame that the Prime Minister says that with only 2.5% of Canadians fully vaccinated we are on track. This third wave is his failure. Residents in my riding can look across the border and see Americans in New York state who can get vaccinated at 16 years of age, at their will, because they have availability of supply. This is the third wave of COVID and the third wave of lockdowns, because the Prime Minister failed to get enough vaccines for Canadians.

Instead of making deals with the Chinese-owned CanSino, why did the Prime Minister not focus on doing what was best for Canadians and getting vaccines for January and February?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, it is important that in this House we base our debate in facts. In January and February, we did deliver hundreds of thousands of vaccine doses to Canadians and, indeed, by the end of March, by the end of the first quarter, we had surpassed our scheduled deliveries of six million vaccines, for a total of 9.5 million vaccines. We recognize there is much more to do, but as of right now, over 25% of Canadians have received at least one dose of the vaccine, and we are on our way to getting through this pandemic.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I guess the Prime Minister hopes that Canadians will accept that he will under-promise and over-deliver up to 2.5% of Canadians being fully vaccinated. I can tell the Prime Minister that is not good enough. The Prime Minister shut down Parliament during a pandemic and had his members filibuster the health committee, the defence committee, the ethics committee and the procedure and House affairs committee, instead of working together in a team Canada approach to vaccinate Canadians.

This third wave is a failure of the Prime Minister, and 25% of Canadians getting their first dose is not enough to stop the third wave. Why did the Prime Minister let us down?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout this pandemic, one thing that has been strong and remarkable is the level of collaboration we have seen across political parties and, indeed, across orders of government. That is what Canadians have wanted to see, people working together. The federal government has consistently been there to support the provinces and territories as we make it through the various waves and as we

face far too many tragedies. That is why \$8 out of every \$10 of support for families through this pandemic came from the federal government.

We have continued to step up every step of the way, and we will continue to. We know we need to continue to work together. Nobody wants to see the partisan attacks that are being demonstrated now. They want to see us all working together, which we will.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of this third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Canadians need support now, and they need reassurance that the economy will be strong and jobs will be created once we are through this pandemic.

Could the Prime Minister update the House on how budget 2021 will support all Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Niagara Centre for his important question. This budget is about finishing the fight against COVID-19 and it is about creating prosperity for Canadians. Budget 2021 is a historic investment to address the wounds of COVID-19, put people first, create jobs, set businesses on a track for growth, and ensure that Canada's future will be more equitable, greener and more prosperous.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his budget, the Prime Minister is proposing to cut support payments this summer.

Why? We are in the third wave of COVID-19, people are still in lockdown, and many are very much at risk of losing their jobs.

Why do the Liberal government and the Prime Minister want to cut back support payments from \$500 to \$300 this summer? Why?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been there for Canadians every step of the way.

We promised to be there for as long as it takes with all the help they need. We are there, and we will continue to be there to support families, businesses, workers and all Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

We are all very hopeful that, by summer, we will be able to relax restrictions and step up economic activity. We know that employers will want to hire lots of people. That is why we invested in a hiring incentive for employers.

We will always look closely at things to be sure we are doing what it takes to give Canadians all the help they need.

• (1515)

The Speaker: That is all the time we have today for question period.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[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 17 petitions. These responses will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

PETITIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present, in both official languages, petition e-2559, which calls upon the government to take further steps with the People's Republic of China. The specific actions are outlined within the petition as points of recommendation.

I look back to the years of the Harper administration when government, in its foreign policy, went by the values of justice, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This petition and those who have signed it are in support of seeing these values once again brought back to our government.

The Speaker: I want to ask the hon. members to be considerate. We have a lot of people presenting petitions and only a limited amount of time. If they can be as concise as possible, it would certainly be appreciated.

The hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

FALUN GONG

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two certified petitions from constituents. Both call on the Government of Canada to deploy legal sanctions against certain officials of the Communist Party of China who have orchestrated gross human rights violations against the Falun Gong practitioners.

I have 119 signatures for the first petition and 30 signatures for the second.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present to the House today.

The first petition is with respect to Bill S-204, to prohibit forced organ harvesting and trafficking. That bill has just passed the Senate committee and is back for third reading. The petitioners are in support of the bill.

• (1520)

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is about Bill C-6.

The petitioners support a ban on conversion therapy. They ask the government to fix the problems with the definition of conversion therapy to align that definition with definitions of conversion therapy that are used in other bans in other jurisdictions.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third and final petition draws the attention of the House to the situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

The petitioners call for greater government engagement in response to the humanitarian and human rights challenge in terms of investigation and engagement with the relevant governments.

I commend these petitions to the consideration of all members.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition signed by Canadians who are concerned about Bill C-6.

The petitioners state that violent, coercive actions that seek to change someone's sexuality against his or her will are unacceptable, but the definition of conversion therapy in Bill C-6 is so broad that it captures instances that do not fit that description. They recognize the impact this bill would have on the choices available to Canadians, including the LGBT community.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons to do five things: ban coercive, degrading practices; ensure that no laws discriminate against Canadians by limiting the service they can receive; allow parents to speak with their children about sexuality and gender; allow free and open conversation about sexuality and sexual behaviour; and avoid criminalizing professional and religious counselling voluntarily requested and consented to by Canadians.

Receiving counsel from parents, teachers or counsellors can be healthy, and this bill must take into account the benefits of talk therapy to those struggling with their sexual orientation or gender identity. These conversations should not be limited by a government that simply cannot know and appreciate the unique needs of every individual. We must respect the choices individuals make in seeking counsel and support. Let us heed the words of these petitioners and fix the definition in Bill C-6.

SEX WORKERS

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to sponsor petition e-3132, and I am even more pleased to present it today as it received more than 9,500 signatures in very short order.

The petitioners call for the full decriminalization of consensual sex work in Canada. They note that criminalizing sex work was found to be a violation of the right to security of person by the Supreme Court in the Bedford decision of 2013. They point out that instead of decriminalizing sex work, Bill C-36 simply found new ways to make sex work illegal, and the result has been to further endanger sex workers.

In the absence of the legislative review of Bill C-36 that was supposed to take place, the petitioners ask that instead of forcing sex workers to go back to court to protect their rights, the House simply repeal Bill C-36.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to table petition e-3071, which was initiated by Bronwen Brice in Nanaimo—Ladysmith. It has 1,188 signatures.

The petitioners are concerned that the fixation on profit and growth is taking us down a dangerous path leading to a widening gap between rich and poor, spiralling poverty, environmental breakdown and a mental health crisis. They note that GDP growth has been a poor measure of success. It counts polluting factories and the manufacture of weapons, but tells us nothing about the quality of education our children receive, the availability of well-paid and secure jobs or the number of species threatened with extinction, yet GDP growth is still the government's main economic goal.

The petitioners state that a well-being economy would prioritize public health and well-being indicators, reorienting our economy toward what matters most. Scientists have called on governments to shift away from pursuing GDP growth and affluence and toward sustaining ecosystems and improving well-being to tackle the climate crisis. Well-being economics has already been adopted by several jurisdictions.

The petitioners therefore call upon the Government of Canada to discontinue GDP measurement and shift to a well-being economy.

The Speaker: I want to remind the hon. members to be as concise and brief as possible.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

PHARMACARE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition today signed by many members of my constituency on the subject of pharmacare.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners note that Canada is the only country that has a universal health care program but does not have universal drug coverage. They call on the government to move expeditiously to put in place universal prescription drug coverage and bring down the price of prescription drugs through a bulk purchasing program at the federal level.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of hundreds of Canadians to present petition e-3181.

The petitioners call on the government to sign onto the temporary waiver that has been proposed at the World Trade Organization of certain trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights, or TRIPS provisions, to help more countries access the intellectual property they need to produce vaccines, as part of our moral obligation to the world, to be sure, but also to protect Canadians against the development of new variants and to reduce the economic consequences of the pandemic, as we could be part of a solution to ensure people are vaccinated the world over.

● (1525)

JUSTICE

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the haze of 420 settles, Canadians are still looking for justice. I am pleased to present petition e-2824, sponsored by Louder Together, which seeks to address the over-policing, the over-incarceration and the other disproportionate impacts that criminalization of cannabis has had on Black, indigenous and other racialized Canadians.

The petition calls on the Government of Canada to develop a department for the equality of Black, indigenous and people of colour and to allocate funding for our community initiatives, including harm reduction, PTSD treatment programs, community revitalization programs and the creation of a business development program with the express mandate of creating and funding opportunities for BIPOC in the regulated cannabis sector.

* * *

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: Nos. 455 to 458, 460 to 463 and 466.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 455—**Mr. Kenny Chiu:**

With regard to the statement by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the House of Commons on February 23, 2021, that “A registry of foreign agents is something that we are actively considering”: (a) what is the timeline for when a decision on such a registry will be made, including the timeline for the implementation of such a registry; (b) when did the government begin considering a foreign agent registry; (c) who has been assigned to lead the government’s consideration of a foreign agent registry, and when did that person receive the assignment; (d) what other changes have been implemented since January 1, 2016, to address the threat of foreign influence; and (e) what other specific actions does the government plan to implement to address the threat of foreign influence, and what is the timeline for the implementation of each such measure?

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.

In response to (a), the Government of Canada does not tolerate harmful activities such as foreign interference and applies a whole-of-government approach to safeguarding our communities, democratic institutions, and economic prosperity.

In December, Minister Blair publicly outlined the threats related to foreign interference and the critical work of the security and intelligence community in a letter addressed to all members of Parliament. The Government of Canada is always evaluating the tools and authorities required by our security agencies to keep Canadians safe, while respecting their fundamental rights.

In response to (b), the Government of Canada is always looking to learn from the experiences of our international partners to see what may be advisable or possible in Canada.

In response to (c), the Government of Canada takes a whole-of-government approach to combatting foreign interference. As part of this effort, the Government of Canada is always evaluating the tools and authorities that our national security agencies need to help keep Canadians safe. This involves officials across multiple departments and agencies.

In response to (d), Canada has been leading the G7 rapid response mechanism aimed at identifying and responding to foreign threats to democracy since it was agreed at the 2018 Charlevoix summit. Since its establishment, the mechanism has focused on countering foreign state-sponsored disinformation, in recognition of the critical threat this issue poses to the rules-based international order and democratic governance. The mechanism’s coordination unit, located at Global Affairs Canada, also supports whole-of-government efforts aimed at safeguarding the Canadian federal elections, as a member of the security and intelligence threats to elections, SITE, task force, along with the Communications Security Establishment, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

There has been an increase in foreign interference, FI, investigations at the RCMP over the last few years, which could be attributed to several factors, including increased reporting by victims, greater awareness by local police, and media attention.

It is predominantly the RCMP’s federal policing national security program that looks to identify common activities that could be attributed to FI, including intimidation, harassment and threats. This

work requires collaboration with police of local jurisdiction and other local partners, as these types of criminality are almost always brought to their attention first. Should there be criminal or illegal activities occurring in Canada that are found to be backed by a foreign state, the federal policing national security program will take the lead in these types of investigations, given the complexity and the classification of information that form their basis. As such, the RCMP can only confirm that it is monitoring and actively investigating threats of FI in Canada.

The RCMP has a broad, multi-faceted mandate that allows it to investigate and disrupt FI by drawing upon various legislative statutes with a view to laying charges under the Criminal Code of Canada. The RCMP also works closely with its security and intelligence partners to identify and protect those who may be experiencing harassment or intimidation, which may be at the direction of a foreign state. Furthermore, the RCMP works with police of local jurisdiction and other local enforcement to ensure that instances of harassment and intimidation, which are commonly reported at the local level, with potential links to national security are considered by the RCMP’s federal policing national security program for investigation.

In response to (e), the Government of Canada’s security and intelligence community is combatting foreign interference threats within their respective mandates. The Government of Canada continues to look for new and innovative ways to enhance the measures in place to address foreign interference.

Question No. 456—**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:**

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency’s (CRA) actions concerning the Panama Papers case and the Paradise Papers case, broken down by each case: (a) how many taxpayer or Canadian business files are currently open with the CRA; (b) how many taxpayer or Canadian business files have been referred to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada; (c) what is the number of employees assigned to each case, broken down by job post title; (d) how many audits have been conducted since each case was disclosed; (e) how many notices of assessment have been issued by the CRA; (f) what is the total amount recovered so far by the CRA; (g) what is the average time to close a case; (h) what is the average return for closed cases; and (i) how many have been settled and what was the loss in amounts recovered?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the above-noted question, what follows is the response from the CRA.

In response to part (a), as of December 25, 2020, the most recent data available, the CRA defines “files” as audits, and there are 160 taxpayers audits currently ongoing related to the Panama papers and close to 50 audits currently ongoing related to the paradise papers.

In response to part (b), as of March 31, 2020, the most recent data available, no cases related to the Panama papers or the paradise papers have been referred to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, PPSC.

Criminal investigations can be complex and require years to complete. The length of time required to investigate is dependent on the complexity of the case, the number and sophistication of individuals involved, the availability of information or evidence, the co-operation or lack thereof of witnesses or the accused, and the various legal tools that may need to be employed to gather sufficient evidence to establish a case beyond reasonable doubt.

In response to part (c), the CRA is interpreting the term “employees” as noted in the question as the budgeted full-time equivalents, FTEs, in the auditors, AU, category: 37 auditors are assigned to the Panama papers workloads, and 14 auditors are assigned to the paradise papers workloads. It is important to note that these auditors are not solely dedicated to Panama papers and paradise papers, and some auditors work on both the Panama papers and the paradise papers workloads.

In response to part (d), as of December 25, 2020, the most recent data available, the CRA has completed close to 200 taxpayer audits linked to the Panama papers and close to 80 taxpayer audits linked to the paradise papers.

In response to part (e), as of December 25, 2020, the most recent data available, there have been over 35 audits resulting in reassessment for the Panama papers and under five for the paradise papers that resulted in tax earned by audit, TEBA.

It is important to note that with each individual audit, there may be multiple notices of reassessment issued to each taxpayer depending on the number of years audited and whether penalties are applicable to the audit. For example, if there are six years under audit, there can be potential for several notices of reassessment issued for the one taxpayer audit should non-compliance be identified.

In response to part (f), the CRA is unable to respond in the manner requested, as it does not track payments against specific account adjustments like audits, as its systems apply payments to a taxpayer’s cumulative outstanding balance by tax year, which can represent multiple assessments, reassessments such as audits of different types, and other adjustments.

However, based on an October 2020 study by the Parliamentary Budget Officer of recent federal budget investments in the CRA tax compliance operations, it was generally estimated that approximately 80% of total audit fiscal impact will materialize and result in successful collection actions.

In response to part (g), the CRA is defining “case” as an audit. Please note that there are many factors that could impact the amount of time to complete a Panama papers and paradise papers audit, such as the time from the date the case is created to the date the case is assigned to an auditor; delays beyond our control such as the time it takes the taxpayer to respond to questions; cases involving offshore assets require exchange of information with other jurisdictions, other tax administrations, which can take a significant time. The average time to complete a Panama papers audit is close to 380 days per audit and close to 360 days per audit for paradise papers.

In response to part (h), as outlined in part (d), there have been close to 280 taxpayers audits completed linked to the Panama papers and paradise papers, resulting in more than \$21 million in fed-

eral taxes and penalties assessed. The average return, TEBA, for closed audits for the Panama papers is \$110,216.

Routine Proceedings

However, as noted under part (e), to date, there have been fewer than five taxpayer audits with links to the paradise papers that resulted in non-compliance. Under the confidentiality provisions of the acts administered by the CRA, in situations where the sample size is so small that a taxpayer or business could be directly or indirectly identified, aggregate data is not released. Therefore, disclosing dollar values related to paradise papers cannot be provided as the identities of the taxpayers or businesses could be revealed or inferred.

In response to part (i), under the confidentiality provisions of the acts administered by the CRA, in situations where the sample size is so small that a recipient could be directly or indirectly identified, aggregate data is not released. Given the small volume of cases and the need to ensure confidentiality, the details cannot be provided as the identities of the taxpayers or businesses could be revealed or inferred.

Question No. 457—**Mr. Gérard Deltell:**

With regard to the announcement by the current Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry on February 19, 2018, related to a federal contribution of \$2,066,407 to have Bell install broadband Internet in Lac Pemichangan and certain other Outaouais communities: (a) did the government chose which communities would be covered or did Bell; (b) what specific criteria was used to determine which communities would be covered by the announced funding; (c) on what date did (i) the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, (ii) the current Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry, become aware that the Chief Executive Officer of Bell had a vacation property in Lac Pemichangan; and (d) why was the funding not used to expand broadband service in Chelsea or other more populated areas of the Outaouais?

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a) connectivity has never been more important, and we continue to make progress in ensuring all Canadians have access to reliable high-speed Internet, no matter where they live. Since 2015, we have approved programs and projects that will connect 1.7 million Canadian households. Our government has introduced programs like connect to innovate, or CTI, and the universal broadband fund that are working to improve Internet connectivity, because we understand that all Canadians need access to high-speed Internet to live, work and compete in today’s digital world.

Routine Proceedings

Through CTI, we are helping more than 900 rural and remote communities, more than triple the 300 communities initially targeted and including 190 indigenous communities, get access to high-speed broadband. This project was chosen under the CTI program. CTI focused on building transformative high-capacity backbone connectivity to connect public institutions like schools, hospitals, and first nations band councils.

Applications were accepted between December 2016 and April 2017 for broadband infrastructure projects in areas identified as underserved because they lacked a backbone connection of one gigabit per second, Gbps. Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's, ISED's, national broadband Internet service availability map was used to determine these areas. For this project, ISED selected Bell's application, in which Bell proposed to provide backbone access to the underserved communities of Grand-Rémous, Clément, Lac-Pemichangan, Petit-Poisson-Blanc, Danford Lake, Alcove and Lascelles and did not include the last mile connection to homes.

The communities ultimately covered by this project were decided through contribution agreement negotiations between ISED and Bell. However, Bell had committed to invest its own contribution to build a last mile network to connect homes. As no federal funding contributed to the building of the last mile network, Bell is solely responsible.

In response to (b), eligible communities were identified on the eligibility map on the CTI website. The data for these maps was provided by a number of sources, including Internet service providers, or ISPs, provinces, territories and others to identify where points of presence, PoP, delivering service of at least 1 Gbps are located. For CTI, an eligible rural community was defined as a named place with a population of fewer than 30,000 residents that was two kilometres or more from the nearest 1 Gbps PoP.

All applications to the CTI program were assessed using a three-stage assessment process. First was the eligibility screening to determine if the applicant was eligible for funding. The second was the assessment of essential criteria, which included technological merit and the extent to which the application demonstrated a feasible project management plan. The sustainability of the proposed solution, including whether the applicant had a reasonable plan and the financial potential to maintain the infrastructure and services on an ongoing basis for five years after the project is completed, was also considered at this stage. Finally, those applications that met the essential criteria underwent an assessment against a series of comparative criteria in the categories of community benefits and partners and costs. Taken together, the program must ensure that projects provide a good regional distribution, allow the program to reach a sufficient number of communities, and do not exceed available resources. This project went through each of the steps outlined above.

In response to (c), the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development and the parliamentary secretary became aware of this via media reports in February 2021.

In response to (d), projects were selected from applications received for the underserved communities identified on ISED's eligibility maps.

Question No. 458—Mr. Taylor Bachrach:

With regard to offshore tax havens, since November 2015: (a) how many taxpayer or Canadian business files are currently open with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA); (b) how many taxpayer or Canadian business files have been referred to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada; (c) what is the number of employees assigned to each case, broken down by job post title; (d) how many audits have been conducted since each case was disclosed; (e) how many notices of assessment have been issued by the CRA; (f) what is the total amount recovered so far by the CRA; (g) what is the average time to close a case; (h) what is the average return for closed cases; and (i) how many have been settled and what was the loss in amounts recovered?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the above-noted question, what follows is the response from the CRA. In response to parts (a), (c), (d), (e), (f), and (g), while the CRA may use the term "tax havens" for illustrative purposes to communicate with a broader audience, in practice the CRA's risk assessments focus on jurisdictions of concern. There are generally two essential attributes that are used to identify offshore jurisdictions of concern: no taxes or low effective rates of tax; and banking secrecy or confidentiality laws providing anonymity.

The CRA does not capture all the audit activity completed involving all jurisdictions of concern information in the manner requested above. The CRA does not specifically maintain an official list of offshore jurisdictions of concern. Through collaborative efforts with international partners, the CRA is able to identify and take action against those who are evading and avoiding paying their fair share of tax. Furthermore, where tax treaties or tax information exchange agreements are in place, sharing of information amongst tax authorities can also be used to help identify and address non-compliance.

In response to part (b), between April 1, 2015, and March 31, 2020, the latest data available, 16 cases with an international component, regarding 19 taxpayers, were referred to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, PPSC. As with any criminal investigation undertaken by law enforcement bodies, including the CRA, these cases can be complex and require years to complete. The amount of time required to investigate is dependent on the complexity of the case, the number of individuals involved, whether international requests for information will be needed, the availability of information or evidence, the co-operation or lack thereof of witnesses or the accused, and the various legal tools that may need to be employed to gather sufficient evidence to establish a case beyond reasonable doubt.

In response to parts (h) to (i), between April 1, 2015 and March 31, 2020, the latest data available, there were seven cases with an international component, regarding nine taxpayers, that resulted in convictions. This involved \$2,639,269 in federal tax evaded and court fines totaling \$1,501,097 and 24 years in jail. The average return for convictions was \$377,038.42 per case.

Question No. 460—Ms. Kristina Michaud:

With regard to youth policy and the launch of the national conversation that sought to develop a new Canadian youth policy and that involved over 10,000 individual responses and 68 submissions from youth-led discussions and youth-serving organizations: (a) where did these 10,000 individual responses and 68 briefs come from, broken down by (i) the official language in which the responses and briefs were submitted, (ii) the home province of these participants; (b) during the consultations, did the government pay close attention to the needs of francophones, including francophones in minority communities, as well as those in rural areas; and (c) what was the total cost of the Canada Youth Summit, that took place on May 2 and 3, 2019?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a)(i), out of the 10,000 individual responses from youth-led discussions, 12% of respondents provided responses to the “Have Your Say” booklet in French; 88% of respondents provided responses to the “Have Your Say” booklet in English; there were 68 submissions from youth-led round tables and stakeholder discussions, youth-serving organizations, and participants and stakeholders were offered the opportunity to respond in the official language of their choice.

The response to (a)(ii) is Ontario 47%, Quebec 13%, British Columbia 12%, Alberta 9%, Manitoba 6%, Nova Scotia 5%, Saskatchewan 2%, New Brunswick 2%, Newfoundland and Labrador 1%, Northwest Territories 1%, Prince Edward Island 1%, Nunavut less than 1%, Yukon less than 1%.

In response to (b), during the consultations, the government listened to the needs of all youth, including francophones from official-language minority communities. Participants were offered the opportunity to respond in the official language of their choice. The summit also provided simultaneous translation and interpretation services.

Various youth-serving organizations were included in the consultation process, for example Inspire, Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, Oxfam-Québec, RDÉE, leader in the economic development of the francophone and Acadian communities, Regroupement des jeunes chambres du commerce du Québec, YMCA Montréal.

The consultation was designed to gather feedback from young Canadians, including indigenous youth, youth from different income groups, youth living in rural and remote areas, newcomers, vulnerable youth facing social and economical barriers, and youth from diverse backgrounds and communities.

Seventy-seven per cent of respondents indicated that they live in an urban community; 20% of respondents indicated that they live in a rural community; 3% of respondents indicated that they live in a remote community.

The response to (c) is \$86,000.

Question No. 461—Mr. Arnold Viersen:

With regard to the motion adopted by the House of Commons on June 19, 2019, calling on the United Nations to establish an international independent investigation into allegations of genocide against Tamils committed in Sri Lanka: (a) does the government support calls for an international investigation into allegations of genocide; (b) has the government made any official statements or representations to other states, multilateral bodies, or other international entities respecting a possible independent investigation, and, if so, what are the specific details, including (i) who

Routine Proceedings

made the representation, (ii) the date, (iii) the summary of the contents, (iv) the form of representation (official statement, phone call, etc.), (v) the name of the state, body or entity the representation was made to, (vi) the title of individuals whom the representation was made to; and (c) does the government intend to raise this issue or any other issues related to human rights in Sri Lanka during upcoming United Nations Human Rights Council sessions?

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.

Canada has long supported calls for credible truth-seeking, accountability and justice in Sri Lanka.

In 2014, Canada supported the UN Human Rights Council's, UNHRC, mandated investigation by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR, into alleged serious violations and abuses of human rights and related crimes in Sri Lanka, OISL. In 2015, Canada supported UNHRC resolution 30/1, co-sponsored by Sri Lanka, which affirmed that a credible justice process should include independent judicial and prosecutorial institutions and the participation of Commonwealth and other foreign judges. Canada also supported resolutions 34/1, 2017, and 40/1, 2019, which rolled over the commitments agreed to by the Government of Sri Lanka in 2015, while calling for their timely implementation.

When the Government of Sri Lanka withdrew its support from the above resolutions in February 2020, Canada, along with its core group partners on the resolution, led efforts to bring a new resolution to the 46th session of the UNHRC, February-March 2021. This was done in recognition that previous domestic processes have proven insufficient to tackle impunity and deliver real reconciliation, and that the international community's continued scrutiny of Sri Lanka at the UNHRC constitutes a key step for advancing accountability.

The new resolution 46/1, adopted on March 23 strengthens the capacity of the OHCHR to collect and preserve information and evidence of crimes related to Sri Lanka's civil war that ended in 2009. It also requests the OHCHR to enhance its monitoring and reporting on the situation of human rights in Sri Lanka, including the preparation of a comprehensive report with further options for advancing accountability to be presented at the Human Rights Council 51st session, September 2022. Canada and the international community will consider these options for future accountability processes, which may include an international investigation, when the OHCHR presents its comprehensive report.

Canada played a key role in building support for the adoption of this resolution during the council session. This included the Minister of Foreign Affairs' statement during the high-level segment on February 24, during which he shared Canada's concern over warning signs of a deteriorating human rights situation in Sri Lanka, recognized the lack of progress in achieving accountability and reconciliation, acknowledged the frustration of victims, and reiterated Canada's belief that the council has a responsibility to continue to closely monitor and engage on the human rights situation in Sri Lanka.

Routine Proceedings

On February 25, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs delivered Canada's statement on the OHCHR report on Sri Lanka. He echoed concerns about Sri Lanka's commitment to a domestic reconciliation process and he asked council members whether Sri Lanka's newly announced commission of inquiry could achieve justice for victims of the conflict, given it lacks a comprehensive mandate, independence and inclusivity.

Canada, alongside core group partners, also conducted advocacy and outreach to council members to build support for the resolution in the weeks leading up to the vote. These coordinated advocacy efforts were critical to the resolution's successful adoption.

Canada will continue to urge Sri Lanka to uphold its human rights obligations, end impunity and undertake a comprehensive accountability process for all violations and abuses of human rights. Resolution 46/1 is a step toward securing a safe, peaceful and inclusive future for Sri Lanka, and, to this end, Canada stands ready to support efforts that work towards this goal.

Question No. 462—Mr. Taylor Bachrach:

With regard to the rebuilding regulations developed as part of implementing the 2019 amendments to the Fisheries Act: (a) will the regulations include definitions of targets for each prescribed fisheries stock; (b) will these targets be set to a level that will produce maximum sustainable yields; (c) will the regulations include a timeline for rebuilding each prescribed stock; (d) what criteria will be used to develop each timeline; (e) will all prescribed stocks in the critical zone be included in the first set of regulations to be released; (f) will the regulations direct related fisheries management to ensure science-based decision making; (g) will the departmental review of the resulting rebuilding plans be made public; (h) what indicators will be used to track progress towards the objectives of rebuilding plans; and (i) will the regulations seek to ensure protection and recovery of all conservation units within a Stock Management Unit consistent with Canada's Policy for Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the proposed regulations to implement the Fisheries Act Fish Stocks provisions, sections 6.1–6.3, recently went through the Canada Gazette, part 1, CG1, 30-day public comment period. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, DFO, is currently examining the feedback received.

With regard to parts (a)-(g) and (i), as the process to develop the proposed regulations is still under way, DFO may not comment on any specific changes that might be made to the regulations based on the public feedback received. However, the member's points in (a) through (i) will be taken into account as DFO continues to review the comments received on the regulations during CG1.

With regard to part (h), the indicators used to track progress towards rebuilding plan objectives will depend on the particular objectives set for a stock in its rebuilding plan and the nature of the stock assessment for the stock, as the latter will determine the types of indicators that can be used. Thus the indicators may vary by fish stock. As an example, if an objective is to promote the growth of a stock's biomass to a certain amount, estimated in tonnes, within a certain number of years, then the indicator would be the estimated biomass. DFO would estimate the biomass as part of the scheduled peer-reviewed science stock assessment process for the stock. If the biomass cannot be estimated for a certain stock, then other indicators may be used to determine progress to promote the growth of the stock. For example, for a salmon stock, the department may estimate the number of fish that return to a river or lake to spawn or the number of eggs per square metre laid in a riverbed.

Finally, with regard to part (i), DFO is committed to the conservation and sustainable use of Canada's fish stocks and ensuring that Canada's fisheries are managed sustainably using the best available scientific information. The department is also committed to taking actions aimed at rebuilding fish stocks that have declined and remains committed to implementing Canada's policy for the conservation of wild Pacific salmon.

Question No. 463—Mr. Peter Julian:

With regard to the Canadian-American Council for the Advancement of Women Entrepreneurs and Business Leaders and the implementation of its recommendations by federal government, since its inception, and broken down by fiscal year: (a) how much was spent by the government; (b) which recommendations have been implemented by the government; (c) of the recommendations in (b), what is the implementation status of each recommendation; (d) which recommendations are still not implemented and what is the rationale for each; (e) how many full time staff have been assigned; (f) what are the details of contracts awarded by the Council, including (i) the date of the contract, (ii) the value of the contract, (iii) the name of the supplier, (iv) the reference number, (v) the description of the services rendered; (g) what are the details of all travel expenses incurred, including for each expense (i) the name of the traveller, (ii) the purpose of the trip, (iii) the dates of travel, (iv) the air fare, (v) the cost of any other transportation, (vi) accommodation, (vii) meals and incidental expenses, (viii) other expenses, (ix) the total amount; and (h) what are the details of all hospitality expenses incurred by the Council, including for each expense (i) the name of the guest, (ii) the location of the event, (iii) the service provider, (iv) the total amount, (v) the description of the event, (vi) the date, (vii) the number of participants, (viii) the number of officials present, (ix) the number of guests?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the full and equal participation of women in the economy is not just the right thing to do; it is also good for the bottom line. Canadian women entrepreneurs are key to our economic success as a country, and are critical to key sectors. However, women today still face unique and systemic barriers to starting and growing a business, and these challenges have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Canada-United States Council for Advancement of Women Entrepreneurs and Business Leaders, which was created in February 2017 to drive women's participation, leadership and success in the workforce, developed advice to help boost women's economic engagement and share the many inspiring stories of progress and successful women to motivate others to follow their lead.

As the final report highlighted, to create real opportunities for women business leaders, we need to make gender diversity in leadership a priority. This is why in the 2018 budget, our government took action by introducing the women's entrepreneurship strategy, WES, and new policies to help more parents take parental leave. We also introduced new legislation to encourage diversity on boards and recognize corporations committed to promoting women leaders.

The women's entrepreneurship strategy is a nearly \$5-billion investment that aims to increase women-owned businesses' access to the financing, talent, networks and expertise they need to start up, scale up and access new markets. In fall 2020, the government committed to accelerating the work of the WES.

The Government of Canada will continue to support women-led businesses as part of their long-standing commitment to advancing women's economic empowerment, which is key to Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan. Women-led businesses provide good jobs that support families across the country, and by supporting them today, Canada will be in a stronger position as we rebuild for future success.

Question No. 466—**Mr. Peter Julian:**

With regard to the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and the applications of companies practicing aggressive tax avoidance and tax evasion, broken down by aggressive tax avoidance case and tax evasion case: (a) how many full-time employees were verifying the applications of enterprises, broken down by category of employees; (b) what is the average duration of each verification; (c) how many verifications were carried out; (d) what are the steps in the verification process; and (e) how many applications were refused?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to parts (a), (b), (c) and (e), the CRA does not track Canada emergency wage subsidy, CEWS, applications in this manner, by companies practising aggressive tax avoidance and tax evasion, broken down by aggressive tax avoidance case and tax evasion case. Part 1 of the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act, No. 2, S.C. 2020, c. 6, notes that CEWS is available to qualifying entities, sets out definitions for the terms that apply to the emergency wage subsidy, and provides definitions of both eligible employees and qualifying entities. The CRA's role is to administer legislation as it has been approved by Parliament and assented to by the Crown.

With regard to part (d), when the CRA processes CEWS applications, it uses an automated validation process and manually verifies certain elements of the claims when necessary. Manual verification can include contacting applicants directly. The CRA has also put procedures in place to identify fraudulent wage subsidy claims before it issues a payment. These procedures include intercepting claims from taxpayers associated with tax evasion or fraud. After payment, through the CEWS post-payment audit program, the CRA further verifies the legitimacy of wage subsidy claims and payment amounts. Taxpayers are selected for a post-payment audit through CRA's risk assessment systems and processes. Selected taxpayers are sent an initial contact letter requesting information focused on the payroll and revenue tests. For many small and medium taxpayers that provide the required documentation, these tests can be performed swiftly, and if fully compliant, the audit can be closed quickly. The audit team conducts the payroll tests like any other payroll audit and confidentiality of the eligible employee informa-

tion is maintained. In regard to the revenue test, where the taxpayer has used a consolidated accounting method or made an election in computing the revenue drop, then more audit work is required. The CRA examines whether the taxpayer took additional steps to artificially reduce or defer revenue to meet the requirements of the wage subsidy, and application of the specific anti-avoidance rule and the related 25% penalty is considered if the reporting of revenues have been manipulated.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

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. 452 to 454, 459, 464, 465 and 467 to 471 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 452—**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:**

With regard to Old Age Security, Employment Insurance, the Guaranteed Income Supplement and all programs designed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic: (a) was a gender-based analysis plus carried out prior to the implementation of the program, and, if not, has one been carried out since, and if so, when was it carried out; and (b) for each program, what were the conclusions of this analysis?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 453—**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:**

With regard to the Safe Return to Class Fund: (a) what is the total amount that each province or territory (i) has received, (ii) will be receiving; (b) of the funds in (a), broken down by province or territory, how much has been used to purchase (i) masks and face shields, (ii) high efficiency particulate air filters, (iii) heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, (iv) liters of hand and surface sanitizers; (c) broken down by province or territory, how many (i) new teachers and education workers have been hired, (ii) new cleaners and janitors have been hired; (d) broken down by province or territory, how many (i) new sinks have been installed, (ii) barriers and screens have been installed; and (e) broken down by province or territory, how many alternative teaching spaces have been rented?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 454—**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:**

With regard to moderate livelihood fisheries: has the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard made a decision, and, if so, when will it be communicated to Indigenous and commercial fishers?

(Return tabled)

S. O. 52

Question No. 459—Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:

With regard to the delays in processing spousal sponsorship applications since the announcement by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship on September 25, 2020: (a) what is the percentage increase in the number of decision-makers reviewing the sponsorship applications that were added; (b) how many sponsorship applications were reviewed in October, November and December 2020; and (c) how many applications in total were processed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 464—Mr. Peter Julian:

With regard to government contracts since March 13, 2020, and broken down by registered lobbyists and their affiliated firms: (a) how many contracts have been awarded to registered lobbyists; and (b) what are the details of contracts awarded, including (i) the date of the contract, (ii) the initial and final value of the contract, (iii) the name of the supplier, (iv) the reference number, (v) the description of the services rendered?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 465—Mr. Peter Julian:

With regard to claimed stock option deductions, between fiscal years 2012-13 and 2020-21 inclusively, broken down by each fiscal year: (a) what is the number of individuals who claimed the stock option deduction whose total annual income is (i) less than \$60,000, (ii) less than \$100,000, (iii) less than \$200,000, (iv) between \$200,000 and \$1 million, (v) more than \$1 million; (b) what is the average amount claimed by an individual whose total annual income is (i) less than \$60,000, (ii) less than \$100,000, (iii) less than \$200,000, (iv) between \$200,000 and \$1 million, (v) more than \$1 million; (c) what is the total amount claimed by individuals whose total annual income is (i) less than \$60,000, (ii) less than \$100,000, (iii) less than \$200,000, (iv) between \$200,000 and \$1 million, (v) more than \$1 million; and (d) what is the percentage of the total amount claimed by individuals whose total annual income is more than \$1 million?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 467—Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:

With regard to the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion (OHRFI): (a) in the last five years, what programs in other countries have been funded by the OHRFI related specifically to the advancement of religious freedom or the protection of the rights of religious minorities; (b) what has been the impact of each of these programs; (c) how does the government measure the impact of these programs; and (d) which of those programs specifically advanced the rights of minority communities that are (i) Hindu, (ii) Jewish, (iii) Buddhist, (iv) Christian, (v) Muslim, (vi) Sikh, (vii) Baha'i?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 468—Mrs. Karen Vecchio:

With regard to contracts entered into between the government and Abacus Data since January 1, 2016, and broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: (a) what is the total value of the contracts; (b) what are the details of each contract, including (i) the initial amount, (ii) the amended amount, if applicable, (iii) the start and end date; (iv) the description of goods or services, (v) the specific topics Abacus provided data or research on related to the contract, if applicable, (vi) whether contract was sole-sourced or competitive; (c) what are the details of all polling, surveys, or focus group research provided to the government from Abacus including the (i) date provided to the government, (ii) topics, (iii) specific questions asked to respondents, (iv) type of research (online poll, focus group, etc.), (v) number of respondents, (vi) responses received, including the number and percentage of each type of response, (vii) summary of the findings provided to the government; and (d) what are the details of all communication assistance or advice provided by Abacus, including the (i) start and end date, (ii) topics, (iii) value of related contract, (iv) summary of advice provided?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 469—Mr. Damien C. Kurek:

With regard to the government's hiring policies: (a) is the government currently hiring for any positions wherein the successful applicant must be a member of a particular underrepresented group; (b) what are the particular positions for which the requirement in (a) has been implemented; (c) what are the underrepresented group or groups with which an applicant must identify in order to be eligible, broken down by each position; (d) what is the process for determining if an applicant has made a false claim in relation to the requirement in (a); and (e) what process

does the government follow for determining which positions will be reserved for underrepresented groups?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 470—Mr. Robert Kitchen:

With regard to the acquisition of freezers required to transport and store the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine: (a) how many freezers were purchased; (b) what is the total cost of purchasing the freezers; (c) what is the cost per unit of freezers purchased, broken down by type of unit; (d) how many of each type of unit were purchased; (e) how many of each type of unit purchased are in each (i) province or territory, (ii) local health unit district; (f) how many of each type of unit were purchased for the purpose of transporting the vaccine; (g) how many freezers were rented; (h) what is the total cost of renting the freezers; (i) what is cost per unit of freezers rented, broken down by type of unit; (j) what are the estimated costs of (i) transporting, (ii) maintaining the freezers, broken down by type of expense; and (k) what are the details of all contracts over \$1,000 related to the purchase, acquisition, maintenance, or transportation of the freezers including, (i) the vendor, (ii) the amount, (iii) the description of goods or services, including the quantity, (iv) whether the contract was sole-sourced or awarded through a competitive bidding process?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 471—Ms. Rachel Blaney:

With regard to the international and large business sector of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), since November 2015, and broken down by year: (a) how many audits were completed; (b) what is the number of auditors, broken down by category of auditors; (c) how many new files were opened; (d) how many files were closed; (e) of the files in (d), what was the average time it took to process the file before it was closed; (f) of the files in (d), what was the risk level of each file; (g) how much was spent on contractors and subcontractors; (h) of the contractors and subcontractors in (g), what is the initial and final value of each contract; (i) among the contractors and subcontractors in (g), what is the description of each service contract; (j) how many reassessments were issued; (k) what is the total amount recovered; (l) how many taxpayer files were referred to the CRA's Criminal Investigations Program; (m) of the files in (l), how many were referred to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada; and (n) of the files in (m), how many resulted in convictions?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that I have received a notice of a request for an emergency debate.

I invite the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands rise and make a brief intervention.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I note that you seem to put some emphasis on the word "brief". I will do my best, but it is an emergency. I think I will find sympathy with many members of the House to the request I bring to the House, but it is only your sympathy that I seek to have an emergency debate this evening on the rising problem of variants of concern.

The fact is that Canada remains at this point and is, as a number of members have just mentioned in question period, in a third wave. An emergency debate should not be a place where we blame each other, but where we take hold of this and ask what we must do better, because we must do better.

I first raised the request for an emergency debate on COVID-19 as it began to change in the second wave in November. My colleague, the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, asked again in February as the variants appeared to be threatening a third wave. We are now in that third wave.

There are many aspects of this to discuss, but the central question is whether we all, collectively, at different orders of government, need to shift from bending the curve to going to zero COVID to actually working to eliminate COVID from Canada by learning from what the Atlantic provinces are doing and what other provinces did. Can we have an emergency debate on that this evening? It clearly is an emergency.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her intervention. I am prepared to grant an emergency debate concerning the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This debate will be held later today at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to respond to the question of privilege raised by the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London with regard to Bill C-288, which I introduced in the House on Monday.

I would like to begin by thanking the member for bringing this matter to my attention. It is true that I spoke to reporters about my bill between the time it was put on notice and its introduction in the House.

That was a mistake on my part. I thought that, since I had described my bill during the emergency debate last Wednesday evening, it was okay to repeat the same comments outside the House. I did not know that one should not talk about a private member's bill during that period.

I would like to sincerely apologize to all members. I did not intend to breach the parliamentary privilege of the House. I now understand the implications of that decision, and I pledge to become more familiar with the rules and practices of the House.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to explain myself on this important issue.

• (1530)

ALLEGED PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL— SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I want to thank the member for his intervention. As the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London mentioned, the

practice concerning the confidentiality of all bills on notice exists so that the House is the first to learn of new legislative measures.

In fact, I want to remind the members once again that, although they are allowed to conduct consultations during the development of a bill or to announce their intention to table a bill on a specific issue, they must not disclose the specific provisions contained in a bill when it is put on notice. Only the title is made public when the Notice Paper is published and remains so until the first reading of the bill.

[English]

In my ruling on March 10, 2020, on a similar matter, the Chair accepted the explanation of the member for Markham—Unionville, where he also apologized.

Under the circumstances, I am prepared to do the same for the member for Sudbury. Thus, in light of what has been presented, the precedence in the matter and the apologies from the member for Sudbury, the Chair considers the matter closed.

Because this is not the first time this has happened, I would like to remind members of the importance of respecting confidentiality when they are preparing bills or having them put on the Notice Paper.

I want to thank the hon. members for their attention.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue on a point of order.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

TAKING OF SCREENSHOT OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to apologize to the House for breaking the rules by taking a photograph of a colleague during oral question period on April 14, 2021.

I have already apologized to the member personally, but I also wanted to do so publicly. I apologize to him personally, to his family, to our colleagues and to anyone I may have offended.

I will close by saying that I have no idea how the image was leaked to the media and, under the circumstances, this will be my only comment.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for his intervention. I will get back to the House with my decision.

*The Budget***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***THE BUDGET**

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from April 20 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to participate via Zoom today.

As a female parliamentarian, it is a great honour for me to rise today and respond to this exciting 2021 budget. It is the first budget delivered by a female Minister of Finance and it really reflects that. It is a truly momentous occasion in our Canadian history.

I am very proud of my hon. colleague. She carries many titles: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, the member for University—Rosedale and “mom”, but her most important title to me is a friend. I send my congratulations once again to the member for the hard work she is doing every day on behalf of all Canadians across this great country.

As we move forward, we are still in this battle against COVID-19. It is the fight of our lives. Unfortunately, my riding of Humber River—Black Creek is one of the hardest-hit areas in Toronto. My constituents are struggling—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask the hon. member if she could continue after “Toronto”.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a point of order.

• (1535)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe the member forgot to mention she will be sharing her time with the member for Outremont.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I was in the middle of a changing of the guard here, so I wonder if the hon. member wants to—

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, yes, I will be sharing my time with the great member for Outremont.

As I indicated, my constituents are struggling. I want to take this opportunity to speak directly to the communities in my riding. Many of their residents have lined up in very long lines in pop-up spots today at clinics that are quickly being put together. I want them to know that the light at the end of the tunnel is near, and that we are all working day and night to get on top of this terrible pandemic. The best vaccine, of course, is the first one that is available to anyone. All of them have been approved by Health Canada, so I want to encourage everyone to get vaccines as soon as they are available. They will help save lives.

We are in the toughest stretch of this pandemic and, as the Prime Minister said earlier this week, now is not the time to let up, not even for a second. People should continue to follow all public health recommendations even after receiving the vaccine: We

should wear masks, wash hands and continue to socially distance. We are in this together and we will beat this virus together.

Now I will go on to this wonderful budget. We talk specifically about the fact that no community will be left behind when it comes to job creation and growth, we say we will have Canadians' backs and we will extend business and income support measures through to the fall. We are going to make investments that will create jobs and help businesses across the economy come roaring back.

The budget is going to support almost 500,000 new training and work opportunities for people who have lost their jobs and do not have jobs to go back to, or who are looking for new opportunities. There will be skills training in a variety of areas, and work opportunities that could change their lives forever. Included in the budget are 215,000 new opportunities for youth. We do not want our youth to struggle more than they have already during the pandemic, and we want to see that they have employment opportunities for the future. Also included are supports for businesses in our most affected sectors, such as tourism, arts and culture. Accelerating investment in, and the digital transformation of, small and medium-sized businesses is the way to go.

This budget is a plan that puts the government on track to meet its commitment of one million jobs by the end of this year. I think about how important it is for people who are struggling with mental health and depression to know that the government is there for them.

Our tourism sector was hit hard, of course. It continues to be one of the hardest-hit sectors in Canada. Through this pandemic, I have been working with local travel agencies in my riding. Lina Matturo, who is the owner of Islington Travel, is a female small business owner who was negatively impacted by the pandemic. I would talk to Lina every week, sometimes every day, to help her return Canadians from abroad at the start of the pandemic. Lina worked tirelessly. The majority of travel agencies are headed by women. I truly wanted to help Lina and all of the other people involved in the travel industry, and budget 2021 has done just that. I was pleased that they were being given help and not left out. We must thank the Minister of Transport, the member for Mississauga Centre, for his tireless work and the successful negotiations to protect the commissions of hard-working individuals in the travel industry.

Now I will move on to something that is very important, which is early learning and child care. We have talked about this for many, many years. Frankly, now it is time. It is going to happen, because this plan is going to drive economic growth for all of the women who have been hit through this pandemic. This is a plan to increase women's participation in the work force, and to offer each child in Canada the best start in life. This plan is aimed at reducing fees for parents of children in regulated child care by 50%. I can just imagine those women thinking about the possibility that one day there will be child care available for \$10 a day. It is going to cost \$30 billion over the next five years and will provide permanent ongoing funding. For the families in Humber River—Black Creek, this will be a huge investment and a huge help for the many single mothers I have talked to over the years.

Pre-COVID, when I would walk through the local Jane Finch Mall or visit some of our local parks, I would meet new mothers who were just starting their families. They would tell me how much they appreciated the Canada child benefit. It is my hope that these mothers, when I see them next, will tell me about the new jobs they have secured because of the child care support they are receiving from our government.

Of course we all have talked a lot about seniors over these last months and their challenges and difficulties, whether in long-term care or simply struggling with limited income.

● (1540)

After a lifetime of hard work, seniors certainly deserve a secure and dignified retirement, which is why the government has committed to increasing old age security benefits for seniors aged 75 and older. The government plans to implement this commitment in two steps.

Budget 2021 proposes to meet the immediate needs of this group of seniors by providing a one-time payment of \$500 this coming August to OAS pensioners who will be 75 or over as of the end of June 2022. Budget 2021 then proposes to introduce legislation to increase OAS payments for pensioners by 10% on an ongoing basis beginning in July 2022.

This would increase the benefits for approximately 3.3 million seniors, providing an additional benefit of \$766 to full pensioners in the first year that is indexed to inflation going forward. This would really help to give seniors more financial security later in life, especially as we know they are facing increased expenses and are at a greater risk of running out of savings.

When this pandemic is over, I will have a chance to visit local seniors' groups who will have been successfully vaccinated. They will be playing cards or bingo at their local community centres. Not only will they be excited about the chance to yell out "bingo" again, they will be overjoyed with the increased support they will be receiving through budget 2021.

One of the problems we had in long-term care in my riding occurred at Hawthorne Place, an excellent home that looks after many of the most vulnerable. It was hit extremely hard with COVID-19. The Canadian Armed Forces were deployed to this facility. The unfortunate situation in my riding was not the only reason that led me to advocate for strengthening standards for long-term care homes. It

The Budget

has long been an issue that has needed to be addressed. We must protect our seniors and the most vulnerable across Canada.

Budget 2021 proposes to provide \$3 billion over five years to Health Canada to support provinces and territories in ensuring that standards for long-term care are applied and permanent changes are made so that what happened through COVID-19 will never repeat itself. It is imperative for us. We have a moral responsibility to ensure we keep seniors safe and improve their quality of life. This work will ensure that seniors and those in care live in safe and dignified conditions.

I want to thank my colleagues for their continued advocacy on behalf of Canadians and those living in long-term care homes, especially our Prime Minister, who heard what our difficulties were and took action to improve the lives of our seniors.

We are unfortunately still in the battle of our lives against COVID-19, but the supports included in this budget will make a difference for Canadians and help them through this. Opportunities are coming. Growth is coming. Jobs are coming. After a long, grim year, Canadians are ready to recover and rebuild.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for highlighting what she liked in the budget.

There are a lot of seniors in my riding, and with two increases to the carbon tax during the pandemic and the rising costs of everything, I am wondering this. Why did the government decide to exclude seniors who are 65 to 75 years old from the increase to OAS?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, I very much enjoy working with my hon. colleague and hope she and her family are staying well.

The reality is that it is a tremendous amount of money. As much as we all would have loved to see a 10% increase to everyone, the practicality is that there is a cost factor. I would hope that, as we move forward, we will have additional resources and opportunities to help many of those seniors who continue to struggle, whether through GIS increases or other ways.

● (1545)

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, but I would now invite her to look Quebec seniors aged 65 to 74 in the eye and tell them that they have gotten enough support from the federal government and that they are not vulnerable enough to receive help in the next budget.

The Budget

I would like her to tell them that in person, because since the Liberal government's announcement, I have received a ton of comments and letters of support from major Quebec seniors' groups such as FADOQ and the AQDR and from people who are confused. This measure would only cost \$4 billion. That represents less than 1% of the deficit.

I would like her to repeat that this measure to support seniors is too costly. Furthermore, I am not even going to address the issue of the National Assembly's unanimous request that the federal government not interfere in Quebec's long-term care facilities. The federal government has no business lecturing Quebec. Quebec will look after its jurisdiction, for which it is solely responsible.

[English]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, we have continued, since the beginning of this pandemic, to help many seniors, recognizing their struggles. I believe there was a total of \$1,500 or \$1,800 in additional bonuses that went to seniors over the last year, since the beginning of this pandemic, to help many of them. We have again invested in the budget in the area of long-term care and a lot of the areas that affect seniors in different ways. As I said earlier, all of us in the House would have loved to be able to spread additional financial supports going forward, but we will continue to work forward in a positive way to ensure an improvement in the quality of life for all seniors in Canada.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, in the budget the government put forward some dedicated funding for sexual and reproductive health services and access. However, it is such a small amount that it does nothing to help clinics, like the one in New Brunswick, and does nothing to expand the services that women need for those reproductive services. The government has not invested in midwifery services, where women on the ground in remote and rural areas could provide excellent service to women. It has not provided greater access for a pharmacare program for access to birth control.

Could the member talk about that?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, we have transferred an additional \$4.3 billion to the provinces, another \$1.2 billion to support health care capacity in a variety of areas, and \$740 million to address the immediate needs in supportive care and to provide health and social supports for other groups and organizations. We have transferred millions of dollars to the provinces specifically for health care and health care-related issues, and I would expect the questions my colleague has mentioned are areas that the provinces will be sensitive to and will ensure they have sufficient funding.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, budget 2021 is a budget about investing in the future of our country; investing in the next industrial revolution and our digital transformation; investing in a cleaner, healthier environment and a new, green economy; investing in the participation of all Canadians in the economy, including women.

What we have put forward is a plan to see our business community through to the end of this pandemic and be well positioned for growth on the other side. Over a year ago, as the House knows, we introduced the Canada emergency wage subsidy, a program the like

of which we had never before seen. This has directly supported the paycheques of more than five million Canadians, saving countless jobs and helping employees and employers stay afloat.

We also created the emergency rent subsidy, which has covered up to 90% of the rent of our small business owners for over 150,000 entrepreneurs and Canadian businesses across the country. I hear it from so many small business entrepreneurs: These programs have been a veritable lifeline. That is why in this budget we have set aside funding to extend these emergency pandemic business supports.

However, let us be clear. Canadian entrepreneurs want to grow. They want to prosper. They want to hire more workers, and they want to succeed in a strong and stable economy. Our budget creates the right incentives for growth in many different ways. From the Canada recovery hiring program, which is going to offset some of the costs of creating new jobs or increasing wages or hours, to the digital adoption program, which helps cover the costs of doing business online, we are supporting a strong recovery.

One of the very important economic lessons of the pandemic is that e-commerce is not a "nice to have"; it is a necessity. The digital economy is here, and it is here to stay. A 2020 study revealed that half of Canadian businesses currently operating online started doing so only within the last year. As we continue to promote the importance of our export market and all of the opportunities that are available to Canadian businesses through our many international trade agreements, being able to sell Canada's goods and services online is a key ingredient to further economic growth.

So is Canadian innovation. I think of the potential of applied research in this country. From the possibilities of quantum technology, in which we are investing \$360 million, to our expertise in artificial intelligence, in which we are investing an additional \$445 million, to our investments in photonics, genomics and more, the federal government is stepping up to support an economic recovery on the cutting edge of technology. This is where the world is going. This is where the economy of tomorrow is going, and Canadians will be there at the front of the pack.

• (1550)

[Translation]

When I think about it, this technology- and innovation-driven economy of tomorrow is practically an investment in Montreal's ecosystem and Quebec's emerging industries.

Think of the AI-powered supply chains supercluster here in Montreal, which will harness robotics. Think of Quebec's biomanufacturing industry. Think of innovative companies such as Medicago, which is developing a 100% made-in-Canada COVID-19 vaccine as we speak.

We are very fortunate to have leading research institutions such as the Université de Montréal, Polytechnique Montréal, HEC Montréal and IRIC. They will be vital to strengthening our national biomanufacturing capacity.

Think of the aerospace industry, too. This industry is based in Quebec and contributes more than \$28 billion to the GDP. With its investment of \$2 billion, the federal government is recognizing the importance of our Quebec industries. These investments will put the industry in a strong position once restrictions are lifted. It is also an acknowledgement of the power of Quebec voices within our federal government.

When Quebecers are wondering whether to vote for an opposition party or a governing party, and when Quebecers see what we can accomplish as members from Quebec and as a Quebec caucus within the government, the answer is quite clear.

We are here to advocate for Quebec with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, in order to fulfill our commitments to Quebec and make sure the budget responds to our priorities with money, political will and meaningful results.

We cannot talk about the economy of tomorrow without talking about the green transition, which cannot be put off to another day. That day has arrived.

Is the federal government spending a significant amount of money in this budget? The answer is yes. These are real numbers that reflect a real plan to combat climate change. Our budget proposes nearly \$18 billion for Canada's strengthened climate plan. These measures position Canada to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 36% by 2030.

• (1555)

[English]

Investing in our fight against climate change can and will be an engine of growth for our economy. This investment is critical, not only to protect the planet that we all inhabit and need in order to live, but also to grow and to prosper.

Through this budget, we are supporting the manufacturers of zero-emission technologies by cutting their taxes in half, and to spur new investments in clean tech, we are proposing to set aside \$1 billion to fund specific projects. These are investments that will protect our environment for our children and our grandchildren, but they will also create the jobs we need today.

Our government is moving with the times. We can see where global investors are headed, and we need to be there for the pass. Canada must move ahead of the puck. This budget will get us there. Climate change is real, and \$18 billion in new green investments is real money. This is concrete action on climate change, and it will have a transformative effect on our economy.

Before I close, as a mother of a three-and-a-half-year-old, I cannot speak to the budget without speaking to the importance of the historic investment we are proposing for early learning and child care for parents, for families and, of course, for the full participation of women in our economy.

The Budget

As the parliamentary secretary for small business, I also cannot speak to the budget without speaking to the importance of our additional investments in the women entrepreneurship program. As a government, we are committed to tackling, head-on, the “she-cession” that Canada and so many other countries are facing right now. We have shown, through this budget, that a feminist economic recovery not only is possible but will bring home huge dividends.

[Translation]

This program is all the more important because, as we know, the crisis has particularly affected women. Since the start of the pandemic, more than 16,000 women have left the workforce, while almost 100,000 men joined it.

Quebec has the highest rate of participation of women in the economy in Canada and among the most impressive internationally. In fact, women in Quebec with children under the age of 3 have one of the world's highest participation rates in the economy. As a woman and a mother and, of course, as a Quebecer, I am proud to see that Quebec is once again leading the way for the rest of the country.

Our pan-Canadian early learning and child care plan is a plan for Canada's future. What we propose in the budget is a plan to support Canadians today, while laying the foundation for a greener, more modern, more dynamic and more inclusive economic recovery.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. I would also like to ask her three questions.

First, as a Quebecer, as she herself mentioned in her speech, does she agree with the federal government's plan to impose standards for seniors homes in Quebec that they will have to meet in order to receive funding?

Second, does she agree that Quebec should receive funding for this new national child care program she says she wants to implement in the coming years? We know that it will take several years before the program is rolled out in other provinces, just like it took several years in Quebec.

Third, does she think that dairy producers should have received compensation in the budget for the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, my colleague asked several questions, and I will try to answer them in the time I have.

The Budget

First, I am indeed very proud to be able to launch a pan-Canadian child care program. In my case in particular, as a mother, I waited three years before getting a day care place in Montreal. I know that Quebec is leading the way for the rest of the country, but we also need to make sure we have enough places for children in Quebec. I think that federal transfer payments could help improve the system we have in place in Quebec.

In terms of health transfer payments, especially for long-term care, it is essential that we continue to support the provinces so that we can provide proper care to our seniors. I think that national standards are important in ensuring that Quebec seniors—

• (1600)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The parliamentary secretary's time has run out, and we need to move on to another question.

[English]

The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know that for decades millions of Canadians have had no access to the prescription drugs they need to be well and even to live.

In 1997, Liberals said that if Canadians elected them, they would bring in pharmacare. They broke that promise. In the 2019 throne speech, right after being elected, the Liberal government said, “pharmacare is the key missing piece of universal health care in this country. The government will take steps to introduce and implement national pharmacare so that Canadians have the drug coverage they need.” The 2021 budget contains nothing to fulfill this promise.

We know the hon. member and her Liberal colleagues voted against the NDP's Canada pharmacare act in February. Will the member come clean with Canadians and just admit that the Liberal Party does not believe in public pharmacare and simply is not committed to implementing it?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, obviously pharmacare is an extremely important issue in this country. As he pointed out, it was in the throne speech. It is a commitment that we made in the last election, and it is a commitment we made again in the throne speech. We will fulfill that commitment. It is important that all Canadians have access to medication at a reasonable cost. We will follow through.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague how she feels about the government tabling a budget like this, which fails to keep many of its promises.

I am thinking in particular about the next generation of farmers. The government has been promising to help this sector since 2019. It even held discussions with representatives of the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec and promised them that there would be measures to support them in the budget. However, the budget does not mention anything of the kind.

Also, how does she feel about the government promising to help seniors but creating two classes of seniors in the budget?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, my colleague has brought up an extremely important subject, but I obviously do not have enough time to answer properly.

With respect to our support for seniors, the number of seniors living in poverty has declined by 25% since we were elected in 2015. Our government is there for seniors, and we will continue to support them.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, special order or usual practice of the House, during the debate tonight, pursuant to Standing Order 52, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

I hear none. The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed will please say nay.

There being no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, at long last, two years after the last budget presented by the Liberals, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to their latest proposal to Canadians.

We remember that the budget at that time was very much crafted and timed to distract attention away from what we all now remember as the SNC-Lavalin scandal. That budget was tabled when the Prime Minister was avoiding questions and was under intense pressure. We would later learn, through the tabling in this House of the report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, the Trudeau II report, that the Prime Minister did indeed interfere in the prosecution of his friends at SNC-Lavalin.

Here we are now, in the middle of a pandemic. Last spring, the government had no intention of introducing a budget. In the meantime, the Liberals have shut down Parliament to avoid tough questions about another scandal that involves this Prime Minister where members of his family received half a million dollars. He then gave that organization half a billion dollars because it needed a bailout. Of course, those are his friends at the WE organization.

We did not get a budget when we returned to Parliament in the fall. Instead, what we got was a Speech from the Throne, which does not match this budget. It was followed by committees being filibustered. We are not talking about just one or two committees. We are talking about the ethics committee and the finance committee, which should have been dealing with pre-budget consultations. We are talking about the procedure and House affairs committee, and of course the national defence committee was filibustered too.

Finally this spring, we have a budget from the government. While the last budget was tabled in its form to cover up the tough questions being asked as a result of the SNC-Lavalin scandal, which saw the Prime Minister fire Canada's first female indigenous attorney general, and kick her and Dr. Jane Philpott out of caucus for speaking truth to power. We now have a budget tabled during a pandemic, and it really is a remarkable opportunity. The government has the runway to make investments in provincial health care.

We hear an awful lot from the government about the \$8 in \$10 that was spent in relief funds during this pandemic coming from the federal government. I can give another number that the government might find helpful: 100% of the money spent by governments during the pandemic came from taxpayers.

Therefore, here we are in the third wave of the pandemic, and the third wave of lockdowns, and the health care system is bursting at its seams. The health care system had funding challenges before the pandemic. During the 2019 election, the Conservatives made specific commitments with respect to increasing health transfers to the provinces.

The pandemic is in full swing. We are in the third wave. There are lockdowns. Hospitals are screaming for help, and provinces need more resources. However, we are not seeing, in this historic document from the government, that investment in the provinces and in health care. I started talking about health care, of course, because we are in the middle of a global pandemic.

There is another item that was noticeably absent. Members in this House will recall and members on the government side will remember that the House did move to adopt a national three-digit suicide prevention hotline. It is a tremendously important initiative, 988, so that Canadians from coast to coast to coast know that those three digits are all they need to remember in a time of crisis. We have seen the effect this pandemic has had with respect to the mental health of all Canadians, and there has really not been a lot of the heavy lifting the government would need to do to implement that motion, which was adopted by this House. It is also missing.

When these items that we know would be incredibly helpful, timely and life saving are absent, their absence from the budget speaks to the intent. The intent, of course, and the reason there is so much preamble in the budget, and I think it is the longest budget in

The Budget

terms of number of pages we have ever seen in this country, is because it is meant to resemble an election platform.

• (1605)

I will note that I will be splitting my time with the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, and I look forward to his intervention to talk a little more about why this is not a pandemic relief budget, not a jobs budget and not an economic recovery budget but, in fact, an election budget.

I received a call at my office yesterday from Helen, a constituent who is quite concerned about the fate of our country. I think that is pretty normal. We all have great hopes and aspirations for what our country will look like. Now, Helen is in her nineties, so she has seen a lot of changes in this country. She has been around for a lot of days. However, Helen's concerns are not for her next days, but for her great-grandchildren's. She is wondering what is going to happen when we have more debt wracked up by this Prime Minister than all the debt wracked up by all the prime ministers previous to him. She wonders who will pay that back.

Concerning the urgency to introduce a budget, we did not expect that from this government, because this Prime Minister, of course, famously said that the budget would balance itself and that we would have very modest deficits during his first term. Now, of course, during the Liberals' first mandate, there was not a global pandemic or a global economic recession, but they blew the doors off the bank and plunged our country deep into deficits. Then, when they got another mandate, they found themselves in crisis and plunged us even further with new deficits and a much larger debt, breaking the \$1-trillion mark.

There was spending that had to happen during the pandemic, and I am talking about important measures such as the Canada emergency wage subsidy. For that, the government proposed 10%, but the opposition parties said that was not enough and that it needed to be more. Members will hear the Liberals say, "Oh well, the opposition says we are spending too much money, but they do not seem to want us to spend any money."

Well, we want them to spend targeted money. It is not just about spraying hundreds of billions of dollars and hoping for electoral fortune as a result. We want targeted measures that help Canadians' livelihoods and their lives. That is why that 75% emergency wage subsidy received the unanimous support of all parties in the House.

However, there are a number of things that this government ought to have done with this budget document that it failed to do. Just like Helen, when we look at what the budget should be focused on compared with what the Liberals did focus on, we are left wondering, my goodness, who will pay for this debt hangover. Certainly it will be Helen's great-grandchildren, which does, of course, give her reason to be concerned.

The Budget

The debt has, as referenced by my colleagues, become a bit of a time bomb for this country. We need to hope and pray that we do not end up in a situation with rising interest rates where our debt servicing costs eclipse our ability to be able to transfer more money to the provinces. The Prime Minister has said that he would give more money to the provinces for health care when the health care emergency is over. I am not really sure how we ended up with that as the best case.

Right now, Canadians are looking for targeted measures, such as for the tourism sector. We were looking forward to the government wanting to climb down into local jurisdictions, helping with chambers of commerce that are seeking rapid tests for its businesses that are employing people in the community. While we find ourselves in this third wave of lockdowns, this third wave of the pandemic, we expected something more than an election document and a lifetime of debt from this government.

• (1610)

We look forward to continuing to review it, but I have as many questions for the members opposite as I am sure they have for me.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the member's remarks on the budget and I wondered where there would be criticism, but he never had any, other than the debt, which is a necessary investment so there is an economic future for Helen's grandchildren.

The budget is all about that. It is about the future for Helen's grandchildren and all grandchildren across the country. It carries on some of the spending we had to do to take care of the health concerns of Canadians and to get in more vaccines ahead of the time for which had been originally planned. The problem with vaccines is not that they are not here; it is distribution in certain areas that will not get them out and into arms.

We heard a lot of wild stories from the member about what happened last summer, but we are talking about a budget in April 2021, which covers a lot of bases. Does the member not recognize that 90¢ out of every \$1 that has been spent on the COVID pandemic comes from the federal government?

• (1615)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, the member for Malpeque mentioned 90¢. I will give another number: 100% came from taxpayers. There was talk about debt. He said that I did not talk about the budget. I talked about what was missing from the budget. Health care transfers are desperately needed by the provinces. That is missing from the budget.

While there are a lot of aspirations in the budget and a lot of future debt to be paid by Helen's great-grandchildren, who will be paying for this, the Liberals missed the mark on spending where it mattered most, particularly with respect to health and mental health. We are looking for that.

If we want to talk about what happened last summer, the government should have been developing domestic vaccine manufacturing, not partnering with Chinese-based and owned CanSino.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

He spoke at length about the importance of investing in health in order to get out of the crisis. The government may have announced that it wants to make stable, predictable health transfers, but that does not mean that it is prepared to commit to giving the provinces what they want, which is to increase the Canada health transfer to 35%.

His Conservative colleagues have already told me that we will have to see what is left in the coffers after the crisis. That is exactly what the Liberal Party said: that we will have to wait until the crisis is over to see where we stand financially.

If there is one sector that should not be subjected to austerity measures or penny-pinching, it is health. Every time pennies are pinched from the Canada health transfer, someone somewhere does not get service, and someone somewhere has their colonoscopy postponed because patients are being triaged and not enough money has been transferred.

Since the 1990s, the Liberals and Conservatives have been cutting back on health care, year after year—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I am happy to tell the member opposite that, in 2021, these Conservatives are looking for increased spending on health care for all the reasons she listed. It will create a delayed public health crisis when we have not had all the diagnostic testing done, which is normally done when hospitals have been shut. Certainly this will have a negative effect on people's mental health, but also on their life expectancy and favourable outcomes on otherwise historically treatable and curable illnesses. That is why we need to make more investments in health care today.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the New Democrats have long recognized that seniors are struggling and that they require more assistance through programs like the old age supplement. That is why we opposed the Conservatives when they raised the eligibility age from 65 to 67. It is why we have called on the government now to ensure that the OAS increase it has talked about is not just for seniors 75 and older, but for all seniors over 65.

I invite the member to comment on that.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, what we want to see from the government and what it will need to explain is why it made the decisions with respect to age cut-offs. It is important that we provide help for seniors who have been affected in a terrible way. Many of them have paid with their lives during this global pandemic. We need to ensure the country is there to support them, seniors of all ages, and that the commitments by the government reflect the actual needs of seniors.

The Budget

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do not think members on the other side expect I will be glowing in my commentary regarding their budget. If they are, I am sorry to disappoint them.

I was in the House when the Minister of Finance presented the budget, and I was taken aback at one point when she seemed to be very proud, in fact she mentioned it twice, that the Liberals only spent \$354.2 billion. She said that they restrained themselves by not spending an extra \$30 billion that were in their projections. She repeated it twice and I thought to myself “\$354 billion”.

The fact is that when the Liberals won the election in 2015, despite having fewer people voting for them, but that is our first past the post system which is fine, they were given a surplus. They said that they would run a deficit of \$10 billion and never came through with that projection. They never came through on any of their projections as far as the deficit goes.

Last year's spending, 2020 to 2021, was 35 times more than the deficit they projected when they first came into power. It as if the Liberals have lost the sense of the worth of money, of fiscal prudence. If Larry and Martha, or any other small business owner or Canadian, were to borrow money and spend all their savings as the Liberals have, they would be in an extremely precarious state, probably evicted from their home. The Liberals are taking us down this risky path and they seem to be quite nonchalant about that.

The government does not seem to feel that what has happened to nations across the world and throughout history applies to Canada. We are Canadians. The laws and principles of the natural world of science, which Liberals like to affirm, also apply to economics. If people step over a cliff, they will go down, even if they are wearing a Canadian flag on their t-shirt.

I think of Argentina, a large and beautiful country. I have not been there but have read about it. It has many natural resources and a large immigrant population. A large European population went there during the late 1800s and early 1900s. For decades in the 20th century, it outgrew Canada and Australia in population growth and per capita growth, and was one of the 10 richest nations in the world. However, it made some poor economic choices and ended up defaulting nine times on its economy. Its inflation was in the double digits, and up to 5,000%, which wiped out the prosperity of the middle class. In the 1970s, it had a few years of sound economic policies, but then it started to go further and further into deficits and its external debt tripled in three years. People lost their savings.

Let us go a few thousand kilometres north to Venezuela. Venezuela is another story. It has the largest reserves of oil in the world. It was the wealthiest nation in South America. In 1998, President Chavez was elected, and his vision was to greatly expand social services, take people out of poverty and implement his socialist agenda. We know now how that fared. Five million people have fled that nation. People have gone hungry. The average weight of individuals has gone down many pounds, or kilograms. There are real shortages of any basic supplies, gasoline, everything. It is a disaster. It is harassing the press and has closed down independent outlets. It has taken over hundreds of private businesses. It has increased money supplies, and borrowing is out of control.

• (1620)

I can hear people saying that I am being an alarmist and that we should not to be so ridiculous. I ask them to open their eyes to what is happening in Canada today.

How many rights and freedoms have been sidelined in our society because of COVID, and responding to medical needs and safety? Who would have believed we would be in the situation we are in right now a year and a bit ago? I do not think anybody would have. Borders are virtually closed. In British Columbia, and I am a member of Parliament from there, people are not supposed to travel outside their health authority. Places of worship have been closed. People are unable to see family, to attend funerals and weddings. People are dying alone. There are suicides. People are afraid.

I personally know a lot of people who have COVID. I had an uncle who passed from it. I am not saying that this is not real; it is very real. However, who would have imagined we would be in this situation? I would have imagined being in the House speaking. Now a few people are here and a few are in the virtual world. Who would have imagined this situation?

Why am I talking about this right now? It is because I am talking about the budget. I am talking about the problems that could happen to Canada. A year and a half ago we could not have imagined losing the freedoms we have lost right now. I do not think the other nations, which were doing so well, could have possibly imagined that their economies would collapse. That could happen in Canada. Let us not kid ourselves; this is serious business.

The Fraser Institute says that only 12% of the budget will go to directly support COVID measures. The rest or a lot of it is pre-election pandering. I know there is some really good stuff in the budget that sound really good, for example, the child care provisions. The only thing with the child care provisions is that they have been promised since 1993, under Chrétien and Martin. The Liberals have always promised it, but it does not show up. I have no doubt the Liberals will get a bottle of wine to celebrate the opening a few spots for child care.

I was talking to a member of Parliament a year ago. I said that we should not be surprised to be meeting in a few months. I was actually thinking it would be a few weeks. I was watching what was happening with COVID. He looked at me like I was crazy. I phoned my kids to talk about buying a place. I told them not to tell anybody, but I recommended they stock up.

Let me speak about a nation a little closer to home. How about Canada? Let us talk about Canada. Let us talk about Prime Minister Trudeau.

The Budget

• (1625)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the hon. member that he is not to use the name of the Prime Minister or any other MPs in the House. He has 30 seconds to wrap.

The hon. member.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, I want to talk about the former prime minister who was related to the current Prime Minister. The government start spending way more than the revenue it received. There were large deficits and increasing debt. The federal spending became 20% of the economy. Now it is 30%. We have a high debt crisis, high inflation and 650,000 people unemployed. Inflation is at 12%. Unemployment is at 12%. The lending rates are at—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member's time is up, however he will be able to add comments during questions and comments. I am sure he has lots to add.

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

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's passion and I listened to him very attentively until he started to reference the Fraser Institute. We can debate that another time.

The member talked about the position we are in. Never did I imagine, when I ran in 2015 or in 2019, that while I was here Canada would be in a position where we owed over \$1 trillion in debt. That is the reality. I do not think any of us did, but we also did not realize the position that we would be in. We are not the only nation to be in this position. Most developed nations like ours are in the same position, yet we made a choice to invest in Canadians. Yes, all the money comes from taxpayers, but the difference is that we thought the taxpayers should bear the burden rather than certain sectors of the economy or certain sectors of the population.

Would the member agree that if we did not invest in Canadians like this we would be in a much worse place when we do come out of this pandemic?

• (1630)

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, I want to say I agree with the member. We do support Canadian workers. It is really key. Conservatives have looked for ways of how we can help. How can we help Canadians? We are there.

Not everything is bad in the budget. There might be a few things that need improvement and we will make some amendments, but most of it is a real mess. The situation is that one-third of the budget of the first prime minister related to the current one was going to debt servicing. That is disastrous.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his passionate speech. I get the feeling that he still has a lot to say on the matter, but I would like to come back to help for workers.

In his speech, he talked about the wage subsidy. Obviously this affects some sectors more than others, including tourism and culture, and they are the sectors that fuel our local economies.

I would like him to elaborate on the importance of extending some of these measures in the budget to help workers and economies throughout Quebec and the provinces.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member from the Bloc Québécois. There should be more in the budget for workers.

In my region, in British Columbia, cruises are one of our most important sectors. This is a \$2.6-billion industry. The Liberals do not even want ships to dock for provisioning, even if the passengers stay on board and do not visit the area. That is very important. The government is telling us that this sector will reopen in a year. That does not work for this industry and all the other sectors.

[English]

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

The hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member's speech was very diverse, there is no doubt about it. I think it is the first time someone has read a word cloud in the chamber. The question I want to ask him is related to credit cards and interest rates, and to find out where the Conservatives are with regard to the modest improvements mentioned in the budget to treat small businesses more fairly with interest charges and service fees. That is one issue, or part of it, but there is no doubt that credit card rates and borrowing rates, in a range of 11% to 19% on average, are excessive.

Would the member support a regulatory approach to bringing down credit card rates, even in the interim, as the rates are disproportionate to the benefits of borrowing and of the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): A brief answer from the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, I think it is very positive when we can see a lowering of the interest rates on credit cards or anything else. I think that has really helped people to purchase homes. However, what is positive can also be negative, because credit card rates will increase if the rates increase also, so it goes hand in hand. This budget is leading us toward inflation. That would lead to higher credit card rates and other problems, including higher mortgage rates. That is a big concern.

• (1635)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish to indicate that I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague, the parliamentary secretary for the riding of Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation.

It is a pleasure to speak on budget 2021, which would not only continue to have the backs of Canadians impacted by COVID-19, but would take substantial next steps to position our economy for ongoing recovery and economic growth. Simply, it is about ensuring a better future for all Canadians and strengthening our middle class and those working hard to join it.

It is a pleasure to represent the residents of Vaughan—Woodbridge. I wish to thank my residents for heeding the calls of public health during the pandemic to stay home, wear masks and socially distance. Now, these same residents are doing their part in getting their vaccinations. I encourage all residents and all Canadians, when they are eligible, to please get their vaccine shots. As we all know, normality will only return with an effective vaccine rollout and vaccinations.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a once-in-a-lifetime event. It froze our economy and overnight resulted in millions of people losing their jobs, businesses being shuttered and, to this day, families' lives being altered. I will be getting my vaccine shot tomorrow evening, so I am quite excited.

This was an exogenous shock to our economy that required a massive response by our government. Yes, our government is there for Canadians, but Canadians, our neighbours, friends and industries, have also risen to the challenge. The Canadian economy has bounced back much faster than many had anticipated, including the forecasts made by the Bank of Canada. We saw this morning the revised upward forecast from the BOC, which stated that, "Activity has proved more resilient than expected in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic". The line I very much appreciated was that, "The Bank has revised up its estimate of potential output in light of greater resilience to the pandemic and accelerated digitalization."

This is a testament to the work of Canadians and the work of our government through its various support programs, and to the unique nature of the shock to our economy. This shock to our economy was not a failure of the markets nor of capitalism but, importantly, the response to this shock required that the government come in and assist its citizens in their time of need.

Budget 2021 would respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and represents a paradigm shift. We must implement further policies to strengthen our social safety net and ensure a more inclusive and sustainable economy where no Canadian is left behind. It is a budget I can best describe as ambitious: It is ambitious for attempting to answer the challenges we face not only today, but tomorrow. It is a budget that would continue the path toward a green transition, where we would surpass our GHG reduction targets and use this as a catalyst to grow our economy. It is inclusive by proposing a national child care program, which would assist families across Canada in covering child care expenses and increase women's labour force participation in our economy. It is a win on so many levels. National child care would become a foundational piece of our social infrastructure here in Canada.

The budget would assist students with an additional \$3 billion in funding via Canada student grants. It would help out our seniors with a one-time OAS payment of \$500 and a permanent 10% increase beginning in July 2022, and it aims to lift over 100,000 more Canadians out of poverty through a material enhancement to the

The Budget

Canada workers benefit. It would encourage business investment, and would assist businesses across the country to digitize; it would invest, through the national trade corridors fund, in our key transportation corridors; and it would position our entrepreneurs for leadership in the green transition, which is happening at a rapid pace.

We will ensure that no Canadian family is left without broadband. It is a necessity in today's world, accentuated by COVID-19. As noted by Scotiabank economists in their opinion on the budget, "Overall, the measures seem well targeted to raise potential output by focusing on economic inclusion, the green transition and measures to encourage business investment."

To review the 10 priorities and the associated 250 or so measures would require a few hours, but there are a few things I know the residents and businesses in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge would benefit from that I wish to highlight. We would continue to support businesses and workers as we battle COVID-19. As many have advocated for, the COVID-19 relief programs would be extended through to September. For hard-working Canadians who remain unemployed, we would be providing an additional 12 weeks of recovery benefits available to September 25, 2021. The rent and emergency wage subsidies, which have been so crucial to supporting businesses in my riding and across the country, would also be extended. In total, our government would commit an additional \$32 billion in temporary COVID spending measures to assist Canadian businesses and workers through to the end of this pandemic. We have their backs.

● (1640)

I am so proud that budget 2021 proposes a major investment in the Canada workers benefit. It is a nearly \$9 billion investment over six years, and \$1.7 billion thereafter. I have long favoured this income support measure. Along with the prior enhancements to the program in budget 2018, approximately three million Canadians would benefit from this program, with an additional 100,000 lifted out of poverty with this budget's measures. With the automatic enrolment for the non-refundable credit via the CRA, Canadians would continue to benefit from this measure.

We know that our seniors, including my parents, helped build our country and sacrificed so much. Their fiscal prudence, work ethic and ingenuity still inspire me. We will fulfill our promise to raise the OAS by 10%, which would benefit 3.3 million Canadians, and is a \$12 billion investment over the next five years.

The Budget

We are too aware of the issues with our long-term care homes here in Ontario and across Canada, including in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, where the Canadian Armed Forces came to assist the long-term care facility of Woodbridge Vista. Budget 2021 would fulfill our commitment to work with provinces to develop and implement national standards while providing for a commitment of \$3 billion over five years.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, I applaud the government's commitment to continue to invest in, and ensure the CRA has the resources to tackle, tax avoidance and evasion with a \$304 million investment over five years to fund new initiatives and strengthen new programs. There is a further investment of \$230 million so the CRA could collect outstanding taxes, which is anticipated to result in an additional \$5 billion in outstanding taxes being collected over five years. This would be used to fund the precious social programs we all depend on. We would invest an additional \$330 million over five years to provide safeguards on protecting the data of Canadians held by the CRA.

An initiative that in my view would and could be transformational for Canadian businesses, including the estimated 13,000 SMEs in the city of Vaughan, is e-payroll. This may not be the flashiest investment in the budget, but the potential for digitization, and the potential for a real-time payroll data reporting system among businesses, the CRA and ESDC, is simply transformational. I am so glad to see this measure in our budget. It is a measure that is needed at this time. Going forward, it would help our businesses digitize and allow them to spend less time on paperwork and more time serving their customers. A commitment of \$44 million over three years for the CRA and ESDC would help to develop the first phase of an e-payroll prototype. I am excited about this initiative. It is the future.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, I have learned the importance of the disability tax credit and how it assists literally millions of Canadians. Considered a gateway credit for disabled Canadians, it ensures these Canadians with special abilities have access to many other programs. I was proud when in 2017 the Government of Canada reinstated the Canada Revenue Agency's disability advisory committee. The committee just delivered its second report on April 9. I wish to thank the committee for its work during COVID-19. These are volunteers. The committee did not meet in a physical setting, but did all its work remotely.

Budget 2021 proposes two major changes. First, it proposes an update to the list of mental functions for everyday life that is used for assessing applicants for the disability tax credit. Second, it proposes recognizing more activities and determining the time spent on life-sustaining therapy, and reducing the minimum required frequency of therapy. These changes alone would result in an additional 45,000 Canadians being eligible for the disability tax credit and would represent \$376 million in additional support over the next five years to disabled Canadians.

Budget 2021, presented by our government, contains a list of measures that move our economy forward. It ensures we have the backs of all Canadians, including Canadian businesses and workers who continue to be impacted by COVID-19.

I am proud of this budget. I am proud to see how Canadians have responded to it, including the residents of my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

● (1645)

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I noticed that wage subsidy and rent relief programs are in the budget. Conservatives support these, as they are very valid and they need to be done. My concern is that the Liberals keep extending them, which probably comes down to the lack of vaccines that have been procured by the government. My issue lies with the fact that when the government talks about the nine million vaccines it got, really each dose means only one treatment. When we talk about nine million doses, that comes down to 4.5 million people who are vaccinated properly. To me, that is a failure in this budget.

Would the member comment on the failure of the government in trying to procure vaccines for Canadians?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, first of all, I am very proud of our government's support programs, seven of which were delivered by the CRA to Canadian businesses and Canadian workers. The Province of Ontario has received millions of doses of vaccines. We have seen over 136,000 Ontarians receive their vaccines overnight.

I encourage all residents of my riding to please sign up for their vaccines when they are eligible. All of my loved ones, including my parents in British Columbia, my in-laws in Ontario and other family members, have received their vaccines. Vaccines are available. People can look on the COVID tracker for the province and for the country.

Vaccines are available in Ontario. We are receiving literally a million or two million this week, and the shipments coming from Pfizer and Moderna are only ramping up. That is true all over the world, not just here in Canada. We are on track. People who wish to receive a vaccination will be able to do so in a short time.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very concerned with the budget. The CRB would be reduced from \$500 a week to \$300 a week. We are well into the third wave and some people are even talking about the fourth wave. This is a huge concern. People are very worried about how they will make ends meet if that should happen.

In addition, on the issue of disability, the budget put off the throne speech commitment for a disability benefit, and it will be revamped over three years. The budget does not match the commitments made in the throne speech, which in many ways is a hallmark of the Liberals.

I wonder whether the parliamentary secretary would advocate for the government to address this issue, instead of doing a consultation process, and change the benefits and supports for people with disabilities.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, as members can see in our budget, we have done a number of things to strengthen income supports. EI sickness benefits will be extended to, I believe, 26 weeks. For the DTC, the disability advisory committee has delivered two reports to the Canada Revenue Agency, and over 90% of the proposals in them have been advanced and worked on. We continue to see a number of income support measures. We are also putting forth the hiring incentive, which will create an incentive for businesses to bring on their staff. The CEWS is still there too, which maintains the employer-employee attachment.

Frankly, we will ensure that no Canadian has to choose between putting food on their table and paying rent during the pandemic. We have Canadians' backs. We will continue to do so. I encourage all parties to help us by supporting this legislation to get it passed so that we can continue to assist Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, one thing I am really concerned about is foreign investment in our housing market and the use of residential housing as a way to launder money for the world's elite, who are trying to use it for tax evasion in their home countries. I am disappointed that there was not stronger action here.

What does the hon. member see as the solution to the affordable housing crisis? Are we going to use taxpayers' money to buy our way out of the situation, or are we going to clamp down on the use of tax evasion and money laundering, which is blowing our housing market out of proportion such that people who live in these cities cannot afford—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to give a brief answer, please.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, the CRA has put literally hundreds of millions of dollars toward clamping down on tax evasion. I understand, obviously, the reports that have been generated on money laundering in real estate in B.C. and the ongoing consultations. I believe the former B.C. premier has been on a panel providing answers in the last couple of days.

Housing affordability across the country is an issue that we obviously have to deal with. There are many levels of jurisdiction in Canada when it comes to housing, so we have to work with all levels of jurisdiction. In Ontario, we need to increase supply, which is quite apparent. We also have low interest rates, which is encouraging Canadians to purchase a first or second home. That is great to—

• (1650)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately I have to go to the next speaker.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank you

The Budget

for allowing me to take part in this important debate on the people who built our society: our seniors.

Before I start, I would like to point out that the lands on which we are gathered are part of the unceded traditional territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin people.

I am very pleased to be able to address the House as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors to discuss the measures we presented for seniors in the 2021 budget.

The budget contains major support measures for Canadians, as well as measures to fight COVID-19 and measures previously announced in the throne speech and the 2020 fall economic statement.

To win the fight against COVID-19, governments across the country must tackle it on several fronts. That is why our government invested in health care and provided direct support for the provinces and territories in their fight against the virus. As our Prime Minister said, it was and continues to be a team effort in collaboration with the provinces and territories.

Our Liberal government implemented sound economic programs to help individuals, businesses and organizations of all sizes survive the pandemic, as well as essential measures to protect Canadians' health and Canada's economy. With the 2021 budget, we are continuing to work toward giving people priority, protecting our economy and ensuring equality and fairness for all Canadians, including seniors. We are doing this in a number of ways.

As I said before, since the beginning of our mandate, we have been there for seniors, and we still are. The 2021 budget paves the way for our key priorities for seniors.

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, I would like to explain to the House what this new federal budget means for seniors. Our government is keeping its promise to increase old age security benefits for Canadians aged 75 and over. These seniors will get a one-time payment of \$500 in August 2021, and we will be increasing the old age security pension by 10% for these same seniors starting in July 2022.

Let us not forget that the increase to the guaranteed income supplement will give each senior \$766 over the first year. That will give 3.3 million seniors more financial security and lift more than 60,700 seniors out of poverty, 65% of them women. This is the first permanent increase to old age security since 1973, other than adjustments due to inflation.

Our oldest seniors face increased care expenses and greater risk of running out of savings. As seniors age, their health care and home care costs go up just as they are most likely to be unable to work, have disabilities or be widowed.

The Budget

The OAS increase will help ease the pressure seniors face and improve their quality of life. This measure reflects Canada's shifting demographics and targets those who most need support.

Seniors will make up 25% of Canada's population by 2037, compared to 8% in 1971. They are living longer now, and Canadians' life expectancy has risen by seven years, from 75 in 1980 to 82 in 2019. It now takes 100 workers under the age of 64 to support 26 retired seniors, compared to just 13 in 1970. That is why we are offering seniors more support, as promised in our platform.

Budget 2021 is doing much more for seniors. We will give the provinces and territories \$3 billion to support the implementation of new standards for long-term care.

● (1655)

To help seniors stay in their homes for longer, we are launching a new initiative, the aging in place challenge program, to help seniors get access to local services such as meal preparation, housekeeping, errands, lawn care and so on.

We will build, repair and support an additional 35,000 affordable housing units for vulnerable Canadians, including seniors. We will help more families and people with disabilities by making it easier to access the disability tax credit and existing support measures.

We will also extend support measures for caregivers who cannot work during the pandemic because they have to care for COVID-19 patients and others.

We are also going to expand and enhance support for veterans, in particular by addressing issues with homelessness, employment, training and health.

Overall, budget 2021 includes major investments that will improve our seniors' quality of life. The pandemic has been hard on everyone, especially on seniors, and the government has not let them down. On the contrary, we took measures to support them on every front. We helped them deal with additional costs during the pandemic. We made one-time tax-free payments of more than \$1,500 to low-income seniors. That is something. In fact, \$1,500 provided seniors with considerable help during the pandemic.

In 2020 and 2021, we will spend more than \$5.5 billion in direct financial support to seniors, which is \$1.6 billion more than we promised in our platform.

Regardless of the pension benefits they were already receiving, seniors who lost their job because of COVID-19 were eligible for \$2,000 a month under the Canada emergency response benefit and later under the Canada recovery benefit.

More than 450,000 seniors received this assistance. At the community level, we invested half a billion dollars to help seniors and other Canadians obtain essential supplies and services such as grocery delivery.

As part of the new horizons for seniors program, we launched more than 5,000 community projects to help seniors. Every one of us benefited in our ridings, and that was for our seniors.

Our vaccine supply is accelerating. More than 80% of Canadians aged 80 and over and 19% of all Canadians have received at least one dose. We are still on track to get 50 million doses by the end of June.

It is essential that we provide more help for older seniors, and that is what we are going to do through measures like the ones announced in budget 2021. Together, the federal government's measures are making a difference in seniors' lives. Canada's seniors will always be able to count on the federal government to listen to them, understand them and defend them.

● (1700)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I have two questions for him on seniors.

First, does he agree with his government wanting to impose conditions on transferring funding to the provinces to improve the safety of seniors in seniors residences?

Second, why does he think that seniors between 65 and 75 do not deserve to get help from his government?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

We are working closely with the provinces and territories on health transfers. The Prime Minister has met with the premiers of every province. The government made a clear announcement that there will be health transfers, but we have a crisis to manage and that is what the government is focusing on right now. We are helping the provinces and territories in many ways through different transfers that are not necessarily in the form of cash.

We will be there for all seniors, but the most vulnerable are those who are 75 and older.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I am pleased to be able to ask him a question.

How could this member from Quebec ignore the requests of Quebec seniors? I would invite him to tour around Quebec. Perhaps he has already done so because he told us that he had solicited people's opinions. That is fine, but what does he think about the statement made by the FADOQ, which called for help for seniors as of the age of 65 and that criticized the fact that seniors aged 65 to 74 are not included? Those seniors are not any less vulnerable. They are also affected by higher prices for all sorts of things. This summer, they received \$1.50 as a result of indexing. That is not even enough to buy a coffee at Tim Hortons.

How can he ignore the fact that the AQDR is also calling for an increase in old age security benefits for people aged 65 and over? How can he, once again, promise to increase monthly old age security benefits by 10% for those aged 75 and over? In 2019, he looked seniors in the eye and made that same promise. Seniors in Quebec will remember. That promise, which will not be kept until 2022, could be used again in the next election campaign.

That is not to mention the fact that the budget proposes a one-time payment of \$500 for old age security recipients aged 75 and over. Once again, seniors groups are wondering why seniors aged 65 to 74 will not receive a payment.

With regard to national standards, I would encourage the member to consult the Quebec National Assembly, which adopted a unanimous motion in that regard. The FADOQ is calling for a 35% increase in health transfers.

How can a member from Quebec be so out of touch with the reality of seniors in Quebec and the other provinces?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Speaker, I cannot express today how proud I am to be a member from Quebec and to stand up for seniors.

Budget 2021 was great news and will make a difference for all seniors in Quebec and Canada. I have travelled throughout Quebec and have met with the AQDR and FADOQ over the last two days.

I can say that the AQDR is very pleased with the progress we have made for seniors. We kept our campaign promise. The FADOQ told us that any action taken to help seniors would be most welcome.

I have met with various groups and many seniors. They are proud of what we are proposing. Their pensions have not been increased in decades. The action we are taking today will make a difference for seniors in Quebec and Canada.

[English]

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, like my colleague from Shefford from the Bloc is wondering, I am also wondering why seniors between the ages of 65 and 75 were omitted. I fail to see where the expenses of seniors over the age of 75 would be greater than for those between the ages of 65 and 75. I expect to spend a lot of money once I reach that age, and I think I will be tapering off and winding down once I hit 75. Can the member answer that more thoroughly?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

We are keeping our promise to increase the old age security pension for Canadians aged 75 and over. We will provide seniors with a one-time payment of \$500, and we will increase their monthly benefits by 10% beginning in July 2022.

We will invest \$3 billion to help the provinces and territories implement long-term care standards and make permanent changes.

With budget 2021, we will continue to meet the diverse needs of seniors, who are more likely to rely on their savings as they age.

The Budget

Their health care and home care costs increase as they get older, although that is when they are less able to work and might be disabled or widowed. We are taking some of the pressure off of seniors—

• (1705)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. He had time for a brief answer, although I know there is a lot to say about the budget.

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

I am very pleased to speak to budget 2021, a long-awaited budget, but I want to first congratulate the child care advocates for their years of dedication. I remember attending rally after rally, and participating in campaign after campaign organized by the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, the YWCA and many others. I congratulate Sharon Gregson, the champion of the \$10-a-day child care here in Vancouver East and across British Columbia, for her tireless work.

New Democrats have campaigned on this election after election and, frankly, generations of children have gone without this kind of support. I am glad to see that the Liberals, after promising it for 27 years, are now finally committing to it in budget 2021. The NDP stands ready to realize the dream of universal child care for Canadians, and we will do anything to help motivate and move it forward. I would like to know from the government what its plans are to really realize this universal child care support for Canadians. With respect to action that needs to be taken, what sort of legislation is required? Let us get it done. Let us get this done once and for all so that we are not back debating this again, and so that we are not waiting another 27 years with empty promises from the Liberals on this very important issue.

I would be remiss if I did not touch on the issue of pharmacare. For more than two decades, the Liberals have repeatedly promised pharmacare to Canadians and have yet to act. In 1997, it was a campaign promise; in 2019, it was a pledge to implement the Hoskins report; in 2020, it was in the throne speech and; most recently, as we all know, it was in the Liberals' own convention from their own members demanding that pharmacare be prioritized. Yet, here we are, and it is not in the budget. When offered the opportunity to vote on this, the Liberals voted it down. They voted down the NDP's Canada pharmacare act. I can tell members that the government has to really commit to this. Budget 2021 did not deliver universal pharmacare, and that is a shame. The budget also does not include funding or measures to implement other important measures.

The Budget

On universal pharmacare, government members often talk about it as a jurisdictional issue and, frankly, the jurisdictional argument is lame. Just like universal child care, we can manage those issues. Just like universal child care, the NDP will not stop fighting for a comprehensive, universal, public, single-payer pharmacare system for all Canadians until it gets done.

Turning to the issue of housing, I am pleased to see that there is an increase for rapid housing. We have said from the beginning that the initial amount that was announced from the government was not sufficient. However, we do note that it still falls short on what was called for by the FCM, which shared its view that the funding that was announced “doesn't yet meet our shared goal of ending chronic homelessness”.

We will continue to push for a significant expansion of the RHI, a \$7-billion investment for no fewer than 24,000 units over the next two to three years. Likewise, we support the increase in the reaching home initiative and the funding dedicated to provide shelter for women and girls fleeing violence. However, the federal government must also step up to partner with all levels of government and non-profit housing providers to ensure that operating costs as well as supportive wraparound services are provided to those who need them.

I would note that I am glad that the the budget announced that section 95 of the co-op and non-profit subsidies have been put in place. However, when I asked the minister and CMHC in November about the need to renew supports for section 95 co-operatives and non-profits that were arbitrarily excluded from receiving support under phase 2 of the federal community housing initiative, the response was that the funding was already given and that existing programs were enough.

• (1710)

I am happy to see the Liberals admit that they were wrong and reverse course to acknowledge the issue following the NDP's and CHF's call for action for this critical funding to be maintained and the subsidies to be maintained to the existing stock of section 95 co-ops and non-profits that the Liberals had left out of the national housing strategy.

One devastating disappointment in the budget is the absence of a for-indigenous, by-indigenous urban, rural and northern housing strategy. Robert Byers, chair of the CHRA Indigenous Caucus, said, “For years, government officials have told us that an urban, rural and northern Indigenous housing strategy was a priority. The absence of such a strategy in today's Budget will mean that urban and rural Indigenous peoples will continue to face inequality and lack of access to safe and affordable housing, and that is a disgrace.”

Indigenous peoples are 11 times more likely to use a homeless shelter and there remains no for-indigenous, by-indigenous strategy to close the housing gap between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous people, despite the minister's mandate letter. It is a national disgrace that budget 2021 still fails to deliver on this commitment. I join with the indigenous leadership and all housing advocates to call on the federal government to address this missed opportunity by immediately committing, in the days ahead, to an-

nounce a for-indigenous, by-indigenous urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy.

Tim Richter, president and CEO of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness and who, by the way, is the co-chair of the government's National Housing Council, about the budget, stated, “An estimated 235,000 Canadians experience homelessness every year and 1.7 million households are in core housing need. The National Housing Strategy aims to create between 150,000 to 160,000 units of new affordable housing over 10 years – much which will be unaffordable to those experiencing homelessness or core housing need.”

It is clear to anyone who is honest about the grim reality of the housing crisis that the Liberals' national housing strategy will not achieve what the Liberals claim they are committed to. This week, over 40 housing organizations and advocates from across Canada jointly signed a letter to the housing minister listing 11 concrete actions that the government must take to address the housing affordability crisis. The NDP fully supports these calls, which all along predated the government's budget considerations, such as the need to limit the ability of the REITs and large cap funds in the fuelling of the rising costs of housing and rent. This includes the creation of a housing acquisition fund that provides non-profits quick access to capital for acquiring properties that are at risk of going to these funds.

Former UN special rapporteur on housing Leilani Farha wrote to the federal government in the early months of the pandemic highlighting the importance of supporting the non-profit sector with such a fund and subsequently called for in “Recovery for All” and by FCM as a separate piece from the rapid housing initiative.

Lastly, it is good to see the government finally taking steps in limiting foreign investment. However, a 1% tax on vacant homes owned by people who are both non-residents and non-citizens is largely symbolic when we see that the average cost of housing has increased by 31% in 2020 alone, a rate that is simply unsustainable. In B.C., vacancy and foreign ownership stacked up independently to 2.5% combined with a 20% foreign buyers tax in Metro Vancouver. This demonstrates that the federal government should be able to at least match B.C.'s initiative for affected housing markets to curb foreign market speculators, but is choosing not to, which is in line with the baby steps, by the way, that the government claims to be taking.

The NDP will continue to push the government in strengthening these measures, as well as for more stringent housing ownership reporting requirements to ensure more transparency on ownership and to make it more difficult for money launderers and the evasion of capital gains taxes on secondary residences. Oftentimes people ask how we will pay for the measures that the NDP—

• (1715)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member's time for debate has ended. There also is no time for questions and comments.

It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the amendment to the amendment before the House.

The question is on the amendment to the amendment. If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the amendment to the amendment be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded division on the amendment to the amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1800)

(The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 94)

YEAS

Members

Atwin	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Bergeron
Bérubé	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Boudrias
Boulerice	Brunelle-Duceppe
Chabot	Champoux
Charbonneau	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Duvall	Fortin
Gaudreau	Gill
Green	Julian
Larouche	Lemire
Marcil	Michaud
Normandin	Pauzé
Perron	Plamondon
Savard-Tremblay	Simard
Ste-Marie	Thériault

Therrien
Vignola — 37

Aboultaif
Albas
Alleslev
Amos
Anandasangaree
Arnold
Arya
Bachrach
Bagnell
Baker
Barlow
Battiste
Bendayan
Benzen
Berthold
Bezan
Bittle
Blair
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Blois
Brassard
Brière
Cannings
Carrie
Chagger
Chen
Chong
Cooper
Cumming
Dalton
Dancho
Davies
d'Entremont
Dhillon
Doherty
Dowdall
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Erskine-Smith
Falk (Provencher)
Fergus
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gallant
Garrison
Généreux
Gerretsen
Godin
Gourde
Guilbeault
Hallan
Hardie
Hoback
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Jaczek
Jeneroux
Joly
Jordan

The Budget

Trudel

NAYS

Members

Aitchison
Alghabra
Allison
Anand
Angus
Arseneault
Ashton
Badawey
Bains
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beech
Bennett
Bergen
Besette
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block
Bragdon
Bratina
Calkins
Carr
Casey
Champagne
Chiu
Collins
Cormier
Dabrusin
Damoff
Davidson
Deltell
Dhaliwal
Diotte
Dong
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Fillmore
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fry
Garneau
Gazan
Genuis
Gladu
Gould
Gray
Hajdu
Harder
Harris
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Ien
Jansen
Johns
Jones
Jowhari

Private Members' Business

Kelloway
Kent
Khera
Kmieć
Kram
Kusie
Kwan
Lalonde
Lamoureux
Lauzon
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Lewis (Essex)
Lightbound
Lobb
Longfield
Lukiwski
MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Martel
Masse
May (Cambridge)
Mazier
McColeman
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McPherson
Mendès
Miller
Moore
Morrison
Motz
Ng
Oliphant
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Qaqqaq
Ratansi
Redekopp
Reid
Richards
Rodriguez
Romanado
Ruff
Sahota (Brampton North)
Sajjan
Samson
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schieffe
Schulte
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh
Sorbara
Spengemann
Steinley
Stubbs
Tabbara
Tochor
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Van Popta
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Viersen

Kelly
Khalid
Kitchen
Koutrakis
Kurek
Kusmierczyk
Lake
Lambropoulos
Lattanzio
Lawrence
Lebouthillier
Lehoux
Liepert
Lloyd
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKenzie
Maguire
Manly
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLean
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Melillo
Mendicino
Monsef
Morantz
Morrissey
Nater
O'Connell
O'Regan
Patzner
Petipas Taylor
Powlowski
Qualtrough
Rayes
Regan
Rempel Garner
Robillard
Rogers
Rood
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Saini
Saks
Sangha
Saroya
Scheer
Schmale
Seeback
Sgro
Sheehan
Shin
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simms
Sloan
Soroka
Stanton
Strahl
Sweet
Tassi
Trudeau
Uppal
van Koevorden
Vandal
Vaughan
Vidal
Virani

Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould
Yip
Yurdiga
Zann
Zuberi — 297

Wagantall
Waugh
Weiler
Williamson
Wong
Young
Zahid
Zimmer

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment defeated.

I want to bring everyone's attention to someone who is sneaking out right now, Mr. Scott Lemoine. Tonight was his first night calling votes.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

INCOME TAX ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-208, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (transfer of small business or family farm or fishing corporation), as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate to the Chair.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I believe, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to carry this at report stage.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

The Speaker: When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for bringing this to third reading because it is a privilege to speak in the House to Bill C-208, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, transfer of small business or family farm or a fishing corporation.

I want to begin my remarks by thanking a few of my colleagues who helped get my private member's bill to third reading much quicker than originally planned. Particularly, I want to thank my good friend, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood, who traded his private member's bill spot during the second reading, which allowed a vote to occur a few weeks earlier than scheduled. I also want to thank my colleague from Regina—Qu'Appelle, who traded his private member's bill spot. That is the reason we are debating Bill C-208 this evening.

The reason I am highlighting and thanking these two specific members is that time is of the essence. No one knows what the future holds or when an election is going to occur. These matters are outside of my control, so I want to focus on getting this legislation passed to support all small businesses. We must correct this massive injustice within the Income Tax Act that unfairly punishes individuals when they sell their qualifying small business, farm or fishing operation to their own family.

For those members who have not been closely following the debate, I will give a brief overview. As it stands, when a qualifying small business, farm or fishing operation is sold to a member of the owner's own family, the Income Tax Act treats the sale differently than if it were sold to an absolute stranger.

Yes, members heard that right. There are currently two sets of rules, and in some cases, it can result in the difference of hundreds of thousands of dollars. For some, that might not sound like a lot, but in many cases it could result in a parent making the tough decision to sell their business to a complete stranger rather than to their own children. That is wrong, and I intend on fixing it once and for all.

During my first hour of debate, I gave two examples of why Bill C-208 is needed.

The first involved a family wanting to sell their bakery to their daughter. If they sold the bakery to a stranger rather than their daughter, they would have an effective tax rate of 10%, after using their lifetime capital gains exemption. However, if they sold their bakery to their daughter, she would be obligated to repay their loan with personal tax dollars, which is a significant tax penalty.

The second example was a father wanting to sell his farm to his son to fund his retirement. If the father were to sell his farm to a stranger, he could use his capital gains exemption on the sale, resulting in an effective tax rate of 13.39%. However, if the farmer sold his farm to his son, that sale would be recorded as a dividend rather than a capital gain, and the farmer would pay 47.4% in tax. That is a huge difference, and I think we can all agree that it is completely unfair.

Since I introduced this legislation, I have been contacted by numerous agricultural and business organizations. People across the country have contacted my office to let me know how important this legislation is to their family. Every single constituency in Canada would be positively impacted by this legislation, and it would result in more locally owned and operated businesses, the type of businesses whose owners are deeply involved in their communities and provide steady employment for countless individuals, and it would help keep farms and fishing operations in the family.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-208 sends a strong message of hope to young farmers who want to carry on what their family started and to other young family entrepreneurs included with them. Most of all, it would bring tax fairness to the Income Tax Act. No longer would parents have to be given a false choice of having to choose between a larger retirement package by selling to a stranger, which has no charge, or a massive tax bill because they sold to a family member.

Other than Finance Canada officials, I received zero push-back from any of the expert witnesses who appeared in front of the finance committee. Witness after witness came to support the bill and to answer the questions put to them. All my colleagues who sit on the finance committee did their due diligence and asked insightful questions. I want to thank the chair of the finance committee, who helped shepherd this legislation, for scheduling ample time for witnesses.

● (1805)

I am pleased to report that the concerns put forward by the Liberal MPs were fully answered. While I do not know how they will vote at third reading, I would kindly ask for their support. Now that we have had hours of debate and a thorough committee study, there is sufficient evidence to justify the changes I am proposing.

The Income Tax Act is complex. It has been changed and amended over the years, and in many circumstances one needs a lawyer or accountant to decipher its intent. With that in mind, the finance committee prudently invited multiple tax experts. In many cases, they gave real-world examples, so members were able to better grasp the implications of the bill. Due to the member for Kingston and the Islands laying out Finance Canada's concerns during second reading, we knew exactly what questions the Liberal MPs were going to ask. Because the government outlined its argument during second reading, the tax experts and I had time to prepare in order to put its fears to rest.

We know what the bill will cost, due to the Parliamentary Budget Officer's analysis, as I have said in previous speeches. We know there are safeguards built into the legislation to ensure people do not skirt tax rules. We know the legislation is squarely focused on small and medium-sized qualifying businesses. We know the legislation, as drafted, will achieve its intended aim, which is to level the playing field in such transactions.

For those members who want further reasons to support the bill, I will highlight some specific comments and evidence provided to the finance committee.

Private Members' Business

Brian Janzen, who is a senior tax manager at Deloitte, appeared at the finance committee. As someone who has been handling business transfers for close to 30 years, he understands the Income Tax Act and the implications of section 84.1, which he said has been a thorn in the industry's side for many years.

In his opening remarks, he provided an example of what would happen with or without the current wording of section 84.1 regarding the sale of a business. He gave the example of a restaurant that is worth a million dollars. If the owner sells the restaurant to a stranger, he, according to Mr. Janzen, “will walk away with after-tax proceeds...of around \$971,000.” He would pay roughly \$29,000 in taxes, but if the restaurant were to sell to a family member, the taxes paid would be roughly “\$466,000 because of the deemed dividend. That's a difference, between the two scenarios, of \$437,000.”

I think Mr. Janzen summed it up quite nicely when he said, “That's just crazy.” I agree with him. It is crazy. This sort of scenario is playing out every single day, and it needs to stop.

Mr. Janzen also said in his opening remarks, “This bill is helping the lower end of the small business community; it is not helping the huge, rich companies even if they're family owned.”

Cindy David, who is the chair of the board for the Conference for Advanced Life Underwriting in Canada appeared at the finance committee and spoke about the necessity of getting this bill passed. She said:

...there's some urgency around the need for the government to act in amending 84.1.... [as] small businesses employ 70% of the private sector and have been major contributors to employment growth over the past decade. A vast majority of those businesses have fewer than 20 employees.

The last comment I want to highlight was made by Dustin Mansfield, who is a chartered professional accountant at BDO Canada. Mr. Mansfield knows first hand the challenges the current wording of section 84.1 causes for families and how it unfairly taxes them at a different rate.

Of Bill C-208, he said, “the legislation would put a successor child of a business in the same shoes as an unrelated party upon the transaction of the business. Why does a stranger receive better tax treatment than a child, when the purpose is to keep businesses within the family?” I do not think Dustin posed this as a rhetorical question.

The fact remains that there are some who do not want this legislation to pass. However, we were elected to lead, to improve the quality of life of those we represent and to make sure that we pass down a stronger nation than the one we inherited. We cannot take our prosperity for granted.

• (1810)

I urge my colleagues to carefully review the testimony provided at the finance committee; call their chambers of commerce, or local farmers and fishers; go make a few phone calls to local accountants or other tax experts; and speak to those who have been impacted to ask them if they think it is fair that they had to pay more taxes for the business to stay in the family. Members will find almost universal support for this bill. They will also find there is bipartisan support. We need to pass this bill and send it to the Senate.

Private Members' Business gives all of us an opportunity to set aside our political allegiances, and I would kindly ask my Liberal colleagues to allow this legislation to go to a vote. If the debate carries on, it will be even further pushed back. Once again, I thank all my colleagues who supported Bill C-208 and helped to get it this far. Out of all the attempts made to fix this unfair tax treatment, we have made it the furthest in Parliament.

By working together, we can support our entrepreneurs, small businesses, farmers and fishers who make up the backbone of our economy, so let us roll up our sleeves and get this job done.

• (1815)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech and, most importantly, on his excellent bill. I also thank him for approaching me right after this bill was introduced and for giving me the opportunity to endorse this bill on behalf of the Bloc Québécois.

I would like to know whether my colleague has spoken with Liberal members.

I also want to know what reasons he has been given for the lack of support for Bill C-208, when this is something that everyone wants.

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, I cannot answer for the government in regard to those areas. There was some discussion of tax cheats earlier in some of the discussions that were going on, and I heard things such as we cannot allow wealthy people to get loopholes in the Income Tax Act, but that is clearly not the issue here.

Small business is the backbone. As the person from the Conference for Advanced Life Underwriting indicated, 70% of small businesses provide 70% of the employment in that area. There are, as I mentioned, clauses built into this particular legislation that would prevent things like fraud. There is nothing to stop the Canada Revenue Agency from auditing anyone, as they would normally in any other time, and so we feel strongly about a lot of those questions, and that is why I congratulated the finance committee. It is because its members gave very good questions at the committee, and the answers were very clearly in support of the bill.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on the progress of his bill. One of the first conversations I had with another member of Parliament upon my arrival in Ottawa after the last election, before the pandemic, was with the sponsor of this bill in a cab, if members can imagine sharing a taxicab now. There were no masks or anything.

Private Members' Business

Our conversation was about his interest in former member Guy Caron's bill. He was letting me know he was going to be taking that on and bringing it forward, so I am glad to see the progress made in Parliament on this bill.

I am just wondering if he could expand a bit more on some of those measures that would help make sure that this is not about tax evasion, but is really about facilitating the transfer of family businesses between generations.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from the NDP. He is very correct on that. It was very gracious of Mr. Caron to come to my office to discuss this particular bill with me, my colleague and my chief of staff. It is a very good bill, and it is exactly the same bill that he brought forward. I have mentioned that in previous debates in the House, and I want to thank him for doing that. Unfortunately, that bill was defeated at the time. I felt, being drawn early in the program this time, I would move it forward.

It is very self-explanatory. There is a huge difference in the tax rules that create a huge disincentive to sell someone's small business to their own family, as opposed to a complete stranger. Most small business owners I know of use those funds for retirement because they have invested their earnings back into the business throughout those 10, 20, 30 or sometimes 40 years to build it to the point—

• (1820)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I did not want to have to interrupt the member, but we have one last question.

The hon. member for Edmonton Manning,

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague. This is amazing. The first time I heard about this problem was in the last Parliament when I was serving on the finance committee. There is a fair bit of farmland in Edmonton Manning, and people there have concerns all the time about this issue.

Why does the hon. member think it is important for the bill to pass? We must secure the continuation of family ownership among small businesses, which is part of our tradition in this country in an industry that is very close to the heart of many Canadians.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, the bill is supported by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Grain Growers of Canada, the Chicken Farmers of Canada, many of the canola growers and wheat growers, many keystone agricultural producers in my province, general farm organizations across the country and fishers. However, I think the big thing here is that all small businesses support it as well, whether that means a shoe store, dress shop, bakery or corner store in a small town or a big city. It is very supportive of making sure that we can transfer small businesses—

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.

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, it is a pleasure to speak to my colleague's bill. I can appreciate that he has put in a great deal of effort to get it to this particular point.

There are some very serious concerns in regard to the bill and the impact it will have. I am not 100% convinced that this is the best direction to go. I find it interesting that the member says, for example, that this is all about the family farm and that the family farm needs this particular break. My understanding is that parents can already sell a family business directly to their child, while claiming the lifetime capital gains exemption on the resulting capital gain. I would be interested in hearing my colleague's comments in regard to that aspect.

The issue at hand, in the eyes of many, is not about passing on the family business; rather, it is about corporations. There are all sorts of other issues that come to mind when we talk about corporations.

I am not as familiar with the farming community as the member would be, given his background versus mine. However, what I can say is that I have had the opportunity to visit many farms over the years. Growing up, I can remember being out in Saskatchewan and doing some cultivating on the big John Deere four-wheel tractors on a family farm. There was a belief that the farmers running the farms had them handed down and that they intended to hand them down to their children.

Even though I have some personal, first-hand experience, I do not want to say that I have a complete understanding of all aspects of farming. However, I do support family farms, and I would like to see us enhance them and give them strength.

A lot of family farms are like small businesses, and I think the Government of Canada has very clearly shown its support for small businesses. We have seen that in a variety of ways. A lot of them have been highlighted during the pandemic. We often talk about some of the benefits the government has brought forward, and I suspect that rural communities and even farmers would have been afforded the opportunity to participate in some of the programs. This highlighted the need that is there. It is very real.

Bill C-208 proposes amendments that could easily be misused by corporations, which could look for tax planning opportunities. I do not believe that the member has addressed that issue head on and provided the types of changes necessary to provide assurances.

My New Democratic friends in particular talk a lot about tax avoidance. I would be very interested in hearing them provide their thoughts on that specific issue. Have they looked into that aspect of the legislation? Are we creating opportunities, by passing this legislation, that could provide for tax avoidance?

This is a legitimate question, and it is an area of concern that was not addressed to the degree it could have and should have been addressed at the committee stage. It is a legitimate concern. I would be very interested in hearing what the New Democrats have to say about it.

Private Members' Business

• (1825)

The former small business minister, who I got to know well because she was the House leader of the government, often talked about the importance of small businesses. I have said in the past that they are the backbone of the economy. We can further add to that to show how important our farmers are. They are the ones putting food on our tables and contributing to Canada's overall GDP and exports. They feed the world. The crops we are able to provide around the world are very impressive. The growth in the Province of Manitoba of the canola industry has been very impressive. It has gone from virtually nowhere years ago to a major crop recognized around the world. We often hear about the importance of prairie wheat and that it is feeding people around the world. We can take a sense of pride in that and look at ways to support it.

In the budget, we heard about a number of initiatives. One that comes to mind right offhand is in the area of drying grains. The budget attempts to deal with that particular issue by supporting farmers.

We could talk about how we supported small businesses through the development of programs during the pandemic, such as the Canada emergency wage subsidy program, which has been very helpful to small businesses in general. We came up with the Canada emergency business account too. Another one I often reference for small businesses in particular is the Canada emergency rent subsidy program. These things are very real and tangible.

We know that many businesses continue to face stress and uncertainty as a direct result of COVID-19. That is why in many ways the government has stepped up to the plate to make sure there is support during these unprecedented times. I referenced the Canada emergency business account, which helped somewhere in the neighbourhood of three-quarters of a million small businesses. We are talking about tens of billions of dollars in loans. The Canada emergency wage subsidy program affected several million people, and, again, tens of billions of dollars were spent on it. There is the additional lockdown support. There was support for the agriculture and agri-food sector. The government recognized it as an essential service and provided support to it. We are committed to supporting producers and businesses so they can continue to provide for Canadians.

We have taken unprecedented action to support farmers, ranchers, food businesses and food processors across the value chain, and have provided support for vulnerable populations. For example, we quickly unlocked the \$5 billion in additional Farm Credit Canada lending capacity and launched \$100 million for a new agriculture and food business solutions fund to ensure that businesses in the sector have the support they need. We also increased the Canadian Dairy Commission's borrowing capacity by a couple of hundred million dollars. That was to allow us to support costs associated with the temporary storage of things like cheese and butter to avoid food waste.

A number of programs were put into place to support our producers. Programs provided dollars to foreign workers—

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to leave it at that.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-208, which would significantly help businesses in Quebec and Canada with succession planning.

I once again want to congratulate my colleague from Brandon—Souris for introducing this bill. The Bloc Québécois considers succession planning to be essential to agriculture and all other sectors. We have supported this sector for a very long time. In fact, we started advocating for this idea back in 2005, after the Union des producteurs agricoles and the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec issued a joint report that talked about the survival of our fishing businesses and farms.

We are talking about taxation, exemptions and various other topics, but what we are really talking about are small and medium-sized businesses, which are the backbone of our economy. We need to keep these businesses alive and make sure they survive. We need to make sure that these small businesses can keep going and that they are not put at a disadvantage where they will end up being bought out by big corporations. The survival of these small businesses is directly connected to the survival of our regions. This is why I am appealing to all of my colleagues.

I will never get used to it, but unfortunately, I once again sense that there is partisanship at play. It does not matter which party introduced the bill. What matters is that members look at the bill and ask themselves whether it is good for people. If it is good for people, then they should vote in favour of it. We need to correct this serious injustice. By protecting our small businesses, we are protecting our economic vitality. This is about sustainability, saving jobs and keeping knowledge in the community. As I just mentioned, it is about stopping the exodus of young people to urban centres. If they are able to take over the family business, then they will stay in the region.

Before I go on, I would like to give a nod to my colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, who introduced a similar bill in a previous Parliament. I commend him for that.

The Bloc Québécois defends the human-scale business model. I talk a lot about agriculture because I am very biased in favour of the farming community, but this is about all kinds of businesses. Human-scale businesses are the ones that keep regions vibrant and schools filled with children because there are families living in the community. We are not talking about a mega-farm that bought the land from eight of its neighbours, leaving only one family. Instead, there are eight families. That is the model we want to promote. In order to defend that model, we need to pass this bill. That is imperative. We have already been talking about it for too long.

Our SMEs are what keep us alive. It is a sector that has not received enough encouragement. I talk a lot about agriculture, but we want to protect innovative SMEs that could also sell their products abroad.

According to a 2018 estimate, between 30,000 and 60,000 Quebec businesses will not find new owners in the years to come. If they do not find new owners, they will die. If they die, 150,000 jobs and \$8 billion to \$10 billion in revenue will disappear.

In agriculture, it has long been said that every day, a farm disappears. That has not been the case this past year because there has been a slight increase in the number of businesses, which is great. We are happy about that, but it was no thanks to the government. It was because dynamic people started from scratch and created micro-farms. That is a good thing. We are happy about that, but we still see farms disappearing when they should be staying in business. We could do better. We can do better. Why are we not doing better?

I want us to take that step and move forward. Many of my colleagues have talked about numbers and statistics. I have lots of numbers too, but I am once again not sticking to my notes, which is just fine by me.

I want to talk about real people, real cases like the certified organic, 23,000-tap maple syrup operation owned by parents who are paying accountants a fortune to figure out how they can set up the transfer. Does another business have to buy the business? This is the parents' pension fund, and they want to pass it on to their children. They have to make a cruel choice. It makes no sense. That is the kind of example people keep sharing with me to this very day.

● (1835)

The dairy farm in Lac-Saint-Jean is another example. They keep postponing transferring the farm because they cannot come up with a solution, because there is no solution.

I would like to correct something my Liberal colleague said a moment ago. It is not true that the capital gains exemption can be used, otherwise we would not be voting on Bill C-208. I really hope my colleague will have a closer look at this file because in the cases brought to my attention, people are racking their brains for days, weeks and months, even paying a fortune to accountants.

On the other hand, the Liberal government likes to make people fill out complicated paperwork, to the point where they are forced to hire others to fill it out; that is how complicated it is. This seems to make the Liberals happy.

The Bloc Québécois does not think like that. We want to simplify people's lives and support the next generation, our youth and the people who want to live in our regions.

I want to share another example, and this is a true story.

A young person was nearing the end of negotiations to take over the family farm when he left on a trip. While he was away, his parents received an offer from someone outside the family that they could not refuse. The person offered ten times as much. The parents ended up selling the farm to the stranger. That type of situation destroys families and leaves permanent scars.

Private Members' Business

There are other examples of parents who hand over their business to their children out of a sense of obligation because they would lose sleep if they did not allow their son to take over the farm. As a result, they end up bitter and living in poverty. This also leaves scars. There are inn owners who resign themselves to paying a fortune in taxes. The father resigns himself to living on half of what he anticipated for his retirement. If that is not disgusting then what is?

Come on. We are the government. We have no right not to change this. Bill C-208 is very simple. It amends the Income Tax Act to give people who hand over their business to a relative the same privileges as someone who sells their business to a stranger. That is the right thing to do. Where is the problem? Where is the tax evasion?

Seriously, I sometimes find it difficult to remain calm when I hear the Liberals tell us that this could lead to tax evasion. We have been talking to them forever about tax havens and nothing has happened. Are they kidding me? Are they talking about tax evasion and SMEs? It does not happen often, but I am pretty much speechless. I could not even speak earlier. I told myself that it was not true, that my colleague did not say that, but he just did. We are talking about millions of dollars in tax havens. What about the web giants? How long have the Liberals been waffling to avoid taxing them? The idea is to ensure the survival of other smaller companies, such as our regional media, but they prefer it big and complicated. They favour their friends.

I am tired of a system that goes after and punishes the little guy. Small businesses are forced to fill out 28 forms, which stifles any economic momentum. Let us talk about the money. The Liberals have said that this will cost more than \$1 billion, but that is not true. If I recall correctly, in 2017, the cost was estimated at \$256 million. This really gets to me.

People thinking in terms of microeconomics see this issue only as a business that ceases to exist. Say the farm is sold to someone outside the family and is merged with a larger company. There is much more at stake here because the suppliers, the employees and the creditors are losing a business partner.

Family transfers are good because they allow for stability and familiarity. People know the business they have been dealing with for 25 or 35 years. When the son takes over the business, it is still the same business. He will keep it going.

Quebec changed its tax laws in 2016, yet another example of how Quebec is ahead. This week, the example was day care. This is good news, as long as we get the money.

Private Members' Business

• (1840)

I would like the House to come to that realization in this case too. Once again, the federal government is trying to catch up with Quebec laws. I am not saying that in a derogatory way. It is the truth.

Independent studies have shown that 47% of SME owners intend to exit their business within the next five years and 72% of them plan to exit within the next decade. In the fishing industry, a very high percentage of business owners are over the age of 50. Some might say that 50 is the prime of life. It is for me. However, that also means that the next generation needs to take over.

I am making a heartfelt plea and I want to send another message. To the government members who use doublespeak and make promises in private or during meetings by saying that this cause is important and that they are going to work on it, I want to say that now is the time to prove it. This is a good bill, and I am asking members to pass it.

Young people in Quebec and Canada are watching us. Business owners, those who support us and pay taxes are watching the government and waiting for results.

This is the first time that this bill has made it this far. Let us pass it.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-208 on the transfer of small businesses, family farms and fishing corporations between family members.

It is no secret to members in the House that the New Democrats definitely believe that the ultra-rich and wealthy ought to be paying their fair share, and we have done a very good job of making a case for that in this Parliament. We have proposed some concrete measures for how that might be done.

We have also been champions for small businesses in Canada. We know they are the backbone of the Canadian economy, with 80% of the jobs in our economy created by small business owners. We appreciate farmers and fishers and what they contribute to the Canadian economy and to the world, with all the food they export outside of Canada the world over.

These are important industries. The businesses within them, whether it is a farm or business, are developed by families and become part of the family. Those families are known in their communities. As the former member said, they have relations with suppliers and others within their communities. Being able to pass that family business on to their children is important. It is important for the family from an identity point of view and from the family's economic point of view. However, it can also be important to communities as well, that sense of stability and to ensure that the people who are employed at those businesses and people who do business with those businesses continue to enjoy those relationships and the economic benefits of them. This is why I am quite pleased to stand in support of the bill before us.

Earlier, the member for Winnipeg North talked about the NDP's concern for tax evasion, and he is absolutely right. We can talk

about tax havens. New Democratic members have had private members' bills before the House, members who are serious about taking action on the biggest tax evaders. However, some of the small businesses in our communities, and I think of a small business I know, a sign company that a husband and wife developed over 30 or 40 years, want to pass the business to their children. They are not the people who are shunting money out to the Barbados, Cayman Islands and other such places.

The fact is that if business owners choose to sell to their children, under the current tax rules, they will pay considerably more than if they sell to a complete stranger, so there is a principle of fairness here. It just does not make sense that by selling a business that is the life's work of a family within the family that it would be penalized and have to pay more. That is what we are trying to address here.

I think the member for Winnipeg North misunderstands the bill, frankly, when he mentions the capital gains exemption. Of course, the very point of the bill is that if people are selling to immediate family members, they do not benefit from the capital gains exemption. That sale is not taxed as a capital gain; it is taxed as a dividend. The whole point of the legislation is to allow those family members to benefit from the very capital gain lifetime exemption to which the member for Winnipeg North was speaking.

I think some members do not necessarily expect that when the member for Winnipeg North gets up to speak, that he will have a very detailed knowledge of what he is speaking about, but that is no excuse for his government, or the ministry or other members of his party for that matter. They should hold themselves to a higher standard and really come to have an appreciation of what is in the legislation.

Why, when the New Democrats are so concerned about tax evasion, do we support the bill? There are a couple of things.

One of measures in the bill is that to get this different tax treatment under capital gains as opposed to dividends, the family member who receives or purchases the business has to continue to be the owner of that business for five years as opposed to the current two years. That is my understanding. It is meant to promote the idea that if the sale is happening, it is happening because someone within the family genuinely wants to take over the business, not just flip it for sale. Therefore, if within those five years, the business is sold again, then it is retroactively treated as a dividend sale and taxed appropriately, taxed as it is under the current legislation. At that point, it is not about succession within a family, it has become something else.

● (1845)

One of the things that gives me comfort is that the bill is not the product of one political party that might have a particular agenda. A former NDP member of Parliament, Guy Caron, developed this private member's bill. He put a lot of work into it. As the NDP finance critic, he was someone who did excellent work on tax evasion and was very concerned about it. It was one of the things that motivated him to get into politics. He did that not just as an amateur within politics who was assigned the finance portfolio, but he did it as somebody who worked as an economist his whole life prior to getting into politics.

He understood very well not just the issue of tax evasion but also the particular dynamics of the bill. He sought to craft a bill that really would honour the idea of being able to pass a business down within generations of a family and to do that in the right way, so it did not just become a loophole or an excuse to evade taxes, something the New Democrats fiercely oppose.

Those are some of the elements, both concretely within the bill with respect to what the legislation would do but also where the legislation comes from, that give me confidence that this is not about introducing another means for tax evasion into the tax code. It really is about settling a fundamental unfairness, where people who spend their lives pouring their heart and soul into a business and make it a success, whose children have oftentimes been part of that success, and then want to ensure it gets passed on within the family and can do so without paying a large financial penalty. This also helps to ensure that these assets for our communities stay in local hands.

Sometimes the only people with the capital to buy a business are foreign investors, which sometimes happens, whether it is with small businesses or with farms. Either large corporations or foreign investors purchase these things. It makes more sense for the family, if the differential is \$400,000 or \$500,000 as we have heard in some cases, to come to the decision that it is in fact better off not doing what its heart wants to do, which is to keep that business or that farm within the family, but to make a more hard-nosed financial decision about the family's best interests. This would allow families to take off the table the factor that makes it far more profitable for them to sell to a stranger than to keep it within the family.

Those are some of the issues at play. As I said, this is something that New Democrats believe in, but it is also part of a package of advocacy that New Democrats have brought forward for a long time, and particularly within this Parliament. I have been really impressed with our small business critic, the member of Parliament for Courtenay—Alberni, a former small business owner himself. He was right out of the gate when the pandemic began, advocating for a 75% wage subsidy when the government said it would only be 10%. He knew how important it was to get beyond just covering payroll costs and providing wage replacement. He was the loudest voice out of the gate for the need for a commercial rent subsidy. He has been advocating for an extension of the Canada emergency business account loan program. We saw a small extension in the most recent budget. We are glad to see that, but there is more work to do.

Private Members' Business

The New Democrats believe in small business. We are advocating for small business. We see this as part of a package that is important for small business and farmers, so they can keep all the hard work of their families with in their families when the time comes to pass that business on.

● (1850)

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Madam Speaker, if there is one group of Canadians that has been hard hit during the pandemic, it is small business owners, men and women who risked everything to build a dream, maybe a small boutique grocery store on main street, a specialty bakery featuring grandma's secret apple pie recipe, the butcher who was taught by his father how to make sausage like they did in the old country or a unique restaurant featuring a mix of Italian pasta and Lebanese kebabs. They all have one thing in common: They have all been holding on by a thread, trying to keep the business afloat long enough to make it to the other side of these restrictions.

Moms and dads work tirelessly besides sons and daughters, aunts and uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers, all leaning on each other to keep that dream alive. Even before COVID, these hard-working entrepreneurs laid it all on the line, hustling endless hours, with no sick leave, vacation pay, maternity benefits or RRSPs. They put every penny they made back into the business, investing in the future, building a legacy, something that made their community a better, more dynamic place to live.

A huge majority of these brave job creators and risk-takers work side by side with their families, guiding son or daughter in the art of providing services within their community. These are fathers showing sons how to grind the pork, beef and spices just so to create the perfect kielbasa coil; or a mother demonstrating the art of making fluffy pastry crusts for the next day's batch of fresh fruit apple pies, recipes and skills handed down by word of mouth, with a keen determination to pass on skills to the next generation, quietly passing on knowledge that would otherwise be lost. Shoulder to shoulder, the generations tend to customers and suppliers, making deals and creating jobs in their local neighbourhoods.

It is in this organic-style school of business that big government just cannot help but cause havoc by way of unfair taxes, taxes that disadvantage a father when selling the family farm to his son or a mother selling the French bakery to her daughter. After years of giving everything they had to build their dream, late nights washing dishes, early mornings mucking stalls, long hot summers sitting in the combine or cold hard winters packing tomatoes into crates, they finally are ready to lay down their tools and pass the business on to the next generation.

What do these owners find when they go to sell their firm? That the government considers them a tax cheat simply for wanting to sell to their children rather than a third party stranger. It has to be said that passing a business on from one generation to the next is no easy feat at the best of times. Many family businesses have had a hard time surviving the challenge, so the very last thing the government should be doing is making this more difficult by disadvantaging the transaction.

Private Members' Business

There are 1.1 million small businesses and farms across Canada looking, hopefully, to the passage of this bill, which would ensure they have a level playing field when it comes to transition of ownership between parents and children. In our own family, I know the many years of hard work that went into the planning for transition, and yes, we incorporated early on. That did not make us terrible, awful people.

First, owners need to ensure their bankers are confident that their children will be able to succeed going forward. They need to earn the trust of their customers and suppliers that the generation will be able to skilfully man the helm when they one step away. They need to negotiate the rough waters of family dynamics that play a huge role in family business succession. Quite honestly, passing a business on to our kids is far more difficult than just selling to a third party.

Selling to a stranger does not disrupt the harmony of family Christmas dinners. It will not damage people's ability to see their grandkids when bitterness creeps in between their kids. It will not cause rifts between fathers or brothers like a family business succession can do, yet government treats those who are willing to walk that hard road like uber-wealthy tax evaders who are only in it for the quick buck. Nothing can be further from the truth.

Family business succession is not for the faint of heart and takes years to accomplish, so why do we keep punishing families for wanting to pass on a legacy? Not only that, but the current system is totally disrespectful to the hard-working Canadians whose entire retirement savings are wrapped up in their small business. Currently, these savings are seriously impacted if they choose to try to keep the business in the family.

This bill appears to be very timely from the perspective of a COVID recovery plan, since we know our small businesses will be paramount in helping us get our economy back on track when we finally reopen.

• (1855)

We all know that family businesses are the lifeblood of our economy and our communities. Honestly, I cannot wrap my mind around why the government would punish parents and children for being willing to put their blood, sweat and tears into a small enterprise only to be considered tax cheats for the simple desire to pass it on to the next generation.

Consider the story of a couple who owns a business in a small town, wants to retire and relies on the sale as their retirement fund. This sort of thing happens all the time. Now imagine the couple was hoping to retire and sell the business to one of their daughters who has been working with them for years. She is excited to take over from her parents and continue building on their legacy.

In the meantime, they are approached by a much larger, non-related company that has no local ties. This larger corporation would want to produce the goods in the bigger urban centre where it is based, possibly even overseas. Ultimately, this would mean completely shifting jobs and economic activity out of the local community.

As happens often, when they did the math with their accountant, they discovered it would cost up to 67% more in taxes for their daughter to buy their business than for a stranger, simply because she was their daughter. It makes no sense that we do not have a level playing field here, especially considering how much communities gain from family farms and businesses run by successive generations. It is clear that a robust COVID-19 recovery will need healthy small businesses that are owned and operated by passionate local entrepreneurs, and that this bill would make a huge difference for local family-run businesses that want to keep their work in the family.

Because this bill is critical for small, family-owned businesses, how many people have actually opposed the bill? As we can imagine, it has overwhelming support across the country including from the Chicken Farmers of Canada, Grain Growers of Canada, Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and chambers of commerce, just to name a few, not to mention every Canadian small business owner who seeks to keep their business in the family.

For too long this situation has continued unabated, but why is that? Looking at similar bills that have come before Parliament in recent years, it seems that a significant reason they have never made it through Parliament is the advice that tax analysts give to the government of the day. The complexity of the Tax Act, which creates these disadvantages for family-owned businesses, was meant as an anti-avoidance measure.

I understand the need to safeguard against tax avoidance. That is why there are safeguarding measures built into the bill. However, the way the laws are currently set up, all business owners who seek to keep their businesses in the family are being punished because of the few who might try to game the system and avoid paying taxes. In typical fashion, we are punishing the wrong people. There will always be a chance that someone is trying to cheat, but contrary to the Prime Minister's belief, most small business owners are not tax cheats. Most small businesses are not simply shell companies created for wealthy Canadians to avoid taxes. Only the wealthy elite who have never had to sweep the floor in their father's grocery store or sling bales on their uncle's farm would believe something like that.

Over 50% of Canadian small business owners wish to pass their businesses on to family members. Nobody in their right mind thinks that 50% of small business owners are looking to cheat on their taxes. I think we all agree that they deserve a level playing field. They do not deserve to be forced to choose between being hammered with extra taxes, which put their retirement in jeopardy, and selling their farms outside of the family and outside of the community.

Whoever is suggesting that we oppose this bill needs to remember that it is our job to serve the public, not the other way around. It is important for the government to remember it is time to show some political leadership and say, "Look, Canadians are being treated unfairly and we are going to fix it."

If the government will refuse to show leadership on this, thankfully I am confident that Parliament will. We are, after all, the voice of the people. We need the bill to pass to ensure that our most valuable asset, the job creators and risk takers who make our communities strong and resilient even in the face of a devastating pandemic, are able to thrive. I call on all my colleagues to support this bill and bring fairness back for the little guy.

• (1900)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Malpeque has about 30 seconds for a short intervention.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the finance committee held a very intensive hearing into this. We passed it back to Parliament. We looked at the tax implications.

The bottom line is what this bill means for the community. The backbone of the community is small businesses, farmers and fishermen, and especially those who can pass a business down from generation to generation. This is an issue of tax fairness and should be supported fully.

If officials have a problem with this, then they should put their corrections forward in a ways and means bill in the future, but they should pass this necessary bill now and support farmers, fishermen and small business.

• (1905)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

EMERGENCY DEBATE

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The House will now proceed to the consideration of a motion to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP) moved:

That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to indicate under Standing Order 42(2)(a) that all Conservatives' speaking slots are divided into two for this evening's important debate.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the Speaker's Ruling earlier today that allows me to bring to the floor of this place an urgent matter. It is an emergency that is on the minds and hearts of every single Canadian.

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, my colleague and friend. I remember we were still sitting in the House together when he was the first member of Parlia-

ment to suggest that people ought to be wearing masks, drawing on the experience of what was working in other countries.

When we were all together until Friday, March 13 of last year, I would not have imagined that I would be speaking in the House virtually tonight during the third wave of COVID. We are speaking of things like variants of concern. We are no longer dealing with COVID-19 alone. We are dealing, as we know now, with variants of concern emerging from other countries. We have had them from South Africa, B.1.1.7 from the U.K. and P.1 from Brazil. There will be more.

We are learning as we go that the longer the pandemic stalks us as a human population, the longer we will be susceptible as the virus mutates into new forms and variants. We now know some of these variants are far more transmissible than COVID-19. Can members imagine that we could be nostalgic about an earlier form of COVID-19? I would not have imagined it.

The “wash your hands, do not touch your face” rules do not seem to apply with variants that appear to be transmitted far more easily, including as aerosols.

I realize that I failed to turn on my interpretation device. That is not helping our interpreters. I am sorry.

The situation we are now in requires us to do something different. It is frequently described as a race between the vaccines and the variants, but I do not think even this particular description serves us well because we are a fragmented federation with far too many tendencies to blame somebody for the situation in which we find ourselves.

I gravely fear that partisanship and federal-provincial tensions will make matters worse. We need to figure out how to offer our constituents solutions they want, and not cast blame upon one another. None of us in this place is an expert on pandemics, except potentially one. There is a scientist among us who is a medical geographer and studied the Spanish flu outbreak: the member for Eto-bicoke North.

However, this is a place full of people who have been elected to serve the public of this country, and we have to be of service. At this time, I think that means blowing the whistle on saying that what we are doing now is not working.

In Mark Carney's new book, *Values: Building a Better World for All*, he discusses many things. One of them is COVID-19 and the different responses to it from governments around the world. The terminology he uses is very apt and understandable. He says that some governments used the hammer and others chose the dance. Can members guess which one we are?

It reminds me of World Health Organization officer Mike Ryan who, more than a year ago, said that it was time we recognized that we have to be fast and not wait to be correct. It was important to have no regrets and just move.

S. O. 52

We are still in the dance. I do not blame any politician or party for this. A lot of it is cultural. A lot of it is relying on a fragmented federation, and no one wanting to step on anybody else's toes. The dance is not working.

A very important point comes from Dr. Yaneer Bar-Yam, an expert in complex systems. He is at the New England Complex Systems Institute. He said:

Vaccinations shouldn't be expected to be a get-out-of-jail-free card in ending the pandemic.

If we are in a debate and one group of people wants to blame the federal government for not buying enough vaccines because vaccines are a way out, it is important to keep vaccines in perspective. They are not our get-out-of-jail-free card. More must be done, and that often falls under provincial jurisdiction.

● (1910)

Why are we not learning the lessons from what worked and did not work in the first and second waves? Can we not successfully share that some provinces and territories have been spectacular in going to zero COVID? Can the rest of us not learn from that? Can we not ask our institutions and public health experts to say that bending the curve is not the thing, that they thought it was the thing and we do not blame them for thinking it was the thing, but now we have to go to zero COVID. If we are bending and flattening the curve, we are allowing COVID to last among us longer. We will have more variants because we will have more mutations because that is what viruses do.

There are many examples around the world. Some were able to go to zero COVID fast because the public in those countries was used to being bossed around. That is a theory that we read in many of the articles and journals that are fashionable now. What do we do with a society like Canada that has a population that is used to having its liberties and is not good at being told where people can and cannot go? I contrast that with Australia. I think Australia is our best example. It is also a federation. It also has a federal government and eight states that have their own rules and jurisdictions.

What Australia did at the beginning was figure out that it needed a new structure. I think Canada needs new structures. Australia decided to put together two different committees. One was chaired by its equivalent of Dr. Theresa Tam with all the people around the table. Whether the equivalent of Rob Strang from Nova Scotia or Bonnie Henry from British Columbia, they sat at the same table and tried to figure out what they were going to do based on the best science. Our approach has been a bit more chaotic, a bit more differentiated and we do not have a single structure that says how we learn, who is doing it right and who is getting the best results.

Can we not ask our public health experts now to please work together and inform politicians at all orders of government what going to zero looks like for Canada? We should not be second-guessing Canadians' attitudes and saying we cannot tell people to stay home because they are sick of it. If our public believes, if our citizenry accepts that we actually have a formula that works based on experiences elsewhere and that if we do it hard, we get it right, we go to zero, then we can be like New Zealand and Australia and be greeting our families with open arms in the airports that just opened.

Right now, I think we need to stop more of the flights coming in from other countries. We do not want people flying in from India, bringing new variants, bringing new disease. We do not even want interprovincial transport. Newfoundland and Labrador was really doing well in the Atlantic bubble until workers flying in from their jobs in Alberta brought COVID into the communities. We have to be serious about locking down and going to zero.

Lastly, I want to read from an article and I want to credit journalist Andrew Nikiforuk for his 2008 book on pandemics called *Pandemonium*. It gave him a lot of knowledge as a journalist, which he has been sharing. If we had followed the advice he gave in a January article in *The Tyee*, COVID could be over in Canada by now. I want to read from his most recent article, which states:

Get on with it.

Canada needs to put this pandemic behind us.

To do that we need a more aggressive and proactive public health approach, with intensive testing...and better targeted, quicker and stricter lockdowns. We need to do what it takes to get to zero to protect the greater public health. And the sooner we do that, the healthier our nation will be.

I talk to parents throughout my riding and all over Canada who do not want to send their kids to school because they are not masked. They wonder why it is that teachers are not being vaccinated up front. They want to know why different provinces have different rules. They want to know how come Nova Scotia was so smart. They want to know why our governments made mistakes. However, it is not with a spirit of blame. We must not blame, particularly individual politicians. Everyone is doing their best. Let us just take that as written. Everyone is doing their best, but collectively, as a country, we are not doing what Canadians want and what Canadians deserve.

I ask all of my colleagues tonight in this debate to please set aside blame and finger pointing, think about what our constituents want of us and is it not time to say that we should learn from what Canadian provinces and territories succeeded, apply that to where we are not doing so well and, with no blame and no shame, form a new committee, as Green Party leader Annamie Paul has been calling for consistently, an interprovincial task force that decides as a country what we do to get through this together.

● (1915)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for asking for this emergency debate this evening. I think that it is very important to have this discussion. Certainly, I think there is a lot to be learned, and I really appreciate her approach to this.

I want to go back to the examples that the member continually used throughout her speech. She compared Canada quite a bit to New Zealand and Australia. New Zealand and Australia are quite unique. They are both island nations. The only way to really get in and out is by plane. However, Canada has the longest land border in the world and has a lot of first responders and frontline workers crossing that border every single day. Literally, people live on one side and work on the other side and are going back and forth every single day. Is it not a little unfair to use Australia and New Zealand as comparators in this case?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, we could use New Brunswick. We could talk about Nova Scotia. These are not separate countries surrounded by water. They are our neighbours and our friends, and they did better. I think we need to learn.

The hon. member is absolutely right, people are going back and forth across borders, such as the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest raised in his S.O. 31 today. People in Southwest New Brunswick are related to people in Campobello, and they have to go back and forth.

We have a lot of geographical situations that require specific solutions, such as better testing and better tracing. Testing and tracing are very inconsistently applied across the country. It is also being sure that we know what essential work is going on. Is it really essential that Site C continued to be built at a time when there were outbreaks there that were a threat to indigenous communities? That is the question—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to give an opportunity for more questions.

The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her initiative in causing this debate tonight. I think it is very valuable and I thank her for her leadership on this.

The member mentioned the word “emergency” many times, and I have in front of me the Emergencies Act of Canada. It is the only flagship legislation that we have from 1988. It says that “...a national emergency is an urgent and critical situation of a temporary nature that... seriously endangers the lives, health or safety of Canadians and is of such proportions or nature as to exceed the capacity or authority of a province to deal with it”. It also says that a public welfare emergency is “...caused by a real or imminent...disease in human beings...that results or may result in a danger to life or property, social disruption or a breakdown in the flow of essential goods”.

Would my hon. colleague not agree that if this legislation is not enacted now, in a once-in-a-century global pandemic, that there is no time that it would be invoked? I specifically refer to Ontario. Would she agree with me that, clearly, the ability of Ontario to handle this pandemic—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member an opportunity to answer.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

S. O. 52

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I think it was back in March when I pulled that out, because people kept saying that they did not want to use draconian legislation. I read the Emergencies Act and thought, “Oh, this is not the War Measures Act. There is no suspension of civil liberties here. There is parliamentary and democratic oversight”.

In fact, that piece of legislation, which was written in 1988, shows what happens when parliamentarians turn their minds to what a sensible country would do in a public health emergency, and they drafted it when they were not in an emergency. I think it is very worthwhile looking at it.

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech and especially for requesting this important debate on the third wave. We are all tired of the pandemic.

I want to look back in time. The member talked a lot about the importance of learning from other countries, and I know some countries have done a better job of controlling their borders.

Let me give a concrete example. Before the first wave, my husband returned from Egypt, landing at the Montreal airport on March 6, right before Parliament was prorogued. There was already talk about closing the borders, and there was pressure from the Quebec government and the mayor of Montreal.

My husband was returning from Egypt, where there were cases of COVID, and he managed to get through the airport with no problem, without any screening whatsoever.

This kind of situation is really troubling, and I would like my colleague to comment on the importance of controlling our borders.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Shefford.

I completely agree about the importance of protecting our borders during an emergency situation. That is a lesson the pandemic taught us. As she said, we are in the third wave, and we need to learn from what we have experienced over the past year.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by recognizing the personal and economic sacrifices Canadians have made during this pandemic. They did everything that was within their control to do. They stayed home, they followed public health orders and they suffered hardships. Families across this country are grieving the 23,756 people who have died.

S. O. 52

Since the first weeks of the pandemic, I have advocated for the approach that Taiwan took. At the beginning, Taiwan was one of the top 10 countries affected. Now, it is ranked 191. Taiwan applied what it learned from the SARS outbreak. It had a mask mandate and it gave every resident three masks per week. It installed hand sanitizer at the entrance to every building. The army worked with manufacturers to expedite the production of personal protective equipment and it had huge fines for PPE hoarding and profiteering. It had testing and temperature checks for inter-regional travel. It had tight controls on its border and travellers returning home faced mandatory quarantining. Those actions protected its economy. It never had a lockdown like the ones that we have had here.

Earlier in the pandemic, the Green Party caucus advocated for the government to invoke the Emergencies Act using the provisions of a public welfare emergency. It is a very well-written piece of legislation that replaced the old War Measures Act. Invoking it would have allowed the government to create a federally coordinated response with the provinces; close the border; mandate quarantines for people returning to Canada; control interprovincial and inter-regional travel; create green zones for opening the economy and red zones to control areas where there was community spread with lockdowns; all things that were done in New Zealand and Australia and other countries that successfully fought the pandemic.

Our calls to invoke the Emergencies Act were ignored. Whether the Emergencies Act was the right tool for the job or not, it is clear that stronger national coordination has been sorely missing in Canada's approach to dealing with the pandemic. We need a federal-provincial task force to create better coordination.

Just last month, during an adjournment debate, I pointed out that the one thing that all countries that went to zero had in common was a coordinated national strategy. I argued that it was not too late for a national strategy. In fact, we need it more than ever. In response, I was scolded by the parliamentary secretary and told that I did not understand the Constitution and that the government did not want to cause a constitutional crisis. I was floored by the weakness of that argument.

Almost 24,000 people have died. The economy is struggling. We have the largest deficit in Canadian history and 180,000 small and medium-sized enterprises across this country are on the verge of closing permanently. Millions of Canadians are financially stressed. We have a mental health crisis. The suicide rate is up and we have a shadow pandemic of intimate partner violence. Drug overdoses have increased. We are in the third wave of the pandemic with variants spreading rapidly and more cases than ever before. We have another series of lockdowns in Canada in its biggest provinces and Canadians are angry, scared and fed up. Our governments have done a poor job of coordinating the fight to end this pandemic, but at least we managed to avoid a constitutional crisis.

Canadians are looking at what is happening in other countries and it is not lost on them that our strategy in Canada is not working. Inadequate coordination between the federal, provincial and territorial responses has failed to stop the spread of the virus. We are using a yo-yo method of lockdown, opening up and lockdown again to try to limit the pandemic, rather than employing a get-to-zero strategy. In countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Taiwan and South Korea, the spread of COVID-19 has been arrested: case lev-

els are down, the death toll is lower, the economies are up and running and people are going about their lives.

What can Canada learn? Where did we go wrong and how can we move forward in a way that will result in less hardship for Canadians?

Countries that have eliminated the spread of the disease share these key aspects. They had a national strategy. They closed borders. They required quarantines for citizens returning from international locations. They limited international travel within the country. They created red zones to lock down and green zones where the economy could stay open. They mandated masks for indoor public spaces. They tested widely and used contact tracing. They continued to use circuit breaker lockdowns to quickly stop new outbreaks in specific areas. The key to success was to isolate outbreaks and use multiple tools to limit the spread of the virus. These are actions that the Green Party MPs advocated for in the early days of the pandemic.

● (1925)

Instead of a well-coordinated national strategy, Canadians had a patchwork of provincial health orders that were often contradictory and confusing. In some cases, COVID-19-related decisions appear to be driven by politics instead of science.

In B.C., during the lockdowns, when the rest of us had to remain at home, workers continued to travel in and out of camps to construct the Coastal GasLink and Trans Mountain expansion pipelines and the Site C dam. This led to the spread of COVID in remote northern communities. When Newfoundland thought it had the spread of COVID under control, workers from the camps in the oil sands brought COVID home with them and contributed to the spread there. The border to the U.S. has been technically closed for a year, but there is a real lack of control over travel.

Since April 6, more than 100 international flights landing in Canada have carried at least one positive COVID-19 case on board. The deputy chief public health officer stated, “We know that, with viruses, it’s practically impossible to prevent new variants from arriving here in Canada.” However, other countries have been successful in stopping the spread of new variants by travellers. It may not make sense to target specific countries anymore, but we can control air travel the same way New Zealand and Australia have.

I appreciate the fact that the government organized an intergovernmental coordinating committee with medical health officers from across the country, but we needed more than a committee. We needed more than a patchwork of confusing protocols and mandates that change from province to province.

Canada is a federation, and it is true that the provinces have jurisdiction over health care. I understand that the federal government is reluctant to use the emergency powers to create and enforce a national strategy. Some provincial governments have at times politicized this pandemic. Such actions have been detrimental for Canadians. The Emergencies Act may not be the right tool, but we have to stop letting the dysfunction in our federalist system get in the way of a more coordinated response.

Australia is also a federation, with jurisdictional and political differences between the national and state governments, but they worked together successfully to stop the spread of COVID-19, and the population there is much better off for that co-operation.

The vaccines are finally starting to roll out across the country, but with the spread of new variants, it is not yet certain how effective the vaccines will prove to be. We need to be prepared to stop the spread of variants that may be vaccine-resistant. We are not out of the woods yet, and a lack of national co-ordination can still have dire consequences.

There has been a lack of political courage to do what is necessary at the federal level in Canada. On both sides of the House, there is little appetite to do anything that might upset a provincial premier. The lack of a unified national COVID-19 strategy continues to have poor outcomes and hurts Canadians in a myriad of ways. We need stronger national co-ordination, and the sooner we start, the better results we will achieve.

Pandemics do not respect jurisdiction. Let us stand together as a nation, get to zero and beat COVID-19.

● (1930)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a bit perplexed at the interventions I have heard so far in this debate from both members of the Green Party.

I think this is going to be a healthy discussion, and we need to have it, but I really think we need to set the context right to do that. What I am hearing is Green Party members trying to compare Canada to non-comparables. If we look at Canada versus what has been going on in Europe, Europe has a lot of land borders, and Canada has the largest land border. If we look at Canada compared to the United States, for example, we have fared better when we look at those more realistic comparables like the G7 countries. We have the second-lowest death rate per capita.

S. O. 52

There is going to be good value in this discussion, but I really think it is necessary to frame it properly so we do not go off the rails right at the beginning. Would the member not agree that it would be better to compare us to our G7 counterparts, as opposed to New Zealand or Australia, which are quite different in geographic makeup, which gives them an advantage?

Mr. Paul Manly: Mr. Speaker, New Zealand and Australia stopped flights that had people with COVID from coming into their country. They have a definite plan on how that happens. We have not managed to do that with flights into Canada, let alone our long border. I understand we have a long border with the United States, which is a serious challenge for us, but on flights coming into Canada, there have been 100 flights with COVID cases since April 6.

We heard other members get up and say they know people who came in from other countries where COVID was spreading and there were no controls. There are controls we could have and things we need to do.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I very much agree with my colleague from the neighbouring riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith about the comparison with Australia. My in-laws all live in Tasmania, and when we are on Zoom calls with them we look with envy as they are able to travel to restaurants and enjoy a semi-normal life.

I very much agree with him about the application of the Emergencies Act. I think the times call for us to look at that piece of legislation, and I think it was very unfair for the Prime Minister today during question period to make a comparison to the War Measures Act, because we all know they are two very different pieces of legislation.

My question has to do with the very vulnerable set of workers: racialized workers and those who work in tourism and arts and entertainment. Would the member not agree that the budget's announcement of having the CRB reduced by \$200 in July is precisely the wrong approach at this point? We do not yet know how this pandemic is going to play out, and I think we need to give those workers all the support they need, for the near future at least.

Would he not agree that we should be keeping that at the current level it is at?

S. O. 52

Mr. Paul Manly: Mr. Speaker, I agree. We need to continue to protect workers. One of the things we have seen is a reluctance on the part of the Ontario government to have sick leave, so vulnerable people whom we rely on to keep grocery stores open are going to work sick, because they do not have any other choice economically. We need to stand up for workers, and we need to protect workers. It is really important that we help them get through this, and I cannot understand how workers who are flying in for these man camps got in line for COVID vaccines before our teachers or grocery store workers did.

Where are our priorities? Our priorities are on resource extraction. Coastal GasLink does not matter right now; what matters is getting through the pandemic.

• (1935)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the House tonight.

Throughout this pandemic, Canada has constantly adapted its response to emerging science, and everything we have done to date has been with one overarching goal in mind, which is to protect Canadians.

At this time, Canada is experiencing a third wave. Like many countries around the world, we have struggled to maintain public health measures in place due to concerning economic and social harms. Like many countries around the world, this combination of relaxing public health measures and the introduction of variants has resulted in the growth of cases in some provinces. As a result of more infections, of course, there is increased hospitalization and ICU admissions, leading to health care systems in some provinces being stretched to capacity, so it is more important than ever before to control transmission and keep COVID-19 infection rates down.

We collectively know how. The variants have not changed what works to stop the spread. Despite an increasing number of vaccinations each day, we must continue to protect each other while we work so hard to reach the finish line. We can see it together, and we need to continue to have the appropriate supports in place to get to that finish line safely and together.

Canada is now seeing an increased number of younger adults with COVID-19 being treated in hospital and admitted to ICU. It is an important reminder that COVID-19 can impact people of all ages and severe illness can occur at any age. National case counts have more than doubled in the last month, and each new case is a person who is spreading infection to more than one other person, keeping the epidemic in a growth pattern. Modelling predicts that continued resurgence is possible if variants of concern continue to spread as expected and public health measures remain at current levels. That is why it is so important for us all to keep our contacts low and to reduce our risk of getting infected or unwittingly spreading this virus to others.

On a positive note, the benefits of vaccination are beginning to show. As of April 10, more than 84% of seniors over 80 years of age have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Incident rates have declined dramatically among adults aged 80 years or older and have not increased as quickly as in other age groups in recent weeks. We continue to see a significant drop in the number of

long-term care home outbreaks, and deaths continue to decrease for the most vulnerable elderly population. As vaccination programs expand across the country, we will see further benefits across the population.

Growing rates of variants are concerning, as they have been linked to more severe outcomes. The number of variant cases in Canada is continuing to increase quickly. They have almost doubled in the past week, and several jurisdictions continue to experience variants of concern during the third waves this spring. There have now been over 70,000 cases of variants of concern reported publicly in Canada as of April 20, and the variants of concern now account for the majority of cases in Canada's four largest provinces.

In response to the emergence of variants of concern in late 2020 and the ongoing detection of new variants, the Government of Canada has implemented a variants of concern strategy and invested \$53 million into it. What will this strategy do? It aims to increase sequencing capacity across Canada to reduce time to getting to results so that public health action can be more rapid, and to create a robust results-driven network of research to enable us to come to understanding these emerging variants and what their impact is very quickly. This work is being done in partnership and collaboration with the provinces and territories, and it has led to the increase in sequencing capacity from 5% of cases in December to 15% of all positives in March.

The Government of Canada has also been working through critical networks, such as CanCOGeN and public health laboratories, to utilize existing and newly implemented sequencing capacity, again with the focus of delivering public health results quickly. This includes the development of rapid screening assays for known variants, as well as a national sequencing strategy that combines outbreak investigations, surveillance of trends in Canada, and targeted testing, such as infections following vaccination or in travellers. Specific for travel-associated cases, Canada now tests returning travellers and all positives are sent for sequencing. This helps us monitor variants arriving in Canada and provides an additional measure of support in our border policies.

• (1940)

Canada's vaccine strategy is clear. We are working to vaccinate as many Canadians as quickly as possible, beginning with those at the highest risk of more severe illness and hospitalization. This not only helps to protect individuals, but also helps to provide protection for those around them.

S. O. 52

With increasing supply of approved vaccines, Canada is well equipped to scale up vaccinations and maximize protection to the population even faster. A total of 10,719,000 vaccine doses have been administered as of today, and this has been done in partnership with the provinces and territories. Together with partners, we are monitoring and learning in real time how well the vaccines are working, how best to distribute them and how to optimize their use using all of this information, obviously while maintaining safety for everyone.

Studies from Israel and the U.K. are demonstrating excellent protection with two doses of mRNA, with effectiveness of over 90% against asymptomatic infections, symptomatic infections, hospitalization, severe disease and death. As well, based on a number of studies, mRNA vaccines show protection against COVID-19 infections, which means they are likely to reduce transmission at a population level. This is good news and helps us get to the finish line.

We know that public health measures work while vaccines roll out. International experiences show that stringent public health measures and adherence to them are required to control rapid epidemic growth and to allow time for vaccinations to occur. In fact, some countries have experienced growth while having high rates of vaccination, largely as a result of relaxing public health measures.

Given that many people in Canada have yet to receive a vaccine and that some have had one dose of vaccine, it remains important that everyone, whether vaccinated or not, continues to follow public health advice. We need to keep physically distancing, wearing masks and avoiding gatherings, particularly indoors. This is what will help hold the epidemic at bay. The public health measures are extremely important, while vaccines roll out, to provide protection at the population level. Lifting measures too soon before enough people are vaccinated, as observed in other countries, can result in an upsurge in cases, requiring repeated adjustments to control infection rates. In fact, this was an early finding in Israel's vaccination campaign.

The speed of information flow is unprecedented, and of course we are using this information and rapidly emerging evidence data and local epidemiology to inform how we adapt. We have to continue to adhere to public health measures. We can only ease them when we are sure that the data is showing us that a phased approach of relaxation, with an aim to increase social interaction and support economic recovery, does not put people at risk. Some factors that influence this could include the spread of variants, the severity of illness, vaccine effectiveness and coverage, health care system capacity and the degree to which public health measures are successful in controlling transmission.

Right now it is important to safeguard the progress that we have made by acting on the evidence and collaborating with all levels of government. After a year of managing the pandemic in Canada, what remains clear is that managing COVID is a lot of work and requires all levels of government, and indeed individuals, to combine public health measures, personal precautions and, most recently, vaccinations to control the growth of cases.

I would now like to talk about the rollout of vaccines across our country.

The Government of Canada has taken a comprehensive approach in its response to address the COVID-19 pandemic, and the immunization plan follows along those lines. We are now entering phase two of the vaccination campaign. Starting this month, the pace of our vaccine supply is expected to accelerate, and as the Prime Minister recently announced, Pfizer will advance the delivery of doses into June. That means Canada is expected to receive at least 48 million doses by the end of June. The arrival of the millions of doses that I just mentioned means that leading into the summer, first doses will be in the arms of every Canadian who wants a vaccine. Then we can move on to providing second doses, which will increase the protection against the disease. By the end of September 2021, every person in Canada who is eligible and wants to be vaccinated will have access to a vaccine.

● (1945)

As the weather gets warmer and we start to see people get vaccinated, obviously Canadians are sensing a bit of relief. However, they want to know what this means for them personally. How do we begin to transition to a life, a new normal? While it will be tempting to change our practices in this context, my message to Canadians could not be clearer: Now is not the time for us to let our guard down. We know that the virus spread is continuing to accelerate in some parts of our country, and it poses an unprecedented challenge for our health care system. In fact, our neighbours, our friends and our loved ones are counting on us to work together.

While the COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Canada are highly effective at preventing illness, we do not yet know whether vaccinated individuals can spread the virus and pose a risk to public health and all of our health. As a result, life when Canadians are vaccinated will still be based on what the COVID-19 situation looks like in our communities and what kind of health care capacity we have to rapidly respond to outbreaks if they occur. If both of these indicators are favourable, then decisions could be taken at the local level to relax public health measures.

In other words, when someone gets vaccinated, they are contributing to a community of vaccinated people. Then that collective community actually helps to control the spread. This, in turn, means that there is less COVID, and less COVID is what makes a healthier, safer community and allows for the relaxation of public health measures.

When someone gets the first dose and then eventually a second dose, they are starting along a path toward a new normal for themselves. However, it is also a new normal for their community. It is a contribution to the health and wellness of it. That means the best thing that we as Canadians can do at this point is get vaccinated when it is our turn, wear our masks, wash our hands, maintain physical distancing and not hold events at home. We know that these public health practices work, and maintaining these practices is especially important within the context of new variants of concern.

S. O. 52

Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada will continue to work hard to fulfill their mandates. They will continue their close work with provinces, territories, indigenous leaders and indigenous communities so that we can have a consistent approach to COVID-19 immunization across Canada. The agency's expert advice and leadership have been invaluable, especially as we move into this critical phase two of Canada's vaccine rollout strategy.

We rely on the accumulating scientific data, emerging evidence and expert guidance, and the agency is guided by all of that to inform its decisions, strategies and recommendations. Furthermore, it is participating in international communities of practice so that we can benefit from the experiences of other countries. The government is continually evaluating the latest evidence and the epidemiological situation here at home, and indeed internationally, and we will continue to adjust our guidance accordingly. Right now, we are following the best scientific advice in rolling out vaccines and working to control COVID together as we collectively work to bring the pandemic under control.

Throughout the vaccine rollout, we have taken many steps to keep Canadians informed. In January, the Public Health Agency of Canada launched a website and opened a 1-833 number so the public can ask questions about COVID-19. Since then, the agency has directly addressed the questions and concerns of tens of thousands of Canadians on many aspects of COVID-19 and the vaccine rollout. As the situation evolves, we will continue to provide Canadians with accurate and up-to-date information.

I would like to conclude with a clear message directly to Canadians. The virus may change and it might shift, but we know what to do to protect our communities. Canadians know what to do to protect their communities and their families. They need to keep reducing their contacts and get vaccinated when eligible, and we as a government will continue to have their backs.

Our goal remains the same: Together we need to bend the curve down. This will be easier with the widespread uptake of vaccines across the country. We can see the finish line. Fall of 2021 should look and feel very different from the fall of 2020, but we do need to stay the course together.

• (1950)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health where we are at with the test that temporary workers are supposed to get on day 10 of their mandatory quarantine. We have asked a lot of questions about this in recent days.

This evening we are having an emergency debate on the management of the pandemic, and I think this issue is a big part of that.

Currently, farmers are having to wait up to 25 days before they can put their workers to work even though the quarantine is supposed to last 14 days. That is because Switch Health is unable to provide this service. I am seeing incompetence all over the place. Nobody is delivering.

We have been raising this issue for a long time. Have there been discussions about this?

People in the agricultural sector have put forward solutions. Nobody wants to relax measures or get rid of the day-10 test. They just want to be able to do it locally. They would like the government to let them hire specialists to come do these tests. Why not allow that?

That way, they could carry on producing food. After all, people need to eat, and that food comes from our fields.

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I share the member opposite's frustration with the return time of day-10 tests for temporary foreign workers. I can assure him that we are working not only with Switch Health, but with many other providers of potential solutions to accelerate the test returns.

I am sure the member opposite realizes that it is important for us to continue our rigorous measures at the border for all travellers. We will continue to work with Switch Health so that we can ameliorate the situation as quickly as possible.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to quote from the Emergencies Act. It says:

a national emergency is an urgent and critical situation of a temporary nature that

(a) seriously endangers the lives, health or safety of Canadians and is of such proportions or nature as to exceed the capacity or authority of a province to deal with it

It then defines a public welfare emergency as:

an emergency that is caused by a real or imminent

(b) disease in human beings

and that results or may result in a danger to life or property, social disruption or a breakdown in the flow of essential goods, services or resources, so serious as to be a national emergency.

Finally, it authorizes the government that invokes it to authorize and make emergency payments and to establish hospitals.

Does the minister agree with me that this perfectly describes the situation in Ontario, which is clearly overwhelmed and needs the federal government to come in and help establish hospitals or make payments for paid sick days? If not, could she explain to Canadians why not?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I will point out that we do not need the Emergencies Act to support Ontario. In fact, that is what we have been doing all along, with cash infusions into Ontario and the establishment of field hospitals, and by mobilizing health human resources; supporting, with the Red Cross, rapid response teams; helping with testing; purchasing PPE; purchasing testing; deploying testing; and supporting private businesses to procure and perform tests and to analyze them. Every step of the way, we have worked with the provinces and territories and provided them with the inputs they need to control the spread.

My department will not rest. We will continue to be there for Canadians. In fact, the rapid response program was born out of a need to assist the provinces with hot spots, and it has grown to include the ability to support people with vaccinations. Every step of the way, we have promised Canadians that we will be there, and we will be.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying to the hon. Minister of Health that I am grateful her work. I bet she has had almost no sleep for a year. I hate to say it, but I am glad we are having the emergency debate tonight, and I want to apologize to her for adding to her workload.

Something is bothering me a lot, as members can tell. That is why I asked for the emergency debate. I do not think we have things under control, and I am particularly concerned for the one out of three Canadians who gets COVID and then has symptoms that go on and on and on. They call themselves the “long-haulers”.

They need help, and I ask the hon. minister what is planned for them. Some of this is in provincial jurisdiction and some of it is federal, but they are feeling abandoned.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her kind words. Indeed, the credit goes to the hard-working public servants as well, who are literally working around the clock to help protect Canadians.

With respect to her question about COVID long-haulers, as they are sometimes referred to in the various media pieces, I know the CIHR is investigating, through the research networks, to try to understand what the nature of these long-haul symptoms means, both in the short term and in the long term, for individuals who are struggling to recover from COVID-19. This is the challenge with a new health crisis. So much is still unknown about the virus and the long-term effects on people who have it.

I will reiterate that this government will stop at nothing to support people, whether they have been infected with COVID or been affected by the public health measures necessary to control COVID. I appreciate the question. I know it is on the minds of many, and I can advise the member that we will get back to her about the specific measures from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, which is looking at this very question.

• (1955)

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to echo the thanks from the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. On behalf of the people of Don Valley West, I want to thank the minister for her work. I never use the word “tireless”, because I am sure she gets tired. The difference is that she keeps going when she is tired.

I also want to echo the parliamentary leader of the Green Party's opening remarks. She talked about not laying blame but working together. I can almost see the field hospital that is just a few blocks north of me at Sunnybrook Hospital. It was set up with the help of the federal government.

Can the minister tell me a bit about the challenges and opportunities of our federation and how she is able to continue in that work? I am sure it is not always easy, but I suspect that at times it is rewarding.

S. O. 52

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, as tired as I am, what keeps me going is knowing that all Canadians are tired and that it is an exhausting time, actually, for global citizens. This is a terrifying time for Canadians, and it is a terrifying time for global citizens, but it is an honour to serve my country, as I am sure the member feels every day when he gets up and serves his constituents.

The member is right that we do have a federation. The challenge, in some ways, is that we have provinces and territories that operate very independently from a health delivery perspective. That is the nature of the way our country is set up. What that means is that we often have different systems of care, different data systems, different approaches and different public health units set up. That is challenging, especially if we are talking about this in the context of taking over health care systems.

We have to be careful, when we are responding in the middle of an emergency, that our response would in no way make something worse, and that whatever we do should be an add-on to the work that is already being done in local communities, rather than in any way jeopardize care that is delivered through provincial systems that are sophisticated, independent and have the responsibility to deliver care. We do have an opportunity, though, through the pandemic and through the work of the federal government, to identify significant gaps and build on those gaps.

Data is an example. At the beginning of the pandemic, in many instances cases were faxed in to the public health unit with very basic data missing, such as the gender or the age of the person who was sick. People would ask about disaggregated data and in my heart I would smile a bit, thinking that even just the gender or the age might be helpful. We have come a long way since then. Part of that is the investments we have made of \$19 billion, including \$4 billion of that for data, as well as the constant and ongoing collaboration at the civil service level and, yes, even at the political level.

Sometimes it is very challenging in a political media space, and it seems like there is a lot of fighting and jarring going on, but I can say that, for example in Ontario, Minister Elliott and I have a fantastic working relationship. We may not see eye to eye on every issue, but she knows that Canada has Ontario's back. She does not hesitate to call me when she needs something, and I do not hesitate, and I often do, to pick up the phone to say, “How can we help?” That is truly the nature of a good democracy.

S. O. 52

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands requested this emergency debate today, but I recall being in this House in January having a similar emergency debate on the inability of the Liberal government to access and distribute vaccines, their putting of the impetus on the provinces and the potential of a third wave. I definitely do not want to be back here in May, June or July having a third emergency debate on the Liberal government's inability to procure and distribute vaccines to the provinces to ensure that every Canadian is vaccinated.

I am going to go in a different direction than other speakers have this evening because of a phone conversation I had yesterday afternoon. One of my constituents, a 19-year-old girl, called me to have a discussion about her brother. Unfortunately, her brother committed suicide. Her brother committed suicide because of isolation, losing jobs, and the inability to see his friends and family. That is just one of many stories that I know all of us in this House have heard from constituents.

This was a 20-year-old young man who had his whole life in front of him, but after a year of lockdowns, quarantines and restrictions, the mental health impacts on his life were just too much for him to bear. We cannot have those stories any longer. This cannot be the new normal. Canadians need hope that there will be an end to this crisis.

The mental health implications of the COVID pandemic are frightening. We saw the report from the Canadian Mental Health Association in December, which said that almost 50% of Canadians had reported that their mental health has deteriorated. That was six months ago. I am sure that number is much higher.

We have seen an incredible increase in domestic abuse, suicides and opioid overdose deaths. My province of Alberta saw skyrocketing numbers in terms of the opioid crisis, and suicide numbers tripled over a two-quarter period late last year. Canadians have had enough, but what is most frustrating about the impact this has had on Canadians' mental health is that this could have been prevented.

A year ago, we were asking the Liberal government to ensure that it had agreements and contracts in place to procure vaccines that Canadians would need. In November and December, the Prime Minister stood at the podium and said there would be millions of vaccines for Canadians, but through January, February and March, Canadians were not being vaccinated anywhere near the rate of our G7 counterparts and countries around the world. As a result of the federal government's inability to meet the most basic needs and ensure the safety of its constituents, Canadians are dying not only of COVID-19, but also because of a mental health crisis.

I know the government says that we cannot go back to the past, but the past often dictates where we are going in the future. It is very clear that the Liberal government's inability to access and procure vaccines is rooted in the mistakes it made a year ago when it was putting its faith in an agreement with the Chinese Communist Party and CanSino, which, to the shock of no one, fell through last summer. The Prime Minister and his procurement minister were scrambling, going with hat in hand to pharmaceutical companies, asking for whatever they could get.

As a result of that, we see where we are right now. We see other countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, have been vaccinating their citizens at a much quicker pace, but they also had very strict guidelines in the contracts they signed with pharmaceutical companies. They ensured that if those pharmaceutical companies did not meet their delivery commitments, there were consequences. In most cases these were financial, but certainly the monthly reports had to be transparent.

We do not know here in Canada if we have similar contracts signed with Moderna, AstraZeneca or Pfizer because the Liberal government has refused to share those contracts with the Canadian public. The Canadian public deserves to know exactly where we stand.

• (2000)

Other countries have shared those contracts with their citizens. In fact, the United States has one of the contracts that we signed. It knows what is in that contract, and has made it public, but Canadians here at home are not allowed to see those contracts because the Liberal government is blocking that information.

We had a motion here in the House in October, which was passed unanimously by the House, to ensure that all documents and information regarding the COVID pandemic and the response to the pandemic were provided to parliamentarians. Those documents have been trickling out, but we still have not had an opportunity to see those contracts. I put a motion in front of the health committee more than a month ago asking specifically if the law clerk had those contracts and, if not, that he prioritize accessing those contracts from the government. It has been almost six weeks, and we still have not seen those contracts at the health committee.

Now, I am not naive. I know that there will be information redacted, which is why we asked that it go to the law clerk before it is redacted by the government. There may definitely be some information in there that is sensitive that the government and those pharmaceutical companies do not want to share. However, I think it behooves the government to show Canadians the contracts it signed, because we are in this Liberal-government third wave that could have been prevented had it been able to procure and distribute vaccines months before.

This was brought up in question period today, and I am sure in the debate tonight we will hear some more about this disagreement in facts, but the facts are that only 2% of Canadians have had two doses of the vaccine. In the United States the rate is close to 30%, and some states are already going to a third shot as a booster. It is incredible to see the difference in this country when we compare it to others. Not to mention, I heard yesterday from a pundit on the news that we are spending like a first-world country but getting third-world results, and I could not think of a better description of what we are seeing.

Thanks to some research from my staff member Mark Choi, I was able to find out what we were paying for an AstraZeneca vaccine. In Canada, we are spending \$8.00 for an AstraZeneca vaccine. I know that many Canadians say that they do not care what it takes, and they want that to happen. I agree, but in the United States it is \$4.00. In the EU, it is \$2.00.

We are spending, in many cases, triple or double what other countries are paying, yet we are not getting those vaccines. If I am paying a premium, I expect premium services, and we are not getting that. Now we are seeing the provinces having to struggle and try to find ways to vaccinate their citizenry.

Also, we are one of the only countries in the world that has gone off label in telling our constituents that they will not get that second dose until four months down the road. We have asked Pfizer if that meets its requirements and if that would still be acceptable, but it will not answer that question because it does not know. It does not want to make that commitment. So, we are continuing to roll this out when only 2% of Canadians have had both their vaccines and now we are waiting four months for that second dose. It is unacceptable. That is poor leadership and poor action, or inaction, by the government, and it has to apologize to Canadians.

We cannot keep this up. As I said, this cannot be the new normal. Our mental health and financial health just cannot take this much longer. We have been on this roller-coaster ride, or, as I like to say, hamster wheel, for a year. I commend Canadians, and I certainly commend my constituents, for how they have handled what has been a very difficult time.

However, we have asked Canadians to do a lot, and there is a breaking point. As I have said, we have seen many Canadians getting to that breaking point as our mental health continues to deteriorate.

Last year, we approached many Canadian pharmaceutical companies with vaccines that were ready to be produced and tested here in Canada, but the Liberal government ignored them. It still fails to support homegrown opportunities. Mr. Sorenson, the CEO of Providence Therapeutics yesterday said, “We’re getting contacted by probably two or three countries per week asking if we could supply them with vaccine booster doses in 2022.... We’re trying to get those things moving...to convey [that] urgency, but we’re just not getting...reciprocated from [our own Canadian] government.”

Again, the failures are piling up and, unfortunately, Canadians are the ones paying the price.

- (2005)

- (2010)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would challenge a number of things in that speech.

For starters, on the issue of Canada being the only country that is extending the time period of taking that second dose, that is false. The U.K. is doing that as well.

The member talked about other things, such as how we were spending like a first world country and getting third world results. That is false. Among the G20, we are putting more needles into

arms on a daily basis. We are third among the G20 for getting needles into arms.

My question for the member is about this. We can criticize the vaccine rollout; we can criticize the timeline of getting vaccines to provinces; we can say more should have been done sooner, more should have been done later, although we would never say that, but we can adjust the timeline; we can say whatever we want, but what we cannot say is that the provinces did not know when they would get vaccines. The provinces were told in December when they would get them.

Therefore, in Ontario, when Doug Ford saw on February 11 the modelling of what would happen in the third wave, he knew when to get the doses and actually ended up getting more than he was promised by the end of March. Therefore, the lack of vaccines cannot be blamed on the third wave, because the provinces knew and had a responsibility to target and timeline themselves around that rollout. Unfortunately it appears as though they did not plan properly for it. At least, that is the case in Ontario.

Would the member not at least agree that the timelines and the vaccine distribution were set well in advance and we exceeded what the provinces were told they would get?

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the question from colleague is the typical response from the Liberals, where they fail to take responsibility for their failures while they push the responsibility onto the provinces.

We heard in November, December and January that we would have eight million vaccines by the end of February. Then it was the end of March. Then it was the end of May. It kept getting pushed and pushed. Now we are hearing it will be into June and July. As the federal government, it has one job, which is to procure and distribute those vaccines. We knew that the Liberal federal government would put these failures at the feet of the provincial governments, which it has certainly done. We have seen vaccine clinics cancelled. We have seen the ages now fluctuate for who can or who cannot get vaccinated.

I want to see Canadians vaccinated, do not get me wrong. I want to see our life get back to normal as quickly as possible. This debate today is about how we got here and where we go from here. The answer to the question is that we should have been having these vaccinations in January, February and March and we did not. As a result of that, this is the situation we now face.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was interested to hear my colleague talk about the government's incompetence on many levels in managing the crisis, including border security in the early days. The measures were excruciatingly slow in coming, which allowed the virus to come into the country permanently.

S. O. 52

Now, with the arrival of the variants, the same thing is happening. The government is very slow to react. When the government imposed the hotel quarantines, it was also very slow to react and improve the reservation system. Remember, the phone lines were jammed. It also seems like the government does not learn from its mistakes. Ironically, I spoke of this earlier. We have the company Switch—

The Speaker: I have to interrupt the member for a moment. We are having a bit of a problem with interpretation. Can I ask the member to start his question over again so that the member for Foothills can understand it?

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, it is certainly important that the member understand the question because it is directed at him. I will start over.

I appreciated my colleague's speech in which he spoke about the different signs of the government's incompetence in managing this crisis.

Remember that, at the outset, the government waited a long time before closing the border, then implementing restrictions, and then reacting to the variants. We wondered when flights from certain countries would be banned. Remember that it was a very long time before flights from Great Britain were banned. By the time the government finally closed the borders, the variant was already here. How ironic that the Indian variant has reportedly already arrived. The government has been incompetent on all levels. Also remember the reservation system for hotel quarantines, when the phone lines were jammed and nothing was working.

It seems like the government does not learn from its mistakes. Today, we have the company Switch Health, which is unable to meet demand in administering testing for foreign workers on day 10 of their quarantine. We see failure everywhere we look. The government is negligent at everything, except when it comes to basically oppressing farmers by leaving their workers in quarantine for 25 days. No one wants to jeopardize public safety. The day-10 tests must be done, but they must be done efficiently.

People on the ground have proposed solutions. I would like to know what my colleague thinks of the fact that the government is not listening to recommendations coming from people on the ground. Do such problems exist elsewhere in Canada? It seems to me that a big part of the problem is that people in Quebec speak French, but the government hired a company that has virtually no employees capable of providing service in French.

• (2015)

[English]

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. The biggest failure of the government has been miscommunication from the beginning. It said to wear a mask then do not wear a mask. It said border closures did not help then they did help. We saw the Auditor General's report, about which I did not even have a chance to talk. It showed that this had been a catastrophic failure by the Liberal government, starting with dismantling the early warning system.

This has been a failure every step of the way. What we see now with the third wave and the lack of vaccines has been the epitome of where we have gotten. At some point, there will be an investiga-

tion on how we got here. Someone has to be held accountable, and it should be the Liberal government.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to participate in this evening's emergency debate, which is being held at the request of the Green Party member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, to talk about the third wave we are experiencing across Canada. I can confirm that the third wave is definitely hitting Quebec along with everywhere else.

As we see it, lack of leadership and inconsistent decisions by the Liberal government and its Prime Minister have led to numerous consequences.

I would like to go back to the beginning and review how it all unfolded. Over a year ago, during question period, my colleagues and I were asking the Minister of Health some questions. I remember it like it was yesterday. We asked her for an update on the situation. The COVID-19 pandemic was just beginning in China. I clearly remember the minister telling us that everything was under control, that her government was on top of the situation, that it was capable of responding, that it had what it needed, that it was ready and that it would be there to help.

Looking back, everyone saw that the government was slow to react. It knew certain things, but did not share that information. A number of mistakes were made over and over again. This government likes to lecture the provinces, and yet it cannot even deal with issues under its own jurisdiction. We have seen this in a number of areas, and this week's budget is proof of that.

I can name two mistakes that have led in large part to the third wave that we are experiencing, and have had an impact on Canadians and on our economy. The first is border controls. The government made bad decisions and often made them too late. Whether it was the use of rapid tests at the border, authorization to leave the country or directives for Canadians returning home, all the decisions were slow to be made.

Today we learned that the variant from India has been detected for the first time in my region, Mauricie—Centre-du-Québec. People are even wondering whether the vaccines will provide protection against this variant. Still, flights from India have landed in this country today. Hearing this news, it is quite troubling that some people still refuse to follow the directives, and the government refuses to bring in the measures needed to protect our air and land borders.

Based on the information we have, we know that there is practically no monitoring of people who quarantine themselves when they arrive. Then there are the problems people run into with the bureaucracy and the fact that they are receiving instructions too late because the government is so slow to act.

That is the first problem I wanted to raise. Border management took time, and, as a result, COVID-19 entered the country. Then, despite all the international warnings about the variants, the government was lax. Now we are suffering the consequences of this mismanagement, which led to the third wave.

The second major responsibility of the government was to procure vaccines. The government was dealt failure after failure. We do not have access to the expected number of doses as scheduled. Every day, the Prime Minister stands in front of his house to say that there will be millions of doses, in an effort to make people feel better and to boost confidence. However, we know that the doses are not arriving when they are supposed to. This has a domino effect on the provinces, which have to manage the health care system and the vaccination rollout in every region of the country. They are having a hard time coordinating all this, and people are left waiting for information to register to be vaccinated so that we can get out of this pandemic once and for all. This therefore has major consequences.

● (2020)

All the rules and measures put in place by the provinces to protect us were valid, whether it was handwashing, masking or physical distancing. Quebec imposed a curfew, which is still in place in almost every region.

Our economy was affected, especially restaurants, businesses and bars. These financial and, by extension, human disasters affect workers and entrepreneurs who have invested their life savings and are anxious for things to return to normal. In some countries this has already started, and it will happen here when we are vaccinated and the provinces can lift restrictions. The one and only reason why we are not there yet is that the vaccine procurement was not done properly. The government's defence is that it did its best. Everyone knows it and everyone agrees.

Could Canada have done better?

It certainly could have, in our view. Why is there so little transparency from this government when we voted unanimously in the House of Commons in favour of motions to get access to contracts?

Other countries are disclosing their contracts, and that would also let us see what is happening here. In particular, we would know why we are paying much more than other countries, to the tune of several billions of dollars.

We could at least say that we paid what we had to pay. Given that we paid more for the vaccines, why are they not arriving on schedule and why have there been so many delays that our country has had to hold back vaccine doses that were supposed to be sent to developing countries to help them get through this crisis?

The government is racking up failure after failure, and everyone is suffering the consequences.

The budget has made it clear that the government is making decisions based on a potential election instead of helping Canadians and Quebecers in the middle of a pandemic. An election is coming very soon, likely in the fall. Everyone knows and every analyst has predicted it because this government is throwing around billions of dollars.

Here is an example. The word “pandemic” is related to health care, and health care is a provincial jurisdiction. The provinces are asking for money because they are the ones managing the crisis that has, in large part, escalated as a result of the federal government's incompetence and decision-making. However, nowhere in the latest

S. O. 52

budget does the government talk about transferring money to the provinces so that they can properly manage their health care systems. Rather, the government is choosing to give money to help campground owners with the post-pandemic recovery. The government talks about campgrounds, sprinkles money here and there and mentions a day care system, supposedly to help with the economic recovery. The day care system is all lip service. The idea is good, but it will take three, four or five years to be implemented. The government is using the pandemic to push its left-wing Liberal ideology through the system and on the public. It is an awkward election ploy. It is rather unsettling to see this Liberal government play politics with the unfortunate situation we are in.

It is time for this government to be transparent and to give parliamentarians all of the information so that we can do our job. This created a lot of frustration during the crisis. I know what it was like to be unable to get access to information quickly, to feel left out of decisions when our constituents, businesses, farmers and organizations were knocking on our doors and looking for information in order to simply survive and keep their heads above water so that they could get on with their lives.

Unfortunately, the reality is that we were left to our own devices. We had to do our best with the small teams that we have in our ridings and invest hours and hours in trying to provide quality service to our constituents, despite the public health restrictions.

● (2025)

I could talk about the election budget that was presented. The Prime Minister and the Liberal government should have shown some compassion and implemented measures to help Canadians and the economic recovery instead of thinking about the next election, which may well occur in August. We can assume that there will be an election, given all the cheques that will be sent out to citizens, the changes to the pension rules and the cheques related to the carbon tax. They were supposed to be sent out once a year, but now they will be sent out three times a year. Coincidentally, all of the—

The Speaker: I have to ask the member to stop speaking because his time was up a little while ago. I thank him for his intervention.

[English]

The hon. member for Malpeque.

S. O. 52

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is an important debate and I have been listening to some of the remarks opposite tonight. To be honest, as a parliamentarian, I am really sad. Tonight is not the night to play political games. The speech I just heard is beyond the pale. During question period if we want to ask questions, put out myths and answer non-realities that is fine, but to say that provinces did not know and to say that the government did not meet what it said it would do with procurement when it really surpassed it, is just absolutely wrong. That is providing misinformation to people.

Let us look at some of the facts. Just in terms of equalization, \$736 million more than the previous years to the country; \$1.5 billion more under the Canada health transfer; \$19.9 billion under the safe restart agreement and that was expanded; \$2 billion for the safe return to class fund, and this member stands up and says that the federal government is not helping people at the provincial level. Come on, let us have a debate here on facts and stop perpetuating these myths that too many members are trying to portray tonight.

Tonight is the time for a serious debate, get facts out to Canadians and let us work together, instead of playing terrible politics in this debate tonight. I am saddened as a long-term member of Parliament by what I have heard from the member opposite.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry if the member is saddened, but what I said is the truth. Being an MP has been extremely frustrating over the past few months because of how little information has been shared with us.

One issue is official languages and French. During most of our meetings, we had trouble getting information in French, so we could not share it. That information came trickling in. We were getting information after the Prime Minister's big show out in front of his house. The information I provided is all verifiable, observable and documented.

If the member wants us to have more information, he should make sure his government shares it as agreed. Had that been done, we would have access to the vaccine contracts. Those documents would be public, and then everyone could come to their own conclusions.

• (2030)

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska for his contribution to the important debate we are having this evening.

Two things really stood out for me.

First, he basically talked about vaccines. Not only has the Liberals' lack of transparency caused delays, but today it was confirmed that we paid more for vaccines. For instance, we paid \$8 for each AstraZeneca vaccine, although most European Union countries paid only \$2. This lack of transparency can affect the price and the delays in vaccine supply.

Of course, I would be remiss if I did not mention the importance of developing our vaccines here. Countries that are producing their own vaccines and have factories to do so are ahead of the game in terms of vaccination. This also has an impact.

Second, he talked about health care and the importance of health transfers. The Conservatives keep saying they want stable and predictable transfers. Increasing health transfers by 2% or 3% would be stable and predictable. However, Quebec and the provinces are calling for them to be increased to 35%, immediately, in this pandemic, when our health care system needs financial support.

Is the member willing to commit to immediately increasing transfers to 35%?

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

My colleague is quite right about the vaccines. With regard to the fact that we paid a higher price for the vaccines, some could say, among other things, that we had to do so, that it is what was required. What is extremely serious in all this is that the Liberals concealed information. From the outset, they misled us about the real cost of the vaccines. The real scandal is that the vaccines have not been delivered. To know what happened, we need access to the contracts.

I could also talk about ventilators. The Liberals gave \$250 million to a former Liberal MP who had just left office. He had never even worked in that field. Furthermore, we learned that the ventilators are currently being stored in garages. They have not been delivered because they are not needed. I believe that Quebec had about forty.

When the auditors start conducting their regular audits, they will discover all of this. These scandals will be brought to light. It is sad to see how the Liberals are currently handling the crisis.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matap  dia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for requesting this very important debate this evening.

I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Jonqu  re. He will talk a little more about vaccine procurement and how the federal and provincial governments are coordinating vaccinations.

I would like to talk about the federal government's management of the border since the beginning of the pandemic. I have already said this in the House, but I think it is worth repeating. Some of my colleagues may see where I am going with this or may have read the same book I did. I am talking about the book that political commentator Alec Castonguay recently wrote about the pandemic in Quebec and across Canada. He interviewed Quebec and Canadian government officials, health care workers and political staffers to learn how the pandemic was managed, especially in the early days of the crisis.

S. O. 52

Alec Castonguay reports a number of interesting facts, including about the Global Public Health Intelligence Network, or GPHIN, a unit of the Public Health Agency of Canada that was set up in the 1990s in the wake of the SARS crisis. GPHIN acted as an early warning system, like a smoke detector for new viruses around the world. Over the years, GPHIN had become the main early warning system for emerging infectious diseases for 85 countries. Normally, the World Health Organization, the WHO, relies on GPHIN for approximately 20% of its reports of new viruses in the world every year, which is quite a lot.

Apparently, however, GPHIN was caught off guard by the emergence of the COVID-19 virus in Wuhan, China. Actually, I believe it saw the virus coming, but it was unable to issue an early warning like it used to. GPHIN scientists stopped issuing warnings in May 2019, six or seven months before the virus was detected in China.

According to Mr. Castonguay's book, the reason is that Stephen Harper's Conservative government cut funding to GPHIN because it did not think it was important, or did not realize how important it was. The scientists were reassigned, and the situation did not improve when the Liberals took office in 2015, since they did not inject any more money into GPHIN.

That shows just how ill-prepared the federal government was to deal with this crisis, how it did not see the crisis coming at all and how it could have been so much better prepared. I think this is a perfect example of the lack of co-operation with other governments around the world. There was a lack of coordination from the start, and I think the recent budget that was presented this week is also proof of that.

We see how paternalistic the federal government is being with the provinces by trying to leave them no choice but to be constantly begging for money. The federal government goes and infringes on the jurisdictions of the provinces and Quebec, and the sheer paternalism is completely staggering. I think that is the reason for the lack of co-operation among the various levels of government.

I want to take a look back at the government's management of the border. Members will recall that the WHO declared a global health emergency on January 30, 2020. However, in February 2020, Canadians continued to return to Canada from China and other places around the world and started bringing the virus to Canada. Many international experts and specialists were saying that countries needed to start testing travellers or at least screening them, but that was not always done.

• (2035)

The Public Health Agency of Canada maintained its alert level at "low risk" within Canada. An alert was issued for people returning from China, but nothing more. Then, on March 11, the WHO officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic, to alert governments, but this had no impact in Canada. On March 16, the Government of Quebec and the City of Montreal decided to take action at Montreal's Pierre Elliott Trudeau Airport because no one was asking returning passengers any questions, screening people or taking temperature readings. Travellers were not being instructed to self-isolate, either.

In March 2020, the Bloc Québécois proposed 22 measures to the federal government, particularly on managing the borders in order to bring in somewhat tighter controls. I seem to recall that the Government of Quebec and Premier François Legault had asked for the same thing, specifically, that the federal government screen travellers more proactively. However, it was not until this March that the federal government finally imposed the mandatory quarantine, which I would say was too little, too late.

Between March 1 and March 21, 42,000 foreign travellers and nearly 250,000 Canadians arrived at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Airport in Montreal from all around the world, including COVID-19 hot spots. By land, nearly 157,000 Quebecers returned home and nearly 37,000 Americans also crossed the border from neighbouring states. At the beginning of the crisis, during that first wave, 250 different strains of the virus ended up in Quebec alone.

Let us move on to the second wave and the arrival of the variants. We all remember the episode with the U.K. variant before the holidays. People were calling for tighter measures at land and air ports of entry because we all remember that people were fed up with the pandemic and they wanted to spend their Christmas holidays down south. It was not the best idea, but the federal government did not stop people from leaving. People asked the government to at least ban entry from the U.K., which it did a few days later, fortunately. However, the variant was already taking hold across Canada and in Quebec. Again, it was too little, too late.

Then the same thing happened again. In January 2021, François Legault once again called for tighter border restrictions. The federal government claimed to have the strictest measures in the world, but people realized that the federal and provincial governments were all passing the buck. Nobody knew who was supposed to monitor quarantines, the police or the Public Health Agency of Canada. As we know, people returning from abroad were getting either a text message or a phone call to make sure they were at home and quarantining as ordered. Basically, it was a total fiasco.

On January 29, the Prime Minister of Canada finally confirmed that he would be implementing new measures, but they did not come into effect until a month later, on February 22. That was the infamous mandatory hotel quarantine, whose implementation was a total farce. Still, I think that measure is important, and I want to stress that. Nevertheless, the fact that variants continue to show up here, especially the Indian and Brazilian variants, proves that the existing measures are clearly not enough to keep the pandemic under control or at least that they are not being implemented properly.

S. O. 52

I do not have to tell members just how critical the situation is in every province at this time. We learned earlier today that there are now 27 cases of the Indian variant in Canada, including one in Quebec. We heard Quebec's health minister say that this variant is more worrisome than the others because public health authorities are concerned that it is more resistant to the available vaccines. This calls into question the whole vaccination program, which was the light at the end of the tunnel. We figured that, when everyone was vaccinated and when all Canadians were immunized, we could put all of this behind us once and for all. However, it is very worrisome to see that variants can enter the country and change the situation.

• (2040)

What is encouraging is that we can take action to prevent this. What we need to do is tighten border restrictions because the variants and the virus did not magically arrive in Canada.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague. There are a lot of lessons we are going to have to learn from this experience and I hope that we take them to heart, unlike the lessons that we should have learned from the outbreak of SARS in the early part of this century.

I wanted to ask a question in terms of the lessons we can learn from the experience in our long-term care homes. Throughout this country the conditions in long-term care homes, no matter which province they were in, were found to be very unsatisfactory, with underpaid staff and improper safety measures in place. That is why we saw the largest numbers of outbreaks and deaths absolutely devastate our precious seniors in long-term care.

I know the Bloc is key in its defence of the role of provincial jurisdiction, but can the member agree that we need to have some kind of standard in place for workers in long-term care homes to protect seniors? Is there a way that the Bloc can agree that the provinces and the federal government can come together so that Canadians, no matter which province they live in, can at least be assured of some basic level of care?

Would the member agree that there is room for the provinces and the federal government to come together to establish that baseline somewhere?

• (2045)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question.

The situation in Quebec's long-term care homes was indeed terrible, and it was a defining point for Quebec during the first wave of COVID-19. We will learn from these mistakes. The health care sector was struggling. As Alec Castonguay pointed out in his book, there was a big push to free up hospital beds at the beginning of the crisis, so seniors were sent to long-term care homes, which did not have PPE. That was a complete disaster, and the people in those long-term care homes were put at risk. We will absolutely learn from these mistakes.

However, when it comes to introducing standards, health care is a provincial jurisdiction. Quebec manages its own health care network. It does a good job with the resources it has, but it needs more funding. In this case, it is not the federal government's responsibility to set Canada-wide standards for something that Quebec already manages quite well on its own. What Quebec needs is a cheque with no strings attached, no conditions. Quebec must be able to use the money as it sees fit, since health care is a provincial jurisdiction, and it is not for the federal government to tell Quebec what to do. I am all for working together to find solutions, but Quebec knows what is best for its long-term care homes.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

I am a bit sad because my goal this evening was not to play the blame game. I think it is now time to share the blame and to find solutions. There will always be time later to determine why the wrong decision was made about the global public health intelligence network.

Now is the time to come up with solutions. All levels of government in Canada need to share the blame and determine what can be done right now to protect Canada's economy and the lives of Canadians and Quebecers. That is why I am asking my colleague what we can do together, right now.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

What we can do now is fairly simple. We can impose stricter border measures. When it comes to interprovincial borders, Quebec and Ontario have decided to co-operate to control their shared border. However, the measures may still need some fine-tuning, since I managed to travel from Quebec to Parliament Hill earlier without getting asked any questions.

The government should also maybe impose stricter measures at our international borders, particularly when it comes to travel from India. The question has come up, and I believe that we could take immediate action. The Government of Quebec is in the process of negotiating with the federal government to do that because of concerns about the Indian variant, which does not react to the vaccine the same way. The situation is urgent and, in the very short term, we need to impose stricter measures at our borders.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for proposing this evening's debate. I think she will be happy to hear me say that I think she is well-intentioned.

As I was drafting my remarks for this evening, I was thinking about how one can be well-intentioned in a debate like this one. We must indeed be well-intentioned. The tricky thing about being an MP is that one is expected to be an expert on everything. Well, we cannot be, especially not on a subject as important as the vaccine.

To be honest, the notorious Indian variant is starting to scare me a little. I have been reading about the Indian variant, and I am starting to fear for my constituents and the general public.

I was wondering what I might say tonight that could help advance our fight against COVID-19. The answer is simple: We have to leave it up to the experts and listen to what science has to say.

Unfortunately, we cannot invite experts to participate in emergency debates in Parliament, but I would like to tell other members what some colleagues and I have been doing in recent weeks. We have been talking to researchers and vaccine experts, and I would like to share what they told us with the House.

First, one of the fundamental problems we have in Canada is basic research funding. During the various meetings I attended, several stakeholders reminded me that everyone is familiar with the famous Naylor report on the state of research. That report, which was presented in 2017, demonstrates that there was a gap under the Harper government. I do not mean to point any fingers, but unfortunately, there has been a bit of a gap in research funding, which has destabilized the basic research sector.

I will now share a statistic that bothers me. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research only accepts seven out of 48 applications received. This means that top health researchers in our country have to go through two or three rounds of review before one of their research projects is accepted. All the researchers told me that it was completely discouraging. Not only is this extremely discouraging, but we now know that the pandemic has also lit a fire under the United States, and officials there are in the process of increasing funding as much as they possibly can. The United States will be extremely attractive over the next few years, while we, meanwhile, risk losing that expertise.

Most people told me about this. They also told me that in the early 2000s, before this unfortunate gap, almost 30% of applications were approved. Today, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research approve 15% of researchers' applications.

If I wanted to do something constructive and I listened to what these research experts are saying, I would ask all my colleagues to increase this rate to 25%. That is what everyone told me. Approving about 25% of applications would perhaps help create an ecosystem that would also result in much more meaningful advances in local vaccine production. This important aspect of basic research is being ignored.

I do not want to criticize the Liberal government's efforts right now. I will perhaps come back to that a little later.

Another key point, which was raised by several people, is that there may be a disconnect in this strategy. There is no link between the department of health and the department of innovation and yet all the experts have told us that this link is necessary.

The success of certain vaccines, such as the AstraZeneca vaccine, was predicated on the ability of putting together several different platforms and gathering different profiles, that is, several actors in the health and research sectors. According to several experts we consulted, producing a vaccine in just over a year has been a major success story made possible by this magic formula.

● (2050)

In the interests of staying constructive, as I was saying earlier, I want to say that I have heard we should not focus on just one plat-

form. I am not going to criticize the Liberal government, since everyone knows that that is not my thing, but I do think it just repeated the same mistake.

The government recently announced funding for Sanofi. People who understand about how vaccines work know that there are several different platforms. There is the RNA platform, which is an amazing discovery. There are other platforms that use eggs as bioreactors, like Sanofi's traditional, and somewhat outdated, platform. Then there is the very promising platform put forward by Medicago. I am not here to blame anyone, but it was a bit of a challenge dealing with the government.

I advocated many times for Medicago to get funding. We were four or five months behind, but who knows where we could have been if Medicago had gotten funding. This platform uses plants as bioreactors, which is a highly innovative technology.

Experts tell me that the government may be going down the wrong path by putting all its eggs in one basket with Sanofi. What happens in the future remains to be seen, but I believe that as soon as a government starts making decisions based on political concerns instead of science, it is on the wrong track.

That is the message I would like everyone to take away this evening. During a pandemic, it is never a good idea to make decisions based on political concerns, when the focus should be on scientific concerns and on what the science is telling us.

I will give another example of something that bothered me. I had discussions with Dr. Gary Kobinger. I can name him because he came forward. He was part of the COVID-19 vaccine task force, which was tasked with coming up with the protocol for the vaccines that Canada would use. What Canada did with CanSino is a classic example of a political decision. Most experts told the government not to move forward with what CanSino was proposing. The government did it anyway, and it ended in disaster.

Dr. Kobinger offered some interesting ideas for solutions, but I get the impression that because he did not exactly toe the line, the government sidelined him.

When I see a debate like the one we are having this evening, I think we could all afford to show some humility as legislators. Maybe we should all allow the science to take precedence.

S. O. 52

We will see how the government reacts in the coming weeks in its recovery plan and all that. We will see whether there is funding for basic research and whether the government will agree to listen to what the experts are advising with regard to vaccine platforms.

• (2055)

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his intervention. It was very interesting. He spoke today a bit about the AstraZeneca vaccine and the public dollars that went into developing it. I have to say, I am excited because today I was able to get the AstraZeneca vaccine in my arm. That is great news for me.

When we talk about the public dollars going into AstraZeneca, one of the big concerns I have, and I have raised it in the House many times, is the Canadian government's unwillingness to allow for intellectual property rights to be waived so that other countries can access the vaccine so they can continue to make sure that people around the world are getting the vaccine. Public dollars went into the development of these vaccines, so I do not understand why there is not that impetus for public good through the IP waiver system, the TRIPS waivers.

Would he be willing to support that if we could get the Bloc to support waiving that intellectual property right?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, we talked to people in the biotech sector about the review done by the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board, the PMPRB.

I am not an advocate for big pharmaceutical companies, nor do I want to be, but I was told that could have a devastating effect. Big pharmaceuticals do not do research, and they definitely do not do clinical trials if they know they will not be selling the products they are developing. There could be unintended consequences. I am not saying I am against the PMPRB's review, but we have to understand how that review will impact the biotech research sector.

I am not a biotech expert, but biotech experts tell me that there could be negative effects that have not been accounted for. The Standing Committee on Health is actually studying this issue. I am not prepared to give a quick answer, but I urge everyone to be prudent about this.

• (2100)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Jonquière. I am pleased to see that his approach is based on the importance of science. I think we should all work together.

Does he agree that no government anywhere in the country has made perfect decisions? This is an unprecedented situation. If we do not work together, it will be very difficult to know the truth and to find the best approach. What does my colleague think about that?

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague.

Politicians sometimes tend to look for a scapegoat when something is not working properly. It is true that we sometimes do that.

Public policy changes for the better when we learn from our mistakes. To learn from our mistakes, we, as legislators, need to point out the missteps. Pointing out missteps does not mean playing partisan games or criticizing everything without offering constructive suggestions.

What the leader of the Bloc Québécois asked us to do was to consult with experts before presenting a vaccine platform and on how much should be invested in basic science and research. Consulting with experts helps us deliver a coherent message, not just a political one.

I agree with what my colleague is saying. In politics, we tend to quickly look for a scapegoat, and that is unfortunate.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague on the tone of his speech, which I agree is the right one to use. However, heaven knows that we could point fingers.

I would like my colleague to talk more about the importance of focusing on research and development so that we do not end up trailing behind other countries. We are thinking mostly about vaccines, but there are other important sectors.

I would like him to talk about his vision, which is focused on the development of those sectors.

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, in his great wisdom, my hon. colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé has put his finger on a fundamental problem.

I mentioned the Naylor report earlier, which indicated that Canada was not faring very well in terms of basic research. What we are learning from the pandemic is that health crises, which could happen more frequently because of global warming, will leave Canada exposed. This will often be the case, because Canada does not have the research ecosystem needed to develop its vaccine production capacity. Consequently, it will often be dependent on external supply. We need to recognize this right away. The alarm bells sounded during the SARS outbreak, and now COVID-19 is showing us that lockdown can be very costly and has a certain morbidity associated with it. It is therefore essential to reinvest in research.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Windsor West.

This debate occurs at a critical time in our country. We have a serious third wave of COVID-19 raging across our nation. We are seeing transmission rates higher than at any time since the pandemic began. We have variants of concern that are now the dominant virus in many areas with greater contagion capacity and virulence. From Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, B.C. and the north, no area of the country is untouched. This is clearly not a purely provincial problem, it is a national one, and Canadians are exhausted. They are anxious, they are isolated and they are hurt physically, emotionally and financially.

It is time to state the obvious. Things are not going as well as they could and should. We must do better. Canadians do not want excuses, they do not want spin, they do not want finger pointing and they do not want partisan politics trumping Canadians' health. They do want action, effective, science-based and coordinated. We must have an understanding of why we are in this predicament to help determine the best path forward because there is nothing to say that we will not face a fourth wave if we do not effectively analyze how we got here and improve our responses wherever possible.

The causes of the third wave are multi-faceted. They include the following. There was poor PHAC preparation. The Auditor General released a report a few weeks ago that is a disturbing and objective indictment of a federal government that was unprepared for an emergency. There were repeated warnings to get ready for an emergency that were ignored for years. There were long-standing problems that remained unaddressed. We have decades of poor pharmaceutical policy by both Liberal and Conservative governments that have left Canadians vulnerable to multinational drug companies and foreign governments. The Prime Minister admitted as much when he was forced to acknowledge that countries that produce vaccines would give preferential access to their own citizens. That is the reality today.

We have an inadequate vaccine supply. PHAC confirmed yesterday that we are only able to utilize half of our provincial capacity to administer vaccines because of a lack of supply. That is 1.8 million doses per week versus a capacity to administer 3.1 million doses per week. The truth is that this has caused governments at all levels to be forced to ration vaccine doses and even violate the label instructions of vaccines against the explicit instructions of the manufacturers.

We have seen weak and incremental border controls by the federal government. This cannot but have helped introduce and spread the variants of concern. We were late to close borders. In fact, the current health minister said that doing so would be harmful. The border was then closed to certain countries, but left open to the U.S., which was raging with COVID at the time. Most SARS-CoV-2 viruses in British Columbia came from Washington state, not India. Perversely, Liberals designed a hotel quarantine policy that applies only to travellers arriving by air, not by land. As we speak, there are travellers using this loophole by flying to the U.S. border and then coming across by vehicle or on foot. To this day, we are still allowing international flights from hot spots.

A federal government that has relegated most duties onto the provinces, saying all it is responsible for is procuring vaccines and dispensing advice, is not good enough. It is refusing to use tools it has and is content to watch as provinces struggle instead of jump-

ing in and helping with supplementary resources like other national leaders of federated states are doing, including U.S. President Joe Biden, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

We have federal and certain provincial governments that are too slow to take decisive action, that put short-term economic interests above prudent public health measures, regularly communicate confusing messages and choose secrecy and self-interest over transparency and accountability, which are vital to maintain public confidence in an age of rumour and inaccurate information.

We must learn these lessons, but we also must apply positive proposals about what we can and need to do. Here are some.

First, we need to put public health first and adopt a zero COVID policy. If this means a hard and sharp shutdown of the economy to get us to sustained recovery, let us do it.

Second, we need to get control of our borders. Evidence is now crystal clear that countries and jurisdictions that did so drove transmission rates down and reduced the introduction of variants of concern.

Third, we immediately must get started on building our domestic vaccine manufacturing with a wartime approach through a Crown corporation. That is the only way we can truly ensure that Canadians will have access to essential medicines in a time of global shortage. The U.K. did it and we can, too.

● (2105)

Fourth, it is time to invoke the Emergencies Act. This is the exact legislation that was drafted precisely for a situation like we are seeing today. I am going to spend the remainder of my time on this vital component.

Frankly, I am shocked at the misunderstanding and confusion around this legislation, often spread by the current government. It is not the War Measures Act; in fact, it replaced the War Measures Act in 1988. The War Measures Act has not existed in the country for 33 years. It does not even contain the word "war".

S. O. 52

The Emergencies Act was drafted with two very different goals. It replaced the scope of the act from war and insurrection to a much different one, including, strangely enough, the outbreak of disease in humans. It was drafted to cure the abuse of civil liberties that was the hallmark of the War Measures Act. It is Canada's central legislation intended to be invoked in a time of national emergency.

Let me read the definition of “national emergency” in the act and then members should ask themselves whether this is not the exact situation we find ourselves in today. It states:

...a national emergency is an urgent and critical situation of a temporary nature that...seriously endangers the lives, health or safety of Canadians and is of such proportions or nature as to exceed the capacity or authority of a province to deal with it....

Specifically, this act also defines a public welfare emergency. I will read this as well. It means that it is:

...an emergency that is caused by a real or imminent...disease in human beings...and that results or may result in a danger to life or property, social disruption or a breakdown in the flow of essential goods, services or resources...

This act gives the federal government specific powers that are limited to 90 days, targeted to a specific province or region and that have to be laid before both houses of Parliament for scrutiny and approval. It explicitly says that powers shall be exercised, “in a manner that will not unduly impair the ability of any province.” There is no constitutional clash here and the permission of the provinces is not required.

It gives the federal government specific powers that are desperately needed. Here are three: The first is the regulation or prohibition of travel to or from any specified area. This could help control interprovincial transmission, just like the Atlantic provinces so successfully did. It provides for the authorization or payment of emergency payments. This could provide for paid sick days. It allows for the establishment of emergency shelters and hospitals.

Up to now, we had to send in the armed forces to two provinces to help them with long-term care homes that were overwhelmed. Look at the province of Ontario today, where doctors are warning of overwhelmed ICUs, health care workers are exhausted, patients are being taken off ventilators if they do not have at least a 70% chance of survival, poor areas are not getting enough vaccines and workers are still being forced to go to work sick because they have no paid sick time. I think most Ontarians would agree that this pandemic has overwhelmed the capacity of the Doug Ford government to deal with it.

The Prime Minister today once again dismissed the Emergencies Act, this time by derisively referring to Tommy Douglas voting against the War Measures Act in 1970. The Minister of Health today said that it was not needed and that everything was under control. With respect, these answers are absurd. Tommy Douglas voted against a very different bill that was used to suspend people's civil liberties. We are calling for the use of a modern act to help save the lives of Canadians.

My question for Canadians this. Do things look like they are under control and that nothing more is needed by the national government? To ask these questions is to answer them.

The Prime Minister has said we need a team Canada approach. Team Canada needs a captain, and a good captain gets everyone

working together, not just his own line mates. Therefore, let us now join and truly come together to implement the measures that I believe the vast majority of Canadians know we need and desperately want.

● (2110)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my colleague, so I genuinely want to discuss his ideas around the Emergencies Act. I share several of his concerns with respect to my home province of Ontario, which we are seeing every day.

I am curious about is this. I know the minister earlier in her speech spoke about some of the work we were doing with the provinces. We are working together collaboratively with provinces and territories right now and I worry that if we implement something like this, it would impede the provincial government's responsibilities? What if the Province of Ontario disagreed and decided instead to challenge this use in the court? Would that not be a terrible use of time in the middle of a pandemic instead of working collaboratively with the provinces?

● (2115)

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, let me take the opportunity to congratulate my hon. colleague on her appointment as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health. I also have a great deal of respect for her and her excellent representation in the House of her constituents.

To answer in a short way, I remember when former prime minister Trudeau wanted to tackle inflation and invoke the Anti-Inflation Act, and it was challenged by the provinces. The Supreme Court of Canada ended up saying that it was a valid use of federal power.

The War Measures Act was used by former prime minister Trudeau when one province faced an insurrection. Right now, we have a national crisis that is at least as important as inflation. I actually believe if these powers are invoked in a supplementary way with the provinces, no premier would turn down federal assistance.

This power empowers the federal government to bring in restrictions on interprovincial travel. No province has that power individually. This is an example where the federal government has to step in and use its full powers to get control of this. Frankly, Canadians want to see leadership in action, and we will deal with litigation, if it happens, after. What is important is saving lives right now.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He spoke in concrete terms about the War Measures Act.

In the current situation, does he not think that we could pay attention, learn from what has happened and take quicker action in three areas, namely, border management, for example when a variant appears in a country, investment in research for the future, so we do not have to again depend on foreign vaccines, and increases to health transfers, when the provinces are faced with exponentially huge expenses?

[English]

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I did touch on those very important points made by my colleague. Absolutely, we must never again allow Canada as a G7 country to be put in a place where we do not have the capacity to produce life-saving medications or vaccines in our own country. That is something on which all parties should join together and recognize, and construct the capacity to do so.

It is also vital to ensure we use every tool at our disposal. If we do not invoke the Emergencies Act now, which is Canada's flagship emergency legislation at the federal level, when would we?

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech was factual and helpful.

With respect to priorities for the government to act on with the list of suggestions he made, what would he say is the number one priority now to get things under control? Is it the Emergencies Act?

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Vancouver East, who is also the deputy critic for health, for her extraordinary representation and contributions to the House and country.

To be honest, all the things I mentioned are important, but the most acute crisis in the country right now is going on in Ontario. I think all of us across party lines can share the horror at any doctor in our country, in a G7 country, having to make a determination to take someone off a ventilator because he or she has a 65% chance of survival. That is the reality in Ontario right now.

I mentioned that this act has the power to establish hospitals. The federal government could into Ontario right now and establish federally funded hospitals and resource them fully with more ICUs. Let us get more ICUs in Ontario, paid for, organized and funded by the federal government. I do not think any Ontarian would reject that right now.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to participate in this debate. It is very important, and I want to thank those who made it happen as well as the staff. I am speaking from Windsor, Ontario, from the traditional territories of the Anishinabe, the Haudenosaunee, and the special lands of the Odawa, Ojibwa and Potawatomic.

If I walked out my door here, I quite literally could be in the United States in about a 15-minutes. On a daily basis, 40% of Canada's trade to the United States goes through Windsor. Even with the pandemic in its full thrust, about 5,000 trucks per day cross into the United States.

Part of the difficulty we are faced with is dealing with our borders and our dependency, and I will touch on that a bit later. It is important to acknowledge that Canada right now, our Confederation, is in many respects a failed state. I know you, Mr. Speaker,

have been here for a number of years, and I will be coming up to my 19th year. I could never imagine that a federal government would disinvolve itself from responsibility during this pandemic.

There are a lot of reasons we have come to this point in time, but this is a crossroads. Examining ourselves as a nation shows our failure to protect the citizens we swore to protect. That disappointment comes from a number of different experiences through this process. I see a lot of hope and opportunity, and I will touch on those elements later.

For example, today, the Prime Minister raised the War Measures Act and Tommy Douglas basically as an argument against having responsible debate on a problem that needs to be fixed. It is important for us to disinvolve ourselves from personalized attacks. So many people hold health care as a central bond among ourselves from coast to coast to coast, a reason to be Canadian and to be different than many places in the world. Health care was from Tommy Douglas and it came from a specific evolved principled position. To use that argument at this time is unfortunate.

We are going through a difficult time right now in Ontario. We had over 4,000 new cases today. The decision about who gets a ventilator and who does not is a very difficult one. It is very important for me to acknowledge all those who have lost a loved one, a family member or co-worker during this pandemic. This will haunt people for the rest of their lives, such as what they could have done to stop one more of those deaths or could they have done better to respond to the crises? In my riding, I had to call for help from the Salvation Army and the armed forces to go into a long-term care facility that had a significant outbreak because of the irresponsible actions of its management. We lost people.

I also worry for other people as well. For example, Asian hate crimes are on the rise, not only in Canada but in the United States as well. I worry about variants coming from different parts of the world. The continued collective assault by some on others has been unacceptable. We have to put this aside and work better together. If we are distracted by those things, they will complicate our situation.

I want to touch on a very important issue in my area. I want to thank the member for Vancouver Kingsway for his work on this. He has raised this a number of different times. It is the demise of manufacturing. As a representative of the auto sector, I have seen it myself. I have seen us slip from number three or four in the world to number 11. It has been going on for long time. We were told that it was globalization and that we could do nothing about it. We thought that divestment and lowering corporate taxes would bring different investment, but it never did.

S. O. 52

We saw the planned loss of Connaught industries, a Canadian manufacturing facility that would have provided some solutions. What we have done is created a dependency. Located a few kilometres from where I am are auto plants that produced Second World War materials to help us during a time of crisis.

During this pandemic, I cannot lose sight of the fact when the Prime Minister was in London, Ontario, 200 kilometres up the road from here, he said that we had to transition out of manufacturing. That was back in 2015. That rang hard for a community that was fighting to save its jobs, its tool and die and mould making, its automakers, all those things. Ironically, we really kept some of those things in the Ford plant. Although diminished in its capacity, it produced PPE. Hiram Walker and other types of businesses struggled through this, and some had to restart.

• (2120)

Manufacturing is a critical component for our future as part of our domestic national security. As a New Democrat, I have been saying for many years that we need national policies on some of these things. That does not mean overtaking provinces like Quebec or other areas, because manufacturing takes place as far as B.C. What it means is supportive, comprehensive, measurable programs. We used to have some of those to make sure we are doing those things.

The SARS issue is a great defeat for us. Not only did we actually find out what we needed to do at that point in time, but we did nothing. We let things rot away and we let other people become the dominant producers of those things and more dependency has evolved.

One of the things I have asked for in terms of a process for solutions is a national strategy for manufacturing so we actually have measurables and tangibles. What does that mean? It means the production of real goods and services. It means innovation where our patents are no longer shipped out of this country and producing goods and services that we have to buy back. We spend millions upon millions of dollars every single year to develop patents and innovation at our research facilities, at different industries that get tax credits, and there is no accountability of that innovation leading to production and jobs in our own economy.

That has to be something that is going to be a focus for ourselves, and we should be measuring the results against our money that we see going in there. Then those companies that are doing that need to get rewards, whereas others need to be moved against, in terms of not getting the supports that are necessary for basically allowing our production to dissipate and go somewhere else.

We fought here, under five kilometres from here, for Canadian innovation, where a federal grant from the Liberal government of millions of dollars went into a plant, and the plant took that technology and innovation and shipped it to Mexico and now sent the jobs to Mexico, too, including innovation. These things would not happen if we actually had a planned economy for these things and for manufacturing vaccines, which are very important.

There are other things that need to be done. There is no doubt that the pandemic is costing us a lot of money and our finances are going to continue to struggle in many respects.

As the industry critic and someone who has put forward the telecom policy, I can tell you that it would be more advanced in terms of connecting Canadians, especially when we look at the fact that we have some of the highest fees in the world and some of the biggest challenges because of geography, but we have control of it. Federal Conservative and Liberal governments have taken in about \$25 billion in spectrum auction fees over the last number of years; \$25 billion have come into government coffers, and at the same time we pay some of the highest fees.

I see this in communities like mine, with a high rate of poverty, which have to basically decide which kids get to go to classes, who goes online, what businesses can afford things and how they can compete and stay together. What is important is that this is an essential service. It was before the pandemic, and it is now, but when we look at students and social equality and inclusion, being online is an important factor that needs to be resolved right now.

Right now the federal government is going to take in billions of dollars more in a spectrum auction and not have any terms and conditions for connecting Canadians who are in rural and remote areas. This is something that has to end. We have to give people opportunity and connection. It is about civil liberties, because it is about the right to be connected in society right now. It may not seem like the biggest issue at the moment, but if we have a pandemic that continues and variants that continue, then we need to connect Canadians much more strongly than ever before. We have that opportunity, and that should be a solution sought as part of our national infrastructure, as part of our identity, as part of something we can do. No jurisdiction should be left behind. There is no doubt that we have to do that.

I want to conclude by thanking all the health care workers who have been out there working on the front lines. We think of our doctors, nurses, PSWs and all those in those profile spots. They are so important and we are so grateful for them every single day, but let us not forget the young people who have to work in grocery stores. In an area like mine that is in the hot zone, there are kids who go into the grocery store, not getting any more pay, probably not getting the training they deserve, and they are making a subpar wage to feed the rest of us. I could go on for days with regard to migrant workers and so forth and the issues there, but we have to change the way we do things. There has to be fairness and equality.

To pay for this, we need to have a profits on the pandemic pay. There are too many companies that have done so well and have so generously padded themselves, had salary increases, had CEO bonuses and a number of different things. It is their turn to return that back to our country.

If we do not do that, then we will continue to be a failed state. It is up to us as federal representatives to make sure we are unified. How do we do that? Let us find the things that can do it for us and our families, because too many of our people have already lost their lives and we cannot get that back, but we can stop more.

• (2125)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I actually agree with the member, and a number of members have talked about this, about making sure Canada has the capacity to manufacture vaccines moving into the future, so that this never happens again and so we are never put into this situation again. In his experience of being a critic for industry and knowing so much about the manufacturing sector, I am curious what his thoughts are as to the best way that we would put something like this into practice, so that we could make sure that we did have that. Is that done through a Crown corporation? Is that done through competitive industry? How does he foresee that rolling out?

I would agree with him that if we do not learn that one thing from this, then we are probably being extremely short-sighted. I am curious about what he sees as the best way to ensure that we can build up that manufacturing and make sure that it is maintained and stays in place for a long time, so that we have this next time we are here.

• (2130)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats here have been on this for an aerospace strategy, an auto strategy, forestry. I will not go into the full details, but basically there are strategies for sectoral development that many countries already do and are actually experts on. We measure them by the jobs created, the investment created and the policies. What we have done is large corporate tax cuts over a number of different decades, and basically we promised jobs that never came and investment that never showed up. That has to end.

Second to that, we need a border task force. We have so much of our manufacturing capacity tied in to the United States and Mexico. We need to have regular meetings and regular operations that are open, clear and public, and we actually have logistics. That just-in-time delivery was huge for those things that could be assets to redeveloping and reshoring a number of different things. Ironically, it used to be a pride to say we want to outsource when faced with global competition; now we are back to actually wanting to bring things home. That should never have been lost.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I heard him talk about the border. He said that he lives very close to the U.S. border. More generally, what are his thoughts on the Auditor General of Canada's criticism of what she deemed a fiasco with regard to checking on quarantining travellers?

S. O. 52

At one point, it was estimated that just one-third of travellers had been asked whether they had gone into quarantine, and half of them had been asked if they were complying with quarantine. These kinds of figures are scary, especially with the arrival of the new, more contagious variants.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, essentially, we need to have more comprehensive supports for our CBSA officers and those controls. I have been well noted for that. I want to thank today our health unit, with Dr. Wajid and others, who have helped get our CBSA officers in Windsor vaccinated. We normally run about 10,000 vehicles a day through here. We are finally getting them, and Michigan has had a major outbreak, so that is where we think we have to have some more resources. We know we have underperformed in that area, and that is just the starting point.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, although it is not directly on point for the emergency debate that I asked for tonight, I could not agree with the member more about manufacturing and that we have adopted an approach economically that said we could have just-in-time delivery of things from anywhere fast. That has significant implications for global warming. It has significant implications for Canada's economic health.

I just want to ask him if he sees a change coming, because, due to COVID-19, I think a lot of Canadians now want supply chains that are more domestic and want to know that we can manufacture the things that we really need.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I think getting out of this is going to require more help from our neighbours. I have asked the government several times to investigate. Most recently I wrote the Prime Minister today. We look at what is happening between Manitoba and North Dakota. They are vaccinating Canadians who are trucking and essential workers through there, so I have asked for the same thing for New York and Ontario and for other places. We have friends out there, but we need to be unafraid to ask our friends for that help.

I am hopeful there will be a return to manufacturing, because there are a lot of pride and innovation that do not take place because we offshore everything.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to discuss such an incredibly important topic. I want to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for suggesting that we have this emergency debate. It is extremely important that we talk about this and try to wrap our heads around whether there are other ways of doing things. I appreciate some of the information that has come forward today, in particular from the member for Windsor West, who just spoke before me, who talked about manufacturing capacity and where we ultimately need to get to.

S. O. 52

I will start by saying that I have been extremely proud of not just sitting on the same side of the House as the government but, indeed, being a part of this particular Parliament, where a number of measures were put into place for Canadians throughout this pandemic.

When I think back to the beginning of this, Canadians were confused and wondering what was next. I am not talking about what was next in terms of weeks and months, but literally days. No generation alive has ever gone through this before, with the exception of a few people who may have experienced the pandemic in 1918. To be there for Canadians, to make sure they have the supports they need, to make sure they are being taken care of, in particular those who really needed it, was extremely important. This Parliament was able to come together to pass emergency measures very quickly to put money into the bank accounts of Canadians while asking them and, in many cases, telling them that they had to stay home and could not work. We took care of them.

I get a bit of a kick out of the Conservatives from time to time when they say it is not the federal government's money. The member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes said earlier today that there is only one taxpayer. Of course he is right, but the question here is whether it should have been the burden of everybody, that one taxpayer, to take on the responsibility of what was going on, to take on the consequences of what was going on. The question is not whether or not it was the federal government's money. The question is who should pay for it. Should it be individuals? Should it be those who are struggling? Should they take on the sole responsibility of this, or should it be society as a whole?

When we say the federal government supported Canadians, we clearly do not mean that the federal government somehow miraculously had its own money to do this. We are using the money of society, generally speaking. We are bringing everybody together to get through this together. That is what happened. That is what we saw happen here. That is what made, in my opinion, a successful go at this. We could have done things a lot better. In hindsight everything is 20/20 and there is a lot we could have done differently, but I think we came together and we passed very important measures to make sure that Canadians would be taken care of.

Now, here we are, in the middle of the third wave of this. I am going to speak primarily to what is going on in Ontario because that is the province of the riding that I represent, but I know, indeed, that this is happening in other parts of the country as well. Today, there were just under 4,500 new cases of COVID-19 in Ontario and 32 people passed away. Over 2,200 people are currently in hospital, and 737 of those are in the ICU. On April 17, there were 4,812 COVID cases, the highest daily number that Ontario has experienced.

We have talked about the Emergencies Act in the past, and I will get to that in a bit. We have also talked about a number of the measures that have been brought into place for Ontario specifically. I just want to highlight some of those because I think it is important. I think it is really important, especially when having a discussion about the Emergencies Act and whether it should be implemented. I want to highlight some of the things that did happen.

• (2135)

We talked about the Canada emergency recovery benefit, CERB. Nearly one in four Ontarians, 3.5 million Ontarians, were recipients of the Canada emergency recovery benefit. The Canada emergency wage subsidy protected just under two million jobs in Ontario, making sure that employers did not let their employees go so that when they needed them, even if only temporarily, they could bring them back very quickly. The Canada emergency business account provided interest-free loans of up to \$60,000 to small businesses and not-for-profits. As of April 15, 343,966 loans totalling \$18.5 billion had been supplied to businesses and not-for-profits throughout Ontario. The Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program provided relief for businesses experiencing financial hardship as a result of COVID-19. Over 70,000 tenants were protected by that, and 654,000 employees, totalling just over \$1 billion.

Again, there are a lot of questions about the debt and where this money came from. It came from society, because we determined that it was better for society as a whole to take on this responsibility than to watch individuals and businesses collapse at a more alarming rate, which still ended up happening to a certain degree.

However, as we talk about the third wave specifically, as things unrolled there were responsibilities and roles the federal government would take on. Of course, we worked with our provincial counterparts to make sure, as things were rolling out, that we could provide them with the supports they needed.

There have been questions about the Emergencies Act and whether it should be implemented. Before I talk about it, I think it is worth noting exactly what was put into place. In terms of vaccines, the federal government let the provinces know, particularly Ontario, at the beginning of the pandemic what the strategy would be for vaccine rollouts. The provinces and territories were given a schedule, going back to late 2020, and were told what they should expect to see coming in terms of vaccines and when they should expect to get them.

Provinces, territories and regional jurisdictions were able to plan for when those vaccines would come. They should have been, and we know they were. They were making strategic decisions about when lockdowns would have to happen and when they could start to let up, and it was all around the timeline of those vaccines coming.

Although at the beginning there were some hiccups and some moving around of vaccine amounts in any given week for about a two- or three-week period, by the end of March, particularly in Ontario, more vaccines had been delivered than had been originally scheduled. The province of Ontario was able to plan for what to expect. This is important, because I want to talk about what Ontario should have been expecting and what it was told to expect.

There is a clip circulating on social media. I cannot remember the news outlet but, on February 11, a reporter was talking to the co-chair of the COVID Science Advisory Table and said, “I have looked at all of your data. I have seen this. I am looking at your modelling, but what you are basically telling us is that removing the restrictions that were in place in January,” which they were doing at the beginning of February, “means dire consequences. Are we not heading for a disaster?” The response was: “No, I do not think you are missing anything. You have it right and, yes, we are heading for a disaster”.

As a matter of fact, the province was told in that modelling at the beginning of February that it was going to reach 4,000 cases by the beginning of April and, sure enough, on April 9, Ontario had surpassed 4,000 cases with just over 4,200 cases. The seven-day rolling average at that point was 4,300 cases in Ontario.

● (2140)

I am not bringing this up to point fingers at the provincial government. I am bringing this up because it is germane to the discussion on implementing the Emergencies Act and what the federal government should be doing. The Ontario government was told the timeline, what vaccines it would be getting, and how it would be getting them. The quantities in those timelines surpassed the targets. At the beginning of February Ontario was also told, if it removed those restrictions, the position it would be in at the beginning of April. In both cases, the information was correct. Ontario got more doses of the vaccine than officials were expecting, and the cases were exactly what they were told.

I brought this up in a question for my Conservative colleague earlier when he was discussing this issue. It is one thing to question the timeline from the beginning and say, “Why are we not getting more in February? Why are we not getting more in March? Why is this happening at this time and this time?” However, the province’s officials could not say that they did not know what they were getting. They did know, and they still chose to do what they did and to act the way that they did. That was the situation in Ontario.

When we talk about what Ontario has done and the position that it has gotten itself into, we have to do it in the context of knowing where we started and what Ontario was expecting. Since then, we have seen the reality play out as it was forecast back in February. We have seen the vaccines continue to roll along and come in at or above the scheduled rate as promised, yet we still ended up in this situation.

Therefore, when we talk about the Emergencies Act, which I will get to momentarily, my concern is this. I want to know what my colleagues are expecting if that act is enforced or an emergency declared. Perhaps one of my NDP colleagues could answer that in a question they ask me.

In Ontario last week, when things really started to fall off the rails, the federal government stepped up to say it would work with the province. It got together with the provincial government and said it was going to send some assistance to set up field hospitals and help with self-isolation areas, and that it was going to send more medical supplies and more medical professionals. A number of these measures kicked in not because we had to declare an emergency and send them, but because the province wanted them and

we were there to support it and to help deliver the supports that it needed.

That happened over the weekend. We heard from members earlier today. I think it was the member for Don Valley West who said from his place he could almost see people setting up a field hospital. We know those measures are working and are in place, so the federal government is there to help the Province of Ontario.

My question to the NDP is this: What more would they expect to get out of engaging the Emergencies Act? I know the member for Vancouver Kingsway has brought it up on a number of occasions and talked about it, but there is another quote in that act that I did not hear him speak to. He has talked a lot about the act.

● (2145)

He has referenced different parts of it, the various times that it needs to be utilized and what defines an emergency. However, there is another part that states a national emergency is a situation “that cannot be effectively dealt with under any other law of Canada.” There is a specific provision that says the government cannot invoke the Emergencies Act if this could be dealt with using other laws.

I would suggest to the hon. member, and to my NDP colleagues, that various things have been happening. Other laws have been utilized. Other agreements have been made, including other bilateral agreements with Ontario and other provinces, territories and regions throughout the country, to get supports to them.

These are things that have been done. It leaves me wondering what else my colleagues could possibly expect to get by invoking that. It is not as though the federal government is holding something back. It is not holding back on anything that it would otherwise be able to implement. It is implementing everything it can. The federal government is communicating with the provinces. It is working with the provinces.

I personally do not see how invoking this measure at a time like this, which would obviously allow us to step on the jurisdiction of the provinces, would do anything positive to the relationship we have with them. If the federal government genuinely wants to work with the provinces and territories, and if we genuinely want to work with Doug Ford right now in Ontario, I do not think that implementing a piece of legislation that allows the federal government to go in and do something for the province is the approach. It would basically be saying that Ontario had done a horrible job, and it should get out of the way because the federal government is taking over now.

The approach that the federal government has taken is the right one. It is an approach of working with the provinces to find solutions and see what they need and want, so that the federal government can then help them to be as successful as possible.

S. O. 52

Going back to my earlier discussion about the provinces and what Ontario chose to do and when it chose to do it, Ontario had decisions to make. I was not laying that out just to say that the Province of Ontario screwed this all up and should have done x, y and z. It made its decisions based on its own information and based on what it thought was the best way to proceed.

I do not agree with that approach. I think it was the wrong approach. I think that if I had known what the timeline would be in terms of getting vaccines and I had known what the timeline would be in terms of the third wave, I could have connected the dots pretty quickly. However, maybe there were other factors at play. Maybe Ontario chose to put parts of the economy ahead of health. I do not know. We do know that the Ontario government had the information and the data to make the decisions that led to where we are.

I want to conclude by saying that I am extremely proud not just of the Liberal government, but indeed of this Parliament. A lot of discussion has been going on tonight. There have been a lot of comparisons to places such as New Zealand and Australia. Compared with our G7 counterparts and our G20 counterparts, Canada has done fairly well.

Obviously we have suffered tremendously from a health perspective and an economic perspective, but when Canada is compared with comparable nations, the success of the Liberal government and this Parliament has shown itself in the fact that our mortality rate is the second lowest in the G7, and our ability to vaccinate people, to get needles into the arms of people, is now among the best in the G20. I think we are third in the G20 and in the G7, for that matter.

• (2150)

We are doing well. There are always going to be disagreements among provincial and other jurisdictions as to how we do things, but at the end of the day, the best solution is continuing to work with them to protect Canadians.

• (2155)

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the member's analysis that the government has done an excellent job. The Prime Minister has a far-out target that would allow for success by September. Things are opening up in the States. Everybody there is now permitted to get vaccinations and we are locked down.

I want to read a note I received yesterday from a constituent, who said:

I am writing to you to voice my concern over the federal government's COVID vaccine rollout, or more so the lack of a rollout. Where are the vaccines? What's taking so long? Our 19-year-old daughter just had a heart valve replacement earlier this month and was bumped several times. Due to the B.C. government's idea of vulnerability, she couldn't get vaccinated until her age group is called. She is so vulnerable, and now with these variants and cases rising everywhere and no vaccines, I am completely on edge. Do you know when she can be expected to be vaccinated?

There are a lot of problems with getting vaccines in B.C.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, members can say what they want about the September target. They can criticize it and say it was too far out or that it should have been sooner. However, what they cannot say is that it has not been consistent. It has been consistent from the beginning. From the beginning, it has always been September. They can say that we set that in advance, but targets

were given for when provinces would get vaccines and those targets have only been exceeded.

The provinces had the data and the schedule. They knew when exactly they would be getting the vaccines, and they have received more by this point than they were told they were going to get. If they had an issue with being able to properly plan around that, that is a whole different thing we can talk about. However, they knew when they would be getting the vaccines.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am still blown away by how paternalistic the Liberals sound when talking about the federal government working with Quebec and the provinces. I will come back to this later.

My colleague spoke about vaccines and about how pleased he was with the government's measures. I want to look back a little and talk about the idea of being quick and proactive, because the National Advisory Committee on Immunization did not meet until June. Between March and June 2020, it was radio silence, and the Trudeau government lost precious months that could have been spent working on vaccines if it had been quicker off the mark.

My colleague mentioned vaccines again when he was talking about collaboration. Quebec was falsely accused of letting vaccines sit in freezers instead of getting them into people's arms. However, it has been proven that Quebec did get the vaccines required but then ran out. There were no vaccines sitting in freezers. This kind of accusation could undermine Quebec's collaboration with the federal government, and I do not think it is a good example to use.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I did not say anything about Quebec keeping vaccines in freezers. I did not go near that topic or discuss it in my speech.

I find it bizarre that the Bloc member is accusing the Liberals of being paternalistic, when here I am telling the NDP that we should not be using an emergency measures act that would step all over the feet of another province. I am actually doing the exact opposite. I am saying that I do not think we should be utilizing this particular piece of legislation so that we can start telling other provinces what to do. Quite frankly, I would argue that I am doing the opposite.

• (2200)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I cannot agree with the member regarding the need to bring in the Emergencies Act to help out the situation in Ontario. The situation in Ontario is dire and it needs help. I think Ontarians would welcome the help.

The Premier of British Columbia has been calling for inter-provincial travel restrictions for some time now. While there seems to be some noise to say that we are moving in that direction, we really have not seen action in that regard.

In terms of travel restrictions in hot spots, early in the pandemic the government did take action, although it was slightly delayed. Will the government take action now to restrict travel with respect to hot spots?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, travel represents 1.5% of transmissions. It is not the dominant force in spreading the virus right now.

Members will notice an interesting word the member used. She said that the provinces “would” welcome help. She is suggesting that the only way to get help to provinces is to use the Emergencies Act. Then, suddenly, we will be able to deliver help to them. I would argue that the provinces “are” welcoming that help right now.

As a member from Ontario, I appreciate her sincere concern for the province. However, in Ontario, as in other provinces, measures are being delivered. The government announced a number of them last weekend, and this did not require the Emergencies Act. During my speech, I said that I really hoped an NDP member would get up and tell me what more they were expecting from the Emergencies Act. I do not believe that anything substantial can be done with it that cannot be done outside of it.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by acknowledging the great work the member and his team do in getting really relevant, truthful information out through his social media feed. For Ontario it has been really helpful.

I have been listening to the debate tonight, and some members, in particular from the Conservative Party, have pointed to other countries that are opening up. He got a question of that nature tonight. I would like to point out that we see our friends and colleagues in Atlantic Canada, such as our friend from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, going to restaurants. Things are opening up. The Atlantic bubble has done quite well, and on a per-capita basis it has received fewer vaccines. However, it has all the same federal restrictions in place.

Perhaps the issue is that continuing to work with the provinces and territories, which is the spirit of this debate, is about learning within Canada from the premiers and provinces that have done quite a good job. We see their economies opening up and we see their vaccinations continuing.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the compliment. I know that Kaitlin, Parth and Kelly will very much appreciate the nice comment she made.

She is absolutely right. What we need to do here is look at the successes in provinces that have been successful and ask what they did and whether we can help Ontario get to the same place. That is the whole point of the federal government.

I know Bloc members look at that as though we are somehow trying to impose something upon them, but really we just want to

S. O. 52

work together collaboratively. I think that is the right approach. I do not think it is going to be done by forcing the Emergencies Act on to provinces at this stage in the game.

• (2205)

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been intrigued tonight, and I loved the discussion between the hon. member and the member for Windsor West.

After a question I asked yesterday of the public safety minister, CBSA officers in Windsor are finally getting vaccines today. That is a great thing.

There has been a lot of discussion around manufacturing. Will the member please have a discussion with the public safety minister to allow business owners and customers in manufacturing to come across the borders so we can open it back up?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I think I understand the question, and I will go back to the question I had earlier from the member for Windsor West. If we have not learned from the pandemic that we need to boost our biomanufacturing sector and make sure, if this ever happens again, that we are not put in a position where we are not manufacturing vaccines in Canada, then I think we have really lost sight of what is important here. Do I personally believe that? Absolutely. We need to make sure that we are never again in a situation where we do not have the capacity to manufacture in Canada.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I just want to take a moment to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for requesting this emergency debate tonight. This is a great opportunity to highlight some of the serious concerns that I have with the Liberal government's response to the pandemic, but also to offer some recommendations.

We are well over a year into this crisis and the fact remains that we are in worse shape now than at any other point during the pandemic. People continue to die and health care staff are kind of burned out. Hospitals and ICUs are struggling. Variants are spreading. Millions of students are not in their classrooms. Countless business are shut down, workers are without pay cheques and we have a vaccine shortage that is prolonging the pandemic.

Throughout it all, we have witnessed a government struggling to meet these challenges head-on. While no one expected a flawless response, time and time again it has dropped the ball. I have yet to hear the Prime Minister, or any minister for that matter, acknowledge the multiple mistakes that have been made. I do not say this lightly, but the Liberal government has failed; failed to ensure that we had an emergency stockpile of PPE, failed to safely reunite families and failed to secure enough vaccines to arrive in Canada for the first half of 2021. Regardless of however the Liberals want to spin it, the virus is winning. Until there is an acknowledgement that mistakes are made, we are left scratching our heads if they truly understand the implications of their decisions or, in some cases, their lack of action.

S. O. 52

Tonight, I will share three specific recommendations that I want to see the government act upon.

The first is to abide by the motion that was passed at the health committee that ordered the government to allow the committee to review the vaccine contracts at an in camera meeting. My colleague from Foothills referred to this earlier. We are aware of the confidentiality clauses contained in those contracts, which is exactly why we proposed they be shared at an in camera meeting.

I want everyone to step back for a moment and think about how ridiculous the government's position is. The government sought parliamentary approval to purchase those vaccines, but does not want parliamentarians to know what was contained in the contracts. How can we do our job as the official opposition if we are being completely left in the dark? How do we know if the Liberals signed good deals? The answer is that we do not know. From my vantage point, we have a massive vaccine shortage and every day we find out that more shipments are being delayed. Without Pfizer and now the Biden administration, we would be even further behind. We cannot measure vaccine successes by the size of Canada's vaccine portfolio. We measure success by getting vaccines delivered to the provinces and into people's arms. There is no other matrix that could possibly be used to evaluate the government's record on procuring vaccines.

The provinces need the vaccines now, not five months from now. The only information in the contracts that I know to be true is that the government paid double for the AstraZeneca vaccine compared to some other nations; at least double in most cases. The only reason we know that little bit of information is because it was contained in an email from the Prime Minister's Office in his communications shop. The provinces cannot wait any longer. Just this week, it was announced that the premier of Ontario was calling international allies to see if they can send more vaccines to his province. The Government of Manitoba has already signed a contract with one of the Canadian pharmaceutical companies and they just announced a deal with North Dakota to get our truck drivers vaccinated. I applaud those actions as it is clear that they cannot wait for the Liberal vaccine portfolio to be delivered sometime down the road.

The second recommendation is to fix the mail-in process of PCR tests for returning Canadians who live in rural areas. In the last month alone, my office has been contacted by multiple families about how the government has signed a deal with Purolator and how it is next to impossible to mail back the PCR tests. I want the Liberal MPs in the House to know how stressful this is on families, so I will share the contents of an email I received yesterday.

• (2210)

The mother of a son who recently returned from university called PHAC to arrange for a pick-up of the PCR test and was told only Purolator is handling the packages. She then called Purolator and it told her it does not visit the rural community on weekends. After being on the phone for an hour she finally spoke to someone who was supposed to swing by their farm to pick up the package on Monday. They waited on Monday and no one came to pick it up. She then waited on hold for another hour and was told there was no guarantee the PCR test could be picked up. Purolator then told her

to drive into town to drop off the package on Tuesday afternoon and to leave it outside at the agreed upon location. By the time the PCR kit was sent in, it begs the question whether it would still be accurate. Because the PCR test was left outside, would it make the result unreliable? I really do not know. What I do know is that this is happening across rural Canada. She mentioned that her son would have been willing to drive to Brandon to get the test done in person, which is about 90 miles, rather than try to navigate through this convoluted process. Here is the kicker. Because her son had been in the United States, he was fully vaccinated. He received both doses. These are not my words, but she closed out her email to me by saying that this whole thing "stinks".

Once again, the government has implemented a plan that sounds good, but in practice is not working. Surely, if people can get their online parcels delivered to far-flung places, the federal government could partner with parcel delivery companies to get PCR tests picked up.

My last recommendation is to distribute and encourage the use of rapid tests. It was disappointing to see the government disregard the Calgary airport testing pilot program, which completely took it off guard.

We have also seen the Minister of Health question the validity of rapid tests, even after spending millions of taxpayer dollars to purchase them.

It must also be said that the government paid a company for rapid test kits without even seeing if they would pass Health Canada's standards. They were then found to be faulty.

Putting all that aside, I know there is a willingness from the government to get more rapid test kits handed out to Canadians as Industry Canada announced it is "launching new efforts to increase the availability" of rapid tests. Multiple provinces are now using rapid tests to help with their screening efforts and it is paying off. Part of the challenge with COVID-19 is that not everyone has symptoms but can be a carrier of the virus and potentially expose others. With the use of rapid test kits, schools and businesses have been able to stop outbreaks before they happen. In the U.K., nine in 10 pharmacies are offering free rapid test kits and are now offering every citizen in the U.K. twice weekly rapid test kits. I want to see this success be replicated in every community across this country. As the adage goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

These are three recommendations the government can easily adopt and build on.

My heart goes out to all those who have lost loved ones and to those who are now on the brink of bankruptcy.

I also want to add my heartfelt thanks to all of our frontline service personnel who have worked tirelessly to try to bring this pandemic under control as much as they possibly can.

I also want the government to succeed in ending the pandemic. I know the government can and must do better, so I urge all members, including Liberal MPs, to join us in pushing their ministers to act swiftly. This is not the time for excuses. People are counting on all of us to get this right.

● (2215)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned rapid tests. We have distributed 25.4 million rapid tests and there are millions that have gone unused, so I would encourage him to ask the premiers, provinces and territories to use them.

The member talked about mistakes being made, so my question is with respect to his credibility and that of his party. His party has suggested that we end the border measures we put in place to protect communities. It also recommended weeks ago that we should simply ignore public health measures and open everything up. We have seen what happened in Ontario when those public health models were ignored.

Does the member opposite still support removing the restrictions at borders? Does he still support opening everything up and ignoring the public health advice?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, of course, we know that the American border is closed. We do know, however, that the action in regard to closing the border to flights coming into Canada was much delayed. It was at least a month and a half after the Americans made their closure. The present border closures that we have in Canada are based on provincial decisions, as was done with Ontario just recently. My province, Manitoba, has done similar action as well, and these have helped bring the numbers down in some of the provinces. Certainly it did here earlier on in the summer last year as well.

I think one of the things we need to look at is the actual delivery of vaccines. As I pointed out, that is the only real measure that we have here in regard to bringing things under control and giving Canadians the confidence that they can actually begin to move around again. It is too early in most provinces yet to do that, but if we have to wait until the end of September and take a whole nine months here to get the first shots into Canadian citizens, does that mean it is going to be next July before everyone gets their second shot?

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have seen what happens in terms of rushed reopenings like we had in Ontario and Alberta. Both have Conservative governments that have been scared and have not had the courage to stand up for families and for working people, and instead have catered to large corporations, big business and the wealthy. They have now plunged both of their provinces into record numbers of COVID-19 cases. We have seen other provinces take very different approaches, where they put public health, workers and their citizens at the top of their priority lists, and we have seen lower numbers.

S. O. 52

Can my colleague talk about what he would do differently at the provincial level from Premier Ford and Premier Kenney?

● (2220)

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I do not have that decision-making power, but I appreciate my colleague's question. I think that some of the actions that have taken place in regard to trying to manage the borders, as I just mentioned in answering the parliamentary secretary's question, have been good moves. I also, from being a member of the health committee, know that we can have all of the procurement discussions we want to have, but the only true measure, as I have said in my presentation this evening, is how many vaccines we get in people's arms. We are way behind in regard to that and not only in first vaccines. It is improving, because we are now getting vaccines after that three-month delay we have had, but that is the true measure. We still have very few Canadians who have a second vaccine, and if it is going to take us another nine months before we get the second vaccine in, which from the end of September would be somewhere around the beginning of July next year, when do we start getting the third shots? Many people are talking about them, particularly in the questions we have asked, even on the health committee, of Health Canada in regard to the boosters that would be available and be needed by those people who may have had some efficacy loss because of the longer waits between vaccines.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for moving this emergency debate.

In her letter to the Speaker, she points out that across Canada, we've had 8,400 cases a day on average this week, and Ontario cases have surged to a new all-time high. In her own province of British Columbia, the P.1 variant from Brazil is becoming dominant, and the province has hit a new record for hospitalizations.

The member also notes that, across Canada, we are lagging in vaccination, testing and tracing, and our medical health care professionals, researchers and epidemiologists are expressing alarm, feeling exhausted and showing signs of despair. She writes that it is time for more provincial-federal co-operation.

I could not agree with her more. As a matter of fact, this is something that we on this side of the House have been asking for since day one. We have been asking for the government to lead.

S. O. 52

While my hon. colleague asked for a non-partisan debate, I have listened intently to the debate over the last couple of hours, and each side is taking shots. Our friends across the way, including my friend from Kingston and the Islands, good soldier that he is, looking a little tired now and seemingly the only one in the House for the longest time now, keeps saying that we are peddling falsehoods and misinformation. A few weeks back during our opposition day, the parliamentary secretary, in questioning my colleague from Brandon—Souris, whom I want to thank for sharing his time me, questioned his integrity and questioned our integrity for pushing the government for a plan.

We were not pushing for the gates to open up and everything to be well. We all want that, but we understand that we are gripped in the midst of the third wave of a global pandemic. We are well over 400 days into it now, and lessons should have been learned. That is what my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands is asking for. What are the lessons we have learned? We are asking so we can move forward, and so Canadians can have hope. That is really what Canadians need right now.

Earlier, my colleague from Foothills spoke of a phone call that he took yesterday from the sister of a 20-year-old young man who committed suicide. I am the special advisor to our leader on mental health, and everyone, both in the house I am in now and in our parliamentary House, knows that I am a tireless champion for mental health. It is weighing on all of our colleagues, and it is weighing on Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We are facing a social and economic upheaval that has never been seen before. Canadians are angry and frustrated. They are facing higher anxiety. Millions of Canadians have lost their jobs. Over 200,000 businesses have closed their doors. At this time, one in six business owners is considering closing their doors.

What we have been doing from day one is asking the government what its plan is as we move forward. We in the opposition, Conservatives, Bloc, NDP, Green and independents, have been pushing the government for what its plan is. All along the way, we have offered truly a team Canada approach, so if they are seeing frustration on the sides of the opposition, it is because we truly have been pushing for that team Canada approach. Sadly, what we have seen across the way is the government saying, “We’ve got this, thanks”, or playing partisan politics.

The Liberals shuttered Parliament right in the heart of a global pandemic. Last July and August, they shuttered Parliament to cover up a scandal. That is the truth. Those are the facts. Right when Canadians' COVID relief packages were coming due, they shuttered Parliament. They kept parliamentarians away from their job. Every day, we are faced with more and more constituents who are at their wits' end.

• (2225)

Politicians, federal, provincial and municipal, are facing angry constituents because it is time. It is time for all of us to lead and show leadership to Canadians.

In terms of the vaccine rollout, I have listened to my colleagues across the way pointing fingers at the provinces. The inconsistencies with the vaccine rollout lay squarely at the feet of our federal

government. As was said earlier, it had one job to do and that was to secure vaccines.

Everyone wants to make sure we are doing whatever we can to open the doors so that we could get back to a new normal, whatever that looks like. It is frustrating for me because, believe it or not, I am probably the most non-partisan person, as evidenced by the work I have done across all party lines to get pieces of legislation passed that benefit Canadians. I will do whatever I can to make sure that we are benefiting Canadians.

I have taken that approach, far and wide, even throughout this. I have tried to be a good soldier as well. However, I am feeling frustrated because that phone rings every day, and on that phone are business owners who are probably going to close their doors because they do not know how to make ends meet, or it is that constituent who has lost their job, or that nurse who is tired, or that medical professional, who is worn out and saying, “We need help. Nobody is listening. We need leadership.”

I have not even talked about the opioid crisis here in our province. We have been calling on the federal government to declare it a national health emergency. It has only gotten worse during this pandemic.

If anyone senses the frustration coming from me, it is because I wear my heart on my sleeve, as members know. I am tired of getting those phone calls from constituents. We were making phone calls this week, and there was somebody who was the beneficiary of a very large Canada summer jobs grant, which they are very thankful for. However, they said that they had sadly had to close their doors. That is a personal story that is heartbreaking.

I know all my colleagues on all sides of the House get this. Our colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands, somebody who is usually not that partisan, has said that Canada is lagging in vaccinations, testing and tracing. We could be better. We should be better.

The Prime Minister and his Liberal colleagues have stood up, trumpeting about all the vaccines. However, they had to go to a program that is designed for third world or have-not countries to make sure that we had vaccines for Canadians. Early on, in the days when we were asking about why we were not doing something about closing our borders, we were ridiculed for fearmongering and being racist. Early on the government said that masks were not necessary. Then it said that maybe we should be wearing masks.

It is all that misinformation, as we go along the way, that adds to, and fuels, the frustration. That has fuelled where we are today in the midst of a third wave of this pandemic. If we do not do what we need to do today, we are going to be in a fourth wave.

Sadly, I think the Prime Minister is more concerned with engineering a pandemic election so that he could guarantee a majority for himself, rather than focusing on benefits for, and the well-being of, Canadians. We saw a budget announced that was really just an election budget.

We need a plan. We are having this emergency debate today because we are all frustrated. Canadians are frustrated. It is time. It is well past the time. I would challenge my Liberal colleagues, who are going to stand up and question my integrity, to tell me what I am supposed—

• (2230)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry, but we have to go questions and comments.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I certainly would never question the integrity of the member. I have a lot of respect for him. One thing I totally agree with him on is that he wears his heart on his sleeve, and I admire that about him.

However, I really think we need to keep the context here. That is key to this discussion. The truth is, and I have not seen this member do it, but I have seen a number of people from his party, especially during question period, get up and challenge how effective Canada is versus the United States, as one example, and talk about how the United States is so far ahead of us. Here is some information. As of today, Canada recorded 5,800 new COVID cases for the whole country. By comparison, Michigan recorded 5,900 and Florida recorded 5,600.

Would the member not at least agree, in that spirit of non-partisanship that he was talking about, that sometimes we might over-inflate a situation, both on this side and that side, in order to make a situation look better or worse?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I heard my hon. colleague talk about comparing apples to apples in earlier interventions when people were talking about Taiwan, Australia or New Zealand. Here is a fact: Only 2% of Canadians are fully vaccinated. That fact right there lies squarely at the feet of this Liberal government.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, first, I want to thank my colleague for Saanich—Gulf Islands for triggering tonight's debate.

My colleague is genuine, and I do appreciate his speech and the work that he does on the all-party mental health caucus, which I sit on with him. I appreciate him talking about the opioid crisis.

The member talked about the small business owners who are struggling right now with mental health challenges, especially as they are facing the next six to eight weeks during this third wave. Does my colleague not agree that the government needs to expand the CEBA loan, help with liquidity, and help those who have fallen through the cracks? One example of this is start-ups, which are getting absolutely nothing right now. Does he agree that it is critical that we support those small entrepreneurs and small businesses in the coming weeks so that they can get through this?

S. O. 52

Like he said, we are going to lose tens of thousands of businesses, and there is going to be a long-term recovery for those people, not just for their economic recovery but for the recovery of their mental health.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, absolutely, I think we need to be doing everything we can to support our small businesses. There are so many businesses that have fallen through the cracks, such as our tourism businesses and seasonal operators.

I have major events in my riding that our municipalities depend on, such as the Williams Lake Stampede, Billy Barker Days, the British Columbia Northern Exhibition, and the Vanderhoof Fall Fair. These are all huge economic generators for our region, and the businesses and communities that depend on those events are desperately hurting.

I honestly think that we need to rethink this. We need to be providing more supports for these small businesses because every day I pick up the phone and there is another business that is closing its doors. I thank my—

• (2235)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have time for one last question from the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech. As the member is from northern British Columbia, I would like to get his comments on keeping the camps open for workers who were travelling back and forth early in the pandemic and the spread that happened in the northern communities. Now I am hearing from teachers who are saying that these camp workers are vaccinated, but they are still waiting for their vaccines in areas where COVID is exploding.

I would like to hear the member's comments about the priorities of the provincial government in terms of vaccinating and in terms of the lockdowns.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I think there is fault that can be laid at a number of governments' feet. However, the failure to secure the vaccinations that were needed on a timely basis to make sure that we could continue lies squarely at the feet of our Liberal government. We needed those vaccines for our northern, rural and remote communities to be safe and secure, and we know they have been unfairly punished and left out in this pandemic.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

It is about 10:35 p.m. as I rise to speak in this important debate. During the pandemic, we have lost many Canadians to COVID-19. Some people lost a loved one and were unable to visit them in the hospital as they would have liked.

S. O. 52

This evening, I would like to talk about someone who served in the House for 22 years, the Hon. Don Boudria. He lost his mother yesterday, and I would like to offer him my deepest condolences. Ms. Loiselle was a constituent of mine and a wonderful woman. I know that her family is mourning her. She had a good life, and she raised a very good boy who went on to serve his community.

In March and April 2020, every member of the House experienced the same thing. We all brought thousands of Canadians home from abroad. We all worked with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was very busy bringing home Canadians on flights as some airports completely shut down.

Members were getting calls at all hours of the day and night about repatriating all these Canadians. That is how the pandemic started for MPs. We did everything we could to bring these Canadians home. On March 13, 2020, we instructed Canadians not to travel anymore, as it was no longer safe to leave Canada.

That was a very difficult time for many MPs. It was like being hit by a tsunami that no one saw coming. The entire world went through this. Today, I want to thank all those who were involved in this operation, all those officials who worked to repatriate all the Canadians. It is already a distant memory now, in April 2021, but that is how the pandemic started for the majority of Canadians.

Today, I also want to thank all front-line workers and first responders. In my riding, the Eastern Ontario Health Unit did an excellent job of deploying rapid testing. People could be tested at a drive-through assessment centre in Casselman.

I really want to thank Dr. Paul Roumeliotis, the chief executive officer of the Eastern Ontario Health Unit. He has done an outstanding job, but it is not over yet. I know he has not slept in a year, like most of us here today.

Once people returned to Canada, the provinces implemented quarantine measures. That is when business owners and people who had lost their jobs overnight started coming to us, because they had to go into quarantine. At that point we had little information about the COVID-19 virus.

I want to thank all members for their work, but I also want to thank all of the business owners who contacted me during this period to say they needed help because they had lost their jobs and had no income. They were not eligible for employment insurance and wanted to know if there would be another program. The Canada emergency response benefit was created.

My aunt, who passed away on Saturday, was a hairdresser. Unfortunately, the vast majority of hairdressers were not eligible for employment insurance. The Canada emergency response benefit was helpful to them during the shutdown, as it provided some assistance to cover personal expenses. If they had to pay rent, they could apply for the emergency subsidy to get support.

Our government delivered for Canadians because we listen. None of this would have been possible without our Prime Minister, who did everything he could to help Canadians.

● (2240)

That mission did not change for our Prime Minister in 2021. It is still very real. In my opinion, it also did not change for the members who sit in the House either in person or virtually.

We are now in the midst of the third wave, and I would like to thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for requesting this emergency debate.

We are still getting requests for help every day. Business owners in my riding were telling me recently that they did not know how they would survive if the Canada emergency wage subsidy was to end in June. They asked me to extend that measure.

The budget that our Minister of Finance presented on Monday confirmed that this measure will be extended until September, and I know that will help many business owners in my riding. The extension of the Canada emergency rent subsidy will also help many businesses to survive.

Our strategy for the pandemic is to build a bridge to help businesses survive and to participate in the economic recovery.

On Monday, the finance minister announced that she wanted to create a million jobs by the end of the year. That is a commendable goal because we know that, during the last recession, it took nearly 10 years, from 2008 to 2018, to create and bring back all of the jobs that were lost.

Everyone in the House has acknowledged that women have paid the price for this pandemic. I cannot repeat what my wife said when I told her that we plan to bring in \$10-a-day child care. Her words were unparliamentary, but I can assure my colleagues that the message was very positive. My wife works with women entrepreneurs, first at Startup Canada Entrepreneurship Empowers Everyone and now at Global Entrepreneurship Network, where she keeps hearing every day about how child care is a hurdle for women business owners or those who want to start a business.

Earlier, I heard my colleagues ask us what we were going to do to help new businesses. I can assure them that helping families get access to \$10-a-day child care alone will open a whole range of jobs in our communities in Canada.

[English]

In English we call that a game-changer. It will be a game-changer for society. I cannot say how many female entrepreneurs I have met in my riding who have told me they need some help with child care. It is a true story in rural Canada, particularly in rural Ontario, and it is also a true story in urban communities.

The other issue is rural Internet access. I know that many children who are trying to learn from home simply do not have access to good broadband. Access to a reliable Internet service should be a right in Canada. We answered that question in budget 2019, but in budget 2021, we added another billion dollars to speed up the timeline to connect every Canadian who wants a reliable, speedy connection. That means access to offered services and access to schooling, and it means being able to talk to the family members we all miss so much.

I want to finish with the procurement strategy. I have full confidence in the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. She has done a great job. We started off with an objective of six million doses by Q1, and we ended up with 9.5 million. We are going to get almost 50 million doses, with current timelines, by the end of June. That is a lot more doses to vaccinate every Canadian who chooses to have a vaccine and includes the second dose for those who choose to have one.

We are on track, we have done a good job and we will continue working with the provinces.

• (2245)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, in British Columbia, where I am from, the numbers are going up, and nurses, health care providers and doctors are crying out for relief. They are exhausted. They are making decisions in their provision of health care that they never thought they would have to make and it is extremely stressful.

One of the challenges is that low-income people who need to work to pay for basic necessities do not have access to paid sick leave during COVID or at any other time. I am wondering if the member could speak to addressing this issue in a fulsome way not only for COVID, but also going into the future.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I do not know about the system in B.C., but I know that in Ontario there is a federal program and people have to wait two weeks to get dollars. In Ontario, some are pushing the premier to implement sick days, and that means not having the wait period. I encourage them.

I know the member is in the NDP, so perhaps she could speak to her NDP premier. If sick days are not available in B.C., I urge her to get inspiration from the Liberals and the NDP in Ontario to push the premier to implement sick days.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I will start by saying to my hon. colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell that I look forward to the day when we are back in the House of Commons again.

I am going to ask the hon. member to reflect on the answer I would have given the member for Kingston and the Islands when I was in the queue. That member said that he really did not see the benefit of greater coordination. To be clear, the Greens are saying we need a different structure. If it is not the Emergencies Act, it is something else, such as a task force, and something that works.

We just saw reports this week. What difference would it make? The Emergencies Act, for example, allows the government to decide where critical supplies should go. That would include vaccines.

S. O. 52

We are getting reports that Ontario has for political reasons not listened to science and has not delivered vaccines to the places where they are most needed. Low-income, racialized communities with high levels of COVID were not given the vaccines they should have received, in preference for areas where Conservative voters predominate. I do not know if this is true, as it is a media report, but it is absolutely wrong. It verges on the criminal. Certainly there is more we should do to ensure that vaccines go where scientists say they should go.

• (2250)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I miss the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. I look forward to seeing her in the back corner where I usually sit. We get to chat about everything else but politics.

I hear the member regarding the task force and perhaps creating a new governance structure, but with the number of vaccines that will be coming within a month and a half, I do not know if creating a new governance structure right now would be the appropriate way forward.

I will continue to push the provinces to continue to speak to our chief medical officers. In Ontario, for instance, there are 34 or 35 public health authorities. I am certainly in close contact with my province's chief medical officer to ensure that we get our fair share of vaccines and to ensure that he has the proper resources. If he needs access to the Red Cross or the military, he needs to speak up through the chain of command in his area. I will be that voice in Ottawa.

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 the member just referenced, we will have an estimated 44 million vaccine doses before the end of June. Part of this goes to the importance of the relationship between the provinces and Ottawa and of working together. This is about Ottawa getting the vaccines and the provinces administering the vaccines.

There is a great deal of coordination between the two levels of government through different departments and so forth. Could the member emphasize from his perspective the importance of that relationship?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I agree with his question. I want to say that coordination is extremely important. I only hope that if provinces need more resources that they ask the federal government so that we can provide them.

S. O. 52

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is great to see my colleagues this evening. I look forward to the opportunity to participate in this emergency debate that was requested by my hon. colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands. My thanks for this opportunity and for raising a very important issue to, I know, all Canadians who are watching or not watching this evening, who are home with their families and preparing for the day ahead tomorrow.

I rise tonight as many parts of our country are plunged into a third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. For 13 months, Canadians and the residents of my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge have been carefully following public health measures, limiting their interactions, wearing masks in public, working from home and keeping their distance whenever possible. It has not been easy, but Canadians have risen to the occasion, doing what needs to be done to protect themselves and each other. I would add that at this time, many residents of my riding and Canadians across the country are now signing up to be vaccinated. I encourage all residents and all Canadians when they are eligible to do so, to please go and get their vaccines. The way we get out of this pandemic is to obtain a vaccine. We know that literally millions of them are arriving on a weekly basis here in Canada. I am very happy to announce that I will be receiving the AstraZeneca vaccine tomorrow in late afternoon. I look forward to that.

I would like to assure Canadians that the Government of Canada has developed and is implementing its plan to respond to the pandemic on all fronts. COVID-19, as we know, is a very contagious illness with significant rates of both hospitalizations and deaths. Every day in Canada we are seeing case counts climb and hospitalizations increase. These are real people. They have families. We pray for them that they make it safely back home and recover from COVID-19.

Health Canada has authorized four different COVID-19 vaccines: Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson's Janssen. Another vaccine by Novavax is currently undergoing Health Canada's regulatory review. All of the authorized vaccines have shown to be very effective at preventing hospitalizations and deaths. Health Canada only authorizes a vaccine if it is supported by very robust scientific data and evidence showing that the benefits of the vaccine clearly outweigh any potential risks. Each vaccine has unique characteristics and all authorized vaccines are very helpful in the fight against COVID-19. Having additional vaccines from different manufacturers can help meet volume requirements to get more people vaccinated sooner and offers more vaccination options.

The government has been hard at work negotiating with manufacturers and suppliers to secure significant vaccine supply for Canadians and planning for the vaccine rollout. In the development of this plan, the federal government has engaged in consulting all levels of government; indigenous leaders; international partners; industry; and medical and science experts, among others.

On December 8, 2020, the government published "Canada's COVID-19 Immunization Plan: Saving Lives and Livelihoods". At the heart of the plan are six core principles: science-driven decision-making, transparency, coherence and adaptability, fairness and equity, public involvement and consistent reporting. These principles

are governing and informing our vaccination rollout actions. The plan also outlines the seven steps in the rollout process. These are communicating with and engaging Canadians throughout the campaign; obtaining sufficient supply of vaccine; obtaining regulatory authorization from Health Canada to ensure safety and efficacy of vaccines; allocating and distributing vaccines efficiently and securely; administering the vaccines according to a sequence of priority populations identified by experts; and collecting data to monitor vaccine safety, effectiveness and coverage.

We are making progress and we are laying the groundwork for great gains and momentum in the coming months. As colleagues no doubt know from the news, we have procured through advance purchase agreements, more than enough vaccine doses to vaccinate all eligible Canadians who wish to receive a vaccination. The federal government and the provinces and territories have worked together collaboratively to develop a plan for the fair and equitable allocation of vaccine doses. Without compromising regulatory integrity, we have expedited the regulatory reviews of promising vaccine candidates. Health Canada is using agile regulatory processes to review vaccines as quickly as possible, while maintaining our rigorous standard for safety, efficacy and quality. Health Canada has hired additional scientists and has established dedicated review teams for COVID-19 vaccines.

● (2255)

In order to ensure consistency in their reviews, these teams have been working literally around the clock to expedite them. Health Canada's findings are based on a sound and thorough review of all evidence available. The department only authorizes a vaccine following a rigorous review of the evidence to determine that it meets stringent requirements for safety, efficacy and quality. Health Canada continues to actively monitor and assess the safety and effectiveness of all vaccines authorized for use in Canada.

Health Canada is also working closely with other major regulators who are reviewing the same vaccines. These partnerships allow us to share scientific evidence and streamline review processes while still making independent decisions for Canadians. These partners include international regulators in Europe, the United Kingdom and around the world to share evidence, discuss findings and combine the best scientific brains to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

Health Canada's assessments and regulatory decisions are largely aligned with those of our partners. All the vaccines in use in Canada are closely monitored through Canada's vaccine safety monitoring system. We will keep Canadians informed about what we find out, and take appropriate action should any safety issue be confirmed. We will report any adverse events that occur following vaccination and conduct investigations in order to assess whether they were caused by vaccination.

We are deeply grateful to have members of the Canadian Armed Forces working within the operations of the vaccine rollout task force. As logistics experts, they are playing a vital role in the success of our campaign. In addition to the forces, we have engaged the private sector to support the logistics of this ambitious undertaking, and to assist with administering the vaccines in the provinces and territories, we are enlisting the help of the Canadian Red Cross and other health care professionals.

We are truly in an unprecedented situation, and this has called for all hands on deck. In fulfilling our mandate to provide transparency, we post updates to the Government of Canada's website, canada.ca, on our progress on vaccination administration and coverage. We also provide authoritative information and data on COVID-19.

In closing, although we must continue to implement public health measures, we can be optimistic that our efforts will start to pay off if we remain steadfast.

• (2300)

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, one of the things that both the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and I discussed in our speeches, and the reason we asked for this debate, is that we are seeing other actions in other countries and other jurisdictions. I am wondering if the hon. member could outline what he sees as some of the key learning that we can take forward to make sure we are prepared the next time, because we have heard from scientists and epidemiologists that the crash in biodiversity on this planet is going to lead to more pandemics and more problems like this.

What planning and preparing are we going to have in place for next time?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I would say that I share the member's, and all members', passion, care and concern for our environment, climate change and what that is impacting in terms of biodiversity, so we must continue to act as a country in terms of transitioning to a green economy. In terms of the question and what we need to do, we obviously need to pay attention to all signals in the environment. We need to look to what all our international partners are doing with regard to the pandemic and adopt what is working, and largely we are doing that. We have some of the most stringent restrictions on international travel. We have encouraged Canadians not to travel at this point in time. We have all stated to our constituents that now is not the time to travel internationally, that we must socially distance and heed the advice of our public health officials.

Now, let us get these vaccines. They are arriving. Let us get vaccinated. I encourage all residents and Canadians to do so.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member whom I served with on the finance committee for three years from 2015 to 2017.

Time is of the essence. We are racing against time. The economy of our southern neighbour is opening, as are Australia's, New Zealand's and part of Europe's, and time is of the essence because mental health stress is on the rise. As MPs, we all receive calls from constituents. Their frustration and anxiety is at the highest level.

S. O. 52

Only a very small percentage of Canadians are fully vaccinated. The remaining majority of Canadians are not. Can the member outline—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know it is getting late into the evening in this very important debate, however, there is a protocol within the House that all members be wearing jackets while speaking. This member does not appear to be wearing a jacket right now, unfortunately.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I can put on a jacket. This is an interruption, more or less. Please excuse me while I put my jacket on, and I will continue.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will allow you a few seconds to go put your jacket on.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I am hoping the member who made the point of order will pay more attention to the vaccination of Canadians than to my jacket.

Could the hon. member tell us what the anticipated timeline is for all Canadians to be vaccinated with the two vaccines necessary to make sure they are safe?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Edmonton Manning is a colleague and a friend. It is nice to see him this evening. I wish him and his family well. Please stay safe.

To answer the hon. member's question, vaccines are arriving by the millions. I have a great deal of confidence in our Minister of Public Services and Procurement. Vaccines are arriving. We have great coverage for Canadians. We have the largest portfolio of vaccines. They will be arriving, and all Canadians who wish to receive a vaccine, if I remember correctly, will be eligible to do so by the end of the summer, going into September. I think that is great news for all Canadians.

• (2305)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the member's remarks.

Beyond vaccines, how important is it that we take a dual approach, getting the vaccines out there and dealing with health, and putting COVID-19 behind us and being prepared for the future? What do we need to be doing? Is the government going in the right direction?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, friend and mentor for that question.

Budget 2021 takes us in this direction. The government has put out a budget, and we do have to take a dual track. We have to worry about the health of Canadians, get vaccines into the arms of Canadians, and at the same we have to focus on recovery and growing our economy again. That is what we are doing. That is what has certainly been laid out in budget 2021.

S. O. 52

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, even at this late hour it is important to take part in this emergency debate. I really want to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for bringing this to the attention of the Speaker and the Speaker for ultimately granting this emergency debate. It is an important one to have, not just to look back at some of the issues we have had, but how we can correct those issues as well.

Let me begin by providing some advice to the government right off the bat. Roberta Place long-term care facility is 10 minutes from where I am tonight. Many MPs and Canadians came to know about the crisis at Roberta Place. Seventy-one seniors passed away. Almost the entire staff was infected by one variant of this virus, the U.K. variant. After 10 months of the staff working so hard to provide a ring around Roberta Place, it took one person with the U.K. variant to come into Roberta Place and that variant effectively became a firestorm through the building, resulting in many deaths of seniors and leaving a community devastated and reeling.

Therefore, I have some advice for the government tonight, after hearing some of the breaking news going on right now about the new variant, the B.1.617 variant. The B.C. government and health ministry has indicated there are 39 cases of that new variant, which means it is already here. We found out earlier today that one case of that variant was identified in Quebec. My advice to the government right now, and this cannot wait any longer, given the circumstances that we went through, is to shut down flights where those variants have originated.

We hear tonight that France has banned flights from the countries where that variant is coming from. We hear that the United Kingdom has banned flights from those countries as well. It is already here and we need to do everything we can to keep it out for the sake and safety of Canadians. In the spirit of what the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands was proposing tonight with respect to solutions, this is one that the government needs to act on immediately and take the advice from where it is coming, a community that was decimated as a result of what happened at Roberta Place, with just one person bringing that variant in.

The level of anxiety and mental health in the country is palpable. It certainly is palpable within my community of Barrie—Innisfil. Not a day goes by when I do not hear from business owners or from moms who are worried about their children as a result of what has gone on.

If we are going to move forward and help deal with this crisis, there are a couple of things we need to focus on in addition to the very serious issue I brought up right from the start. We need to get down to the grassroots, the base of truth and facts.

People are exhausted. There has been a lot of confusing information coming from all levels of government. The lines of government have been extremely blurred throughout this process. Whether it is municipal, provincial or federal, people are looking to government for factual information. People are becoming confused and that is creating doubt among Canadians as to what the proper course of action.

Therefore, the one thing I would encourage the government to do is to be truthful and be factual with Canadians. It is what they need

and it is what they want right now. That means providing information, being open and transparent. There have been several cases over the course of the last several months, throughout the course of this pandemic, where we have had to basically scratch, claw, fight and push and pull for information from the government, whether regarding the contracts for the vaccines or other issues.

● (2310)

I implore the government to be truthful and factual with Canadians when it comes to information as it relates to all aspects of this. The confusion, which is creating the doubt, is creating the exhaustion among Canadians right now.

If we go back to the beginning of this crisis, there were several issues, and we can learn from them. There were medical intelligence briefings talking about what was happening around the world, particularly in China, and the early warning system being shut down. Flights from hot spots were coming into Canada from areas like Spain and Italy, all dealing with massive outbreaks. I recall being at a joint interparliamentary committee meeting and talking about MP flights. There was some concern that if we banned MP flights, maybe we would scare people into trying to understand the situation. A lot of the things that have gone need to be corrected.

To get back to the factual information, there was a lot of confusion in the beginning as to whether we should wear masks or not wear masks and that the risk was low. We heard a lot of that coming from the government as well. We knew back in November that we would have a serious deficiency with vaccines. We were starting to understand at the time that the government had put all of its eggs in the CanSino basket. We were starting to see that the U.K. and the U.S. were getting vaccines at the time. Flights were going into the United States and the U.K. with vaccines and they were being highly publicized, yet Canada did not receive anything until December. That has been a challenge for us, especially with the evolution of the variants coming into Canada.

This virus is not going away. It is going to stay with us and that is adding to the anxiety of Canadians. We need to learn to manage it much better. We need to mitigate the challenges that exist with this, and that includes vaccines. We need to ensure there are enough. Clearly there has not been enough at this point to get us in a better situation. Yes, it is easy to compare to the United Kingdom and the United States. When Canadian baseball fans see Texas Stadium filling up with 40,00 people and we are still in lockdown, that causes Canadians to question where we are with vaccines.

Rapid testing is another issue. This is how we are going to mitigate this problem, but we have not seen rapid testing to the extent and degree that we have seen, for example, in the United Kingdom. I have another phone call tomorrow with a company that is looking to get rapid tests approved by Health Canada. This has been a challenge for many companies in Canada that have provided their products to Health Canada for approval.

Isolating people, those with underlying health conditions and comorbidities, is critical in managing this crisis as well as contact tracing. Other countries have done that significantly well. The government talked about the app, but we do not hear about that anymore.

Those are some of the ideas that the Conservatives have come up with in order to mitigate this. We cannot continue, by default, to lock down the Canadian population. The heightened anxiety, the fear and the mental health crisis happening in the country is really significant. I know all members of Parliament are dealing with it on a day in and day out basis as we deal with our constituents.

Therefore, I am asking for what Canadians are demanding of government, governments at all levels, and that is the truth, honesty and giving them some hope as to when this crisis may end, because right now there is not much hope. We hear on the news about these new variants, vaccine distribution and procurement issues. We hear about all that stuff and it is adding to the anxiety. By being truthful and honest with Canadians and letting them know exactly where we stand, we can provide them with hope.

Finally, we need a plan to reopen the economy soon. We cannot keep burdening businesses and people employed by those businesses, because it is going to add to the anxiety and mental health.

I know this has been said several times, but I want to thank our front-line workers, health care workers, first responders and others for really carrying the yoke on this crisis.

• (2315)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am trying to understand this member's position and how it has changed dramatically. Can he explain to this House why he voted in favour two or three weeks ago to set up a plan to reopen our economy immediately? He is now talking about how we need stricter measures, we need tighter lockdowns and these other things. The Conservatives are so reactive to everything.

Why did he vote in favour and support an opposition motion to establish a plan to reopen the economy, when a couple weeks later he is suddenly so concerned that he is completely backtracking and insists that we do the exact opposite?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I am going to challenge the member on that because he is factually wrong. The vote that was presented to Parliament was for the government to present a plan for reopening the economy. It was not a plan to reopen it immediately. Canadians and businesses in particular, and the people who are employed in those businesses, are looking for that plan.

In terms of shutting things down, I hope he is not confusing my request right off the top given the experience that happened here in Barrie with the U.K. variant. I hope he is not confusing that with shutting everything down. I am talking about doing what the U.K. and France did which is to ensure that there are no further cases of this new variant coming into this country. We already know they are here. There actually is danger involved within our country as a result of that.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, allow me, as a British Columbian, to really express solidarity with what the people of Ontario are going through. I have heard the interviews with critical care nurses and ICU doctors and it is really devastating to hear the strain they are going through and the incredibly difficult decisions they are having to make.

S. O. 52

My colleague knows the situation in Ontario and I know he has talked a lot about the vaccines, but that is going to take some time. I want to know what the federal government can be doing now. If the situation gets significantly worse in the days and weeks ahead in Ontario, does he think there might be room for the federal government to actually start declaring that we do have a public welfare emergency? We could maybe start constructing hospitals and free up emergency money to provide for paid sick leave. Does he believe there might be room for that team Canada approach with a captain at the helm?

• (2320)

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I know that the province has already started instituting plans. Locally, there have been additional settings and buildings that have been built, and that is happening right around the province. The province is actually trying to manage as best it can, with additional facilities, to look after the situation.

I know that over the weekend the Prime Minister and some of the ministers held a press conference putting on their capes and coming in on their white horses. The challenge is that it is a vaccine shortage issue. Even the local chief medical officer of health said today that there is a vaccine shortage here in our region. His concern is that there may be a fourth wave coming on top of the third wave we are currently experiencing. The vaccines will certainly help. The province is doing its best to get more vaccines into additional hot spot areas, but we do need vaccines.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, moment by moment since this debate started, we have had confirmation that the B.1.617 double variant from India first started with one case in Quebec now is confirmed to have 39 additional cases in British Columbia. In real time, this debate is dealing with increased threats from the variants.

I will say to him and to all members of this place that we will make more progress if we do not find blame with each other, but recognize everyone needs to work together. Our barriers to working together are baked into things like feeling we must not hurt a province's feeling and must not hurt a premier's feelings.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, in the spirit of what the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands was intending tonight, I hope I was able to articulate providing solutions together, which is exactly what Canadians expect.

To the issue of what is happening in B.C. with 39 cases and one in Quebec, given our experience in this area, I am trying to provide the government with an opportunity to act and to act quickly, despite the fact those variants are here, to further protect Canadians, which is the intent.

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise tonight to speak to the urgent matter of COVID-19 as we experience a third wave of the pandemic with new variants worsening the crisis.

S. O. 52

I stand here tonight with the weight of the frustrations, anxiety, anger, depression, grief and hopelessness my constituents and Canadians across our nation are suffering during this daunting hour in history. It has been 13 months since the pandemic lockdowns began, and hospitalizations and ICU admissions are soaring.

The nature of a crisis is that it takes us by surprise. The initial shock can cause us to panic or become numb, but we must inevitably face the reality of the loss, damage and change and begin coping with a long-term vision of not only survival, but sustainability. While we cannot fully control the unpredictable, life-threatening nature of COVID-19, we can certainly have control over how we respond. Surely, with knowledge, foresight and proper planning, and with the synergy of many strong minds and good hearts coming together, we can limit the damage of the pandemic on our lives and our institutions. If we can navigate the pandemic, united with humility, honesty and introspection, and commit to making things right and doing what is right, we can establish the foundation of a stronger future for Canada.

We are living at a pivotal moment of Canada's history, when patriotism must govern our actions and selfish motives be snuffed out. More than ever, we must set aside all agendas and set the best interests of the people and our future as our priority.

I would like to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for calling us to this debate. In fact, we must move together intelligently and humbly to outwit this microscopic organism. Before we can move together, accountability and integrity must be established, and the government must take note of where it has fallen short with honest self-assessment. It must change its trajectory where there are electorally driven agendas and step up to the call for wise leadership to save our nation, but that is a decision it has to make.

It has been over a year since the pandemic caused lockdowns across our country, and we have now defaulted to a third-wave lockdown. People are traumatized, exhausted and short on hope from this roller coaster ride. There is a rise in domestic violence and opioid overdose, and suicide attempts are spiking. Drastic lockdown measures have pulverized businesses and industries, and stir unrest as civil rights continue to be challenged. Families cannot gather for holidays. Faith communities, which offer solace and comfort, cannot gather. College students are missing out on the joy of campus life experiences. The live performance industry has forfeited sharing its skills and enriching audiences with its talents. Audiovisual technicians I have spoken with say that the skills and techniques they have developed over decades like fine wine are becoming dull because they have no shows to work. The pandemic lockdowns have created serious implications for culture, psychology and human excellence for the sake of saving lives.

The root of the devastation is not the lockdowns themselves, but the lack of foresight and planning on the part of the government, which has prolonged the lockdowns and their severity. The collateral damage from severe lockdowns could have been lessened had the government been more pre-emptive along the way with better procurement of rapid testing and vaccines to protect Canadians and safely work our way to reopening Canada.

During the time I have been serving as a member of the 43rd Parliament, I have come to see how the current government oper-

ates. Rather than working collaboratively with the opposition parties, it has been busy proroguing Parliament to shut down investigations into its WE scandal and delaying procurement of PPE, rapid testing and vaccines, while putting together an election budget that does not address the need for adequate health care funding support to the provinces, but gives a tremendous amount of spending with no viable plan for job creation and economic growth. These are things that give us hope.

The member for Cariboo—Prince George introduced a three-digit national suicide prevention hotline, but the government has not moved on it despite the spike in suicide numbers.

● (2325)

South of the border, our neighbours are vaccinated and that is why cases and hospitalizations are dropping. Their businesses are opening and their patios are busy as fans gather to watch in-person sports and games.

If Canadians had been vaccinated in January and February, we could have prevented a third wave, but by the end of February, only 4% of Canadians had received their first shot, and to date only 2% of Canadians are fully vaccinated.

Our current situation was avoidable. Could this third wave have been avoided had the government done things differently? The health minister allowed our pandemic early warning system to be shut down just months before COVID-19 hit. The Prime Minister sent hundreds of thousands of masks, gloves and gowns from the government's own reserves to China, and a month later our own health care professionals were lacking and told to economize on their PPE. The borders were not shut early enough, and the virus spread. The Prime Minister could not decide whether Canadians should wear masks, and the health minister purported that the risk was low.

COVID-19 response benefits rolled out slowly and took months to fix, after Conservatives and other opposition parties raised concerns and offered productive solutions to help Canadians. Now we are behind our allies in securing future COVID-19 vaccines. We should not be turning to plans that were made for poorer countries to access our vaccines. When the House of Commons summons the contracts that were ordered to be released on procurement and it is not done, then accountability is questioned.

Tonight I do not say these things to condemn the government or stir up more scrutiny, because I believe we are in a time when there is a great opportunity to change the trajectory if we can only be honest and humble enough to assess our shortcomings.

If there is anything this season is teaching us, it is to have better care for our fellow humans. With the exposure of injustices and vulnerabilities in our society, from gender-based violence like domestic violence, to racist hate crimes with the recent spike in anti-Asian hate crimes, to sexual misconduct in the military that we are looking into right now, we have an opportunity to drain the swamp. There is no time like now to get to the root of our culture and make things better.

I hope accountability will lead the way, because without it, everything else is merely optics and lip service. Canadians deserve better. Our democratic institutions, which our veterans and fallen heroes have fought for, deserve better. I hope that we can focus more on legislating things that will give Canadians more hope, and that as politicians we will break the curse and the cycle of the long-standing history of “corrupt politician” and actually give thought to caring for the people. I did not struggle through my life to be here to do things for electoral reasons. I came here to serve the people of Canada and my constituents.

That was the heart of many people who came here originally, but somehow politics has led them astray, in the wrong directions for different reasons, and I want to encourage the government and all colleagues across all aisles to let this moment be a turning point for Canada's Parliament, that in this moment of crisis when Canadians need us the most, we will do the right thing, even if it costs us a few inconveniences.

• (2330)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what we must also remember in this chamber is truth and honesty, of which there was a lot lacking in that speech. While I am on that, the member referred to the U.K. and said that vaccinations would have prevented all these lockdowns. However, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom actually acknowledged that, when they saw cases increasing in the third wave, it was lockdowns and strict public health measures that allowed them to continue to vaccinate and allowed the vaccinations to do their work.

Weeks ago, members opposite moved and supported motions to open up the economy and ignore public health, just open everything up. In addition, the health critic for the Conservatives wanted us to remove our strict quarantine measures at the border for people entering this country and applauded those who challenge those measures in court.

Would the member please let us know if she still supports removing the border measures and lifting all restrictions despite public health being against it?

Ms. Nelly Shin: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her question, but my head is kind of spinning, because I cannot seem to extract the truth in what she is saying. I do not think I made reference to the U.K., first of all. I was talking about the U.S., south of the border.

However, to answer the question, absolutely not, and there needs to be a safe process to recover the economy and opening Canada. Lockdowns are there to protect people, but if vaccines were in place, and enough of them, then these lockdowns would not have to be so severe. These drastic measures, which have had a huge men-

tal health toll on so many people, would not have to be so severe. We have to factor those in. When I talk about foresight and having a long-term, sustainable vision on how to handle crises, that is exactly what I am referring to.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, for her speech. They were very heartfelt words.

In our province of British Columbia, it is clear that the most important place for transmission is in the workplace, and everywhere it is low-income workers who are most affected. They have to go to work or they lose pay, because they do not have paid sick leave.

Does the member not think that the first thing we should do is bring in real, effective, paid sick leave across Canada so that sick workers stay at home where they want to be and where we want them to be?

• (2335)

Ms. Nelly Shin: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague. I always enjoy his questions and the work that he is doing.

I believe for that workers who are unable to make a livelihood right now because they are sick or whether it is anything else that makes them vulnerable, this is a time when we need to provide support in real time, otherwise it means nothing. In terms of support for workers who are sick, absolutely, we need to respond to them and help them.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam. However, I think the member inadvertently used the word “corrupt” in relation to people in the House.

I want to maybe not ask a question but just put a comment.

I am concerned that we are not doing what we should do as a nation to protect our population. I firmly believe that it is not the fault of any one political party, certainly not the fault of any one politician and has nothing whatsoever to do with corruption. I believe it is deeply rooted in the notion of federation where fear of offending a province is overriding what should be leadership to protect lives.

I do not know if the member has any comments on that, but that is my comment.

Ms. Nelly Shin: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for raising this debate tonight.

I think that corruption at the core has to do with the lack of moral integrity and can be in the form of not owning up to that moral courage to do what is right. That is how I look at corruption.

S. O. 52

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 sharing my time with my good friend, the member for Hull—Aylmer.

I first want to thank the health care workers and essential workers who have made life so much better for the rest of us because of their sense of commitment to be there in a very difficult time in our history. I would also like to extend my condolences to those who have lost a loved one because of the coronavirus.

Our constituents want us to work together and do whatever we can to battle COVID-19. When I think of solutions, two things come to my mind. We need to respond to the needs of our provinces. When provinces come to Ottawa, we need to respond in the very best way that we can. We also need to encourage people to continue to do the right thing and to get vaccinated.

We have learned a great deal through this process, such as physical distancing, wearing a mask, washing our hands. We understand the importance of a local manufacturing capacity. We need to review what has taken place over the last number of months. These are all very important aspects and I suspect they will be given the time that is necessary with respect to the people who make these critical decisions, whether it is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, who is with this evening; or the Minister of Health; or other ministers; or the Prime Minister and so many others on all sides of the House who are trying to contribute positively to combatting the coronavirus, a virus that has killed, a virus that has caused so much damage to our society both from a social and an economic point of view.

We indicated at the very beginning that our first priority would be to have the backs of Canadians. That was stated by the Prime Minister long ago. We took a team Canada approach to develop programs that have helped millions of Canadians in every region of our riding. I believe the most successful program of them all is the CERB, which has helped well over eight million people. I could talk about how we supported small businesses through the emergency wage subsidy program, the emergency rent subsidy program, the credit availability program. I could talk about how we listened to people with disabilities, our seniors and helped them with one-time payments.

We recognized from the beginning the importance of the national government working with provinces and territories and indigenous leaders. I could cite, for example, the provincial restart program, a program that invested billions of dollars in provinces so we could be in a better position.

The government has been open from day one to ideas and solutions, ideas that would modify programs that we had put in place from scratch; they did not exist before. The government has been there in a very real and tangible way. Canadians have learned a great deal as has the government. We continue to work with those who want to work with the national government and even those who might be reluctant.

I think of the return to school program, ensuring school divisions had financial support as well as many other organizations, non-profits, charitable and so on. The government has been there in a very tangible way, protecting industries, whether it is aerospace or agriculture.

● (2340)

We have a plan and we have been administering the plan. One would have to be blind not to recognize that. About 44 million doses of vaccine will be in Canada before the end of June. The population of Canada is 37.5 million.

I am concerned about the approach from the Conservatives, our official opposition. It has changed. It is not what it was before mid-June. The Conservative opposition began to shift its approach in dealing with the coronavirus back in the summer. It did this big time, and I can cite examples. I could even give a very good example from today. I want to do that, because I think it illustrates the real agenda of the official opposition.

Here is something that was said earlier today by the member for Brandon—Souris:

The Government of Manitoba has already signed a contract with one of the Canadian pharmaceutical companies and they just announced a deal with North Dakota to get our truck drivers vaccinated. I applaud those actions as it is clear that they cannot wait for the Liberal vaccine portfolio to be delivered sometime down the road.

What was the member's purpose in making that statement?

Let us think about what other Conservatives have been saying this evening. One Conservative said the government needs to have truth and honesty in what it is saying. I suggest that, at the very least, there is a lot of misleading taking place, and it is coming from the official opposition.

Let us look again at the statement made by the member for Brandon—Souris. He is not the only member who, on this specific issue regarding Manitoba, is trying to mislead Manitobans and possibly Canadians. He is trying to give the impression that because Manitoba does not have vaccine doses, the premier had to go to North Dakota to get more vaccines to support long-haul truck drivers who are going into the United States.

I will read from an article that came out April 1 in the Winnipeg Free Press. It is from Tom Brodbeck, a reporter who is fairly well respected. His editorial comment says:

The province has received 248,180 doses of vaccine (all of which it's had since March 26) and has administered 199,322 of them.... The province still has an inventory of almost 50,000 doses, an amount that is expected to soar with the arrival of more shipments this week.

Earlier today I was told that Manitoba had somewhere in the neighbourhood of 350,000 doses, yet well over 100,000 doses have not been used. The article that I read said 150,000.

S. O. 52

The Conservatives use that to try to give a false impression that Ottawa is not getting the doses out. They say that something like 2% of people have received a double dose. Let us listen to what the health care experts are saying and let us stay away from the Conservative opposition. We know what is most effective. The provinces are administering vaccines, and they realize that the most effective way of protecting the population is to get the first dose out. The provinces know that. The Conservatives also understand that, but they choose to intentionally try to give an impression that 2% of the population has been covered.

I could cite many different examples, from over the last number of months, where the Conservatives have intentionally tried to misrepresent the reality. It is as if they are in full campaign mode and do not really care about what is actually happening in our communities. It is time for them to stop thinking about the election and start getting back to where they were in April, May and June 2020, when there was a whole lot more co-operation and the idea that the Conservatives could actually contribute, as opposed to being so partisan—

● (2345)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary to give way to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the parliamentary secretary refers to the middle of last June about the opposition to the Liberals as far as their COVID response. It was around this time that the CanSino agreement was being made with China, and that led to the problems we are facing today.

Does the parliamentary secretary not recognize that the incompetence of the Liberals has led to a big delay on vaccinations, which is impacting us today and costing lives and causing a lockdown? The Liberals have, by their choices, started to procure later on. Does the member not recognize that this third wave rests upon the Liberals, not on the provinces and not on the opposition? Will he and the Liberals not take responsibility for this?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, wanting to be parliamentary in my language, that is garbage, absolute total garbage.

The Conservatives try to say it is because we were trying to get a deal with China. We had seven other agreements. There were negotiations that were taking place with other companies. The member cannot tell me of another country in the G7 or the G20, outside of the U.S. and the U.K., that has more doses on the basis of 100. Canada is doing exceptionally well in comparison.

To try to give an impression that everything was on hold because of something that went bad in China is just wrong because there were negotiations that were taking place with a large number of companies. Canada, as a result, is in an excellent position to ensure that Canadians will in fact get the vaccination, and we are doing superbly by working with provinces today in getting them, not only—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to continue on with that line of questioning about vaccines because it is clear that we would have been ahead of the game, we would have had vaccines sooner, had we the ability to make those vaccines here in Canada as we once did. We had a Crown corporation.

Why does the government not take this golden opportunity and create a publicly owned Crown corporation whose sole task is to make vaccines and other critical pharmaceuticals for Canadians, as we once had with Connaught Labs?

Let us do that again so we would never be in this position again, and we would not have to negotiate with anybody. He can talk about how many companies we have negotiated with. Let us have a company of our own that can do this for Canadians so we are never caught in this situation again.

● (2350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, making sure that Canada has manufacturing capability is an excellent idea. This is something that, months ago, we actually supported by investing hundreds of millions of dollars, if not directly then indirectly, to ensure that is exactly what is going to happen. We have lost that capacity and we are restoring that capacity and we are committed to doing so. I appreciate the question.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, just as a point of small personal record, I will get my vaccine on April 29. That is the first available date for someone 66 years old, in this province, and that is why I did not come to Ottawa for the budget.

Is the government open to the idea of pulling together a high-level group of our public health experts, our scientists, our epidemiologists and asking them this point-blank question: Should this country shift our focus to get to zero COVID as opposed to letting it live among us for longer?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am glad the member is going to be getting her vaccination and I am sure she will get a lot of attention. I hope she gets a lot of attention as members of Parliament are leaders within our community. I get mine on May 3 at the RBC Convention Centre downtown, and I am going to encourage my constituents, as I know the former leader of the Green Party will do likewise.

The one thing I am not is a health expert. Recognizing that, I—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): On that note, we have to resume debate.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board.

S. O. 52

[*Translation*]

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, it is unfortunate that we could not hear the last part of the response by the 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.

In the time allotted to me, I would like to start by congratulating the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands on convincing the Chair to agree to this emergency debate about the third wave of viral infection. The member challenged us to hold a debate that would enable parliamentarians to work together. That is very important. However, I have to admit that, over the course of tonight's debate, I did come to wonder what had happened.

At the start of the pandemic, there was a wonderful and admirable desire on the part of all parties to work together. We were in a crisis, and it was crucial that everyone contribute to helping Canadians.

I was looking for an example of that wonderful collaboration to share, and it is funny how we can sometimes miss what is right in front of us or even right under our noses. I actually have a really great example to share from the Parliamentary Black Caucus. For almost a year now, this caucus of members of all political parties has been meeting to promote the interests of Black Canadians and to fight anti-Black and systemic racism.

We had a meeting again this evening. Members of all parties left partisanship at the door to discuss how to promote the interests of Black Canadians. The link between this example and the current debate is that cultural communities and racialized groups are more vaccine-hesitant, as we can see when we break down the data for Canada.

Two other observations must be made. The first is that these groups are overrepresented among victims of this virus. The reason

they are more likely to die of it is that they are often essential workers. They are working in long-term care centres or in hospitals, on the front lines, making sure the rest of society is protected. They are on the front lines of the fight against the coronavirus. They are the most vulnerable.

● (2355)

It is so important that we set partisanship aside in order to protect the people who are helping maintain the appearance of a functioning society during the pandemic.

This means that we all have a greater duty to be more accountable in our words, in the statistics we quote, in the advice and guidelines that our health authorities offer us. As members of Parliament, we have a responsibility to share this information and to give Canadians the facts. We do not want to scare them, cause panic, promote a point of view, be partisan or present facts selectively.

At this time, it is true that between 2.5% and 2.8% of Canadians have received both doses of the vaccine, so they are completely protected from the virus. This is true, and it is safe to say it. However, that is just one small part of the story. The other part, which is just as important if not more relevant, is that as of April 21, 25.9% of Canadians have received at least one dose of vaccine. We now rank third among G20 and G7 countries. That is a record. A more—

● (2400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his speech, but, it being midnight, unfortunately, the debate must end there.

[*English*]

It being midnight, I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12 a.m.)

CONTENTS

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Birthday Congratulations

Mr. Van Bynen 5907

COVID-19 Restrictions

Mr. Williamson 5907

Ramadan

Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North) 5907

Rail Transportation

Mr. Bergeron 5908

Montreal North Religious Leaders

Mr. Dubourg 5908

Mental Health

Mr. Carrie 5908

Essential Workers

Mr. McGuinty 5908

National Volunteer Week

Mrs. Shanahan 5908

Mental Health

Mr. Brassard 5909

Her Majesty the Queen of Canada

Mrs. Mendès 5909

The Environment

Ms. Alleslev 5909

The Economy

Mr. Lawrence 5909

Child Care

Ms. Gazan 5909

The Budget

Ms. Normandin 5910

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Mr. Chong 5910

Black Lives Matter

Ms. Ien 5910

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health

Mr. O'Toole 5910

Mr. Trudeau 5911

Mr. O'Toole 5911

Mr. Trudeau 5911

Mr. O'Toole 5911

Mr. Trudeau 5911

The Budget

Mr. O'Toole 5911

Mr. Trudeau 5911

Health

Mr. O'Toole 5911

Mr. Trudeau 5912

Mr. Blanchet 5912

Mr. Trudeau 5912

Mr. Blanchet 5912

Mr. Trudeau 5912

Mr. Singh 5912

Mr. Trudeau 5912

Mr. Singh 5912

Mr. Trudeau 5912

Mr. Deltell 5913

Mr. Trudeau 5913

Mr. Deltell 5913

Mr. Trudeau 5913

Mr. Deltell 5913

Mr. Trudeau 5913

Ms. Dancho 5913

Mr. Trudeau 5913

Ms. Dancho 5913

Mr. Trudeau 5914

Ms. Dancho 5914

Mr. Trudeau 5914

Justice

Mr. Blanchet 5914

Mr. Trudeau 5914

Mr. Blanchet 5914

Mr. Trudeau 5914

Health

Ms. Rempel Garner 5914

Mr. Trudeau 5914

Ms. Rempel Garner 5915

Mr. Trudeau 5915

Ms. Rempel Garner 5915

Mr. Trudeau 5915

Ms. Rempel Garner 5915

Mr. Trudeau 5915

Mr. Singh 5915

Mr. Trudeau 5915

Mr. Singh 5915

Mr. Trudeau 5916

Families, Children and Social Development

Ms. Zann 5916

Mr. Trudeau 5916

Health

Mr. Poilievre 5916

Mr. Trudeau 5916

Mr. Poilievre.....	5916	Sex Workers	
Mr. Trudeau.....	5916	Mr. Garrison.....	5921
Mr. Poilievre.....	5916	The Economy	
Mr. Trudeau.....	5917	Mr. Manly.....	5921
Mr. Poilievre.....	5917	Pharmacare	
Mr. Trudeau.....	5917	Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands).....	5921
The Budget		International Trade	
Mr. Ste-Marie.....	5917	Mr. Blaikie.....	5921
Mr. Trudeau.....	5917	Justice	
Mr. Ste-Marie.....	5917	Mr. Green.....	5921
Mr. Trudeau.....	5917	Questions on the Order Paper	
Public Services and Procurement		Mr. Lamoureux.....	5921
Mr. Berthold.....	5917	Questions Passed as Orders for Returns	
Mr. Trudeau.....	5918	Mr. Lamoureux.....	5927
Mr. Berthold.....	5918	Request for Emergency Debate	
Mr. Trudeau.....	5918	Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic	
Mr. Berthold.....	5918	Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands).....	5928
Mr. Trudeau.....	5918	Speaker's Ruling	
Seniors		The Speaker.....	5929
Mr. Robillard.....	5918	Privilege	
Mr. Trudeau.....	5918	Alleged Premature Disclosure of Private Member's Bill	
Health		Mr. Lefebvre.....	5929
Mr. Barrett.....	5918	Alleged Premature Disclosure of Private Member's Bill—Speaker's Ruling	
Mr. Trudeau.....	5919	The Speaker.....	5929
Mr. Barrett.....	5919	Points of Order	
Mr. Trudeau.....	5919	Taking of Screenshot of Parliamentary Proceedings	
The Budget		Mr. Lemire.....	5929
Mr. Badawey.....	5919		
Mr. Trudeau.....	5919		
Mr. Singh.....	5919		
Mr. Trudeau.....	5919		

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions	
Mr. Lamoureux.....	5920
Petitions	
Human Rights	
Mrs. Kusie.....	5920
Falun Gong	
Ms. Shin.....	5920
Human Organ Trafficking	
Mr. Genuis.....	5920
Conversion Therapy	
Mr. Genuis.....	5920
Ethiopia	
Mr. Genuis.....	5920
Conversion Therapy	
Mr. Falk (Provencher).....	5920

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

The Budget	
Financial Statement of Minister of Finance	
Motion.....	5930
Ms. Sgro.....	5930
Ms. Gladu.....	5931
Ms. Larouche.....	5931
Ms. Mathysen.....	5932
Ms. Bendayan.....	5932
Mr. Berthold.....	5933
Mr. Davies.....	5934
Mr. Perron.....	5934
Business of the House	
Mr. Gerretsen.....	5934
Motion.....	5934
(Motion agreed to).....	5934
The Budget	
Financial Statement of Minister of Finance	
Motion.....	5934

Mr. Barrett	5934
Mr. Easter	5936
Ms. Larouche	5936
Mr. Blaikie	5936
Mr. Dalton	5937
Mr. Gerretsen	5938
Ms. Larouche	5938
Mr. Masse	5938
Mr. Sorbara	5938
Mr. Soroka	5940
Ms. Kwan	5940
Mr. Manly	5941
Mr. Lauzon	5941
Mr. Berthold	5942
Ms. Larouche	5942
Mr. Falk (Provencher)	5943
Ms. Kwan	5943
Amendment to the amendment negated	5946

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Income Tax Act

Bill C-208. Report stage	5946
Mr. Maguire	5946
Motion for concurrence	5946
(Motion agreed to)	5946
Bill C-208. Third reading	5946
Mr. Perron	5948
Mr. Blaikie	5948
Mr. Aboultaif	5949
Mr. Lamoureux	5949
Mr. Perron	5950
Mr. Blaikie	5952
Mrs. Jansen	5953
Mr. Easter	5955

EMERGENCY DEBATE

Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5955
Motion	5955
Mr. Gerretsen	5956
Mr. Davies	5957
Ms. Larouche	5957
Mr. Manly	5957
Mr. Gerretsen	5959
Mr. MacGregor	5959
Ms. Hajdu	5960
Mr. Perron	5962
Mr. Davies	5962
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5963
Mr. Oliphant	5963
Mr. Barlow	5964

Mr. Gerretsen	5965
Mr. Perron	5965
Mr. Rayes	5966
Mr. Easter	5968
Ms. Larouche	5968
Ms. Michaud	5968
Mr. MacGregor	5970
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5970
Mr. Simard	5970
Ms. McPherson	5972
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5972
Mr. Perron	5972
Mr. Davies	5972
Ms. O'Connell	5974
Mr. Perron	5974
Ms. Kwan	5975
Mr. Masse	5975
Mr. Gerretsen	5977
Ms. Larouche	5977
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5977
Mr. Gerretsen	5977
Mr. Dalton	5980
Ms. Larouche	5980
Ms. Kwan	5980
Ms. O'Connell	5981
Mr. Lewis	5981
Mr. Maguire	5981
Ms. O'Connell	5983
Mr. Johns	5983
Mr. Doherty	5983
Mr. Gerretsen	5985
Mr. Johns	5985
Mr. Manly	5985
Mr. Drouin	5985
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	5987
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5987
Mr. Lamoureux	5987
Mr. Sorbara	5988
Mr. Manly	5989
Mr. Aboultaif	5989
Mr. Easter	5989
Mr. Brassard	5990
Mr. Gerretsen	5991
Mr. MacGregor	5991
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5991
Ms. Shin	5991
Ms. O'Connell	5993
Mr. Cannings	5993
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5993
Mr. Lamoureux	5994
Mr. Dalton	5995
Mr. Cannings	5995
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5995
Mr. Fergus	5996

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>