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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 22, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)
[English]

COMMISSIONER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 23(5) of the Auditor General Act, the spring 2021 reports of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the House of Commons.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), these reports are deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (FedDev Ontario and Official Languages), 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 11 petitions. These responses will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO QUESTION NO. 461

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order at the earliest opportunity I have to raise a concern I have about the “response” tabled to Question No. 461 from my colleague from Peace River—Westlock.

In brief, the question is with respect to a motion adopted by the House on June 19, 2019. It calls on the UN to establish an international independent investigation into the allegation of genocide against Tamils committed in Sri Lanka. The question asks about the

government's position on it, diplomatic representations it has made with respect to that issue, as well as the government's intention with respect to raising the genocide investigation specifically.

The response that was tabled to that question makes no mention of any genocide investigation. In fact, it does not address the question at all. It refers broadly to Sri Lanka, but it makes no mention of the substance of the question.

I know that it is practice for the Speaker not to be asked to evaluate the particulars of the quality of the response. However, in this case, given that the alleged response does not in any way acknowledge or respond to the question, I would submit that this makes a total mockery of the expectation in the Standing Orders for the government to table a response.

There have to be some constraints on the response the government presents. After all, if the government were to present a response on an unrelated topic, I would submit that the Speaker would have to note that a violation of the Standing Orders had occurred. I would ask you to examine the response to this question and advise the House on whether the government's words actually constitute a response for the purpose of the Standing Order.

The Speaker: From what I have heard, the hon. member has answered his own question. It is not the responsibility of the Speaker to rule on the answers that are given. I will take it under advisement and, if needed, I will return to the House.

* * *

PETITIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting three petitions this morning.

The first petition is calling on the government to recognize that Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims have been subjected and are being subject to genocide at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party. I note that as we speak, the British Parliament is debating a genocide recognition resolution and I commend all the members of the British Parliament involved in that important discussion.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is highlighting the situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia and calling on the Government of Canada to engage to a greater extent with and respond to the humanitarian, as well as the human rights, issues raised by that situation.

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HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third and final petition is in support of Bill S-204, a bill on forced organ harvesting and trafficking that has just passed the Senate committee on justice and human rights and is now headed to the third reading in the Senate before hopefully coming to this place very soon. Petitioners are in support of Bill S-204 and hope that this Parliament is the one that gets it done.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a huge privilege and honour today to table a petition on behalf of constituents of Parksville who are calling on the government to increase the tax exemption from \$3,000 to \$10,000 to help essential volunteer firefighters and search and rescue workers across the country.

The petitioners cite that volunteer firefighters account for 83% of Canada's total firefighting essential first responders. In addition, approximately 8,000 essential search and rescue volunteers respond to thousands of incidents every year. They cite that not only do these volunteers help save lives, but their efforts help cities and municipalities to keep property taxes lower because, if paid services were required, they would certainly cost more to these municipalities.

We need to help these volunteers. They have been there throughout COVID and beyond. This is an important opportunity to help them get the exemption they deserve to support them if they have been volunteering over 200 hours in a calendar year.

• (1010)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, happy Earth Day. It is a privilege to table e-petition 3184, which was initiated by constituents in Nanaimo—Ladysmith. The petitioners call upon the government to take urgent action, based on science and independent expertise, to make Bill C-12 a world-class climate law by adopting the following three amendments to the bill before it passes.

The first amendment is to set the first emission target for 2025, strengthen the roles of the advisory body and the environmental commissioner, and ban fossil fuel executives from the advisory panel.

The second amendment is that Bill C-12 should be aligned with Canada's commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, putting workers and communities first with no exceptions. It should set targets for sustainable job creation to ensure a just transition for all workers.

The third amendment is to create true legal accountability for the government by setting clear, unconditional obligations for the Minister of Environment to meet, not just plan to meet, actual targets.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages

(FedDev Ontario and Official Languages), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

[English]

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from April 21 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to the budget bill that has been presented to the House. Indeed, I want to add to the chorus of people and members who have come before the House to congratulate the first female finance minister on presenting a budget to the House of Commons. It is quite an important budget.

This budget is one that is very direct in its approach to get us through the rest of this pandemic, but in a way that brings Canada back to the resiliency that its economy had before. We need to get back to having the lowest unemployment rates that this country has seen in decades. We need to get our economy back to where it was.

I strongly believe that what has been proposed in this budget is the right step moving forward in that direction. I do want to take some time today to talk about what I see as being the signature piece in this budget, and that is the child care provisions. They are not only going to change the lives of Canadian parents but, indeed, are going to help our economy tremendously.

Before I get to that, I just want to talk briefly about the measures that are in this budget that relate to the pandemic, and coming through this pandemic in the way that we need to.

I have just been reminded by my colleague that I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Let us talk about the measures that have been put in here to support small business, to support Canadians and to make sure that they have the tools to get through this. We were faced with a stark choice a year ago, the same choice that is being presented to us right now with this budget. That is a choice between whether we want to allow Canadians to fend for themselves to get through this very difficult time or whether we want to come together collectively as a society to bear the burden of this enormous toll on our economy and, indeed, our society during the last year.

The Liberal government made a very clear choice. It said that we are going to take on that responsibility collectively. The federal government is going to step in on behalf of the people, the taxpayers of Canada and support, in particular, those who are being significantly affected by this pandemic, those who have small businesses that rely on people coming in and out of their stores on a daily basis, those who have restaurants, and those in the entertainment industry.

I think of a good friend of mine who literally has not worked in his profession throughout the last year, and for the foreseeable future will not. He is an audio engineer. He works at live events. At a lot of the conferences that we go to, he could very well be one of the people in the back running those. Those conferences depend on thousands of people being there, as do festivals and events that are held throughout Canada. He travels throughout the country, going and setting up from an audio engineer perspective, making sure that the quality of the sound in the room is right. Literally, that industry came to a standstill.

I will never forget the conversation we had last spring where he said that in a matter of 48 hours, he went from having the entire next six months planned to having absolutely nothing. He lived in downtown Toronto. He lived there for a number of years, probably the last decade, although he was born and raised in the Kingston area, like I was. He has since moved back to the Kingston area, Sydenham actually. He knows the industry is not coming back for a while. He has been trained and has a degree. He is a professional audio engineer. He does not have any kind of work whatsoever because of the nature of his industry.

The government made it very clear to people like my friend and other people throughout the country that we were going to take on this burden together. The government was going to be there to support Canadians to get through this. I am extremely proud to be part of a government that did that over the last year, but more importantly that is going to continue to do that to get us through to the other side of this.

• (1015)

That is what this budget is doing. In the beginning, when this budget comes into effect, the first measures will be to support Canadians through to the other end of this pandemic. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel. We cannot turn our backs on Canadians now. We need to finish what we started, and I am very happy to see the measures as they relate to small businesses, as they relate to continuing to support Canadians in this budget.

The other thing I wanted to talk about was child care and what this budget has specifically for early learning and child care for parents. Everybody who has put a child through child care is fully aware of the costs associated with it. People living anywhere outside of Quebec are likely paying a lot of money for child care. It quite literally puts parents in the position of asking whether one of them should stay home and take care of the children, because after they consider everything, they are really not going to be any further ahead. In some cases they will be further behind, so people make that choice.

The unfortunate reality is that more often than not, the majority of the time, it is the woman in the relationship who is making that

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decision to stay home. It is hindering female participation in our labour force. Nothing has impacted that more in the last short term than this pandemic. It has made that participation in the labour force for women extremely difficult. It has taken us back several years in terms of the progress that we made toward getting equal participation in our labour force from women.

Given that so much of it has to do with child care, if we can develop a child care system that will allow us to make it affordable, as Quebec has done, and it has done it extremely well, if we can develop a similar child care system for the rest of Canada, we will significantly impact not just the lives of those parents who have to pay for child care, but indeed the economic and social impacts that come with it.

Think of the potential if we can unleash so many single parents into the marketplace: entrepreneurs, people who want to be entrepreneurs but cannot because of limitations around child care. Women unfortunately are impacted more than men in that regard. The opportunities here are really not just about making child care affordable but, more importantly, about increasing women's participation in the labour force, and in particular, as I see it, as it relates to women entrepreneurs.

That is what this budget provides. It makes the transformative investment toward child care and early learning that this country has been asking for and looking for, for so long, by putting in the necessary funds. I believe it is about \$30 billion in investment initially, over the next five years, getting us to a place by 2026 where the average cost of child care is \$10 per day. That truly is transformative if we can get there.

We are in a minority government. I really hope that my colleagues across the way, maybe not the Conservatives, maybe not the Bloc members because they have this child care in Quebec already, but the NDP in particular, will see the value in this and support this budget. I certainly do not want to be in the same situation that the Liberal Party was in with Paul Martin when he introduced a budget to transform child care and the government collapsed and Stephen Harper did not have an interest in that, and here we are 15 years later.

There is a great opportunity here if we can come together and the NDP members can see the value in what we have here. I know that if they support this and we can get through this, we can start making a meaningful impact for child care throughout Canada.

• (1020)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, on the issue of child care, I would submit that the government's policy really ignores the ways in which technology and work are changing. There is so much more telecommuting, more shift work, more flexible hours and precarious or gig-related work. Some of this is forced on parents, but some of it is something parents are seeking, that choice of being able to work from home, be present with their children to some extent or have flexible child care arrangements. As work is changing, the demands for different kinds of child care are changing, and that is particularly why today a one-size-fits-all approach to day care does not work.

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I ask the member to think about that single mom who is working an overnight shift, who is not expecting that government-run child care is going to mean somebody coming to her house to be present with her kids while they are sleeping. People need flexibility. They need choice. They need community-based and workplace-based copos that respond to these new realities.

Why does the member double down on this one-size-fits-all government-run approach to child care?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I do not know where the member is getting that information from. Where have I said that it is a one-size-fits-all approach? It is quite the contrary. What has been highlighted here is the fact that we want to bring in child care and early learning opportunities to support Canadian parents. There certainly will be, in my opinion, the opportunity for flexibility in this, and it is something that we need to make sure happens as the programs and plans are developed.

I appreciate the member's passion, and I am sure he will voice that passion when the time comes to develop the exact programs.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech on the matter of agreements between the federal government and Quebec.

It took years for an agreement to be reached on tax harmonization, for example. If the federal government wants to impose conditions on the transfer of Quebec's share of the funding, then I expect it will take many more years of negotiation.

In order to avoid these additional negotiations, is the member opposite prepared to assure us that there will not be any conditions imposed on the transfer of funding to Quebec?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I think the member knows that I am not in a position to be able to give her that assurance, but I would certainly say that there is always an interest in the Government of Canada in working with its partners. This government looks at provincial and territorial bodies as partners and will look for opportunities to work with them. We certainly will see what the situation might be as it unfolds, but I know that Quebec in particular, which this member is asking about, will have input into how money is distributed and what it will be specifically intended for.

• (1025)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke about event planners, and it tweaked my interest, because I actually met with the Canadian Association of Exposition Management just yesterday. They are a sector that has been deeply impacted by the pandemic. There are many people within the sector who will not be able to even start back to work until the fall, and we know that because of the cyclical nature of it, and because some of their events will not happen for up to a year, they are very concerned about the impacts on their sector and that we have started this race but we are not going to get to the finish line with what is being proposed by the Liberal government.

Would the member be willing to look at some of these supports for businesses and individuals, and look at them as the individual needs for certain sectors, knowing that some sectors are going to take longer and that peeling back the CRB and business supports by September is not going to be appropriate for all sectors?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member that this particular sector was the first hit and will be the last to recover. Not only do events take months to plan, but also we are going to need to get the degree of confidence in people's willingness to go into a room with 10,000 people. I cannot imagine how comfortable people will be with that initially, so there will be some time. Specifically to her question, I am certainly personally always interested to hear about that, and I look forward to that discussion at committee.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will start by sharing the story of Sandy, a constituent of mine. She has a really good education, but her struggles are those of many Canadians around the world. She gave up her career to start a family, and she continued to stay away from her career because child care in Ontario was too expensive and the waiting list was too long. Now, as her children are age five and seven, she finds herself living in a shelter, because she does not have housing as she tries to flee from an abusive marriage. She is now working part time while staying at this transitional house for women just like her. She is looking for housing and a stable job, but because of COVID, the situation of schools, and everything becoming so precarious, it is so hard for her to get into that workforce. The jobs that she does find are precarious, part-time and minimum-wage.

Women, in particular low-income women, have been hit the hardest by the COVID-19 crisis. They have faced steep job losses and shouldered the burden of unpaid care work at home. All the while, many have bravely served on the front lines of this crisis in our communities. There is no doubt that we remain firmly in a "she-cession" as lockdowns continue to impact our communities and many Canadians stay at home to stem the spread of an even more aggressive third wave.

I have heard from businesses in my riding about what would ensure the health of the economy of a city like Mississauga, a province like Ontario and, indeed, a country like Canada. For example, the Mississauga Board of Trade in my city has been quite clear: We need to have increased labour force participation. We need to have an empowered labour force of people who are willing, able and eager to contribute to our economy, to empower themselves and those around them, and to bring financial stability and economic prosperity, not just for themselves and their families but for all Canadians. Based on that feedback, our government has a plan through budget 2021 to emerge from the pandemic with a stronger and more inclusive society. Increasing opportunities for women's participation in our economy is at the forefront of our growth and recovery plan.

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As I mentioned, the closure of schools and child care centres due to COVID-19 has really exacerbated work-life balance challenges for parents, and especially for women. It has made it more difficult for some women to work full time or, in some cases, such as Sandy, at all. More than 16,000 women have dropped out of the labour force completely, while the male labour force has grown by about 91,000. Child care is an essential social infrastructure and without it, parents, particularly women, cannot fully participate in our economy. Parents have told me this. Businesses have told me this. Single mothers have told me this.

This is an economic issue as much as it is a social issue. TD Economics has pointed to a range of studies that have shown that for every dollar spent on early childhood education, the broader economy receives between \$1.50 and \$2.80 in return. It is a sound investment. We can simply look at the impact of Quebec's early learning and child care system, where women in the province with children under the age of three have some of the highest employment rates in the world. Further, a study shows that child care alone has raised Quebec's GDP by 1.7%.

It is clear: Now is the time for the rest of Canada to learn from Quebec's example, and this is exactly what our government is proposing to do through budget 2021. We are making generational investments of up to \$30 billion over five years to work with provincial, territorial and indigenous partners to build a Canada-wide, community-based system of quality child care, bringing the federal government to a fifty-fifty share of child care costs with provincial and territorial governments and meeting the needs of indigenous families.

Our government's plan includes a strategy for unprecedented expansion in child care across the country. This proposed investment would also be a critical part of reconciliation.

• (1030)

Early learning and child care programs designed by and with indigenous families and communities give indigenous children the best start in life. That is why this generational investment includes \$2.5 billion over five years toward an early learning and child care system that meets the needs of indigenous families.

By 2025-26, new investments in child care will reach a minimum of \$8.3 billion per year ongoing, including indigenous early learning and child care.

Our vision is to bring fees down to \$10 per day on average by 2025-26 everywhere in Canada outside of Quebec. This would start with a 50% reduction in average fees for preschool care by 2022. Simply put, this investment will drive jobs and growth. It is a smart economic policy and it is the right policy for Canadians at this juncture.

However, it is not the only way that we are supporting women through budget 2021.

Budget 2021 also lays out an expansive jobs and growth plan that is very much a feminist plan. It seeks to build a recovery that gives all women in Canada the ability to fully participate in our economy.

For example, Canadian women entrepreneurs still face unique and systemic barriers to starting and growing a business. In light of this pandemic, that has become even more challenging.

To address these challenges, budget 2021 proposes to provide up to \$146.9 million to strengthen the women entrepreneurship strategy, which will help provide greater access to financing, and support mentorship and training activities. Ensuring women have opportunities to work and grow in their businesses is absolutely crucial, but, of course, protecting the health and safety of women is also a priority.

Our government is also moving forward on developing a national action plan to end gender-based violence through new proposed investments of over \$600 million, which will provide support for action against gender-based violence, for indigenous women and for 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations, for the design and delivery of interventions that promote healthy relations and prevent violence and for increased access to information and support. This is in addition to reallocating \$250 million in existing funding to support housing and shelter spaces for women and children fleeing violence.

We are accelerating work on a national action plan in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' calls for justice and the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. To support this work, budget 2021 proposes to invest an additional \$2.2 billion over five years, and \$160.9 million ongoing, to help build a safer, stronger and more inclusive society.

Finally, budget 2021 proposes to invest \$236.2 million over five years, starting in 2021-22, and \$33.5 million per year ongoing to expand work to eliminate sexual misconduct and gender-based violence in the military and support survivors. This investment will reinforce the systemic efforts to change the culture and working conditions in the Canadian Armed Forces. Ultimately, these measures support the objective of increasing representation of women in the Canadian Armed Forces from 15% to 25% by 2026, which, if achieved, will further positively reinforce culture change.

It is absolutely absurd to think that, in 2021, we are talking about the need for some of these measures instead of simply living in a society where women and men are on equal footing, with the same opportunities to succeed in a truly inclusive society.

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• (1035)

Our government will continue to build a feminist intersectional action plan for women in the economy that will work to push past systemic barriers and inequalities for good. The—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member's time for debate has expired, but she will be able to continue during questions and comments.

The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, quite apart from intruding upon provincial jurisdiction, there is one aspect of child care that is under federal jurisdiction, and that is for the Canadian Armed Forces. For them it is not only a matter of having spaces available close to base, but women can be called into work at any time of the day or night.

What provisions are being made to create more positions to assist our forces in the military and is the government is going to do something for the provinces? Why does it not provide money for infrastructure so there will be spaces instead of just buying off people for the next election?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, when we talk about creating child care spaces and a national child care plan, it is not just about having adequate spaces. It is also about affordability and ensuring there are enough quality, educated workers to run these spaces. It is about providing and facilitating access to the economy and safe early learning for children and families as we grow and rebuild past COVID-19.

To be honest, it has been about 50 years that we have been thinking about how we can continue to get more women into the workforce. Child care is something for which many organizations and not-for-profits have been advocating. Now, through the pandemic, businesses and employers are advocating for it more and more because they want to increase the labour force participation—

• (1040)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to allow for other questions.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Since the member seems to be having technical difficulties, we will come back to him later.

[English]

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know that during this pandemic, the rich have become richer and more and more Canadians are struggling. Despite the Liberals' long-time commitment to fight for the middle class and lift Canadians up, the budget does not include a wealth tax, which would be critical in ensuring that the rich pay their fair share of taxes and that everybody can be lifted up.

What do the Liberals have against the rich paying their fair share of taxes?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, as I go through the budget, I see it as definitely an equity-seeking one, whether it is through the luxury tax on vehicles or a more robust system for ensuring we catch tax evaders. The difference between the Canadian economy and other economies around the world is that we are not a quid pro quo system where Canadians put in money to get something back for an individual service. The Canadian system and Canadian society are really about all pitching in to ensure that our neighbours are well taken care of and that on a rainy day we are taken care of.

When I look at budget 2021, again, it is one of the most equity-seeking, most equitable budgets that I have seen in a very long time and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Because there was a technical issue, I want to give the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean an opportunity to ask his question.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I apologize for the technical difficulty.

I thank my colleague for her speech. She really focused on this budget's feminist approach.

Of course, one sector in which the majority of the workers are female is health care, so I would like to know why the Liberals rejected the amendment to the amendment, which would have increased health transfers.

Why did the Liberals turn this into a confidence vote even though nobody wants an election?

Is this a way for the Liberals to shut down opposition party amendments?

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, over this past year, we have seen that Canadians expect a team Canada approach. They do not want to see these partisan politics. They do not want to see this pushing, pulling and tugging among parties, saying someone did this or someone did not do that. Ultimately, Canadians want all of us, all parties, each and every one of us as individual members to be there and have their backs. That is really what this budget is about, and that is what we will keep on doing as a government.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the MP for West Nova.

It is almost incomprehensible that it has been more than two years since the last budget and that the Liberals have only seen fit to give Canadians two brief fiscal snapshots during a time of historic economic challenges and unprecedented government spending.

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The Prime Minister has added more debt in just seven years than the combined debt of all Canadian prime ministers since 1867. He spent more money per person than any other prime minister in Canadian history. Canadians have a right to ask what all of it has actually achieved and to be worried about the astounding moral failing of passing this burden on to future generations.

In 2019, the projected deficit of \$20 billion was already mind-boggling. The Conservatives urged the Liberals to set out a plan to balance the budget, implement fiscal anchors and save money for the future, like Canadians struggle to do every day in their households and businesses. The Liberals' spending was already extraordinary. No government outside of wartimes or major global recessions had ever spent so much but achieved so little.

Now Canadians see the consequences: over \$354 billion in deficit, over \$154 billion projected for 2021-22 alone in deficits, debt interest payments that will cost Canadians \$39 billion through 2026. Every man, woman and child in Canada now owes \$33,000 in federal debt.

The numbers show the reality of Liberal mismanagement. The Prime Minister once said, "Canada is back", but the truth is his plan is making Canada fall back. Now Canada is an outlier globally in all the worst ways.

Global unemployment in 2020 rose to 6.5%; Canada's to 9.5%. Global GDP declined by 4.4%; Canada's by 5.4%. In 2019, the time of the last federal budget, 46% of Canadians were \$200 or less away from being unable to pay their bills. Now 53%, more than half, live that unsettling and precarious experience every single day.

The Liberals love rhetoric over substance, announcements over delivery, promises over outcomes, and they seem to make a dozen new ones every day. There is one in a section in the budget that suggests unlocking Canadians' savings is a key to boosting the country's economic recovery. It states, "Over the last year, Canadian households, in particular, have built up significant savings. When the pandemic recedes, the release of pent-up demand could translate into a tangible if temporary boost to economic activity."

The reality is that rising costs of food, gas, lumber and essentials, to eat, get around and put a roof over one's head and declining productivity, with fewer, good-paying full-time jobs in exchange for precarious lower paying part-time work while unprecedented investment has left Canada, means that for most Canadians their savings are stretched thin and their futures are uncertain, except, of course, for the ultra-rich.

Inflation rose 2.2% in March. Eggs cost Canadians 11.4% more, gasoline prices have jumped 35.3% and natural gas costs have risen 14.1% when compared to March 2020. There is no spending limit, no fiscal anchor, and to top it all off, Canada is now entering the uncertain world of quantitative easing, literally printing money to pay our debts.

I guess at least the finance minister seems to have given everyone a heads-up. She already wanted to dip into the private savings of Canadians months ago, saying, "If people have ideas on how the government can act to help unlock that 'pre-loaded stimulus', I'm very interested." It is the spending of the government that knows no bounds, not the savings of everyday Canadians.

In this budget, Canadians needed a plan for reopening, a plan to secure the future, assurances for their small businesses. Over 200,000 are at risk of closing forever. That is one in six small businesses, potentially affecting 2.4 million Canadian jobs. This budget needed to include a concrete plan for the private sector and for entrepreneurs to take risks and create new jobs by reducing government-imposed barriers and layers of red tape and costs that stifle innovation and new economic opportunities.

Instead, Canadians received the rude wake-up call that the government would be saddling their grandchildren with more deficits and more debt. Meanwhile, in the most elite and privileged positions, the Prime Minister and finance minister call COVID a so-called opportunity to pursue an ideological great reset of the economy and busy themselves with reimagining, all a bunch of new ways of how to spend Canadians' money.

• (1045)

Speaking of imaginary money, and as the shadow minister for public safety, I did not see any mention of the estimated \$3 billion to \$5 billion for the Liberal, wrong-headed confiscation program. It is an ever-expanding list of firearms that they will ultimately take or prohibit the use of by millions of law-abiding Canadian sport shooters, hunters, collectors and firearms owners. At least this budget does increase funding for the Canadian Border Services Agency, \$312 million over five years, to fight gun smuggling and trafficking, as Conservatives have urged consistently for years.

The Liberals failed again to address a significant issue in the RCMP, which is increasing funding for training new RCMP recruits and replacing its unsafe 25-year-old service pistols. The past year created a backlog in training new recruits. According to the National Police Federation, this "will impact recruiting and training for years to come, jeopardizing public and Member safety."

With Liberal bills currently being debated that would reduce penalties for serious violent crimes such as gun trafficking, sexual assault and assault with a weapon, while allowing for community service for sexual assault, kidnapping, arson and human trafficking, RCMP recruits will be sorely needed in the coming years.

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This budget also relies on a magical boost from American investment, but the Liberals are actively destroying Canada's trading relationship. They are driving jobs, contracts and businesses south of the border with the ongoing mess the public safety minister has either actively created or passively perpetuated. It has gotten so bad that the U.S. just advised not to travel to Canada. Workers who travel to the U.S. for essential work, but do not travel daily or weekly, are constantly subject to inconsistencies and contradictions.

The Liberals should mitigate this major problem by adjusting the order in council's wording to allow essential workers to travel to fulfill contract and business obligations not based on calendar days. I personally believe that all workers and all businesses, every single one, are essential to the Canadian economy, but the least the Liberals can do is fix their own policy so those they have declared to be essential could actually do their jobs.

Another announcement that is far behind is rural broadband. After first announcing it in their 2015 election platform, the Liberals then committed to 100% of houses being connected to broadband by 2030, in both 2019 and 2020. In the government's own strategy in 2017, it said 37% of rural households had access to 50 megabytes per second download speed.

Now, four years later, CRTC's 2020 communications monitoring report shows it has only grown to 45.6%. At that rate, 75% of rural homes will not have access to broadband for another decade. The Liberals have already spent \$6.2 billion since 2015, but many rural people in Lakeland and Canadians in rural and remote communities all over the country are still wondering when it will make a difference for them.

Of course, Albertans are very familiar with the Liberals roller coaster of benign neglect and outright hostility. While there is a tax measure for carbon capture and storage, there is still no hint the Liberals will reverse their anti-energy, anti-resource, anti-business policies after failing to deliver timely and accessible sector-specific support, which they promised to Canada's energy industry as it reeled from a confluence of domestic government-inflicted, and external, challenges. I have to confess a sense of bitter irony that their main energy-related budget measure deals with keeping something in the ground, despite my support of the policy and the objective.

Naturally, true to form, this budget plays provincial favourites. Alberta's finance minister sums up Alberta's frustrations that the budget "is light on increasing investment and productivity, increasing market access opportunities...and growing the economy."

He also said, "We are gravely disappointed that the federal government once again missed an opportunity to fix the fiscal unfairness of the federation by acting on the unanimous request of provinces to retroactively lift the cap on the fiscal stabilization program."

This means that Albertans, who have paid way more than their fair share, \$600 billion more than they have received in return, continue to be penalized during economic crisis and the global pandemic.

Alberta has been a leader in job creation, clean tech, responsible resource development and fiscal contributions to Canada for decades. The province's regulatory expertise and technological

achievements is world renowned, but the Liberals cannot get past their ideological objections and partisan calculations to recognize that reality.

This budget does not help the constituents I represent in Lakeland. It inevitably means higher taxes, higher costs, fewer jobs and future generations left to pay the bills.

My constituents understand the concepts of setting a budget, putting needs before wants, not throwing good money after bad and spending within one's means. People there just want to know that if they work hard they can do better, and for government to remember that it does not have its own money. It all comes out of Canadians' pockets.

● (1050)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have heard the Conservatives directly misquote what the finance minister said. This member did it as well, and the Leader of the Opposition has done it repeatedly through tweets and various forums, where they imply that he said, "I really believe COVID-19 has created a window of political opportunity." That is where they stop.

Of course, they will never give the rest of the quote. However, let me read the entire quote. It says, "I really believe that COVID-19 has created a window of political opportunity...on the importance of early learning and child care."

Does the member not feel a bit embarrassed to completely misquote somebody in that manner?

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, I am not really sure what the member is talking about, because I did talk about the finance minister saying that COVID-19 is a political opportunity.

If the member does not like what the finance minister had to say, then I am sure he would acknowledge what the Prime Minister said, which is that he believes the global pandemic is an opportunity to reimagine the economy and to participate in what he called a great reset.

Make no mistake, this budget is absolutely a targeted, pre-election budget that is actually full of the Liberal left ideological agenda to increase the ever-expanding scope of government. It is just mind-boggling that the Liberals are willing to preside over such irresponsible and reckless decision-making, which will burden future generations of Canadians.

• (1055)

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her presentation.

She believes that we are not doing enough to exploit our energy resources, but this budget maintains direct and indirect financing for fossil fuels.

In her opinion, how is it possible to square money for fossil fuels with the government's supposed environmental goals?

[English]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, as a Conservative and as an advocate for an oil and gas riding in northeast rural Alberta, I am extremely proud to represent communities and people who have made outsized contributions to the finances of the province, and to every province and community right across this country.

I will explain what I meant. The Liberals, over the last six years, with the support of anti-energy activists in the other parties, have introduced a series of damaging policies and damaging legislation designed to shut down the fossil fuel industry and stop market access for Canadian oil and gas, which is the most responsible, and environmentally and socially responsible oil and gas on the planet.

I know this might come as a shock, but oil and gas workers and oil and gas companies do not actually want government money. They want to continue to do their work, which they do with the highest standards and the highest outcomes of any oil and gas producing jurisdiction on earth. That industry is fundamental for the Canadian economy and our standard of living.

The Liberals need to reverse course on all their bad legislation and policies, so the private sector could go ahead and continue to invest hundreds of billions of dollars in the Canadian economy and create the hundreds of thousands of jobs that come with that.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, during the pandemic, during the crisis, many, many families and small business employees suffered, but other people raked in huge profits. Canada's richest people increased their wealth by \$78 billion in the past year.

Does my colleague think the wealthiest people and big corporations such as Amazon and Netflix should pay for the recovery, so that workers and their families do not have to?

[English]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, the rich get richer, and the most connected, elite, big companies, the ones with the big lobby firms and the big connections, and the people behind them, are

always the ones that do best when government brings out big government spending and big government programs and tries to help.

That is why I think Canadians should have expected the budget to have a recovery plan that would allow for a path to get back to balancing the budget, so future generations of governments would have the ability to make decisions that reflect their priorities, and actually enable the private sector and entrepreneurs to create jobs and invest in the economy.

I guess, just like how not one of 2 billion trees promised managed to plant itself, neither does the budget balance itself.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to join the House from beautiful southwest Nova Scotia, where it is a little rainy. We do not have a whole lot of COVID-19 floating around, but it seems that here in Nova Scotia we are having a resurgence of variants. Due to a lack of vaccines, we are going to see a bit of the third wave the rest of Canada has seen over the last number of weeks and months.

Because it has been a year and a half since many of us were elected, and we have not had the opportunity to speak to a budget, I would like to start my first response to it as a new MP with something a little more Nova Scotian. I will talk about something that is a bit more positive in the budget, which is important to my area and extremely important to me and my family. It is the national framework for diabetes. This is something in the budget that I support.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the discovery of insulin here in Canada, something Banting and Best were able to do at the University of Toronto. We as Canadians continue to celebrate being a part of this historic change in the lives of people with type 1 and type 2 diabetes. The budget provides \$25 million over five years, starting in 2021-22, to Health Canada for additional investments in research in diabetes, including juvenile diabetes, and surveillance and prevention, to work toward the development of that national framework.

That is extremely important to me and my family because I am the dad of a type 1 diabetic. My son just recently, for lack of a better description, celebrated his fifth anniversary of being a diabetic. I can see from what he has had to go through, and what other diabetics across this country have had to go through, that there is no real standard of care for those individuals.

It is good to see Canadians get together. We need to work with our provinces to make sure that is going to happen. These are very positive developments for JDRF and Diabetes Canada. I hope this continues and that more emphasis will be put on some of the chronic diseases that Canadians continue to suffer from.

I wish the rest of the budget were as positive, but unfortunately, it is not. On the health care side of things, this budget is very lax in how it is going to help with COVID-19 and respond to the needs of the provinces for extra help, especially when it comes to the deferred health care that has happened over the last number of months.

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I am a member of the health committee, and a couple of weeks ago we had radiologists in to present before the committee. They estimated that 380,000 Canadians have had their tests delayed, whether it was a test for cancer, a colonoscopy, or the like. If we start to delay health care, greater issues might happen. For people who are diagnosed with cancer, it might be a different level of cancer. They could be at stage three or four, which is much more difficult to treat.

The provinces have been asking for a top-up in their health transfers over the last number of years. That does not show up in this budget, yet we saw the Prime Minister go out the next day and say the government was going to do that after the pandemic is done.

The way things are going right now, the pandemic is going to be with us for quite some time. I wonder when that extra investment is going to be in the Canada health transfers. I believe they are asking for about \$4 billion. In the scope of the \$100 billion of extra, I would call, election funding the government has put forward, the \$4 billion they are asking for seems like quite a bargain.

• (1100)

Let us move on from health care and talk about something that is important for the coastal communities here in southwest Nova Scotia. Quite honestly, this area is based on the fishery and access to that fishery. I want to talk about small craft harbours. Small craft harbours might not be important to many people across Canada. However, those of us who use them, and people who have their families in the fishing industry, want to see investments in wharves. They are part of our highway system. They are part of our business park, so to speak.

We see an investment of \$300 million over two years in small craft harbours. That is a drop in the bucket of what is required to improve the safety of our ports and wharves and to adjust to the changes in vessel sizes and vessel safety over the last number of years. There is not enough room in a lot of these ports.

I was on beautiful Brier Island the other day meeting with the port authority of Westport. They have a fabled wharf in the Bay of Fundy that sees some of the highest tides in the world, but they have not had an expansion or an adjustment to their port in well over 50 years. They have had little projects along the way. There has been a bit of a breakwater and maybe a change to one of the wharves, but nothing has actually happened for them in that amount of time. The \$300 million is going to be very difficult to sell, because we could spend way more than that just on the 27 wharves that require it here in West Nova. A number of wharves on our list are condemned. Fishers are still using them, but they have been condemned by small craft harbours because they do not have the dollars to do the work.

While I am on the topic of the fishery, I want to talk about the safety of our fishers and a couple of experiences we have had in the last few months. The *Chief William Saulis*, a scallop dragger out of Digby, basically out of Yarmouth, was lost and seven men were lost with it. It took a lot of time to find. There was not enough money in the budget for the Coast Guard to go out to recover the bodies of the men who were lost. We need to do more to make sure that our vessels are safe and that we have the systems to go out and actually help them.

In another example, the scallop dragger *Atlantic Destiny* went down off of Georges Bank and 32 souls were saved, but we learned a number of things that I do not see in this budget. The fuel for search and rescue is not available at the airport that is closest to the port. The great people at CFB Greenwood need to change a few of their processes to adjust to these kinds of situations, sending helicopters 100 kilometres offshore. The nearest airport needs to have the capability to do it.

I will present a quick personal issue from southwest Nova Scotia. A young gentleman who is a fisher just had a terrible accident: 24-year-old Andrew Saulnier was caught up in the engine room. He lost one leg and could possibly lose the other. He is a young guy with a few children. I am going to share this on my Facebook page, not that we should be presenting Facebook page issues here in the House of Commons, but if people want to help out families, a family like Andrew Saulnier's is one that we all should be supporting, and this budget does not.

• (1105)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for sharing his thoughts on the diabetes strategy. He shared a very personal story of how that would impact a family member of his, and I am wondering if he sees the need to continue to work together rather than to immediately throw the budget aside and say, "We cannot support it."

Does he see the need, based on his comments, to bring this to committee to see if some of the other issues that he wants to see addressed can be amended? Perhaps the budget could have even more in it that he would like to see.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Speaker, if that was the way the budget was structured then, yes, we should find things that we could work on together. However, what we find is a document that has not been presented in two years, so the pent-up demand from government departments created a 700-page tome of information with a whole bunch of things in it that are, in our case, unsupportable.

We supported the bill for a diabetes framework as it came down, and I am happy to be one of the co-chairs of the interparliamentary group on JDRF. There are other ways for us to support it rather than supporting an unsupportable budget.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to come back to what my hon. colleague said.

This budget proposes standards and agencies, as well as a \$3-billion investment without providing any services to the public, which means more bureaucracy and consultation but without any additional services, at the end of the day. Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Speaker, what we are seeing is nearly \$100 billion being spent on programs that have more to do with a future election.

The government is doing its best to offer Canadians as much as it possibly can, in the hope that they will vote for the Liberals. I think Canadians can see through the game the government is playing with these investments to help Canadians and Quebecers.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, Elk Lake is a tough and scrappy town founded by Jack Monroe. He was a vaudeville superstar who also fought Jack Johnson and was a war hero. Descendants in Elk Lake are as tough as Jack Monroe, so I am very pleased that Eacom put \$8.9 million into the Elk Lake sawmill to keep it sustainable.

I am glad to see some federal money going into supporting forestry, but my concern is that people are being gouged and totally ripped off on the price of lumber right now. When I go home to people in Elk Lake and my surrounding communities, they cannot even build a woodshed because of the price.

I would ask my colleague this: What does he think we need to do at the federal level? A two-by-four has gone from costing two bucks to eight bucks. It is completely affecting people's ability to build and do renovations at a time when we need to kick-start the economy.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Speaker, not only are we seeing the same thing here, but we do not have access to those kinds of products.

Another issue here in southwest Nova Scotia is that the housing market has gone up as a lot of people have decided to move here. A young couple trying to buy their first home and get into the workforce cannot afford to, because of mismanagement and how this pandemic continues to go on. Everybody has moved here. It is positive for the people selling their homes, and positive for the real estate agents, but where are people, who have modest means and want to move here, ever going to be able to get into a house or build their own because of the access to those kinds of products?

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Hochelaga.

Ironically, I had occasion to repair my deck. Normally I would ask somebody else to do it, but these are strange times so I thought I would apply my formidable carpentry skills to the repairs. To no one's great surprise, it is clear that I should try to keep my day job.

While my lack of carpentry skills should not be a shock, the price of lumber certainly was, as was raised in a previous exchange. It cost 51 bucks for a 16-foot cedar deck board, which is three times last year's price. I considered myself lucky to get any after phoning four lumber yards, two of which had nothing at all. Now my simple

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job was going to cost me 75 bucks for a four-by-two square in materials alone. If I was intending to replace the entire structure, I probably would have had to put a mortgage on the house. Mortgage money is really cheap these days, which underlines the real estate frenzy that the previous exchange outlined.

Cheap money is also the underlying assumption of this budget. The related assumption is that the Bank of Canada can keep its commitment to an inflation target of below 2%. The government and the Bank of Canada are backed up by the best economists in Canada. They provide consensus opinions to the Minister of Finance and the governor of the Bank of Canada upon which all projections are based: GDP projections, nominal GDP projections, inflation projections, interest rates, etc.

Everything starts and ends with consensus numbers. Those allow the government to know what its revenue will be and, in turn, its deficit projections. However, what if the experts are wrong and have been measuring the wrong things? The basket used to calculate inflation is made up of quite a number of goods and services, some of which are questionable in a pandemic economy.

For instance, no one is travelling these days, so travel is actually deflationary, along with all of the related services and goods that go with travel. My deck board, on the other hand, or a trip to the grocery store is exactly the opposite: It is quite inflationary. In normal times this all balances out. However, these are not normal times and we need to be more than a little skeptical about these predictions.

In a November article in *The Globe and Mail's* Report on Business, the writer took on the post-March pandemic predictions of the leading economists and this is what he found.

Canada's best economists predicted, first, that there would be a significant weakening of the Canadian dollar. The reality is that a brief hit was followed by a full recovery. The second prediction was that equity markets would take years to recover. The reality is that markets took months to recover and they have been on a tear ever since, with what some might even call "irrational exuberance".

Third, the GDP would plunge. In reality it did plunge, but it recovered quickly and with not much ground to make up to pre-pandemic levels. In fact, colleagues may have caught reports by the Bank of Canada that are revising GDP growth up to 6.5%, which is higher than the government's predictions as of Monday, so things are changing rather quickly. Fourth, housing starts would plummet. The reality is that housing starts are thriving and the real estate market, some say, is insane.

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I appreciate that these are challenging times, but apparently being an economist means never having to say they are sorry. Colleagues might say that I am just ranting about economists, and that might be a little bit true, even if economists are some of the nicest and smartest people I know. The fact remains that at this time last year, some of the nicest and smartest people I know got it far more wrong than right. That puts the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in a dodgy position. Spending demands far exceed the ability of the economy to support them. It is one thing to provide emergency support, but it is quite another to provide that support over the short or medium term. It is simply not sustainable.

• (1115)

I do not know what a 1% interest rate jump would do to the budget, but I do know that 2% would probably be quite devastating.

Many decades ago, I was doing mortgages for my legal clients in the 17% to 18% range for five-year fixed rates. I wish I had had the foresight to load up on long-term Canada savings bonds at 13%, however I did not. I do not claim any unique insight, but to those who claim it could not happen again, I say “think again”. I remember the inflation wars of the seventies and eighties, or “stagflation” as I suppose it was called at the time. I remember wage and price controls. I remember Canada being an honorary member of the third world. I remember the draconian financial disciplines of the nineties and early 2000s. I remember the banking crisis of 2008-09, where financial institutions were severely overleveraged and CEOs were buying fancy financial instruments that they did not even seem to understand. I also remember the wise words of Ed Clark, former CEO of the TD Bank, who said he would not buy anything for his bank that he did not understand. That is good investment advice.

We are in a time when no one really knows what is going on or will go on. I did not read the last year's predictions to embarrass some people; I read them to remind everyone that we are in perilous times, and as long as the pandemic remains in our midst, economic prognostications, even consensus ones, cannot necessarily be relied upon. The question has become, “has the Government of Canada taken us too far to a step to the abyss?”

A little history might provide some comfort, however. In 1946, immediately post-World War II, the net debt-to-GDP ratio was 110%. Some eight years later, by 1954-55, it was down to 38%. It was largely reduced by tight spending and a prosperous and expanding economy. By the 1975-76 fiscal year, it was down to 14%. Then it took off to the point, in 1996-97, where the debt-to-GDP ratio was 67%, and it was considered by all, particularly the economists, to be unsustainable. We remember the New York Times article about Canada being an honorary member of the third world. With fiscal and monetary discipline and an expanding economy, the government of the day was not only able to bring down the debt-to-GDP ratio to below 30%, but the government actually paid of \$100 billion in actual real debt. I would note that fiscal targets were set and a contingency fund was created, so that everyone knew the plan. The 30% debt-to-GDP ratio has hovered there ever since 2006 to 2018. While history may teach us something, it does not teach us everything. We may be in the immediate post-World War economy, or we may be in something else.

I think I have said enough about what I think about economists' predictions. The other unknown is how the virus will behave. It has demonstrated a devastating resiliency, attacking populations that were once thought to be safe, so it is hard to know whether we have reached an armistice with the enemy or there will still be a full-on war or just a few battles left to mop up.

The finance minister is making a series of what I would argue are reasonable bets. One is that the economy will grow its way out. She has some evidence to support her position. As I indicated earlier, the Bank of Canada yesterday revised its expectations for the growth of the economy upwards quite dramatically, even higher than what the projection was set out last Monday by the finance minister. The second bet is that inflation is still within the band. I am a touch more skeptical, for reasons outlined above, but it is not an unreasonable assumption, and one of the monetary tools left by the Governor of the Bank of Canada to keep the expansion of the economy going. The third bet is that short-term interest rates will remain low. How long is short term? I am not quite sure, but I am, again, a little skeptical about that.

• (1120)

The fourth is that the fall deficit projection of \$382 billion came down to \$354 billion, which is quite true, and did show some evidence that the government's plan was working. The fifth is that the government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member's time for debate has expired, but he will be able to add during questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague has been here for a while and has some very valuable historical insight on things that happen over time.

When I saw this budget of 700-plus pages with extraordinary debt spending and decisions around support for many different items, I worried about, as the saying goes, when we will have to pay the piper. Part of the Conservative amendment suggests that we are concerned that the government, in an election budget, has given things away, but is not talking about the hard choices it is going to make. Does the member guarantee that there will never be capital gains on private homes?

• (1125)

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, one is not the business of issuing guarantees on anything that one cannot control.

The member is justifiably worried about whether we can pay the debt. The real question is whether the finance minister's assumptions are realistic under the circumstances. The other assumption I would add as I have a chance to is that President Biden is proposing \$2.3 trillion in stimulus spending and Canada will be well positioned to pick up on that uptake, in spite of the buy American provisions.

The budget is 700 pages and I agree that we are in perilous times. The test is whether the Minister of Finance has made some reasonable assumptions. I believe at this stage she has and, in fact, they are probably the only assumptions she can make.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his comments, especially around economists. I once heard a respected conservative economist say that economists exist to make astrologers look good.

I want to ask the member about taxing the ultrawealthy to help pay back this pandemic debt. It is low-income Canadians who have been really impacted by this. People have lost their jobs and some people have lost their lives. Why has the government not brought in a wealth tax? Eighty per cent of Canadians want a wealth tax on the ultrawealthy. Instead, we get a luxury tax of 10% on people's latest Ferrari or yacht. Why has the government not taken the bold step to bring in a wealth tax so that the wealthy are paying this debt down?

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I will tell the hon. member that I do not own a yacht or a fancy car, unless one calls a Subaru a fancy car.

The short answer is that wealth taxes do not work. When they have been tried, they have been abandoned. The most effective wealth tax we have is the capital gains tax. I expect that, given the irrational exuberance of some of the real estate sales, there will be quite a significant windfall for the government on the sales of assets.

[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Scarborough—Guildwood for his speech.

These are huge and unprecedented expenditures. Let us remember that this spending comes on top of Ottawa's deficits.

Moreover, the government is investing very little in health transfers and support for seniors.

Could the member comment on that?

[English]

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, what I would say about that is simply that the government has provided massive amounts of stimulus to be put into the economy in order that provincial governments survive and service their own jurisdictional responsibilities.

The transfers to provinces in the past 18 months are unprecedented. The provinces have, by and large, spent the money quite wisely on health and other related issues.

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[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will start by acknowledging the people in my riding of Hochelaga. During this unprecedented and ongoing crisis, the people of Hochelaga have been resilient, supportive and engaged. I am so proud to represent them in the House, especially today, as I rise to speak to a progressive budget focused on an inclusive and feminist economic recovery.

I too want to commend my colleague and Minister of Finance, who is the first woman to table a federal budget in the House. A significant glass ceiling has just been broken.

Since the start of the pandemic, more than one million Canadians have contracted COVID-19 and more than 20,000 Canadians have died from it. I want to tell the families and friends who lost a loved one that I am thinking of them. I also want to thank health care workers for their dedication and tireless efforts. In Hochelaga and Montreal East, the vaccination campaign is making great progress. More than 83% of seniors over 70 have already been vaccinated.

We are still living with a great deal of uncertainty and facing a global health crisis. Now is not the time for austerity. We cannot ask the most vulnerable to go into debt to pay for food and shelter or just to live during this period of uncertainty. The federal government decided to be there for Canadians and support them in the fight against COVID-19.

I come from a family that strongly believes that the role of government is to fight for society's most vulnerable and to ensure that it is ready to step up in times of crisis. That is what this budget does. Our budget seeks to meet today's urgent needs, namely overcoming COVID-19 and building a fairer, more prosperous and more innovative future for all. This budget will have an important impact on the people of my riding and of Montreal East.

In my riding, many businesses and organizations have benefited from the Canada emergency wage subsidy. "We would not be here without the federal government": This is a strong message from Benoist, director general of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve community kitchen. Without the help of this wage subsidy, this jewel of Quebec's social economy, this pioneer of community kitchens in Quebec, which has provided more than 140,000 meals, would no longer be there. In fact, the budget allocates an additional \$140 million to the emergency fund for food security.

The wage subsidy has helped several industries and small and medium-sized businesses. We can be proud to have supported two new businesses in Hochelaga and Montreal East, Oshlag and Glutenberg. A few months ago, the Prime Minister and I met with co-owners David and Frédéric to talk about the impact of COVID-19 and the federal programs that helped them. I am proud to tell Benoist, David and Frédéric, as well as thousands of organizations and businesses throughout Quebec and Canada, that our budget will extend the wage subsidy until September 25, 2021.

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On top of helping these companies and making it easier for them to keep their workers employed, we are jump-starting the economy by increasing the Canada workers benefit, enabling thousands of workers to upgrade their skills in this modern, ever-changing world. With this budget, our government aims to support a sustainable green recovery, focused on the jobs of tomorrow.

Community organizations have been there for the most vulnerable Canadians since the beginning of the pandemic. Volunteers have been working every day to help the less fortunate. In Hochelaga, more than 35 community organizations received assistance from the emergency food security fund. I want to tell all of the organizations serving our community, including Le Mûrier, the Fondation des aveugles du Québec, Le Chic Resto-Pop, Projet Harmonie, Un prolongement à la famille de Montréal, and the Un Élan pour la vie foundation, that the government is supporting them in this budget. They play an important role and we recognize that. This is why we plan to invest \$400 million over three years to create a temporary community services recovery fund that will help organizations adapt, modernize and participate in the economic recovery.

One of the main concerns for people in eastern Montreal and Hochelaga is the high cost of housing, which continues to put financial pressure on families. These high costs undermine the economic and social prosperity of all families in Hochelaga and across Quebec and Canada. A family should not have to choose between paying rent or buying groceries, and families will not have to do so. In addition to investing in safe, affordable housing, we plan to increase the Canada child benefit, which has lifted more than one million Canadians out of poverty for good.

• (1130)

I want to tell organizations like Maison Tangente, Centre NAHA, L'Anonyme, CARE Montreal and CAP St-Barnabé that the budget provides an additional \$567 million over two years to support people experiencing homelessness. An additional \$2.5 billion is also being invested to speed up the construction of affordable housing.

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected women. In the labour market, women were hit early. Schools and child care centres had to close, making it even harder to achieve work-life balance. The budget includes a fundamentally feminist plan to support growth and jobs. This includes creating a nationwide early learning and child care system based on the Quebec model. Creating such a system will help ensure that women can contribute to economic growth.

I would like to remind the House that Quebec is one of the best places in the world for women to enter the workforce. It is time for the rest of Canada to follow that example.

A feminist recovery also means supporting women entrepreneurs, strengthening diversity in corporate governance and creating a national action plan to end gender-based violence. We must act.

Our thoughts are with all the victims of femicide. I want to say to all women at risk that we think of them every day.

Lockdowns and reduced social contacts during the pandemic have had serious repercussions on mental health. We have a duty to ensure that Quebeckers and everyone in Canada are getting the help they need when they need it. As a mother of two young adults, I can say that the pandemic has hit hard at home.

I spoke at length with two young students at Collège de Maisonneuve, Estelle and Jean-Emmanuel. The mental health of young people has been hit particularly hard. Overnight, they ended up isolated without necessarily having access to resources to help them prepare for these changes. I want to say to Estelle, Jean-Emmanuel and the thousands of young people in Hochelaga that the government has heard them. The budget we are proposing today includes \$100 million in funding to support mental health interventions, including for young people.

For the first time, the federal government recognizes the precarious state of the French language in Canada. We have a responsibility to protect and promote it. We recognized the need to protect the French language in Quebec, but also across the country, because the declining demographic weight of francophones is very real.

The time has come to modernize the Official Languages Act, and that is what we are going to do by providing funding to Canadian Heritage and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat for that modernization.

By providing \$180 million to enhance French immersion and French second-language programs in schools and post-secondary institutions, we recognize that the status of the French language is at risk in Quebec and Canada and that we have a responsibility to protect it.

I would like to close by letting the House know how proud I am that east Montreal, which I proudly represent, is included in budget 2021. Our government recognizes the potential of east Montreal, its potential for innovative research, for new and growing businesses and for the economy of tomorrow.

As the proud government representative for Hochelaga and east Montreal in the House of Commons, I will continue to work hard to defend the economic and social interests of our area and, more importantly, to support all Canadians in the recovery of tomorrow—a green, sustainable, inclusive she-covey.

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Vegreville had commented earlier today about the Liberals' propensity for announcements instead of actual action, and I want her to reference this.

She talked about the need to promote entrepreneurship among women. I will note that three or four years ago the operations committee tabled in the House a report on helping women entrepreneurs with government procurement. Now, three years later, the government has not acted on a single one of over two dozen recommendations.

She also talks about the need to promote French language in Quebec, which I understand and I support. I will note that the Treasury Board, in providing a billion-dollar, sole-sourced grant to its friends at WE, violated Treasury Board rules and did not do the official languages impact analysis. The President of the Treasury Board from Quebec City violated his own rules. Why the hypocrisy?

• (1140)

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I think that we basically share the same concerns, particularly that of ensuring that women are able to return to the labour market, and that is exactly what our budget proposes.

I would also like to remind my colleague that our government is the first federal government to recognize the decline of French and the need to protect the French language to ensure its vitality and demographic weight in North America.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to pick up on the idea of a she-covery and the importance of women in the workplace.

Not only are many women in the workforce, but they are also caregivers. The number of patients per nurse, most of whom are women, keeps rising because of diminishing health transfers and the government's refusal to grant permanent, sustainable, ongoing transfers.

In Montreal, 800 nurses have resigned over the past year, and that has increased the workload for those who remain.

By denying the health transfers that Quebec and the Canadian provinces are calling for, is the federal government not shooting itself in the foot when it comes to a she-covery?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

This question really resonates with me because my mother is a caregiver and has been her whole life for my brother, who is now in a long-term care home. I have not seen him in almost eight months. All that to say, I truly understand people's concern about caregivers.

I would like to remind my colleague that our government was the first to introduce a strategy to recognize caregivers and people with disabilities by increasing the disability benefit.

My colleague mentioned health transfers. I would point out that our government had to contribute \$8 out of every \$10 during the COVID-19 pandemic. That is over \$40 billion transferred and allocated to various health programs across the country.

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We are there, and we will continue to be there for all provinces to support Canadians through health care challenges.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Hochelaga.

She knows that many people have suffered during this pandemic, in particular workers, seniors and business owners in her riding.

Many others have become much richer. The wealthiest have amassed an additional \$78 billion during this crisis. Big companies like Amazon and Netflix have made record profits.

Unfortunately, her government refuses to create a wealth tax or an excess profits tax. Why are the Liberals going to make families pay for the economic recovery?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I would remind my colleague that our government is committed to making GAFAM and their ilk pay and ensuring that they contribute to our country's economic and cultural system.

However, it is up to Canadians as a society to take on debt in order to get through this pandemic.

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Today, we are debating the federal budget, which outlines how much money the federal government is going to spend in a period of time. We have not had a document like this, an outline, in over two years. During that period of time, the federal government has spent an enormous amounts of money.

When a federal budget is put together, typically a government looks at how much revenue is coming in, and revenue is, of course, in the form of taxation, fees, levies, etc., and then how much it is going to spend against that. There are two ways that the government can fund spending, and that is either through revenue from taxation, etc. or by borrowing.

In 2015, when the Conservative Party left power, we had a balanced budget. This meant that how much we were spending was about equal to what was coming in. We did not have to borrow.

In the six-year period, including what is in the document we are debating today, the federal Liberal government has added more debt to Canada, more than every other government in the history of country combined. That is really quite something.

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The question that everybody in Canada should be asking is whether he or she is getting value for that money. People who are watching today know that when they put money on their credit cards, they have to pay interest on it. That interest payment could prevent them from spending on other things. Our whole country is in that situation now.

I want to speak to this from three perspectives: the pandemic, moving forward in the pandemic, and from my province of Alberta.

First, the budget should have been tied to a plan to move Canada permanently and safely out of lockdown restrictions. We know that a lot of spending in there is related to spending on measures that are needed when people are forced to sit at home by the federal government. That does not help everybody. Restrictions do not have an equal effect on everybody in Canada. A lot of people are more impacted by these restrictions than others.

For example, a government employee who has the ability to work from home, with a permanent paycheque, might not be financially impacted in the same way as a small business owner who has to close his or her business because of uncertain restrictions.

A year into the pandemic, other countries around the world, like the United Kingdom and the United States, have started to tie reopening to benchmarks like vaccination rates. We have heard nothing from the federal government on that. In fact, it has shied away from talking about this. I realize we are in the third wave right now. I do believe the federal government's failure to deliver vaccines to Canadians in January and February exacerbated the third wave. However, without that plan, those targets, that line of sight on when the economy could reopen, this plan is a house of cards. There is a lot of assumptions that we cannot evaluate, and that is a problem.

After the pandemic, at some point, and I am hopeful Canada can move out of this, we will have a major challenge as a country. I know that some people who are listening today have lost their businesses or their jobs. Those are not things that will easily come back.

This plan should have outlined measures that would attract investment into Canada, things that would have made Canada an attractive place to do business. Some people think that government spending creates jobs, but what creates sustainable jobs is an environment in which people can take risks, invest and hire people. That means lower taxation, consistent and lower regulatory burdens, a skilled workforce and other factors.

There is really nothing in this record amount of spending and of borrowing to do that. Why is that important? Without that clear line of sight on attracting investment and job creation, it means that we are artificially creating growth. Let us think about this for a second. It is like saying we are getting more money because we are spending more money on our credit cards. It is like taking cash out of an ATM on a Visa. This is essentially what the budget would do, and that is a huge problem.

• (1145)

With the time I have left, I want to talk about my province of Alberta. Alberta was in a very bad economic situation prior to going into the pandemic. We had some of the highest unemployment rates in the country, and this is because the federal Liberal government

disrupted the energy sector with policies that made it almost impossible for projects to move forward. This is classic Liberal political philosophy, to paint Albertans as people with dirty jobs who do not care about the environment, put in place policies that are punitive to them without any plan to support workers, and then buy off votes in central and eastern Canada and hope the Liberals continue to hold power.

We know that a government that wants to maintain Canadian Confederation should put in place policies that benefit the whole country, which the Liberals have consistently failed to do, and this budget does the same thing. There is nothing in it to address the severe economic downturn that my province is facing, because the little bits of hope that we had after the Liberals' destruction of the energy sector, like the hospitality and tourism sector, like the airline sector, etc., are all wiped out now.

The Calgary Stampede, for example, brought \$500 million into the city every year, but without a plan on reopening or some benchmarks, it cannot proceed and no amount of government spending is going to fix that. We need that plan. I will bring up WestJet. WestJet is a huge source of jobs for Alberta, and the federal government has done nothing for the workers in that industry. They have been begging for a plan for rapid testing at airports that would make things safer, but the Liberals have left this company out in the dark. In fact, they have made it worse in a lot of ways, and there are so many examples like that.

This budget, which spends so much money, really sets my province back. From 2007 to 2018, my province provided \$239 billion in net fiscal transfers, essentially equalization, to the country. How much did it get back from that program? It got zero dollars. Think about what my province could have done with \$239 billion. Instead, people in my riding are sitting at home. I have seen high levels of suicide and domestic violence, and it is because the government consistently overlooks that. The government thinks we can somehow put money on a credit card and magically hope things get better.

What we need is a stable macroeconomic situation to allow growth to happen over time, not artificial growth through government spending, which creates inflationary pressures, makes things more expensive and does not really create any sort of long-term growth. In fact, it actually hinders growth because of those interest payments on that debt. We cannot accept this. I believe this is a way to buy off votes in a feeble attempt that undermines the intelligence of Canadians ahead of a federal election that the Prime Minister's party really wants to have happen during a pandemic. I think that is morally bankrupt.

Instead, what the government should have done is have a plan that clearly states the benchmarks by which Canada can safely reopen. Liberals should have had a better plan for vaccination. They also should have ensured that there was regional specific support for hard-hit regions like Alberta.

I am really tired of policy happening to my province. If the Liberal government was really serious about helping every region of this country, it would be ensuring that the workers in my province who have been left behind by its policies have things like skills development or specialized support. We should be looking at ways to create a stable economic climate in Alberta to attract more investment right now, but that is not what this budget does. What it does is put a lot of money on our nation's Visa card for not a lot of return. There is a lot of structural spending in here with not a lot of return, and that is a huge problem. That is why I do not support it, and no Canadian should, either.

• (1150)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know that this member, the opposition critic for health, speaks a lot about comparing us to the United States and tries to paint a picture that the United States is in a much better position right now than we are. However, the reality of the situation is that yesterday Canada added 5,859 COVID cases for the entire country. By comparison, Michigan added 5,900 and Florida added 5,571. Just those two states alone had double the total cases throughout all of Canada.

How can the member justify continually pointing to the United States as a huge success story when the numbers do not support it?

• (1155)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, this may come as a surprise to the member, but the United States has 10 times the population of Canada, and I believe the figures that have come out of the United States recently have shown that on a per capita basis—because that is how we measure things when there is not an equal amount, we have something called a common denominator—Canada's cases are actually outpacing the United States, and that is because the member's party failed to deliver vaccines to Canada in January and February, unlike the United States.

I will take this opportunity to thank President Biden for announcing that he plans to give Canadians some vaccines, where the member's Prime Minister failed to do so. I thank President Biden.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

The Conservatives' proposed amendment to the budget highlights the importance of accelerating vaccinations to end the third wave of COVID-19. That will require greater investments in health care. We have spoken many times about the importance of increasing health transfers. In fact, that was part of the Bloc Québécois' amendment to the amendment.

Why did my colleague and her Conservative colleagues vote against the Bloc Québécois' amendment to the amendment?

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, certainly the Conservatives understand that the federal government's delay in getting vaccines during that crucial period in January and February, when only 5% of Canadians even got their first shot, put an enormous pressure on provincial ICU capacity, for example. Of course the federal government should be helping provinces in every way

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possible, including increased transfer payments during this crisis. The Bloc's amendment, though my colleague makes it sound like it was just that, had some other, problematic components. As responsible legislators, I think we made a good point on that, but we do understand and agree that the federal government has left most provincial governments in a deeply untenable situation and needs to do more to secure vaccines.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, my question for my colleague is around working people. The Conservative leader talks a lot about standing up for the working class. However, the Conservatives have not supported federal leadership when it comes to paid sick days. We know from everybody, from public health experts to doctors, that paid sick days are critical in dealing with workplace outbreaks of COVID-19.

Does she agree that if we are going to actually stand up for working people, we need to see national leadership and provincial leadership in ensuring paid sick days for workers, so that they can stay home safely?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, gig economy workers and workers in grocery stores are the real heroes of the pandemic, but they have also been treated the most abysmally by the federal government. Of course, we need support for them to be able to isolate when they need to. We also need a plan to get them vaccinated and to make working conditions safer. The fact that the federal government has not done more on rapid testing in workplaces, and has not done more on things like seeing danger pay for grocery workers be abolished by a virtual monopoly of grocery companies in this country, is ridiculous and unconscionable. Yes, we need to do more, but we also need a path forward through vaccines, rapid tests and therapeutics.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, in my short time as an MP, so much has changed in our country and in our world. I could not help but be reminded of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, when Brutus says, "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.... On such a full sea are we now afloat, and we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures."

As legislators, it is time to recognize that we are in the throes of history. What we decide today will either lead us to future success or down a dangerous path. I am saddened to say that the path this budget presents is one that could really lead our country into peril. Even before the pandemic, the government's vacuous promise to balance the budget by 2019 had long been abandoned and broken. Canada's debt had risen, and a view of the horizon displayed a sea of deficits and red ink for years to come. The cupboard had already been spent bare.

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By June 2020, Fitch had already downgraded our national credit rating. Standard & Poor's was warning at the same time that it could also downgrade us at some point over the next couple of years "should the deterioration in the government's fiscal position become more severe and prolonged than we currently expect." I think we can safely say that Canada's fiscal position is more severe and prolonged. Credit rating agencies do not react well to vast, irresponsible spending with absolutely no plan to return to balance. Based on what I see in this budget, the government could not care less what the credit rating agencies think. There are real consequences to being downgraded. It means more difficulty borrowing and higher interest rates.

The government has at best treated any fiscal anchors with disdain, and they are in fact absent from this budget. From breaking promises to balance the budget by 2019 to maintaining a decreasing debt-to-GDP ratio, these measures were simply ignored. The lack of fiscal responsibility has been absolutely staggering, and all Canadians should be very worried about what is coming next.

I want to be clear, because the government will say that surely I am not saying I would not have protected Canadians during the pandemic. I am not saying that; I am saying that things could have been done far better. I believe the Conservatives would have avoided many of the errors in the emergency programs that we have seen. There were so many obvious errors that led to gaps in the commercial rent subsidy, the wage subsidy and the CEBA, leaving so many Canadians out in the cold. Some of these errors border on negligence at worst and incompetence at best. It took our continued efforts to point out these errors time and again before the government made necessary changes.

My caution today has to do with interest rates. I really want to talk about interest rates because the rationale used by the Minister of Finance for this massive past and future spending has been that interest rates are historically low. On Monday, she said, "In today's low interest rate environment, not only can we afford these investments, it would be short-sighted of us not to make them." She was basically telling us that it would be irresponsible not to borrow.

All this new debt presents huge risks in reality that vulnerable Canadians just cannot take in this precarious time we are in now. This abandonment of prudent financial management without sound fiscal anchors should worry future generations. The Liberals are literally rolling the dice, playing with real lives and gambling that interest rates will not rise.

What my colleagues across the way fail to mention is that the government does not entirely control these rates. Market forces also establish interest rates. Just ask former prime minister Paul Martin, who, as the finance minister in 1995, brought in the most draconian budget in Canadian history, actually cutting health transfers to provinces. It took Martin's 1995 budget, with its \$25 billion in cuts, to address the problem head-on. Canada was so substantially downgraded by the credit rating agencies in the mid-1990s that in June 1995 *The Wall Street Journal* called Canada "an honorary member of the Third World". That year, the federal budget included cuts of over 10% in total spending. It slashed national defence, customs and immigration spending. It reduced the size of the civil service. Health care transfers were slashed, and other things as well. This, I might add, was all under a Liberal government.

• (1200)

In 1995, the bank rate was 7.31% and Canada was in a full-blown debt crisis. In justifying these massive cuts, Mr. Martin said:

There are times in the progress of a people when fundamental challenges must be faced, when fundamental choices made, and new course charted. For Canada, this is one of those times. Our resolve, our values, our very way of life as Canadians are being tested. The choice is clear.

Those are prophetic words. I fear that with the magnitude of new spending in the budget, the government will likely lead us down a path into a new debt crisis. For my colleagues across the way, if they really think this cannot happen again, they have their heads in the sand.

Governments around the world, including Canada, have engaged in trillions in quantitative easing. This printing of money has diluted the money supply across the globe.

Historically, as economies recover from crises like these, inflation takes hold and interest rates rise. With a debt approaching \$1.2 trillion, an interest rate of 7.31% today would cost roughly \$80 billion a year. That amount represents nearly two full years of health care transfers to every single province.

The budget is a let down for Canadians. It represents misguided and risky spending from a government that does not seem to understand we cannot keep running the printing press and ratcheting up the credit card bill.

Since 2015, I have heard countless concerns about the government's blatant disregard for fiscal prudence, and this budget is just more evidence of it. When I talk to small business owners in my community, they do not just go and borrow money without having an eye on the future. They take into account the impact of what an increase in interest rates would actually mean.

The government likes to say that it took on debt so Canadians did not have to. That is a good one, but it is simply not true. In reality, this debt has to be paid for by Canadian taxpayers and the future ones to come.

What the government has really done is use the credit card of future generations to put them deeper into debt, which can only be repaid at the end of the day by higher taxes or program cuts, as the example Mr. Martin put forward clearly substantiates.

Every man, woman and child in Canada each now owes over \$33,000 in debt. There are 82,574 people in my riding. Thanks to the government's cavalier spending, my community now owes \$2,724,942,000 in federal debt. Workers in my community who are struggling to get back to work needed a real plan to get them back on their feet, and I have already heard from many who are deeply disappointed. Stripped of their wages and their hours slashed, they were absolutely desperate to see a plan and leadership to help them find their way back.

For example, I cannot help but think of aviation workers at the Winnipeg airport who have been pleading for support and are continually let down.

Our party's leader has put forward a bold plan, Canada's recovery plan. This plan is what real leadership looks like. It will create financial security and certainty, secure our future and deliver a Canada where those who have been hurt financially by this pandemic can get back to work.

This is all about securing good jobs for Canadians, securing the manufacturing industry in Canada, securing our economy and leading people out of the darkness and back into the light. Highly respected Canadian economist Jack Mintz said,

"[The] Minister of Finance...argues higher debt loads will be easily manageable over the next five years. But they put Canada at risk. Large primary deficits in the next several years and rising interest rates will destroy the fiscal firepower we would need should another recession come our way."

I ask the Minister of Finance to heed these warnings and learn from our history so it does not repeat itself. However, mostly I ask, for the sake of all Canadians, that she take the tide that leads on to fortune.

• (1205)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I just went on the Conservative Party's website, because the member talked about the plan, the bold vision his leader had put forward, since I thought maybe something had been released today. The plan is literally five topics and then three bullet points for each one, grandiose statements that do not really mean anything. I am confused as to how he can possibly call that a plan.

Nonetheless, let me go back to his speech. He talked about the amount of debt that had been taken on to get to where we are, as though he was not part of the whole process. The reality is that the Conservatives voted in favour of that debt every step of the way. Up until this point, the Conservatives, including that member, through his consent in unanimous consent motions quite often, voted in favour of the debt.

If the member were so concerned about the debt, could he please explain why he voted in favour of the unanimous consent motions when we passed these measures for Canadians?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, as I said in my speech, the Conservatives did vote for emergency measures and we would have done it again; we just would have done it better.

What I am referring to in my speech is the prospective spending, the massive amount of spending without any regard for fiscal anchors at all. We can make all the assumptions in the world, as the member's colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood said, but if we

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do not have a plan to get back to balance or at least a fiscal anchor, those assumptions are meaningless. If interest rates go up, I really fear for what the country is in for.

• (1210)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

The one topic that the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois absolutely agree on is that health transfers must be increased. My Conservative colleague spoke about this in his speech.

Earlier, my colleague from Saint-Jean asked our colleague from Calgary Nose Hill a question. She asked why the Conservative Party voted against the Bloc Québécois' amendment to the amendment, which called for an increase to health transfers. The member responded that some other components of the motion prevented her from supporting it.

The thing is, the only other component in the motion besides health transfers was support for seniors as of age 65.

Does this mean that the Conservative Party is against support for seniors as of age 65?

[English]

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for asking about health transfers because it is a concern.

One of the key aspects of this budget is the child care plan, if we can call it a plan. It is really a proposal, saying that we need to enter into agreements with 10 provinces and three territories and that the provinces will have to pay 50% of the cost. If we listen to the finance minister, it sounds like it will be a slam dunk, but I can assure everyone it will not be.

For example, we can read what Tom Brodbeck had to say in today's Winnipeg Free Press. He said that it would be almost impossible to get that deal done because provinces would not trust the fact that the federal government would not reduce funding in the future.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member and I have worked together on a number of things throughout this Parliament, and it has been very interesting to hear his intervention.

The member spoke about the emergency strategies and programs that have been put in place to support businesses. I agree with him that how they were designed and developed was deeply flawed. The NDP proposed many things, like the rent subsidy program, that would have been much better, so I certainly agree with him on that.

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However, one of the things the member talked about was the debt. If we do not continue to invest in small businesses and workers, we will have only won three-quarters of the race; we will not be over the finish line. In fact, we could actually lose all the ground that we have been able to hold on small businesses and workers if we pull back that support too soon.

Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, if I had been asked that question last fall, I might have been more in agreement. However, the reality is that we see the economy doing far better than it was doing at the time of the financial statement last fall by the finance minister. The economy is growing, and many economists are saying that this amount of stimulus is a solution looking for a problem and that if the government continues down this path, the economy could overheat, which will cause inflation and a rise in interest rates. I am very concerned—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a great privilege to be part of this debate and discussion around the fiscal future, and the economic and social future of our country as we talk about budget 2021. I will be sharing my time with the esteemed member for Vancouver Centre.

A budget is far more than a fiscal plan. It is far more than a set of programs. It is a signature. It is an imprint that this government is making and it is the ability of a government to show what is in its heart, mind and soul. As such, I want to thank the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for her tremendous work and for the signature that she has put on this budget; a working mother, a journalist, an economic's writer, a thinker and a careful politician. She is someone who is rooted in her riding, but brings both a Canadian spirit and a world vision to her job, and she has made a difference with the budget. I want to thank her and her whole team for their work.

This budget's imprint is clear. It is about compassion for people, it is about bringing businesses forward after a very difficult time with COVID-19, and it is about doing that with responsibility and with great care.

The people of Don Valley West would benefit from this as would all Canadians, and I speak on their behalf today as we engage in this conversation. Obviously, we are still gripped by a pandemic, by COVID-19, and we are fighting this third wave. The first priority of budget 2021 is to win the fight against the virus, and we need to do that together.

In addition to the significant assistance that our federal government is currently providing all the provinces, including my province of Ontario, in the form of health care, testing, vaccine development and contact tracing and through the buying of vaccines and supporting provincial and territorial health care systems, budget 2021 would enable provinces, territories, municipalities, families and businesses to come out of this very difficult time healthier and stronger.

Proposed funding of up to a billion dollars for Canada's COVID immunization plan will result in continued success of our government's effort to bring more vaccines into Canada and bring them sooner. A one-time top up of \$4 billion to the Canada health transfer will crucially help health systems and ensure that Canadians get the procedures and treatments they need to stay healthy as well as clear through the backlog of delayed procedure. Up to \$5 billion in health care funding to provinces and territories will ensure the sustainability of our health systems about which we care.

Obviously, we have been gripped by a health crisis that has also been an economic crisis. Through all-party support, in many ways, we have extended an economic hand to businesses, individuals and communities through a variety of programs over these last two years. These programs include the Canada emergency wage subsidy, the emergency rent subsidy, lockdown support, CERB, changes to the EI program and the Canada recovery care benefit. A host of issues and problems addressed through government programs have been successful. They are the reasons that Canadians are doing as well as they are through this very difficult time.

We have also recognized that this pandemic has revealed certain cracks in our society. We have recognized that some populations and groups have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Even as we have an enviable position when it comes to our economic recovery and we are in a good fiscal state to take further steps, we still have more to do. We want to find ways to ensure that Canadians, all across the country, from coast to coast to coast, of every economic, social and gender background, are taken care of in a way that looks into the future in a new and promising way.

In my riding of Don Valley West, like across the country, child care costs are extremely high. Toronto has the highest average child care cost of any city in the country and where it can be equivalent to, for some people, making a mortgage payment. It is no wonder that paying for child care represents a significant barrier for families to equally engage in the workplace.

It is a burden on women, but it is also a burden on men, and together we are attempting to make a new program, a new plan for child care, that will change Canada. It is one of the signature items of this budget that we can all rally around regardless of our political stripe. A universal system of child care will be boon to women in the workforce and a boon to men who take their part in child care and child raising.

The Budget

• (1215)

By achieving a 50% cost reduction in child care by 2022 and \$10-a-day child care by 2026 through this budget, we will remove significant barriers to women seeking employment now and even more so by 2026, and it is good economics. It is the only way for Canada to continue to build its economy, to ensure that newcomers are fully engaged in the workforce and that we are able to compete in the world. Given the disproportionate effect of COVID on women, our economic recovery needs to be a feminist recovery. With substantial measures for women's employment along with affordable child care, we will not only recover the employment that we have lost over the last two years, but we will also see further and continued success by women in the workforce.

As I said, this is an opportunity to build back better. Cracks have been revealed in our social safety net and our various systems. We will continue to work on environmental programs, on building the base for small business to recover and ensuring that large businesses are able to compete in the global marketplace.

Housing is core to that as well. People in Don Valley West, especially in neighbourhoods like Thorncliffe Park, depend on affordable housing, and COVID has made it even harder to get. It has widened the gap between Canadians who have housing and those who cannot afford it. Budget 2021 will quickly address creating new housing while at the same creating jobs, alleviating cost pressures on the housing market overall in a variety of methods that have already been mentioned in today's debate, and will grow the middle class. Part of the underscoring of the care for families is to ensure that they not only have jobs but are able to participate in the workforce equally and also that they have a roof over their head.

Many people in Don Valley West did lose their jobs during the COVID pandemic. Some have recovered, but many have not. This is not a time for austerity; it is a time for bold imagination, creativity and ensuring that all Canadians can participate in the workforce. It is not a time to draw back; it is a time to push forward. It is a time to ensure that we are spending appropriately and carefully, doing so with imagination and compassion, and with partners in our cities, provinces and territories, labour unions and businesses. Canada and Canadians have what it takes to make an economy that is competitive in the world. Government needs to be there to undergird it, support it, encourage it and, at times, invest in it.

Most people in the House will know me as a United Church minister and will understand that I try to bring people first in the work I do, but I am also accountant, which was my first career. I come at this budget with an accountant's eye as well as a clergy's eye, and the accountant's eye is very pleased with this budget.

I was very glad that the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley brought up Paul Martin as finance minister in the 1990s. He had to have the budget for his time, which was to undo the fiscal recklessness of the previous prime minister, Mr. Mulroney. He had to find a way to take care of the debt that Mr. Chrétien, as prime minister, had inherited. He had a budget for his time. This is a budget that the Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister has brought for this time; a different budget.

We are not ideologically driven. We are driven by doing the right thing at the right time to invest in the right way. We are taking ad-

vantage of our tremendously good banking system; the bones of our economy, which are strong; and the imagination and entrepreneurship of Canadians, which need to be harnessed and brought forward into new and creative ways following this pandemic. We need to do that in a fiscally responsible way. I am glad that we are not afraid of investing, encouraging, enabling, supporting and making sure that our economy is built for the years ahead.

We have looked back, and we are taking care of the present. We have learned from the past and we are taking care of the present, and we are building a country and an economy for the future.

• (1220)

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member spoke at length about how the budget reflects the heart, mind and soul of this Liberal government. He spoke at length about not being afraid of investing to meet the needs of Canadians. I think all parliamentarians agree that we need to invest to meet the needs of all Canadians.

The member also mentioned that we need to learn from the past. I was perplexed when I did my first review of the budget that it did nothing to address the key findings from the Office of the Auditor General who found, on infrastructure, that key federal organizations could not demonstrate that the investing in Canada plan was on track to meet its expected results and objectives. The reality is that Canadians, under this government, do not know where billions of dollars are going as it relates to infrastructure projects. I believe that this government can do a better job of improving its transparency so that Canadians know—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to give the hon. parliamentary secretary an opportunity to comment.

• (1225)

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, I take this as an opportunity to thank the Auditor General and the whole team that the Auditor General has in ensuring that Canadians have the best information. The Auditor General's work absolutely is incredibly important to Canadians, and that is why we have restored funding to that office that was cut by the previous Conservative government.

We want to engage with the Auditor General to ensure that Canadians can count on and can trust our officials across this government to spend their money wisely. We never understand this as our money; we understand it very clearly as money that Canadians have put in. As the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills said this morning, our tax system is a way we put money into a pot to use in appropriate ways.

We will follow everything the Auditor General suggests, and I can assure Canadians that their money is—

The Budget

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to go to other questions.

The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke about how the budget will help with job creation.

From a holistic perspective, I have to wonder. Increasing health transfers would lead to better care, since new equipment could be purchased. This would create jobs, including jobs in health care systems.

Increasing old age security would have a similar impact, since increasing the purchasing power of seniors, who account for 22% of our population, would create jobs in all kinds of sectors, such as the food and clothing industries.

Why did he vote against the Bloc Québécois' amendment if it would ultimately benefit the economy?

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, it is very important to understand this clearly.

[English]

I will speak in English because I was not able to change my headset.

It is actually a bit tiresome, I would say. I am a little tired of this endless rhetoric from the Bloc about health transfers at this point.

The transfers that this government has made in health care have been historic, and absolutely the appropriate way that we have supported every province, including Quebec, in our health care is essential to fighting COVID.

We have also supported seniors tremendously through this program and this budget adds further support to seniors. The transfers that we made—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to have one last question.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Northern Ontario is seized with a crisis right now. Laurentian University is cutting dozens of French-language programs, including its midwifery program, the only one offered in French outside Quebec.

Where in the budget are the Liberal government's commitments to post-secondary education, including French-language programs at northern Ontario universities?

[English]

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to comment on that.

Regarding Laurentian University, I am from northern Ontario, from Sault Ste. Marie. Algoma University, called Algoma College, was part of Laurentian and it is very much part of my family history.

I have a great deal of concern about the provincial government and Ontario's support of post-secondary education, but I was extremely pleased to see several interventions in this budget providing money for elementary, secondary and post-secondary education in French, which is absolutely part of Canada's heritage. We need to make sure that French language is—

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

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am so proud to speak to this budget. The hon. member laid out the vision behind this budget extremely well, and I want to follow up on it.

This is a historic budget, presented by Canada's first female finance minister. I am proud because I can see the fine hand of the Deputy Prime Minister in that budget. I can see her thinking and her vision, because it is a clear, logical, visionary budget. It is laid out in three themes, as any logical budget would do. It is a budget about people. It is about protecting people, that is the first theme; it is about supporting people, that is the second theme; and it is about investing long term in people, that is the third theme.

We are facing the greatest global human and economic catastrophe since World War II, and I think we need to remember that. This is not a crisis caused by some human error or economic mistake made by others. It is caused by a virus that is currently in full control. I want us to think about the nature of this catastrophe, because we seem to lay blame in this House for who is responsible for what and why we are not controlling the virus very well.

With the exception of Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan, every country is in lockdown right now, struggling against a third wave of mutations of the virus. Actually, Canada is holding its head above water. We hear fears raised about deficits and spending, etc. I want to ask my colleagues if we should have abandoned Canadians, or abandoned provinces that, constitutionally, have the ability to deliver health care. We have not done that.

We have invested \$8 out of every \$10 in the provinces and vaccines, giving provinces what they need in order to deliver health care, personal protective equipment, testing, tracing, surveilling, and ensuring the basics of epidemiology, which are test, trace, surveil and isolate when necessary, are followed. We have supplied the provinces with the money to be able to do all of that. However, it is their duty under the Constitution to deliver on that.

I want to say what the IMF said about our early response, which is the first theme in this budget. Because Canada used public health policies, grounded and guided by science and expertise, we were able to deal with the first wave of COVID in a very reasonable manner.

The Budget

The variants are the problem right now. Until we can flatten the curve and until we get rid of COVID, nothing, no economic redevelopment, no starting of any economy, no transition, and no ability to plan for the future, will occur. Job one is getting that virus contained.

One of the things we did when it first started, as the IMF pointed out, to deal with this was we funded, \$8 out of \$10, the provinces and gave them the ability to deliver health care in a manner they felt fit their particular province and region. In many cases we have seen across the country that the provinces have different responses. Some have done well, as in the Atlantic provinces, and others have not done so well. That is because provinces are dealing with health care on the ground in their provinces. That is an important thing to remember. The federal government cannot suddenly impose on provinces and tell them what we think they need to do.

This is the first part, protecting Canadians, which we have done extremely well. The IMF said that we are one of the countries that did extremely well, using science and expertise to do it.

I could sit here and say that we are putting \$40 billion into this and \$3 billion over two years and whatever into things we have done. However, I am hoping members have read the budget and know where all the money is going and for what reasons.

I want to talk a little about the vision behind this budget. The point is we were, and are still, trying to flatten the curve. The second part of the budget is supporting Canadians, supporting workers, families, seniors and vulnerable Canadians, and supporting businesses and helping them to stay afloat. That part of the budget was about supporting Canadians so that they could survive and cope, and so that businesses, if not rising above it because nobody can rise above it until COVID is gone, could tread water.

● (1230)

When the time comes, and we are ready to move forward again and rebuild a new economy, small businesses will be ready to hit the ground running. That is why we looked at putting in place the wage supplement and the rent supplement for people who lost their jobs. That is why we looked to increasing sickness leave. That is how we saw the vulnerable in our society, which COVID exposed to us.

There are all of the women who had to leave their jobs. They did not lose their jobs. They had to leave them because they had to stay at home and take care of their children. There are all of the low-wage workers, who are working in risky and precarious jobs, many of them full time, who still cannot afford to make ends meet. The pandemic exposed those vulnerable people extremely well.

I think that is one of the reasons we are now looking at how to support them with a \$15 minimum wage. Of course, we are helping workers, not just families but single workers too, to be able to make use of the taxes that can help them keep their heads above water. We helped seniors with money. We are looking at how we are going to help them continue to function by increasing the OAS for seniors above the age of 75, and giving them a one-time amount of \$500.

We are looking at housing, not only for businesses, but also helping people and families pay their rent. We are looking at how we

put money into a rapid housing initiative to deal with all of the homelessness, to help the people who have been displaced. We have put money into food banks to support people so they can eat and feed their families.

That is what this budget is about. It is about continuing to do that on until we get rid of COVID to help people to survive and cope, and have businesses able to keep afloat, so when the time comes they can rebound.

The third part of the budget is where I can see the Minister of Finance's fine hand, because it is a visionary budget. It is talking about the future. It is building for a resilient future.

This is not going to be our last pandemic. We do not know what is going to happen. Catastrophes will occur. We need to prepare for when they happen, not fall apart like we did economically and socially. We need to be able to be resilient enough to bounce with whatever hits us. That is what this budget is doing in its third phase, which is building for the future.

The important thing about this budget is that we are finding out about all the people who fell between the cracks, and they are going to have to be helped. This budget is about looking at building a new social infrastructure, so that we do not have to have people fall between the cracks again. We are looking at the people who have fallen and are falling.

We are looking at young people, and we are looking at seniors, helping them to survive and be able to move forward.

We are looking at the tourism sector and industries that have fallen apart. We want to keep them alive so they can rebound again. We are giving them money for marketing and for rebuilding.

We are not only looking at giving small businesses the help they need to restart and to rebuild, but we are also looking at helping them into the new era.

The new economic era that we are going to build will be based on the post-industrial economy. I have listened to many international fora, such as in Europe, talking about a post-industrial recovery. It is not going to be the same old, same old. We are going to have to look at how we invest in the new economy. In Europe they have talked a lot about how automation has actually begun to kill the industrial sector, and Europe has massive industrial sectors.

We are looking at how we rebuild back a new economy. We look at scientific knowledge and innovation. We are looking at harnessing our oceans. We are lucky. We are surrounded by three massive oceans. How do we get into that blue economy?

The Budget

How do we utilize our oceans to produce food and protein with low greenhouse gas emissions, with renewable food sources? Oceans are not just about fish. We are going to look at how we could develop that. Although, I might say that I am very pleased to see that my province of British Columbia got a lot of help with the salmon. They are dying right now, and we got enough money to be able to rebuild that particular resource.

The important thing to remember is that we are recognizing that this new economy will have to utilize young people, who right now have no jobs. We have kept them afloat with summer jobs, and all of the other things, but we are now trying to utilize and focus on youth being able to get their first jobs, being able to get into the kinds of training that they need—

• (1235)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to go to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Vancouver Centre talked a lot about all the things the government is looking into, but the one area it is not looking into is first-time home buyers. The federal government, I acknowledge, has put new money into housing, but it does not address the structural economic challenges that young buyers.

They are the young professionals graduating from the University of British Columbia or Simon Fraser University who followed all the rules to get ahead and did everything they were always supposed to do. They now find themselves having to pay \$3,000 a month for a crappy apartment in Vancouver.

They do not want to live in social housing. These are independent-minded young professionals. They want a pathway to home ownership, and under the first-time home buyers plan, they are not getting that. Under the current government, which acknowledged that the system works better for foreign buyers—

• (1240)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will give the member for Vancouver Centre an opportunity to answer.

The hon. member.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, I think what the hon. member does not remember is that in 2017, after the housing strategy had been gutted, this government put \$40 billion over 10 years into housing, and since then we have topped that up. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation was brought back in the housing business, because it had been taken away by the Conservative government.

We scrapped what was happening to support mortgages to help young people and first-time buyers. This is happening. This is going on in very difficult provinces such as British Columbia to help young people get jobs. I might add that one of the things IMF commented on is that we have been actually getting new jobs, the rising number of jobs in British Columbia in the last quarter has been in the technological industries with new innovations.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Vancouver Centre for her speech.

I, too, would like to take a moment to salute the first budget presented in the House by a woman. It is worth acknowledging every time a woman speaks for the first time on this issue, so I congratulate the Minister of Finance on her achievement.

I would like the member to comment on whether she sees a difference between the expenses of seniors who are 65 to 74 and those of seniors who are 75 and over.

Has the government created two classes of seniors based on the belief that their expenses are different?

[English]

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, this budget is not only about supporting the vulnerable, but it is also about being able to recognize where those supports are best used at the moment. It has been shown statistically that of seniors over 75, 10% are in the paid workforce right now. Most of them are disabled. They are suffering from long-term health problems, and so they really needed this extra support right now.

It is shown that, for those between 65 and 74, about 35% of that cohort are working and raising money. They are able to live, and they do have some ability to support themselves. Right now we are supporting the very vulnerable group.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, like the member, I was quite excited to see the commitment to child care. I think it will be vital in women's recovery from COVID-19 and for the recovery of our economy. However, what I did not see in this budget was anything on pharmacare. Despite the fact that the Liberals ran on this in 2019, and despite the fact that the throne speech talked about pharmacare, there is nothing in this budget for pharmacare.

How can we believe that there will actually be any real action on child care, when we have seen promise after promise on a number of different fronts not be fulfilled and dropped when they become inconvenient for the government?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, I think this member does not recognize that both pharmacare and child care are constitutionally provincial jurisdictions. In order to get to where we were under Paul Martin, we had negotiated a full child care and early learning program with all the provinces.

We had also negotiated the Kelowna accord, and we had begun to work on a pharmacare strategy with the provinces at that time. Then, of course—

• (1245)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We must resume debate.

The hon. member for Saskatoon—University has the floor.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time today.

The Budget

Centuries ago, when a community was facing a terrible plague, a man showed up wearing a coat of many colours. He claimed to be able get rid of the rats that were responsible for the plague. The town folks decided to take him up on his offer. Just as the plague was ending, the pied piper, having changed outfits, I guess he was a big fan of costumes, was now sporting a bright red hat. He lured the children out of the town, and they were never seen or heard from again.

It is a tragic story, but there are some parallels to what is going on in our country. I am quite concerned about this budget and what it means for the futures of the children out there.

I was born in the seventies and went to school at the University of Saskatchewan, starting in 1996. Some of the lessons from my university days and living in Saskatchewan are telling, and some are lessons we learned in the eighties and nineties about problems with governments living beyond their means and what comes next.

I believe what comes next is going to be a repeat of the nineties. We know interest rates are going to go up, and what that will do is pressure federal governments to make changes. In the nineties, the Liberals slashed transfer payments to the provinces, and the provinces downloaded those cuts onto institutions such as the University of Saskatchewan, where I was going to school in the late nineties.

I felt what those cuts did to the facilities. There were cuts to my education and cuts to health care in our province, and it was all because of governments living beyond their means when interest rates were low. As soon as they started moving and the crunch happened, the credit card bill came due.

That Liberal government cut transfer payments. The provincial government in my province of Saskatchewan made cuts to the University of Saskatchewan, where I was going to school. One example that really sticks in my mind concerning the cuts to transfers is that the facilities at the university I was attending were falling down. In the frugal nature of Saskatchewan, we made due with what we could to provide.

I vividly remember writing a final in the gym. It was not really a gym, it was actually a World War II hangar that was moved on to campus. However, it was not just one War World II hangar. The university took another one and stacked the two on top of each other. That is where I was writing a final one morning, and later that day, the building was condemned. It was ready to fall down. It was because of the cuts the federal government made. The credit card bill was due.

Unfortunately, the Liberals have not learned from these tough lessons. More and more Canadians are waking up to the fact that, once interest rates start moving up, we know what will happen because of the fiscal reality of our country and also because what the Liberals have done with printing money.

There are numerous countries and societies that thought it would be a good idea to print money to pay bills, but unfortunately we know how that ends for governments, and it is probably worst off for citizens. It is going to cause inflation. Inflation is going to be at a runaway pace with the current plan of the Liberals, which will result in interest rate changes. Interest will go up, which will unfortu-

nately force future governments to make the decision, similar to the nineties and the Liberals, to cut transfers to the provinces, cut services and raise taxes.

That is why I cannot support this budget. This budget contains a lot of new spending and a lot of structural spending, which is going to force us into a worse structural deficit. I am the shadow minister of families, children and social development, and the government day care program falls within my duties. I am very concerned about the direction it will take us fiscally.

Different projections show that by 2026 we are going to be spending \$8.3 billion on child care, if this fantasy the Liberals are once again telling comes together. They have been telling this story for the last 30 years.

● (1250)

In 2026, even with interest rates as they are currently, we are going to be paying \$39 billion to service the debt. What kind of future are we giving children who apparently are going to be paying for this government's day care program? The problem with what the Liberals are proposing I think is worse because it limits a family's choice. We should be trusting families to make the choices that are right for them. We should be empowering parents and sending them supports to make those decisions, be it for regulated day care, a relative who helps out or someone else who helps with their children. I am very concerned that this program will never get off the ground.

The problem with this budget is there is not a thin nickel going to the provinces in transfers directly for health care. Provinces right now are on their knees. Not one province is in surplus. If a province was going to spend an extra dollar to take care of its responsibilities, as this is a provincial responsibility, it would not spend on child care right now. Because we are in the middle of a pandemic, it would go to health care, and rightfully so. No province is going to be willing to forgo providing the health care we need in order to start a national program with the federal Liberals. I find it very difficult to believe, and this is why it has not gotten off the ground in the 30-some years that the Liberals have been promising this fantasy.

On a positive note, I would like to highlight the spending on the VIDO centre in Saskatoon. It took me 12 months of lobbying to get these dollars finally flowing. This facility was the first to isolate COVID-19 in the world. It has world-leading scientists working on these problems. It had to wait for the budget consultation and 12 months to get its funding, which is wrong.

The Budget

There are a lot of things wrong with this budget. There are supports that Conservatives supported to make sure we get through the pandemic. We should be there for people who are not able to provide for their families because of government restrictions on their ability to work. We have supported those short-term relief programs. However, the structural deficit this creates, which we were already in before the pandemic, is going to result in a future for our children that is a lot darker than ours. I have issues with spending future generations' wealth today and what that results in. We talk about fiscal pressures that are going to exist with inflation. What is the Liberal government going to cut when the structural deficit credit card bill comes due? This is not a way to operate a country, and I hope that more Canadians are waking up to this pied piper dream. It will result in a darker future for our country and our future generations.

I wish this budget was based more in reality. The fact is that the fiscal capacity for our country is going to be shaken, just as in the 1990s, and I am fearful of what is going to be cut when the credit card bill comes due. Canadians are counting on us. We should be there during the pandemic for relief programs in the short term, but we have to get back to balance.

Circling back once more to the children's story of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, at the tail end of the play, he wanted to take the town's gold or its children. It is important not to see too many parallels with today. For one thing, we should remember that the pied piper actually did a good job of ending the pandemic and, for that matter, what he really wanted was to steal either the town's gold or its children's future, but not both at the same time.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one by one Conservatives have been trotting out and talking about the debt and the deficit. That is a really important conversation to have. I get it, and we need to talk about that because it is a lot of money, but they are not giving any kind of indication of what they would remove from the budget. If the member is not convinced of the amount of debt, then he should pick a number. He wants to halve it. What if it were only half? He should tell me what he would cut from it.

Can the member tell me what he would cut from it? Conservatives want to start cutting things from the budget, but they should tell us what those things would be rather than just complaining about the number.

• (1255)

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, I would hope the member would believe his own words: that we need to get back to balance at some time. Running up the credit card bill is only going to get us in worse shape down the road, and those choices that we are going to have to make as a country when the interest rates go up are going to be horrific. For the member to say that we are in a good spot, and that this extra spending is going to relieve the concerns we have in our country about fiscal deficits or a structural deficit, I cannot accept that. We are forgoing so much opportunity for future generations with the direction of the government.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government refuses to take action in response to the

unanimous request of Quebec and the Canadian provinces to permanently increase health transfers to 35% per year.

Permanent transfers are a way to make long-term investments to help people in terms of their health, the economy and employment, which will affect their ability to afford housing, food, clothing and so on.

My question for my esteemed colleague is this: Does he realize that by voting against health transfers last night, his party is being inconsistent and demonstrating that it lacks a long-term vision regarding how these transfers can have a positive impact on the economy?

[English]

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, it was an important debate last night. We need to remember, if we are talking about the Bloc's amendments, that they removed all reference to being fiscally responsible. There is a need to live in reality versus this fantasy world where we can just keep spending and not have problems that will come back on us.

I believe that we need to help provinces. They are the ones at the front lines of this pandemic. They are begging for vaccines the government failed to deliver in January and February, which resulted in a third wave that is crushing Canada. Meanwhile, not that far south of us, freedoms are returning. Cities are coming back to life. It was the failure of the federal Liberal government to get vaccines—

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

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the questions I had when I looked through the budget was that I did not see the support for the Prairie provinces that I wanted to see. The member will know that Alberta was in a really dire situation before the pandemic, and that unemployment is something that is facing us. I did not see a commitment to diversifying our economy or making sure that there were forward-facing job opportunities for Albertans and all the Prairie provinces.

What investments would the member have liked to see in our Prairie provinces to make sure they have the opportunity to have jobs and a good future economy?

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, the member is right that Alberta and Saskatchewan were ignored and this is no surprise. For the last six years, there has been abuse in my region. It has been on the stinky end of the stick from the Liberal government. If we are talking about getting our economy rolling again, we need to get pipelines. We need to get our resources to market. We need to build the economy of the future without—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

• (1300)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, today we are talking about the 2021 federal budget. This is the Liberals' first budget in two years.

I have to say that, sadly, this does not bode well for future generations. In addition to about \$400 billion in unbudgeted spending over the past year, this budget includes another \$150 billion in red ink for the year to come. Moreover, if everything is okay in five years, the government is projecting a more modest \$31-billion deficit for 2025-26. On Monday, Radio-Canada described that as pretty close to balancing the budget.

They seem to have lost sight of the value of money. They do not know the difference between \$1 and \$1 billion. This is nothing like Liberals' fiscal rigour under Jean Chrétien. It does not even come close to what the Liberals under the current Prime Minister promised when, in 2015, the Liberal Party leader projected three small \$10-billion deficits and a balanced budget by 2019. Let us not forget that.

I understand, of course, that the pandemic has created the need for temporary support programs to get through this crisis, programs that we have supported and even helped improve many times over the past year. However, that does not explain this orgy of spending, this \$101 billion in new spending that is not all related to the pandemic and that, once in place, will be here to stay. A government program is the closest thing to eternal life on earth. It does not actually exist.

Worse still, we learned that the budget, presented in the House of Commons on Monday, was already outdated the next day. The Prime Minister came out and said he would increase health transfers—something the provinces and the opposition parties have been calling for—right after the pandemic. Either the Prime Minister thinks the pandemic is going to last until 2025, or he has not included the increases to health transfers in his spending. This will inevitably add to the deficit after the pandemic.

We also want to act on the request made by the provincial premiers. Ideally, it would be unconditional, because health services are entirely under provincial jurisdiction. The only problem is that the amounts requested are nowhere to be found in the budget.

This budget is an 725-page brick, a half-baked document that the government took two years to complete. It was presented less than 48 hours ago, it has not even been voted on yet, and we already know that the figures for the next five years will have to be modified because the government did not have the foresight to include an amount for health transfers.

I have a feeling that many other amounts will have to be added or modified after seniors aged 65 to 74 begin complaining because they just learned that the announced increase in OAS applies only to those aged 75 and over. This is a measure that involves increasing the pension by 10% next year, but also offering a one-time \$500 payment this year, just before the election. In fact, there is a good chance that an election will be triggered in August.

The Budget

This issue was met with public outcry in my riding, including from Ms. Bélanger in Saint-Jean-Port-Joli, Mr. Fortin in Saint-Aubert, Ms. Plourde in Notre-Dame-du-Portage, Ms. Petit in Rivière-du-Loup and Mr. Saint Pierre in Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatière. These people and many others have called me since the budget was tabled, and they are very angry.

The government's discrimination against younger seniors, a group I will soon be a part of, shocked the people at the Fédération de l'âge d'or du Québec, the FADOQ, and other seniors' associations across the country. I would not be surprised if the government eventually had to put things right by raising the pensions of seniors between the ages of 65 and 74. The \$12 billion could potentially grow to \$24 billion or \$30 billion. Once again, the projections in the budget are obsolete.

The budget does not contain more money for the third link in Quebec City or the extension of Highway 20 to Rimouski. If the government is so willing to go into debt and extend the deficits for years and even decades to stimulate the economy, it can at least build something of use for future generations.

We also had to run deficits under the Harper government. Members will recall that deficits were necessary during the 2008-09 crisis. However, the money was used in large part to support our communities by building and renewing infrastructure, which would serve and continues to serve Canadians.

In 10 or 20 years, what will the Liberals' legacy be to justify all these billions of dollars of borrowed money?

• (1305)

After the budget was tabled, we made a troubling discovery. By 2022-23, the deficits that the Liberal government has been accumulating since 2015 will have exceeded the eye-watering sum of \$662 billion. That is more than the \$630 billion in total debt accumulated by all other prime ministers combined since Confederation. The debt has doubled in the span of eight years. It is unbelievable, and it makes no sense.

Did Canada's GDP double in eight years? Did all Canadians' wages double in eight years? Obviously not. The Liberals just do not get it.

Despite mismanaging its own programs, the Liberal government now wants to get into child care, which it announced a long time ago but never did anything about.

I have nothing against day cares. The shortage of day care spots is a problem for many young mothers in my riding. However, child care, like health, is an area of provincial jurisdiction.

The Budget

I am certain that the two provincial representatives in my riding are doing everything they can to improve access to child care services in these difficult times. In Quebec, we made the political choice to implement universal access to subsidized day care, and we pay for it with provincial income taxes. As everyone knows, nothing is free. This was a choice we made as a society. Quebecers agreed to pay more income tax to support young families.

I would like to point out that, in Quebec, individuals pay 15% income tax on the first \$45,000, compared with British Columbians, who pay only 5% provincial income tax on the first \$42,000. In the next bracket, \$84,000, Quebecers pay 20% of their income to Quebec City, while British Columbians pay only 7.7% of their income to Victoria. That is a difference of 10% to 12%, which is enormous.

I will ask the government this: Why should Quebecers take on 23% of the new debt? The \$30 billion that the Liberals intend to invest in child care will be funded entirely through deficits. Quebec already has a child care system. That means that we will be paying twice, through our income tax, each year. Since the Liberals cannot restrain their centralizing federalist tendencies, we can also expect any transfers or compensation to be subject to the federal government's conditions.

Clearly, today's Liberals are far from being able to manage public funds as well as they did under Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin. Who would have guessed that a Conservative member would ever say such a thing? I have no choice but to admit that some Liberals did do a good job of managing this country.

This budget is a huge, 739-page campaign brochure that is not intended to get the country back on a solid foundation for the future, but to trigger an election and promise something for everyone. Canadians, especially the young Canadians who will have to pay for all of this, are not fooled by this attempt to buy Canadians' votes with their own money.

Two days ago I was shocked by the Liberal budget and I still am. For two days, I have been getting endless phone calls, email and text messages. People in my riding cannot understand why the government chose to run such huge deficits. These deficits were racked up before the infamous pandemic. Mr. Trudeau did not keep his promise. That is the first thing that needs—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I remind the hon. member not to refer to sitting members by name.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, I apologize. It was a slip of the tongue.

I was saying that people in my riding cannot understand the current Prime Minister's deficit policy. Our children and grandchildren will have to pay for it.

The Prime Minister once said that the budget will balance itself, which is unbelievable. A budget cannot balance itself. We have to work to make that happen.

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, like my female colleagues, I would like to point out that this is the first budget tabled by a woman. I am happy about that, because it shattered the glass ceiling.

I was very happy with the member's presentation, because it felt like we had one more Bloc Québécois member on the floor. In fact, his point of view is identical to the Bloc Québécois' stance on health transfers and the situation of seniors aged 65 and over.

Is my colleague aware that, by voting against the health transfers yesterday, the Conservative Party was inconsistent and showed a lack of long-term vision regarding the positive impact of these transfers on the economy? I took the liberty of paraphrasing my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou.

• (1310)

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

I agree that the fact that this budget was presented by Canada's first female Minister of Finance is a huge step forward for Canada and for all Canadian women.

That being said, we Conservatives definitely agree that the health transfers must be increased unconditionally. We also agree that there should not be two classes of seniors, those aged 65 to 74 and those aged 75 and over. That is completely illogical.

However, the reason the Conservatives voted against the Bloc Québécois' amendment to the amendment is that it gave the provinces and territories free rein to spend the money any way they wanted, without regard for financial responsibility. The Bloc Québécois can promise the moon, but we know they would never be able to deliver.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. I will address his concerns about a balanced budget.

Looking beyond the necessary spending and investments, the NDP noticed that this budget contains some of our own ideas, including a universal affordable child care program.

We also need to look at the revenue column, something the Conservatives rarely do. Does my colleague agree that web giants like Amazon should pay taxes and that there should be a wealth tax and an excessive profits tax?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We have always agreed that people who do business in Canada should pay their fair share of taxes. This is a good principle that applies to all Canadians.

My colleague is correct in saying that, in accounting, there is a right-hand column and a left-hand column. The problem with the Liberals is that they only pay attention to the spending, not the revenues. The budget says nothing about revenues, so we find only spending and, of course, deficits, because we do not have enough revenue to balance the budget.

The Budget

That is unfortunate. The Liberal government will not make any cuts, but it must make responsible decisions at some point to make sure we return to a balanced budget. That is not addressed anywhere in the 664 pages of this budget.

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to salute my colleague, who sat with me for five years on the Standing Committee on Official Languages. We had some good times and did good work.

I heard him speak of his concerns about the budget being extravagant. Without wanting to take a partisan jab at the Conservatives, they are always talking about budget cuts. It is their hallmark. Let us remember that in 2015, the Conservatives wanted to raise the retirement age, the age at which Canadians can start receiving old age security. Today, they are upset that the government increased those benefits for some of our seniors, those aged 75 and over.

Our budget is a win-win solution, because we managed to protect Canada's economy, which many countries around the world have failed to do. The budget plans for the next 10 to 20 years by investing in our social infrastructure as well as the physical infrastructure.

I would like to hear my colleague talk about budget cuts. During the pandemic, in 2021, what budget cuts would he make and where? In his opinion, where would be the smartest place to make cuts?

Mr. Bernard Gagnéux: Madam Speaker, I like my colleague, because he is mischievous and tries to make me say things I would never say.

We Conservatives will not talk about cuts. We will talk about financial and fiscal responsibility. I think there is a very big difference between the two. We cannot keep going at the rate the Liberals are going now and will be going for the next few years.

I would like to point out once again that, in 2015, the Prime Minister said that there would be only three small \$10-billion deficits. The reality is that the Liberals have an \$80-billion deficit.

• (1315)

[English]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Richmond Hill.

It is an absolute honour for me to rise in the House today to speak on behalf of the residents in my riding of Davenport. I am truly proud to speak on this historic budget. I have so much to say that I suspect I am going to be running out of time.

I want to begin by acknowledging that my riding, which is in downtown west Toronto, like many places in the GTA, is currently under attack by a devastating third wave of this pandemic. There are four postal codes in my Davenport riding that are considered hot spots for COVID cases. I want to pay special tribute to all the essential workers in my riding, who have already spent more than a year working around the clock to save us and keep us healthy. I want to thank everyone who works in a hospital or a long-term care home, working to exhaustion to keep people safe.

I also want to say a huge thanks to everyone who is working to keep us fed, healthy and safe. I thank those who are working in gro-

cery stores, food services, factories and the TTC and doing all the jobs that keep our committees going. I know they face more risks every single day with the variants that are out there and the risks are much greater, so a heartfelt thanks to all of them.

This pandemic has hit us hard not only from a health perspective, but also from an economic perspective. The COVID recession is the steepest and the fastest since the Great Depression. Some people may look at our government's historic, ambitious budget, which invests over \$100 billion over three years, and say that we are overdoing it. What I would like to point out, and I know our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has pointed this out, is that we learned from our last recession. It took over 10 years for employment levels to fully recover. We know the investments at that time were limited. We have learned our lessons. We are not going to make the same mistake in federal budget 2021. The economic and human costs of inaction are too great.

As I am sure members have heard, because they have heard so many speeches thus far, there are three key sections in budget 2021: conquering COVID, punching out of this recession, and building a better future. I will touch very briefly on the first two but spend most of my time on the last section and how we are building back Canada better.

With respect to the first part, conquering COVID, as the current third wave is showing us, we are not done with COVID. To conquer the virus, the federal government needs to continue to do whatever it takes for as long as it takes to keep Canadians safe, healthy and supported, and federal budget 2021 has allocated even more funding to extending supports to workers and benefits. We are extending the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency rent subsidy until September 25. We are extending the Canada recovery benefit by another 12 weeks, and we are maintaining flexible EI rules for an extra year until the fall of 2022. Some of the supports taper off a bit in the summer as we expect and hope that our economy will rebound. I know that Davenport workers and businesses can now plan around these supports and know that, as always, our government will be there if they need us. We will have their backs.

The Budget

On the vaccine front, I am very proud of the fast action of our federal Liberal government early into the pandemic. We have secured contracts for more doses per capita than any other country, and more candidate vaccines. Our vaccine rollout is now third in the G20, behind only the U.S. and the U.K. Around 24% to 25% of our population has been vaccinated with one dose. We are investing a lot to rebuild our own domestic vaccine manufacturing. Budget 2021 proposes over \$2 billion more for that, because we know that there is a very high risk that we will need booster shots and maybe even modified vaccines as we move forward, and we want to have the opportunity to be able to create that here in Canada.

Next, I want to talk a bit about punching our way out of this COVID recession. We know that many sectors have been disproportionately devastated by COVID, such as tourism, arts and culture, and the airline industry, among many others. We also know that small and medium-sized businesses have been greatly impacted. We only need to walk along our main streets to see the absolute devastation. Budget 2021 provides quite a bit of support for our small and medium-sized businesses to help them adopt and upgrade their digital technology, rehire laid-off workers and bring on new ones. It provides some special financing that is going to help them to be even better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the economy moving forward.

• (1320)

In terms of additional supports for many of our hardest-hit industries, I mentioned tourism and festivals and events. There are a lot of events that happen within my own community. We have a huge comedy festival and lots of multi-ethnic festivals, and I know that they will benefit from the \$1 billion of additional support that we have put into budget 2021.

I want to give a special shout-out to the arts and culture community in my riding of Davenport. They are huge, vibrant and impactful not only to my local community but to our city and nation. We also have an additional \$1 billion of support for the arts and culture sector.

I will devote the rest of time to how we are building back better. There is so much I want to cover, and I will run out of time, but I will do my best to cover the most important elements to the residents in my riding of Davenport.

First is national child care. A lot of people think that downtown, west Toronto is a very wealthy area. However, most of the people in my riding are working-class. There are many working families who are struggling with the highest child care costs in the country. The introduction in budget 2021 of a national child care program will be an absolute game-changer for them. I truly believe that it is the single best thing we can do to restart our economy and to put a solid foundation for our economy for future success. It is going to increase the participation in our workforce that will result in an increase in our GDP. Investing in our kids, investing to ensure that we have full participation is going to be critical for Canada's success in a knowledge and digital economy. Of course, quality early learning and child care will be a great, best possible start for our children. We are setting them up for success early on in their lives.

The next thing I want to talk about are the huge investments we are making on a green recovery and doubling and tripling down on

climate action. I will tell members that the number one letter that comes in from Davenport residents outside of anything related to COVID is about ensuring that, as we restart and regrow our economy, we are making sure that we do not stop on our urgent quest to get to net zero by 2050. Our budget commits an additional \$18 billion in investments that puts us on track to reducing our emissions by 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030. Our budget actually says 36%, but this morning, our Prime Minister announced that we are actually increasing our ambition to decreasing our carbon emissions to between 40% and 45% below 2005 levels by 2030.

We do have an action plan in place. Mark Carney was saying a couple of weeks ago that Canada is the first of the G7 countries with a climate policy serious enough to make a difference. We are serious about our green recovery, we are serious about moving to net zero and we have a serious plan that is going to ensure that we get there, and now this budget ensures that we have the financial resources to be able to do so.

For workers, we are going to be massively increasing our Canada worker benefit and increasing the federal minimum wage, which is a huge promise of our government and something really important for Davenport residents. We are also extending EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks, which is something that many of our communities, non-profit organizations and advocates have been asking for. This is going to be a game-changer for those who are seriously ill and do not want to have to think about taking care themselves or making a choice between taking care of themselves and putting food on the table.

There are significant investments in our seniors, long-term care standards and increasing the OAS for those over 75. We also have a lot of investments in youth that I am really proud of. We want to make sure that they are not a lost generation. As well, there is over \$18 billion to help support our indigenous people toward reconciliation and righting the wrongs of Canada's past and present.

I will end by saying that we have put a significant amount of money around migrant workers and immigration, which is close to my heart, because I believe that future Canadian economic success depends on a great immigration policy.

• (1325)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have learned over this ordeal how important it is to have self-sufficiency as it pertains to pharmaceutical production, in both research and development.

When Pierre Trudeau was prime minister, he changed the Patent Act and the pharmaceutical companies left. It was our first brain drain within the medical community. Now the Prime Minister has made changes to price controls. He is increasing the price controls and increasing the disincentive for pharmaceutical companies to come and, if they are here, to stay here.

What other changes are going to be made? The government is throwing money at the problem, but what changes are going to be made to attract and retain research and development pharmaceutical companies in Canada?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, it is nice to see the hon. member in the House, looking safe and healthy.

Once we realized we did not have the capacity to be able to produce our own vaccines, we took immediate action to ensure that we were working with our manufacturing and scientific communities to bring our manufacturing up to speed.

I am very proud of the investments we have made, not only last year but also in budget 2021, to ensure that our biomanufacturing capacity comes up to speed so that we will be self-sufficient by the end of this year and will be able to produce booster shots, as well as produce our own vaccines moving forward.

A lot of the rules and regulations around how to ensure we maintain a healthy biomanufacturing industry, in terms of the information, will be forthcoming. That is something that we are working on, and it is important to get it right as we move forward.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, my question is about the failure of this budget to deal with the priority of indigenous housing.

We know that indigenous communities have suffered some of the highest rates of COVID-19. A key factor in this is the housing crisis that exists in indigenous communities, a result of federal neglect over a number of decades.

There is an absolute housing crisis that requires federal investment. Why does this Liberal budget fail to have a strategy for and by indigenous communities when it comes to housing?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her passionate advocacy for our indigenous peoples and for promoting indigenous housing.

One of the sources of pride that I have in our own government is that we are serious about reconciliation, and we are serious about narrowing the gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. Ever since we were elected, we have put in a significant amount of money to make sure that we are addressing all indigenous issues, from infrastructure to housing to health to governance to entrepreneurship. There is \$18 billion additional in this budget.

Jane Jacobs, a great urban thinker who has now passed away, used to say that one corrects the wrongs of the past by making gifts to the future.

The Budget

This is what we are doing. There is \$18 billion more to narrow those gaps for housing, infrastructure and many of those issues, and to advance reconciliation. I am proud of our investments. We are not going to stop until we eliminate that gap completely.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to take the floor to speak to my colleague from Davenport.

I did get up this morning at 5:00 a.m. B.C. time to watch Biden's climate summit, so I will inform my friends in the House that, officially, Canada is a laggard. The United States government has announced it will go to 50% below 2005 by 2030. Our Prime Minister has announced a much weaker target.

I wanted to ask my friend from Davenport if, in reading the budget, since she has been a champion on basic income and her private member's bill, Bill C-273 calls for a guaranteed livable income, she was as disappointed as I was not to see a reference to moving to a guaranteed livable income in the budget?

● (1330)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I want to say thanks to my hon. colleague for being such an amazing champion, not only on tackling climate change and the environment, but also on a guaranteed annual income.

In terms of a guaranteed annual income, of course I am disappointed. If anything, it has made me even more passionate about continuing to advocate for one moving forward. I will say, though, to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Richmond Hill.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my honour and pleasure to contribute to the debate on this historic budget. First, let us acknowledge the history that has been made, as my colleague, the Minister of Finance, is the first female to deliver a budget in our chambers, showing young women and girls across this country that when women lead, we change politics. This is a powerful moment, but is not only a symbolic one. It also reinforces our commitment to support women and youth, along with our commitment to preserving our environment across our nation.

The Budget

We know that many families with young children have been struggling trying to find affordable child care during the pandemic while they are at work. Women are the backbone of this country and this pandemic alone has shown us how resilient they are. Our government will support women in my riding and across this country with up to \$30 billion over five years, reaching an all-time high of \$8.3 billion every year permanently to build a high-quality, affordable, inclusive and accessible early learning and child care system across Canada. This will directly improve the lives of over 10,000 families in my riding of Richmond Hill. This investment is a step toward removing barriers that women and young families face. It is a plan to drive economic growth, a plan to increase women's participation in the workforce and a plan to offer each child in Canada the best start in life.

Make no mistake, this government is committed to supporting families with young children, women and reconciliation with our first nations, Métis and indigenous people. Our government will invest more than \$6 billion for infrastructure in indigenous communities, and \$2.2 billion to help end the national tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Furthermore, on the note of moving forward, this pandemic has had an impact on our youth and students from coast to coast to coast. Our government is supporting the future generations of our nation. We have an enormous pool of diverse and talented students, like those in Richmond Hill, who will become doctors, technicians, teachers and even the future members of this legislature. Our budget will help those students across our country.

During this time, we have heard from many students who are burdened by student debt and are struggling to find work. We are committed to ensuring that this pandemic does not derail their futures. This budget will support our students with over \$5.7 billion over the next five years to help young Canadians pursue and complete their education, creating 215,000 new job skills development and work opportunities. During the pandemic, our government made a six-month grace period after leaving studies interest free. We will waive interest on student loans for one year and enhance the repayment system so that no student earning less than \$40,000 per year will need to make payments on their federal student loans.

In addition, our government believes that our youth are the leaders of not only tomorrow but today. That is why in this budget we will double the Canada student grants, providing additional support for 580,000 students who rely on student loans. This will effectively cover 90% of the average undergraduate tuition in Canada for low-income students. It is crucial that we are equipping our youth with tools and resources for them to succeed, and that is exactly what our government aims to do.

Similarly, as an advocate for the environment myself, I am proud because this government recognizes that climate change is indeed real. We must protect our planet, as we owe that to our children. I have spoken in this House before about how important it is for me to leave behind a planet that is safe for my children. This budget recognizes that investing in green recovery initiatives is the right thing to do. That is why we are proposing a historic investment of \$5 billion over seven years in the net-zero accelerator. With this added support, on top of the \$3 billion we committed in December, the net-zero accelerator will help even more companies invest to re-

duce their greenhouse gas emissions, while growing their businesses.

• (1335)

Our government will accelerate Canada's net-zero transformation through innovation, propel clean technology projects, grow zero-emissions technology manufacturing and accelerate investment in clean energy technology.

This is the change for which Canadians like the members of my Community Environmental Council have been pushing. These green investments will allow companies like Tavo Industries, which produces eco-friendly products, and Greenbrain Inc., an organization committed to promoting conservation and sustainability, all of which I am proud to have in my riding, to thrive.

Additionally, our budget will provide up to \$8 billion of support for projects that will help reduce domestic greenhouse gas emissions across the Canadian economy.

This is a government that will act on climate change, that will protect the future of our youth and multiple precious ecosystems that span across the country, from the west coast of British Columbia to the northern coast of Nunavut all the way to the east coast Nova Scotia.

This budget is an investment for a healthier society and keeps our promise to our youth, acting on the urgency of protecting our planet. The time to act on health and future of the planet is now.

Last, the budget will provide much-needed economic support to Canadians. The measures I mentioned include increasing our support to families with young children, reducing student debt and investing in a cleaner future. Most important, the budget is an investment in mental health resources, resources that are needed as we move past this pandemic.

The budget includes several notable measures that address the social and economic factors of mental health. Budget 2021 proposes to provide \$45 million over two years, starting in 2021-22, to Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada's, the national mental health service standards in collaboration with provinces and territories, health organizations and key stakeholders. This pandemic has taken a toll on Canadians, students, seniors and those working on the front lines. We thank them all. The mental health of Canadians is just as important as their physical health.

The Budget

Earlier this year this government announced Wellness Together Canada and funding for Kids Help Phone, which we plan to extend. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing mental health challenges for Canadians and has increased the number of Canadians in crisis.

Making mental health services easier to access will have substantial benefits for Canadians and help save lives. The mental health of Canadians matters.

In closing, this budget outlines our promise and commitment to a more inclusive Canada, finishing the fight against COVID-19 and healing the wounds left by the COVID-19 recession. It is about creating more jobs and prosperity for Canadians in the days and decades to come.

If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it is that we are all in this together. Canada succeeds when all Canadians can participate in the economic growth and make ends meet. Canadians deserve a government that will put their needs and best interests first, a government that supports women, reconciles with indigenous peoples, supports the future of youth, acts on the urgency of climate change and supports the mental health of Canadians.

Our government does exactly that in the budget. This is a budget for Canada and for all Canadians. Better days are ahead.

• (1340)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member was right to say that this was a historic budget for a lot of reasons. One of those reasons is that it is the largest deficit in Canadian history and pushes our debt further into the abyss. With the large amount of spending commitments coming in years down the road, I wonder if the member is willing to use a medium or even a long-term outlook and decide when the government should start to show some form of fiscal restraint.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, during this time, the government faced a big challenge as it related to COVID-19. We have ensured that all the measures are in place to support all Canadians through this difficult time. Naturally, with these difficult times, difficult decisions need to be made, and we have made those difficult decisions. We have ensured that there is the most diverse array of vaccines available to us. We have made investments in the environment, in child care, in the environment, in youth and in small businesses. Those investments are ensuring that Canadians stay—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Richmond Hill for his presentation.

Let me get back to child care. We know that Quebec is a pioneer in child care services, which were first put in place by Pauline Marois. Like the Finance Minister today, she too shattered the glass ceiling. Women do politics differently.

Since Quebec already has a child care system, will the Liberals agree to provide the province compensation without conditions?

[English]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, it is great that Quebec has demonstrated leadership. I am sure we will benefit from that leadership in ensuring that, as we roll out the program, we will succeed. We are in this together, as I said, and we appreciate the leadership that the Province of Quebec has demonstrated. We will commit to working with Quebec to ensure that the funding that is available will benefit the province in other areas, such as being able to build capacity and getting incentives for early childhood educators to get trained and more effectively participate in this.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Richmond Hill is right when he talks about the importance of child care. However, in 2015, when the NDP ran on \$10 per day child care and a \$15 minimum wage, we were ridiculed on both scores by the Prime Minister and his party. If the Liberals had actually introduced the child care plan they introduced in this budget in 2015, it would be in place right now, six years later, instead of something that will not benefit people who are affected by the pandemic right now.

Will the Liberals act immediately to implement the \$15 minimum wage? Could the member tell me why the government has announced a reduction of 40% to pandemic payments under the CRB that will be introduced prematurely before the pandemic is actually over?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, the hon. member asked three different questions. One was on child care, and I am glad that both the NDP and the Liberals are aligned on ensuring child care is more affordable. I am looking forward to getting support on our budget from that party and the member as it moves forward.

• (1345)

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure today to rise virtually on the first budget tabled in over two years.

Before I begin, I would like to congratulate the Minister of Finance on being the first female to table a budget. Whatever our differences and beliefs, this is a significant step toward equality, and I congratulate her.

While I am pleased that the government finally tabled a budget, that is unfortunately where my positive comments mostly end. My hope was that this budget would contain provisions—

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to remind my colleague and good friend that he was going to notify the Speaker that he would be splitting his time.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to split my time with the fabulous member for Niagara Falls.

The Budget

My hope was that this budget would contain provisions that would provide a road for economic recovery. Unfortunately, while the government announced record spending, it did not introduce a responsible economic recovery plan. This is something my constituents are rightfully concerned about, as the debt that will be incurred will be felt for literally generations.

The temporary measures put in place during the pandemic were always seen by me as a bridge to brighter days, a future where Canadians could return to their normal lives, content in the knowledge that Canada was secured by a thriving private sector and a supportive government. However, increasingly it appears the government is content to build a bridge to nowhere, a future not of abundance and freedom but instead characterized by debt-created scarcity.

In a report last week, the C.D. Howe Institute warned “fiscal stability would still be jeopardized by the prospect of other expensive initiatives recently floated by the federal government.” The fact that the private sector is recovering through its own determination, perseverance and innovation seems to be not deterring the government from making record expenditures. “An improving economic outlook has weakened the case for stimulus”, is what the RBC said, “though the government's appetite to spend hasn't changed.”

The Liberal government's solution may very well do more harm than good. A recent Parliamentary Budget Office report noted that another stimulus package was not what was needed now. While temporary stimulus of this magnitude would likely provide a significant boost to the Canadian economy, it would result materially in larger budgetary deficits and higher federal debt over the long and medium term.

None of this spending is conditional. The government is going to spend it anyway, without knowing what will happen in the economy in three to five years. The public is completely and unfortunately being desensitized to these massive deficits. Running \$30 billion for one program used to be a lot of money. This is revenue that could be directed to support our important social safety net. For example, in 2026, the government will spend \$8.3 billion on child care, but \$39 billion on debt interest payments.

Every day this year, we will spend \$422,465,750 more than what we will generate in revenue. Every Canadian is taking on more than \$100 every day in new federal debt. For a family of four, that equates to more than \$3,000 a week in new federal debt. Many families do not earn \$3,000 a week in total, much less taking on \$3,000 each week in new federal debt.

The government's own fiscal projections show that in four years we may have a debt-to-GDP ratio of under 50%. Talk about moving the goal posts. This rivals them setting a target for vaccinations such that, if we achieve it, we may be in the top 100 in the world. According to this projection, this unremarkable achievement is a goal that we should not be attempting to achieve, but even if we do attempt to achieve it, it may be impossible. The problem with this idea is that it expects nothing unexpected to happen. However, we know, from 9/11 to the great financial meltdown to the global pandemic, nearly always something unexpected happens.

Prime Minister Harper rebuilt our financial house after the financial crisis of 2008, which allowed us to weather this latest crisis, despite five years of excessive spending. The challenge we are facing now is that we will simply not be able to weather another significant economic shock. The next shock could come any number of forms, perhaps a collapse in the housing market, the escalation of global tension, a rise in inflation or in interest rates, the devastating impacts of climate change, because even though we in the House have committed to reducing our carbon output, China continues to dramatically increase theirs.

Nobody, including the Prime Minister's millionaire friends who helped draft this budget, know when the next shock could be.

● (1350)

What will we do if this shock happens and we have a debt-to-GDP ratio in excess of 50%, or even just below 50%? We simply will not have the firepower to respond to it. However, maybe we will be extraordinarily fortunate and not experience an economic downturn in the next 10 years. Maybe interest rates will remain at historic lows, which may mean that maintaining a 50% debt-to-GDP ratio might be sustainable. Even if that were the case, I still have some skepticism that the government would be able to stay within its means.

The best projections for the future are usually generated by studying the past. The government was elected in 2015 with a promise to deliver a balanced budget after running several itchy-bit, modest deficits, then it said it would maintain surpluses for the remainder of its mandate. This, however, did not happen. The budget did not balance itself, as it turns out. Balancing the budget would have taken relatively modest tweaks to either increase revenue or reduce spending, but the government simply lacked the ability, discipline or the will to make this happen.

Achieving a debt-to-GDP ratio of less than 50% would require a massive reduction in government expenditures in the coming years and would involve tough decisions, including inevitably bringing to an end many pandemic support programs. The government, which could not reduce spending or grow revenue by billions pre-pandemic, is now telling us it will reduce spending not by billions, but by hundreds of billions. Please excuse my skepticism on this.

The finance minister, in her budgetary address, repeatedly stated that her plan for the future would grow the economy out of debt. In principle, I agree with that approach. Economic growth is the best and maybe the only path forward to help us maintain our jobs and pay down our massive debt. However, this budget simply will not achieve that stated objective. This budget continues the unprecedented level of spending and government interference in the economy.

The Budget

Over 2,000 years of economic history has proved to us, over and over again, that while the government can build a framework to support businesses, it cannot create economic growth by itself. Let me be clear that only the private sector, only Canadian workers through their perseverance, tenacity, work ethic and innovation, can expand our economy. While the government cannot in itself create economic growth, it can certainly inhibit or even stop economic growth by overburdening the private sector with needless regulation and excessive taxation.

The budget's forecast of \$1.4 trillion of national debt has the potential to starve our economy and future businesses of the capital they need to grow and expand. The servicing costs of this debt will force our government to put a greater burden on our workers and confiscate their ability to invest in our economy.

Why, then, would the government table a budget that introduces unneeded stimulus and massive amounts of spending? French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville once wrote that democracy will endure until the day that politicians realize they can bribe people with their own money. It is clear to me that the government is utilizing the power of a budget to table an election platform, not an economic recovery plan, with the hopes of buying Canadian votes with their hard-earned money.

We have reached a moment of truth. There is a tipping point, if not in this budget, then in the next election. We must decide whether we believe in Canadians or in an ever-expanding federal government. Do we believe in democracy or bureaucracy? Do we believe in Canadians' ability to decide their own destiny, or in an ever-growing centralized government that controls Canadians' lives?

• (1355)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the rhetoric is rich today. The member started his speech by talking about how Stephen Harper saved us from great turmoil during this time because Stephen Harper put the right conditions in to the economy to achieve the economic growth we had. Then, later in his speech, he said that the government could not create economic growth. He is basically saying Stephen Harper is to get all of the credit for us being able to get through this time, but at the same time governments cannot create economic growth.

Can the member try to explain to me why he thinks that Stephen Harper was able to do it, yet governments, generally speaking, cannot?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I always enjoy the vim and vigour, if not the content, of the member's interventions. What I would say to him is what I said in my speech, which is that the government absolutely has a role. It has a role to create framework in order to make a fair and equitable economy, but it is the private sector that ultimately generates growth. In some cases, and in fact many cases, the best thing the government can do is get the heck out of the way.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member outlined very well the stark contrast that exists within this place between the left-leaning ideologies of the three other parties and Canada's Conservatives, who are ready to get this country moving.

I ask him to comment further on the glaring debt scenario. When I read through the budget, I see not only the disastrous fiscal path our country is on but that the real debt management strategy of the government is simply to refinance, refinance and then refinance some more. Could the hon. member comment on that?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, the reality is there is only so much capital, so much money, out there. If we direct those monies to the private sector, we get jobs, we get taxes and then we can sustain our important social safety net. If debt starts to take off, and starts to syphon more of that income away from the private sector, we get into a negative spiral where we will have higher taxes and lower government services, as we saw in the Chrétien era.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's comments about the idea of resilience: the fact that our institutions need to be prepared for further shocks that could come. If COVID has taught us anything, it is to expect the unexpected and to prepare for the possibility of serious disasters and to respond to them. The point is made very well that if we are not prepared for the possibility of major disasters, and if we do not have the fiscal capacity to respond, we are leaving ourselves in a great deal of danger for the future.

Can the member share further the importance of building resilience, of not assuming everything is always going to be fine going forward, and of preparing ourselves financially and in other respects for the possible challenges we might face in the future?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I serve on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, so I hear the Auditor General repeat again and again that governments must be prepared for the unexpected. We must plan. It is not exciting to invest those monies, but unless we have the resources to respond we will be in a difficult situation.

Increasingly under the Liberal government, both in good times and bad, we have spent away those resources, so when we get hit by that next shock we may be in a very difficult position. That is why we need to secure the future.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have time for a very brief question from the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, we have had decades of trickle-down economics with tax cuts to the wealthiest and to corporations, and this has not worked. When we put stimulus money into the economy and provide for people to ensure they can make ends meet, that is trickle-up economics. That money is spent in our communities and helps our economy grow. It helps small businesses, it—

• (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): A very brief comment from the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Statements by Members

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, that is just factually incorrect. If we look at Venezuela, the Soviet Union and Cuba, we can see what that creates. Those types of socialist policies create scarcity and poverty. I am for abundance and freedom and for the Canadian—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Statements by Members, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

EARTH DAY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, on April 22, 1970, I was in high school and organized for the first Earth Day. For 50 years, every April 22nd, I have said “Happy Earth Day”. I have to say this year that the words stick in my throat somewhat. If I say “Happy Earth Day” to the earth, which is battered, abused and gasping for breath, what does the earth say?

Brilliant indigenous writer Robin Wall Kimmerer wrote, in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, that we in our society suffer from “species loneliness, estrangement from the rest of Creation.” However, she gives me hope. She wrote this:

Even a wounded world is feeding us. Even a wounded world holds us, giving us moments of wonder and joy. I choose joy over despair. Not because I have my head in the sand, but because joy is what the earth gives me daily and I must return the gift.

With that, let us all say “Happy Earth Day”.

* * *

EARTH DAY

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today, Canadians across our beautiful country will be celebrating Earth Day, a nationwide movement to address climate change, engage in environmental conservation and initiate a green recovery.

Our government believes that climate change is real. That is why in this budget we will invest \$1 billion in the clean technology sector. This will fuel the growth of innovative companies in my riding like Greenbrain Inc. and LumeSmart that are committed to bettering our planet and preserving our resources.

I am proud to represent the beautiful riding of Richmond Hill, which has been recognized for planting nearly 10,000 trees in 2020.

I would also like to recognize members of my environmental community council who are passionate environmentalists and have advocated for green initiatives.

I am proud to be a part of a government that will act on climate change. We must all do our part to preserve our magnificent planet, earth. Happy Earth Day.

THE BUDGET

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Madam Speaker, on Monday, 287 million kilometres away, we witnessed history as NASA's Ingenuity helicopter made its first flight on Mars. On that same day, right here in the chamber, Canada received a historical ideologically partisan budget.

The Ingenuity helicopter spent 39 seconds airborne. In that same 39 seconds, Canada's national debt increased by over \$400,000.

The Perseverance and Ingenuity project is estimated to cost \$2.7 billion over its life cycle for a massive step forwards in scientific research and exploration. Budget 2021 adds to over half a trillion in deficit spending since 2016, which is a massive step backwards for Canada's economy.

Water disappeared from Mars 3.8 billion years ago. I pray we do not have to wait that long for future generations to pay the debt down.

I believe we must act responsibly—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

* * *

[Translation]

EARTH DAY

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, today being Earth Day, I would like to salute those who care for the earth, who sow, who reap and who earn their living off the land. Farmers play a crucial role in occupying and protecting our territory and in ensuring the ecological future of our regions.

Our land has green potential, and the federal government has to help realize that potential. Quebec's food sovereignty must be supported. The pandemic revealed how important that is, but maintaining a local farming sector with low food mileage is also a green choice.

We need to capitalize on Quebec's trademark clean energy to promote alternatives to propane and gas. Ottawa has to make massive investments in researching alternatives to neonicotinoid pesticides because that is important. We also have to promote labelling so Quebecers know exactly what they are putting on their plates and can buy local.

On this Earth Day, let us salute our farmers and let us all work together to support green agriculture.

• (1405)

[English]

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, all Canadians living in long-term care facilities deserve to live in safe, modern spaces. Unfortunately, the pandemic has shown that all too often this is just not the case. In the city of Guelph alone, 10 residents of long-term care homes have passed away from complications related to COVID-19.

As we mourn their loss, we must also work to ensure that this type of preventable tragedy is never allowed to happen again. That is why I am proud to announce that on Friday, the federal government is contributing 80% of a \$1.8 million investment, in partnership with the provincial government, to upgrade HVAC systems and improve the air quality in long-term care homes in Guelph, so that they are safer for both residents and health care workers. This represents just one small step forward in fixing the crisis in our long-term care system.

* * *

[Translation]

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the arts and culture sector was one of the first sectors to have to shut down and will be one of the last to be able to fully reopen.

With vibrant performance venues such as the Théâtre Granada and the Université de Sherbrooke cultural centre, diverse and colourful festivals such as the Fête du Lac des Nations and the Festival des traditions du monde de Sherbrooke, and above all a rich pool of artisans and technicians, Sherbrooke is no exception.

In tabling budget 2021 on Monday, my colleague, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, announced nearly \$800 million for rebuilding festivals, concert venues, music and much more. This key funding will help encourage our local artists, musicians and cultural producers.

I am in constant communication with representatives of the arts and culture sector in my riding, and I can tell the House that Sherbrooke is ready for the cultural recovery of Quebec and Canada.

* * *

[English]

APPRECIATION FOR STAFFERS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, do you ever have a moment when you say to yourself, “I cannot believe I am here in this place, sitting in this chair, presiding over the House of Commons in the Government of Canada”?

When I first took my seat as the member of Parliament for Yorkton—Melville, there was rarely a day that went by when I did not marvel at the sight of Centre Block as I was quickly walking up that hill to make it in time for House duty or question period. I shared my rookie amazement with a dear colleague, who said to never lose that sense of awe.

Statements by Members

Today, I want to thank what I do not doubt is the best team of staffers on the Hill and in my constituency office. They are also a part of my sense of awe and deep appreciation. This year has been challenging. They have missed loved ones, faced illness, worked from home and been a shoulder of reassurance and hope in the midst of very trying times for constituents who have been isolated, unemployed, or working 24-7 to try to save a business that they have poured their hearts into.

They continually go above and beyond. I want to thank Kristen, Kathleen, Gail, David, Tristan and Wyzdom.

* * *

LONDON ATHLETE

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to take the time to recognize Londoner Maggie MacNeil. This summer, Maggie will be representing Canada in her first Olympics, in Tokyo, as a member of Swimming Canada's team.

I spoke to Maggie last spring after the pandemic hit, when many athletic training centres had to close, but she would not let that keep her from training. Her parents set her up in their backyard pool, where she spent months honing her skills.

Maggie, a London Aquatic Club grad, won gold in 2019 at the FINA world aquatics championships in the 100 metre butterfly. In that race, she not only beat the reigning four-time world champion, but set a new Commonwealth, Americas and Canadian record.

At only 19 years of age, Maggie's skill, hard work and determination show that she has a bright future ahead. I ask members to join me in wishing Maggie and her teammates all the best as they head to Tokyo for team Canada.

* * *

NURSES AT VICTORIA GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I want to recognize the incredible health care workers at the Victoria General Hospital in my community of Winnipeg South.

Last month, I had the pleasure of welcoming the Prime Minister to meet virtually with eight nurses from the Vic. They shared their harrowing experiences of being at the forefront of the pandemic, working long, tiring days, sometimes holding the hands of elderly patients during their last moments, and grieving the loss of so many they cared for. I hope that we, as a community and as a country, will never forget the endless sacrifices that our health care workers have made for us.

Statements by Members

To the wonderful nurses we met, Doris Dong, Tina Friesen, Doris Paquette, Emily McLeod, Katie Bryant, Milika Pillman, Cassandra Szczepanski, and John Patrick Hernandez, all of their character, strength and bravery exemplify the Vic's motto of a small hospital with a clear vision and a big heart. Our community is so grateful for their heroic actions.

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● (1410)

HEALTH

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is in the middle of a third wave of COVID. It did not have to be this way, but for the catastrophic failure of leadership on the part of the government. From the outset of this pandemic, the government failed to close the border until it was too late, failed to secure PPE and failed to secure vaccines.

In December, the Prime Minister had the audacity to say, "we ended up in such a great situation with vaccines." If that had been true, we could have avoided a third wave, as other countries have. Instead, a mere 2% of Canadians have been fully vaccinated, compared to nearly 30% in the U.S. and nearly 20% in the U.K.

After more than a year, it seems that the government's only plan is to keep Canadians locked down and to bribe them with their own money. Canadians deserve so much better.

* * *

[Translation]

SPORTS AND CANADA'S ACTIVE RECOVERY

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2021 was announced this week. I was really happy to see that \$80 million is being invested in Canada's active recovery.

With facilities closed and events cancelled, physical activity is at a standstill. Sports have a way of bringing people together and promoting fair play among Canadians of all backgrounds. The sports community has stayed positive throughout the pandemic. We now have a golden opportunity to make sports better than ever by removing barriers to accessing physical activity, by stimulating participation and by improving sports programs.

When it is safe to do so, let us all play an active role in Canada's active recovery.

* * *

CONSERVATIVE PLAN

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the pandemic is causing human and social devastation, the Liberals do not have a plan. Actually, they do have one. They plan to max out our credit card and leave future generations up to their eyeballs in debt.

We, the Conservatives, have a responsible plan to create long-term prosperity by recovering the one million jobs that have been lost. We plan to put an end to Liberal cronyism and Liberal friends lining their pockets with taxpayers' money. We plan to work with the provinces to come up with an action plan to finally address mental health issues. We plan to protect Canadians' health by creat-

ing a strategic stockpile of essential products and building the capacity to manufacture vaccines at home. Lastly, we plan to protect future generations by implementing responsible measures and balancing the budget over the next decade.

It is simple. I am saying no to Liberal excess and yes to a responsible Conservative plan that will leave no Canadian behind, now or in the future.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we are celebrating Earth Day. All Conservatives know how important the health of our planet is. The leader of our Conservative Party recently announced our plan to secure the environment. This comprehensive plan would achieve about the same emissions reductions by 2030 as the government's current plan. However, our plan would create jobs and grow the economy, as compared to the Liberal plan, which would destroy entire industries.

Our plan would lower industrial emissions, backed up by border carbon adjustments to level the playing field with countries that have lower emission standards, like China. Our plan would focus on technology like carbon capture and storage, a technology where we in Saskatchewan lead the world. We would also encourage small modular reactors to deploy zero-emissions electricity across the country. Our plan would also recognize and build on the world-leading sustainable practices of Canada's agriculture and forestry sectors, and ensure producers have access to carbon credits.

This is a Conservative plan to secure our environment, secure our jobs, and secure our future.

* * *

● (1415)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the Liberals were elected, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions have increased by 1%, and we are the only G7 nation that failed to meet the Paris target.

On the first day of Biden's presidency, his first act was to cancel the Keystone XL pipeline. In Canada, the Prime Minister went and bought a pipeline.

Today, on Earth Day, his Holiness the Dalai Lama and 100 other Nobel laureates are calling for an end to the new expansion of oil, for a phase-out of existing production, and for leaders across the globe to invest in a transformational plan to clean energy.

Canada needs to play its part. We need a total economic mobilization to bring about a green new deal just recovery to make Canada greener, more sustainable, more resilient and ultimately more just. We need a just transition act. We need a jobs guarantee. We need a climate accountability act. The government must uphold indigenous rights. If we do not take action now, every generation that comes after us will pay the ultimate price.

* * *

[Translation]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today is Earth Day, a day to remember that not only is climate change real, but that it is already having a major impact on our health. The consequences are not something that will happen in the distant future. They are happening now and affecting our loved ones.

Climate change is causing increasingly intense heat waves, which could have serious consequences for seniors this summer. It is disrupting animal migration, which has consequences, such as the emergence of Lyme disease in Quebec. It is exacerbating air pollution, which has a major impact on the development of respiratory diseases like asthma. It is making epidemics more frequent. I do not have to draw members a picture. Everyone understands the consequences.

On this Earth Day, let us be sure to make the fight against climate change as much a part of our daily lives as the impact it is having on the health of the people around us.

* * *

EARTH DAY

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this Earth Day, I want to share the story of a prime minister who visited each province to work with them on setting bold climate targets that worked for everyone.

Sadly, it was not our current Prime Minister but our former one.

[English]

On this Earth Day, the current Prime Minister has announced targets without working with provinces and instead dictating to them by fiat. That is not leadership. That will not get us to where we need to be. Our bold plan to secure the environment will reach our national commitments by working with provinces, all the while ensuring better economic growth.

The spirit of Earth Day is about coming together to protect those things we all care about: our soil, air, water and everything that depends on them. Sadly, the Prime Minister has forgotten about the spirit of coming together when it comes to the provinces.

I wish everyone a happy Earth Day, and we on our side look forward to securing our environment together.

* * *

BAYVIEW VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Earth Day today I want to bring attention to the Bayview

Oral Questions

Village Association in my riding of Don Valley North and the work it does to help the beautiful ravines in our neighbourhood.

When we think of environmental protection, we often think of more rural areas and the vast, scenic woodlands and lakes that Canada is famous for, but Don Valley North, located in the heart of Toronto, is also home to scenic ravines, trails and creeks. These outdoor spaces are made even more precious because of COVID-19.

I want to thank Bayview Village Association president Jane Robertson, environment committee co-chairs Sharon Johnson and Monty McDonald, and all BVA members and volunteers for their tireless work in protecting the ravines and trails in Don Valley North.

I wish all my hon. colleagues a happy Earth Day.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government was first asked about travel restrictions for COVID-19 in January of last year. It is 15 months later, and the Liberals still have not learned anything.

In the last two weeks, more than 100 flights have landed in Canada with at least one positive COVID-19 case on board. When are Canadians going to get a serious plan to secure the border?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way the government has added measures to protect Canadians from the importation of COVID-19.

In fact, infections resulting from international travel represent just over 1% of total infections in this country. Those infections are caught because we have a rigorous process. Travellers must submit to a pre-departure test, a post-arrival test, a stay in a government quarantine facility, a further quarantine of up to 14 days, and a test on day 10.

We will stop at nothing. We constantly review the data. We will add more measures if necessary.

● (1420)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government will stop at nothing except closing the border to keep out dangerous variants.

In fact, travel restrictions are an example of a plan that works. The Atlantic Canada bubble is an example of that. British Columbia and Quebec have now both registered cases of the double-mutation variant from India.

Oral Questions

Is the Prime Minister going to immediately stop flights from COVID hotspot countries, yes or no?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to first of all start by thanking and commending Atlantic Canada and the premiers of those provinces for taking bold action on COVID-19, including keeping measures in place until cases are so low as to be sure that they will not rebound, making sure that they have strong measures to isolate people, and to protect people while they are isolating to ensure those people are in fact staying home and not spreading COVID in communities.

That is the work that we need to do together across this country. I will reiterate, we have some of the strongest measures in the world. We will stop at nothing to protect Canadians.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the health minister is thanking the Atlantic premiers for the leadership that her Prime Minister fails to take at the border.

It is ironic, but it should not be a surprise from this health minister, who ignored travel restrictions on the first wave of the pandemic, and Canadians paid the price. Now we find out the most dangerous variants are coming in. We are not properly vaccinated, because of her failures, and the government is not taking restrictions now.

When will that minister stop failing Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians want right now, more than anything else, is for their elected leaders to work together to protect their lives. That is exactly what we have done every step of the way, with provinces and territories, no matter where a Canadian lives.

In regard to borders, we have some of the strongest measures in the world. As I mentioned, travellers go through a rigorous process of testing and quarantine. We will stop at nothing. We continue to monitor data. We will add additional measures if necessary.

[Translation]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our neighbours to the south have started to reopen. Sports stadiums are filling up, and people are reuniting with families and friends. All this is possible because the United States is manufacturing its own vaccines. Canada is in a crisis because the Prime Minister was unprepared and had no plan to manufacture vaccines here.

Will the Prime Minister admit that the third wave of COVID-19 is his fault?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question.

Let us look at the facts. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared a pandemic. Within 12 days, Canada had invested more than \$200 million in biomanufacturing. Within 30 days, we had invested \$600 million in biomanufacturing to keep Canadians healthy and safe. Our investments paid off. Just look at Medicago in Quebec City and AbCellera in Vancouver.

We will continue investing to keep Canadians healthy and safe.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government continues to ignore the border. The variants are now a daily concern. The Liberal government must stop flights from Brazil and India. International flights from hotspot countries continue to land as usual. The Prime Minister's slowness in addressing this crisis poses a risk to the health and safety of Canadians.

When will the Prime Minister stop flights from hotspot countries?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition should pick a lane. One week, they are arguing for opening up the borders; this week, they are arguing for tighter restrictions at the borders. I will tell him what we will do. We will continue to use science to guide us and to protect Canadians.

Every step of the way, we have added measures to protect Canadians. We have some of the most rigorous measures in the world, a combination of testing and quarantine, including checks on people in quarantine. We will continue to do that, and we will not hesitate to do more if necessary.

• (1425)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what is happening at the border with the Brazil and India variants is very worrisome. Every day, planes are arriving from India full of COVID-19 cases.

This morning, the Premier of Quebec announced that he was writing a letter asking Ottawa to take action. Why? It is because Ottawa is asleep at the wheel. Fortunately, it just received the letter.

Once again, the federal government is waiting to be told what to do. It just cannot do its job. We need to ban flights from India today. We do not need a plan or an announcement, but an immediate stop.

What is the government waiting for?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. Since the beginning, we have added measures at our border to protect Canadians from the importation of COVID-19, and we have been successful. Of all of the incoming travellers from February 21, 1.8% have been positive for COVID, and those have been captured by the testing and quarantine regime.

We know that we need to work together to protect Canadians from COVID in their communities across the country from coast to coast. We will stop at nothing to be a partner to provinces and territories.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the federal government were doing its job, it would not matter so much that there are COVID-19 cases on these flights, because travellers are subject to supervised quarantines on arrival. However, cases are spreading in British Columbia and now Quebec. Why? Because we now have community transmission. Why? Because people getting off planes are not quarantining. Why? Because this government is incapable of managing quarantines effectively.

When will the government understand that its incompetence has devastating consequences for Canadians' health?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, we have been there for Canadians, regardless of which province they live in. We will continue to do that. We have some of the most rigid and stringent measures at the border, including a predeparture test, a post-arrival test, a mandatory stay in a government-authorized quarantine hotel, a test on day 10 and a 14-day quarantine.

We will continue those measures because they are protecting Canadians. I would urge everyone to stay safe during this time.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to wish everybody a happy Earth Day. Today is also the day that the Liberal government announced its plan to fight the climate crisis, and spoiler alert, it is not a very good plan.

In fact, it is one of the worst plans, if not the worst plan, among G7 nations in terms of reducing emissions, which is not a big surprise because this Prime Minister bought a pipeline, continues to subsidize the fossil fuel sector and continues to exempt the biggest polluters. When will this Prime Minister start fighting the climate crisis like he actually wants to win it?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have an ambitious plan to address climate change, cut emissions and grow the economy. I know the hon. member will not believe me, but perhaps he will believe the former leader of the New Democratic Party, Thomas Mulcair.

He called our plan absolutely marvellous, saying it would put Canada on track to respect our Paris Agreement obligations. He went on to say that our Prime Minister had published a very bold, all-encompassing, frankly brilliant climate plan. We agree.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, the Prime Minister announced his plan to fight the climate crisis.

It is not a very good plan. On the contrary, it is the worst plan among G7 nations. That is not surprising since the Prime Minister has a terrible environmental record. He bought a pipeline, he continues to subsidize big oil and he continues to exempt big polluters.

When will the Prime Minister start fighting the climate crisis like he actually wants to win it?

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a credible and tested climate plan that is delivering results. We have flattened the curve on pollution. We have made a historic investments of more than \$100 billion in building a cleaner, healthier economy with more good jobs for Canadians. That includes \$17.6 billion for climate and the environment in budget 2021, \$15 billion through the strengthened and climate plan, \$15 billion in dedicated transit funding, and \$60 billion in the pan-Canadian framework. We will continue to fight climate change, invest in a cleaner future and create a stronger economy.

* * *

● (1430)

THE BUDGET

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are in the middle of the worst health crisis of our lifetime. There is a massive third wave. There are lockdowns across the country, and Canadians are desperate to get their shots, yet the Prime Minister's budget has no plan to speed up vaccinations. There is no support for overwhelmed hospitals or for Canadians who are sick and dying from COVID. His budget does have \$100 billion for his re-election, but nothing to fight this pandemic.

Why did the Prime Minister put his political interests ahead of the health of Canadians? Does he not realize that this pandemic is now his failure?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we knew that the third wave was coming. That is why, in March, we said we would be sending the provinces \$4 billion to support them in their fight against the third wave of the virus. In March, we knew now important it was to accelerate the vaccination campaign. That is why we said the provinces would get \$1 billion to do that. In this budget, we committed to extending business and income supports through to the end of September to help Canadians as we fight the third wave.

Oral Questions

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, she knew the third wave was coming, yet the Prime Minister's budget failed to deliver any money to vaccinate Canadians more quickly or to address skyrocketing health costs across the country. There is no support for provinces and health care workers, who are overwhelmed. Instead, the Prime Minister told them that he will get around to it after the pandemic is over.

As Canadians are suffering and dying, he found billions for his re-election, but not one nickel to provide Canadians with the health care they need. Does the Prime Minister not realize that this pandemic is now his failure?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe the member opposite missed our announcement at the end of March, but we and epidemiologists could see the third wave was coming. We knew provinces and territories needed support right away. That is why we then announced \$4 billion to support the health care system and \$1 billion to support vaccination campaigns. In this budget we committed more than \$12 billion in additional support to maintain our business and income support programs for Canadians through the end of September.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Well, Mr. Speaker, there is no way of sugar-coating this. This budget also failed to deliver an economic growth plan. There was no plan to reopen the economy or create jobs, or a more competitive business environment.

Here is what Robert Asselin, one of the Prime Minister's top policy advisors, had to say about the budget. He said, "this budget [is]...doubling down on programs that do not address our innovation shortcomings and have yielded few results to date." He also said, "it is hard to find a coherent growth plan." It is hard to find a coherent growth plan. This is coming from one of the Prime Minister's Liberal advisors.

Why has the Prime Minister failed Canadians so badly?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, this is a budget targeted squarely at delivering jobs and increasing Canada's economic growth. This budget will create 500,000 work experience and job training opportunities. This budget will deliver on our throne speech commitment to create one million jobs by the end of this year. This budget is a budget that will help Canada come roaring back.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the media headlines could not have been clearer than they were this morning.

The Indian variant has arrived in Canada and the first case of it has been confirmed in Quebec in the region of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry. The Prime Minister has already been criticized many times for his management of the health crisis, particularly for waiting several weeks before temporarily closing the Canadian border to people coming from China.

Today, he has a chance to redeem himself. Will he temporarily close Canada's borders to people coming from India?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have been saying today and, indeed, all along, we will stop at nothing to protect the health of Canadians. We have some of the strongest measures in the world at our borders. Travellers are required to submit to a predeparture test and a post-arrival test, and spend 14 days in quarantine. Several stay in a government-authorized quarantine facility while they await their negative tests. We will not hesitate to add additional measures if the data and science indicate that we should do so.

● (1435)

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our leader and member for Durham quickly called for the government to temporarily stop flights from countries with serious outbreaks of COVID variants. The Premier of Quebec also formally asked the Liberal Prime Minister to do more at our borders. We have been calling for these measures for a long time, but now it is too late. We already have a case of the Indian variant in Canada. The Conservatives want to take action at our borders.

How many variant cases will it take before the Liberals take action?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is where I differ in opinion with the member opposite. It is never too late to do something about COVID-19. There are always measures that we can take together, with provinces and territories, indeed with Canadians, to protect each other. COVID is something that requires a great deal of work collaboratively to control. It is a global pandemic. We will not hesitate to add additional measures at our borders when we need to do so.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, much like with the borders, the Liberal government failed to take action to increase health transfers for the provinces with no strings attached, in the midst of a pandemic. It failed to take action to secure the vaccine supply for Canadians. There is no question that it is the Prime Minister's fault that we are in the midst of a third wave.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and temporarily close Canada's borders to countries where there are severe outbreaks?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I repeatedly have said, we have some of the strongest measures in the world at our borders. In fact, we know that we have a very low number of travellers who arrive positive. How do we know? We demand a pre-departure test. We demand a post-arrival test. Travellers must spend time in a government-authorized hotel until they receive a negative test. They must continue their quarantine and submit to a day 10 test.

We will continue to apply measures at the border and we will not hesitate to do more if the science and evidence indicates we should do so.

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*[Translation]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has spoken a lot about how health and seniors have been left out of the budget, and rightly so. However, there is another more inconspicuous victim, and that is the fight against climate change.

In the budget, the federal government announced \$17.6 billion for a green recovery, but that is almost the same as the \$17.1 billion cost of the Trans Mountain pipeline. If I understand correctly, the entire cost of Canada's green recovery is equivalent to the cost of a single project to develop dirty oil.

Are we supposed to take that seriously?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that the leader of her party, when he was Quebec's environment minister, circumvented the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement not once, not twice, but three times in the same year. That is the worst record of any environment minister in Quebec's history. If I were sitting with the Bloc on the other side of the House, I would not be so quick to criticize.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Well, Mr. Speaker, I would not be so quick to criticize if I were a government member because Canada keeps missing its greenhouse gas reduction targets.

It invests money to combat climate change and then it invests heavily in fossil fuels. It was the same under Stephen Harper. They keep hoping a magic wand will transform dirty oil into clean energy instead of trying something else. As Einstein said, insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

How many times will the federal government keep trying the same thing before admitting that it does not work?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remind my hon. colleague that Greenpeace called the climate plan we presented in December 2020 bold. Interestingly, that is the exact same word that John Kerry, the U.S. special presidential envoy for climate, used to describe Canada's target today. He called our target a bold step and said he was proud to be working with Canada in the fight against climate change.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I see that the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie has become the environment minister.

This morning, the commissioner of the environment released a report that illustrates this phenomenon. In 2015, Canada joined the UN plan for sustainable development, but six years later, the commissioner writes that the government has not developed an implementation plan. The same goes for the Paris Agreement. The Prime Minister signed the agreement in 2015, but six years later, Canada is the only G7 country whose emissions have increased instead of decreasing.

There is no solution that is compatible with fossil fuels. When will the government admit that?

● (1440)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, Canada's plan is ambitious.

We already have one of the most ambitious carbon pricing rates in the world, more ambitious than Quebec, British Columbia and even California and Europe, places that started putting a price on carbon nearly 15 years ago.

Our investments in the green economy are double the investments in the oil sector. All of that was done before the budget brought down by my colleague the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

Our emissions are starting to come down, but we agree that we must do more and we will do more. That is why we presented this ambitious target at the climate summit today in the United States.

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*[English]***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a brave woman came forward to report sexual misconduct allegations against General Vance to ensure the defence minister had this critical information. She knew that the situation was too serious to get wrong and that only the minister could make it right, but he did nothing for three years. The minister will not assume responsibility. He denies any wrongdoing and refuses to accept that he has failed those in uniform.

Will the defence minister honour his sworn obligation and admit he has been derelict in his ministerial duties?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we commend the brave woman who has come forward. When this information was brought forward by the former ombudsman, I immediately took it to the Privy Council Office and the Privy Council Office immediately, the next day, followed up with the former ombudsman.

Oral Questions

We have a lot more work to do. That is why, in budget 2021, we have outlined \$236 million to continue to work to eliminate sexual misconduct and gender-based violence in the military and to support our survivors.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three years ago, a female member of the Canadian Armed Forces complained to the military ombudsman about General Jonathan Vance's inappropriate behaviour. She wanted to make sure the minister took responsibility.

General Vance's position reports directly to the Minister of National Defence. The solution rests with the minister, but he is washing his hands of the matter, saying he referred the matter to his chief of staff.

Why did the Minister of National Defence desert the women of the Canadian Armed Force by refusing to deal with the complaint?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that could not be further from the truth. When this information was brought forward, I immediately contacted the Privy Council Office, which is in charge of Governor in Council appointments, to ensure that action was taken, and action was. The following day it contacted the former ombudsman to take the information even further.

We know that we have a lot more work to do. As outlined in our budget, we have \$236 million to combat and eliminate sexual misconduct and gender-based violence in the military. Also, I am hoping the member opposite and his party will support this endeavour.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has to stop misleading Canadians. The military officer who came forward with sexual misconduct allegations against General Vance said that this was “a political appointment...so it is a political issue.” She wanted the minister to actually see the evidence so “the defence minister's accountability could be reflected.” The defence minister failed to protect our troops from sexual misconduct by refusing to accept the evidence.

Will the defence minister apologize for failing to protect the integrity of Operation Honour by leaving General Vance in charge for an extra three years?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, when any information is brought forward, it has always been immediately actioned, and that is exactly what we did. We contacted the Privy Council Office to ensure action was taken.

Since the member opposite is bringing this up, maybe he can also explain, when he was a parliamentary secretary, and also ask the leader of his own party, the actions they took when information was brought forward prior to the appointment of General Vance at that time, and why action was not taken at that time.

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the Liberals released their new greenhouse gas reduction targets, which is great, but they do not have a credible plan to achieve those targets. They cannot undertake an energy transition because they are addicted to oil.

According to a report, in 2020 alone, the Liberals gave \$18 billion to oil and gas companies. No surprise, then, that they have been downgrading their targets year after year since coming to power.

How are we supposed to take the Liberal targets seriously when the Liberals could not even achieve the Conservative targets?

• (1445)

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we flattened the curve on pollution, and we know there is more work to do.

That being said, the authors of the report the hon. member is citing are not being entirely forthright in their assessment of subsidies that include many things the vast majority of Canadians would agree are not fossil fuel subsidies, such as supporting workers, cleaning up orphan wells and methane cleanup. These were supported by the NDP and Greens at the time. Are they now opposed to it?

We fully agree that Canada needs to eliminate real fossil fuel subsidies, but mixing several issues in this report does not contribute to an intelligent discussion of this important subject.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, COVID infections are raging across Canada and hospitals in many provinces are overwhelmed. Canadians need to be vaccinated as quickly as possible to help address this crisis. However, the head of the Public Health Agency just told the health committee that Canada's vaccine rollout was only operating at half capacity. This is due to a lack of supply of doses.

Will the Liberals stop spinning and blaming others, take responsibility for their failure to secure enough vaccines and tell Canadians when we will be able to vaccinate at full capacity?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been extremely clear and transparent with Canadians about the expected vaccine rollout, about the doses arriving in our country and, indeed, any delays in those doses. In fact, there is good news. We are ahead of where we projected we would be. In fact, we expected by the end of quarter one to have six million doses. We received nearly 10 million. We will be receiving 48 million doses in this quarter, enough to vaccinate every person with one dose for those people who wish vaccination.

We will continue to work with provinces and territories to get the job done.

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THE BUDGET

Ms. Kamal Khera (Brampton West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a proud member of Parliament for one of the youngest ridings in the country, I know how much investments in our children and youth matter.

The Canada child benefit alone helped over 37,000 children in my riding of Brampton West. This week, Canada's first female Minister of Finance announced a historic budget that includes investments in early learning and child care programs that will provide more young Canadians with the education and care they need, while giving parents peace of mind.

Could the minister please tell us how this historic investment into Canada's future will help even more families, children and particularly women in Brampton West and across Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the member for Brampton West's service as a nurse on the front lines of the pandemic.

Our government recognizes the extraordinary and disproportionate toll this pandemic has taken on women, particularly racialized women and those with young children. That is why this budget commits up to \$30 billion over five years, reaching \$9.2 billion on a permanent basis, to build a high-quality, affordable and accessible early learning and child care system across Canada.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Liberals overpaid for the AstraZeneca vaccine, in fact, substantially overpaid: \$8 dollars a dose compared to \$4 in the United States and \$3 in the U.K. When I pay a premium, I expect premium results, but Canadians are paying far more for far less. Now the AstraZeneca vaccine is being delayed.

With results like that, it is no surprise that the Minister of Procurement wants to keep the vaccine contracts that she negotiated secret. When will she comply with the House motion and table those vaccine contracts so Canadians can see why we are paying way for way less?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is working tirelessly to bring vaccines into this country. That is why we are in the top three

Oral Questions

of vaccine administration in the G20. That is why we have 11 million doses administered and 13.7 million doses distributed.

We will work to comply with the parliamentary process, while keeping Canada's vaccine supply safe for the health and benefit of all Canadians.

● (1450)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with rising cases, B.C. handed down tougher restrictions this week, restrictions that will keep families apart and cause businesses to close for good.

B.C.'s health minister, Adrian Dix, called the Liberals' delivery of vaccines "unpredictable"; and Dr. Bonnie Henry said there was no "line of sight on additional doses".

We have had more than 14 months to figure this out. More than one-quarter of Americans are fully vaccinated. That number in Canada is 2.5%. Where is the Liberal government's urgency?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that our supply chains for vaccines are ramping up considerably. Let us just take a look at the facts. Key fact: We exceeded our targets in Q1 by 3.5 million. Key fact: We are receiving between 48 million and 50 million doses in Q2. Key fact: We will have 110 million doses here before the end of September.

We are providing transparency to the provinces and territories with our supply chains. We will keep bringing in vaccines for all Canadians.

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HEALTH

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, throughout the pandemic, immune-compromised individuals have had to live in fear and isolation. My son, Garrett, is one of these individuals. Immune-compromised persons need vaccines, which the Prime Minister has not delivered.

Only 2% of Canadians are fully vaccinated. Experts are sounding alarms about the four-month, off-label dosing interval, potentially compromising health outcomes. Canadians should not live in fear, and the failure to get vaccines lies directly with the Prime Minister.

Will the minister apologize for this failure?

Oral Questions

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we have been there for provinces and territories to ensure that they have the vaccines they need to prioritize their populations in the order they believe is best and safest for Canadians.

Let me be clear. Vaccination serves two purposes: one is to protect those most at risk from a severe outcome from COVID-19, including death, and the other is to help control the spread.

We have worked with the provinces and territories to make sure they have the guidance they need. They then design their vaccine strategies as appropriate for their particular populations.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just met with the Fernie Chamber of Commerce and it is planning an economic recovery. They need the economic recovery plan for this summer's tourism and hospitality sector. Yet, there is still no plan. Tourism and hospitality needs to plan for the summer now.

Now we are in a third wave due to the Prime Minister's inability to provide vaccines in January and February. It is another blow to the struggling tourism and hospitality industry.

When will the Prime Minister admit his failure?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to send my thoughts to the people in the tourism sector who have been going through a very difficult year. We know that. This is exactly why we have been there for them since the beginning of the pandemic, and my colleague knows that. It is the case in B.C., it is the case in his riding and it is the case across the country.

To make sure that the sector would be able to get through the pandemic, the Minister of Finance, in her budget, announced that we would be continuing the wage subsidy until the end of September, as well as the rent relief program. Of course, we also announced \$1 billion to support the tourism sector. This is a historic investment. We will be by their side as we restart—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to keep track of this government's greenhouse gas reduction targets. On Sunday, its reduction target was 30% over 2005 levels by 2030. In the budget, on Monday, it was 36%. Today it is 40%, or perhaps even 45% if things go well. That is a lot of changes for one week, and yet it is nothing but hot air if it does not have the force of law.

The government introduced Bill C-12, its climate accountability bill. The government is free to pick its target, but my question is this: Will the government amend Bill C-12 to include that target in the text of the bill?

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

There is a word for what she is describing. It is called ambition. We need to be ambitious in the fight against climate change, whether in Canada, the United States or elsewhere on the planet.

That is why Prime Minister Trudeau is very pleased to join his counterparts from around the world today at this conference, to take ambitious action in the fight against climate change.

To answer my colleague's question, yes, we will include Canada's 2030 climate change target in Bill C-12.

• (1455)

The Speaker: Before continuing, I saw a few raised eyebrows, and I want to remind the member not to name other members by their names. He may refer to their riding name or their title in the House. I just wanted to give this small reminder, as it is sometimes forgotten.

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I applaud good intentions and ambition, but if the targets are not included in legislation, they will have no impact. It is a good thing that today's good intentions are better than yesterday's, but the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

At present, Ottawa is not adopting any new legal obligation to meet either this new target or the old target by 2030. The government is not bound to have any independent reporting, and it is not setting any deadline for an interim progress update in the next 10 years.

Will the government have the courage to amend Bill C-12 to entrench its target in law?

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

I would like to inform her that Canada submits an annual greenhouse gas inventory to the United Nations as part of its commitments.

The environment commissioner and the Auditor General conduct regular audits of the government's efforts to fight climate change.

Furthermore, with Bill C-12, we are creating an advisory body to help us and to ensure that Canada will meet its targets.

We are one of the few countries in the world to have a bill like Bill C-12, and we urge the House to act quickly to pass this important bill.

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Regina's drive-through COVID-19 vaccine clinic was shut down this past weekend. The province announced that unless there was a sudden increase in vaccine supplies, it may remain closed until May 2.

The Liberal government has set the people of Saskatchewan on a collision course. Because of its incompetence, the people of Regina are left with no option for two weeks. Why is it that any American can walk into a pharmacy in the U.S.A. and get vaccinated while Canadians continue to wait? From the very beginning, the government has been a day late and a dollar short.

When will vaccinations for the people of Regina be delivered?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' historical account omits some very key facts. First of all, the entire production base for vaccines was ramping up in January and February. The United States' production line is much different from Canada's.

We in Canada actually exceeded our targets in the first quarter by 3.5 million vaccines. We are in the top three for administering vaccines in the G20. Indeed, I would like to suggest it takes a multi-pronged approach to combat the virus. Vaccines and public health measures must go hand in hand.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two days ago, the chief medical officer of health for Simcoe Muskoka stated, “[Vaccination] is a challenge at this time. We’ve had Moderna being delayed and reduced in half and now the AstraZeneca postponement”. He went on to say, “We look forward to the day we get much bigger volumes, but we don’t know when that will be.”

Vaccinations save lives, but only 2% of Canadians are fully vaccinated. A year into this pandemic, why does our chief medical officer of health have to guess about vaccine supply, and why did the Prime Minister not get us vaccines in January when we could have prevented the third wave?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some numbers clear for the opposition. First of all, we have distributed 13.7 million doses to the provinces. Second, 11 million doses have been administered, and third, in terms of supply, we have Pfizer delivering two million doses a week through May and 2.5 million a week through the month of June over five weeks. That is going to lead us to the larger part of between 48 million and 50 million doses by the end of June. That is transparency. We are saying it now, and we will continue to bring vaccines into Canada for all Canadians.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Dr. Gardner also said controlling COVID is limited by a lack of vaccine supply. He said that with delays of Moderna and the postponement of AstraZeneca vaccines, only half the local capacity to vaccinate is being employed.

Dr. Gardner is not just talking about a third wave. He is concerned there may be a fourth wave without adequate immunization.

Oral Questions

Public health officials should not be left guessing about vaccine supply a year into the pandemic.

The Deputy Prime Minister admitted earlier that she knew the third wave was coming, so why did the Prime Minister not get us vaccines in January and February to stop this devastating third wave?

● (1500)

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said it already in this question period, but I will say it again. The entire world was ramping up in terms of achieving a vaccine supply through January and February. Despite the global supply chain challenges faced by the entire world, Canada was able to secure 3.5 million more doses than originally targeted.

In addition to that, we have accelerated 22 million doses into earlier quarters. That is going to mean all Canadians who want access to a vaccine can be fully vaccinated prior to the end of September, if not sooner. We will continue bringing vaccines in for all Canadians, and we will provide transparency directly to the provinces and territories—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change is top of mind for Canadians and for my constituents in Lac-Saint-Louis.

We know that we need to do more. I was happy to see the Prime Minister announce our new climate targets today to Canadians and to countries around the world.

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs update us on this important development and on the measures we are taking to combat climate change?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Lac-Saint-Louis for his important question and for his commitment to protecting the environment.

Climate change is real, and Canadians deserve a credible climate plan. Today our government committed to enhancing its emissions reduction target by 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030.

We have made it clear that we will be a leader on climate action. We will invest in a cleaner future and a stronger economy.

*Oral Questions**[English]***PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Corrie is a Port Moody business owner with 30 employees all under age 30. With severe lockdowns it has been too hard to operate, so he is moving his business to the U.S. Sadly, many businesses have been devastated by roller-coaster lockdowns, but because of the Liberals' vaccine failure provinces have to impose tougher restrictions for a prolonged time. The economy suffers and businesses have to shut down or move. We are now facing a third wave lockdown.

Why did the Prime Minister not secure enough vaccines in January and February to prevent this third wave?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have reiterated in the House, the global supply chains for vaccines were ramping up in January and February. That is a historical fact.

Another fact is that, despite this global supply chain difficulty, Canada has been extremely aggressive in procuring more than 3.5 million doses than originally planned in the first quarter. We are going to be at 48 million to 50 million doses at the end of June and 110 million prior to the end of September. We have millions of doses running into this country from multiple suppliers. J&J next week—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians are at risk of having their benefits cut off this July because they have not been able to get their taxes done by going out. They are not able to do their own taxes at home and they rely on tax preparers. We are talking about seniors, parents, those with disabilities and those on a fixed income. We need compassion during these challenging times.

Let me ask a question of the minister responsible. If the government can take two years to prepare a budget, why can Canadians not get an extra two months to file their taxes when they are being told they must stay at home?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that this tax season is stressful for Canadians. We will continue to be there for them every step of the way.

In February, we announced that recipients of emergency response and recovery benefits would be eligible for interest relief if they file their 2020 tax returns. The CRA also has strong taxpayer relief provisions in place through which taxpayers can be relieved of penalties and interest if these are incurred for reasons beyond their control.

These measures ensure that Canadians who need help this tax season will get it.

● (1505)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Action, Mr. Speaker. Our francophone communities demand action. The federal government has the duty and power to take action.

Our leader made it clear that a Conservative government will increase funding for post-secondary education in francophone minority communities, but the minister keeps making excuses instead of taking action now.

When will the government take immediate, concrete action for our francophone universities, schools and communities?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to answer my colleague, for whom I have such great respect.

I wonder if he has read the budget, which allocates \$120 million to supporting post-secondary education in French in Canada. I would be happy to work with him to explain exactly how we plan to distribute the funds. Communities know they can count on us. We will be there to support francophones across the country because we know post-secondary education is important, whether it is in northern Ontario, Alberta or elsewhere in Canada.

The Speaker: I know we forget sometimes, so I would like to remind members to make sure they mute their microphone when they are done asking their questions and when they are listening to other people's questions and answers.

The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

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*[English]***THE BUDGET**

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is being hit by the third wave of COVID, and we know that Canadians need support now as much as ever. Programs such as the wage subsidy, the rent subsidy and the emergency business account have been a lifeline to Canadian workers, families and businesses, but they fear these will sunset by the summer.

Can the Minister of Finance please update Canadians on the support extensions or expansions announced this week in budget 2021?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his hard work for his community.

We know that Canadian businesses need our support as we all fight this third wave of the virus. That is why this budget extends the wage subsidy, the rent subsidy and lockdown support for businesses and other employers until September 25, and extends the CEBA loan application window until June 30.

We will do whatever it takes to support Canadian businesses, as we all fight COVID together.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, York Landing is now in the fifth week of chronic water outages during a pandemic.

The first nation has been forced to declare a state of emergency because their “state of the art” water treatment plant is not working. The band is now paying out of pocket for proper testing and bottled water. The Liberals will say they are monitoring the situation, but band-aids will not cut it.

The government's lack of sustained funding is the problem. What is the federal government going to do right now to fix the water treatment plant in York Landing?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member may well know from the fall economic statement, as well as from the budget that came out on Monday, there are sustained investments for water across the country in indigenous communities and in York Landing. We will continue those.

No nation should go without secure and safe access to clean water. We will continue working on it. When we took power, there were 105 long-term water advisories in effect. We have lifted 106. That work will continue. We will continue to sustain those critical assets throughout the lifespan of the asset.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the health minister has previously questioned my concern for science, and today I return the favour.

At least 75 recent studies have shown that optimal vitamin D levels significantly reduce susceptibility to COVID-19 and significantly improve health outcomes if people do get infected. It has been documented for decades that Canadians have sub-optimal vitamin D levels, especially during winter.

Could the minister explain why Health Canada's website states that most Canadians are getting enough vitamin D, and does not actively recommend supplementing?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member opposite to not fall prey to the myriad of fake news articles that are circulating around the Internet about ways people could protect themselves from COVID, and trust that the Public Health Agency of Canada only puts science-based credible documents up, guided, of course, by our Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. Tam and the many scientists that work for us.

Oral Questions

What Canadians need now is trust. They need to be able to trust in the information that their elected officials are sharing. I would urge the member to get his sources from credible sites.

● (1510)

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

We have a point of order.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

* * *

ENHANCED BORDER SECURITY

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties, and I hope you will find unanimous consent of the House for the following motion:

That the House call on the government to immediately suspend non-essential passenger flights from countries with a high outbreak rate of COVID-19 variants, including India and Brazil, as Canada did in the suspension of flights from the United Kingdom on December 20, 2020.

The Speaker: 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]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During question period, the member for Repentigny referred to Alberta oil as dirty oil. With the House's permission, I would like to table a report from the Canadian Energy Centre showing that Alberta oil actually has lower flaring and lower venting, and is cleaner oil than the oil that is imported into Quebec from the States and Algeria. I suggest that perhaps the member should get on board and bring in Alberta oil to help the environment, as opposed to the dirty oil that currently being imported.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

*The Budget***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, I would like to hear from House leader of the government what our plans are for the remainder of this week and next week.

[Translation]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, we will continue the debate on the budget presented on Monday by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

Tomorrow, we will debate Bill C-21, the firearms act, at second reading.

When we return on Monday, we will have the fourth and final day of debate on the budget.

On Tuesday, we will resume the second reading debate of Bill C-12, an act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050.

[English]

On Wednesday of next week, we will continue with the second reading debate of Bill C-19, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act (COVID-19 response).

On Thursday, we will have the first of eight opposition days in the current supply cycle.

Finally, on Friday morning, we will start with a debate on Bill C-22, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, followed in the afternoon by a debate on Bill S-3, an act to amend the Offshore Health and Safety Act.

[Translation]

That is all.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[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, and of the amendment.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today and take this opportunity to share my thoughts on the recently tabled federal budget. Before I do, I want to congratulate our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for her historic achievement of being Canada's first female finance minister to deliver a budget in this House. It is a well-deserved honour and one that was long overdue.

In terms of this budget, the first one in two years, I would say I am disappointed. I was expecting to hear a road map that lays out a responsible recovery plan, one that would lead us out of this pandemic in a timely manner. Instead, we were presented with a docu-

ment not focused on restoring and creating jobs but on Liberal partisan spending priorities.

The budget path of this Prime Minister's reimagined economy veers off into the unknown and saddles our children with debt levels and repayment obligations that will challenge their future success. When reviewing this document, it is absolutely staggering to think that each of us owes a federal debt share of over \$33,000.

The government members cannot argue that they are supporting middle-class Canadians when they put the middle class and those suffering in poverty this much into debt. The government members also cannot argue that they are supporting future generations when they are spending the very savings of those generations on Liberal priorities of the day, right now and in the near future.

Many others share these concerns. In fact, well-known economist David Rosenberg recently gave the federal budget a D grade, and was quoted by BNN Bloomberg as saying, "we're definitely mortgaging our future with this extreme increase in debt."

He also acknowledged, "We're adding on more debt in six years than we did in the previous 152 years combined". Let that resonate for a moment. We are adding more debt in six years than in all the years since Confederation combined, including two world wars.

Alas, here we are, speaking about this long-awaited and very overdue budget. This document contains 739 pages and almost 233,000 words. By far, by these metrics, it is the longest budget in Canadian history. Unfortunately, despite all these words and pages, no recovery plan is there to lay out how we are going to go about getting out of this pandemic and into the early stages of a recovery in the near future, so we can begin returning life back to normal. It is as if with this budget the Liberals want to wish the pandemic away and pretend we have already made it to the other side.

However, here is the reality. On the day the budget was announced, Ontario reported more than 4,400 new COVID cases, along with 19 more deaths. Record COVID numbers are also being felt in British Columbia and in Prince Edward Island, which has effectively closed its provincial borders to travellers from outside Atlantic Canada.

Our worst fears at the start of this pandemic are being realized in this severe third wave. As the provinces and territories struggle mightily to contain COVID-19 and the new variants of concern, they are without sufficient supplies of badly needed vaccines, which were already badly needed over a year ago to manage hospitalizations and protect our health and well-being.

Provinces and territories can only combat COVID with the resources they have. While many are ready to vaccinate, including Ontario, they are without vaccine supply because the federal government has failed to secure them. It is a shame that the federal government used its first budget announcement as a flashy attempt to turn the channel on this pandemic at a time when it is the worst it has ever been.

It was either that, or the Liberals prematurely assumed that COVID-19 vaccines would be here by now and that cases and hospitalizations across the country would have subsided by April 19, 2021. Either way, these are massive miscalculations by the Liberal government. It is also evidence of irresponsible and poor governance.

In addition to lacking a recovery plan, there is scant to no mention of additional vaccine acquisition and distribution, and it is the same for rapid testing. Everyone knows that rapid testing must be a key component in any reopening and recovery plan, as we have seen in countries around the world that are much further ahead than we are in vaccinating their populations and reopening their economies.

Canada's Conservatives have been calling on the Liberal government to implement widespread and publicly available rapid testing devices since the early days of the pandemic, including at our international border points. However, when we review this budget, we see they do not even mention our land border crossings, of which I have four in my riding alone, despite the misleading title on page 73 of this budget. It is inappropriately titled "A Plan for the Safe Reopening of Our Borders".

● (1515)

Just yesterday, the finance minister met virtually with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Businesses are seeking clarity and certainty from the government and are asking for the federal government to lay out the criteria it will be using to determine whether and when border restrictions can end. According to a press report, the finance minister reported by indicating that "everyone needs to be flexible at the moment as the country continues grappling with the pandemic." Then, according to the media, "she suggested rapid-testing kits could soon be flowing to companies". This is peculiar, as nowhere in the budget is rapid testing even mentioned.

Before the pandemic, Canada's travel and tourism industry was the country's fifth-largest sector, responsible for \$105 billion in GDP or 2.3% of GDP. It employed one in 10 Canadians, 10% of Canadian jobs, and had 225,000 small and medium-sized businesses across Canada. COVID hit our travel and tourism industry first, it hit it the hardest and it will take this industry the longest to recover.

As special adviser to the Conservative leader on tourism recovery, I hear this from sectors of the industry when I meet with stakeholders. In fact many, including the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, have predicted that a recovery will take up to four or five years just to achieve the levels of success we had attained in 2019. Yet, in budget 2021, the federal government is only extending the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency rent subsidy until September 25 of this year, while an additional 12 weeks will be added to the Canada recovery benefit. However, subsidy rates for both CEWS and CERS will begin to gradually decrease beginning on July 4. For the Canada recovery benefit, the \$500 payment usually received will be reduced to \$300 for the last eight weeks of the benefit.

Travel and tourism industry stakeholders have been asking for these essential programs to be extended right through to the end of 2021 for those who have been hardest hit. They have also provided

The Budget

ample warning that travel and tourism will not resume right away, as if we were switching on a light, but rather, it will take time before we begin welcoming international or even domestic tourists back to our Canadian destinations.

The extended CEWS and CERS support, as well as changes to the Canada recovery benefit in budget 2021, clearly fall short of industry and worker needs, which is incredibly disappointing, from my perspective. Coming from the riding of Niagara Falls, where tourism is heavily dependent on the summer season, it will be devastating for many tourism businesses and workers if the CEWS, CERS and CRB rates decrease while COVID cases remain high, the borders remain closed and tourists stay away. Why are these emergency business support programs, which have been so essential for so many, set to these arbitrary timelines to end?

In a perfect world for the Prime Minister, his promise of everyone being vaccinated by September would be fulfilled and the economy could be instantly reopened as good as before. Unfortunately for the Liberals, this is another imagined world. The world we live in today is one with a severe vaccine shortage in Canada, without widely available rapid testing devices and with an overabundance of COVID variants that are driving a severe third wave. What happens to the CERS, CEWS, CRB and the workers and small businesses that rely on these emergency support programs if the variants continue unabated into the summer?

What if borders remain closed through the summer and into the fall, significantly damaging our prospects of having international tourists visit our destination. Summer is the best tourism season in Niagara. However, we are on the verge of losing our second consecutive summer tourism season due to this pandemic. If businesses do not reopen this summer or tourism does not return in time for the summer season, the CRB, CEWS and CERS plan, as laid out by budget 2021, could have a disastrous outcome for workers and the many businesses that depend on them.

We are not on a good path, because the Liberals have failed us. To make matters worse, as the COVID conditions across Ontario have intensified, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued a level 4 "Do not travel" health warning about Canada due to COVID-19, and it did this just one day after the Liberals announced their budget.

The Budget

So many of us were looking to budget 2021 to provide a recovery plan, a real, solid, tangible recovery plan supported by science, metrics and data, so we could finally plan to reopen our borders and our economy and bring life back to normal. If there was an ideal time to unveil a federal recovery plan to get Canadians to the other side of this awful pandemic, it was on budget day. Unfortunately for Canadians, the Liberal government and the Prime Minister have failed us once again.

• (1520)

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, while I appreciate the speech from my colleague opposite, I have to wonder if we are reading from the same document when we are looking at the budget, although it is likely that my colleague reads most of these types of documents with blue-tinted glasses because we are still stuck in an era when we are talking about government debt as if it is a Visa card or a mortgage and we have to pay it down and live in prosperity debt-free as a nation. It is a bit of a fallacy.

When I read the budget, I saw investments in child care, investments in jobs, investments in the environment and the pursuit of a net-zero future for all Canadians, and indeed, as my colleague would know, investments in tourism and leisure.

If we are going to start taking things out of the budget to lessen the debt load of the country and invariably add to the debt load of Canadians in terms of personal debt, which deputy chief economist Benjamin Tal and many others indicate is the most serious form of debt in Canada, where would he start? Would he start cutting money to tourism and leisure, to families or to the environment? Which is the first one to go?

• (1525)

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the hon. member was listening to the speech or just preparing remarks to attack my position here. In fact, when he talks about debt load, if we judge this budget, by 2026 we will be spending \$39 billion just on interest payments on this debt and, if we think about it, only \$25.6 billion on employment insurance benefits for Canadians. We can think about that. In 2026, we will be spending \$40 billion on interest payments and only \$27.9 billion on the Canada child benefit.

Again, there is a cost to be paid, which is interest payments, and those payments are not going to programs that support Canadians and assist Canadians, including those in the tourism sector. I represent a riding of 40,000 workers and they are looking for assistance. This budget is going to be one that hurts them.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Niagara Falls for his speech. He talked a lot about the pandemic.

Yesterday, the Conservative Party members refused to vote in favour of the amendment to the amendment moved by the Bloc Québécois to increase health transfers.

By so doing, the Conservatives have broken their promise to fight for health transfers, and they are abandoning seniors aged 65 and over.

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

[English]

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Mr. Speaker, since the Bloc's subamendment deleted two key aspects of the amendment we were proposing, we therefore voted against it. The Bloc members knew that was going to happen. We support the notion of increased health care funding, but we do not agree with their position, which allowed them to delete certain sections of our amendment, so we voted against it. We do not agree with their refusal to understand the basic need for fiscal prudence and fiscal responsibility. I guess they would not, because they will never form a government. We also do not agree with creating two different classes of seniors, which their amendment proposed.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member talking about basic needs. We know that there are over 300,000 homeless people in our country right now. The government announced 4,500 new units for rapid housing and it is patting itself on the back, but at this pace, it is going to take over 37 years to house the homeless.

I know the Conservatives have talked a lot about reducing crime. We had a rapid housing initiative application in our riding get denied that was supported by the Nanaimo parole office. It cited how it had no accommodation for clients returning to the area from corrections. There was a report from the Province of B.C. about crime reduction, which cited that every dollar spent on prevention, whether it be affordable housing or criminal justice reform, saved \$12 from the taxpayer.

Does my colleague agree that the government is not doing enough to tackle housing, which is absolutely critical to crime reduction and to helping those who are struggling the most?

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Mr. Speaker, I will agree with the member in the sense that this budget does nothing to help those who need it the most. Again, I will refer back to my community of 40,000 workers. They are all sitting at home. They are collecting government programs, but they would rather be working instead. A vaccine is a way forward. Rapid testing is a way forward.

A key concern about this budget is that it would put these programs, which are vitally important for our community, at risk. If those programs end in September, what happens? Niagara, by its nature, is a seasonal tourism operation. If those people do not even have the necessary hours and COVID still remains, they will not have any programs to go back on to support themselves in the months ahead.

• (1530)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I start my speech on the budget, I would like to congratulate the member for Brampton East for his parliamentary secretary assignment. I will be sharing my time with him in the House.

The Budget

I rise today to communicate my strong support of the federal budget delivered this week and to speak specifically about the strong economic measures announced in support of Canadians and businesses. I am partially inspired by the comments made by the leader of the official opposition earlier this week, when he made the following ill-informed and misguided remark: “this budget does next to nothing to secure the Canadian economy.”

While I am not surprised by this type of politics from the member for Durham, it does indicate that he either did not bother to inform himself of the long list of economic measures taken in this budget, or he has a fundamental lack of understanding about how best to support and grow the Canadian economy.

Budget 2021 not only acknowledges the thousands of Canadian workers who have been laid off or are facing reduced working hours due to the pandemic, but it also offers a strong plan to increase opportunities. In total, this budget would create or maintain 330,000 jobs in Canada by 2022-23. Further, it would also create almost 500,000 new training and work experience opportunities. This is, of course, in line with the Speech from the Throne last fall, which committed to creating one million jobs by the end of the year.

On that front, I am pleased to say that we are well ahead of the predicted timeline for job creation. Of course, gaining jobs in light of the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic took away so many over the past 12 months is something that must be mentioned. Along with these considerations is the fact that our government's investment into getting people back to work and creating new opportunity is expected to result in reaching our pre-pandemic employment rate by early 2022.

Budget 2021 announced \$26 billion over the next six years to invest in critical infrastructure across the country, from more reliable and accessible public transit to supporting projects in indigenous communities and massive programs to create more energy-efficient and affordable housing. The fact is that not only do infrastructure projects provide a long-term foundation for overall economic growth, but they also create immediate well-paying jobs for the duration of each respective project.

Another measure that would help hundreds of thousands of small business owners is the newly announced Canada recovery hiring program for eligible employers who are continuing to experience declines in revenue relative to before the pandemic. For those businesses that have had to lay off staff or drastically reduce the hours their employees are receiving, this proposed subsidy program would offset a portion of the costs employers must endure as they reopen. These subsidies could be applied to either increasing work hours available to already existing employees or the hiring of new staff.

As we know, small to medium-sized businesses, which have been hit the hardest by the pandemic, are the backbone of the Canadian economy and the drivers of job creation from coast to coast to coast, so helping them be well prepared to recover and thrive in the post-pandemic economy is a smart strategic investment that would create jobs and create opportunities.

• (1535)

With the rollout of vaccines well under way, and when it is safe to do so, businesses in the tourism and arts and culture sectors are getting ready to welcome Canadians back to experience the great places and activities this country has to offer. To support thousands of jobs for vendors, technicians, production crews and many more, our government will invest \$1 billion over three years, including \$200 million for local festivals, museums, heritage celebrations, and community cultural and amateur sporting events, which will showcase the best of Canadian culture and talent.

I also want to take the time to outline some of the measures announced that will support young people. Over the next three years, \$470 million will be directed toward Employment and Social Development Canada to establish a new apprenticeship service. This initiative will create 55,000 first-year apprentices in construction and manufacturing Red Seal trades. Up to \$5,000 will be available for all the first-year apprentice opportunities and up to \$10,000 for year one will be directed to those employers who hire under-represented populations, including racialized Canadians and persons with disabilities.

This budget also proposes to invest over \$370 million in new funding for the Canada summer jobs program in 2022 and 2023 to support 75,000 new job placements in the summer of 2022. This builds on the funding announced in the fall economic statement, in which the program will support over 220,000 summer jobs over the next two years.

I want to mention the \$708 million over the next five years that is being invested into Mitacs, a non-profit organization that connects young workers with innovative, business-engaged research and provides training opportunities. This will give Canada's young innovators more opportunity to succeed while supporting businesses of all sizes across the country. This will result in at least 85,000 work-integrated placements that provide job learning for young people and the opportunity for participating businesses to grow and develop talent.

There is also \$5 billion over the next seven years for the net-zero accelerator, which is a critical component of innovation as we shape a more green and prosperous economy.

There is \$500 million for the industrial research assistance program for innovative small and medium-sized businesses, \$440 million over the next decade to support artificial intelligence innovation across Canada and a combined \$760 million investment in geonomics and quantum research.

To conclude, I want to make it clear that all of the investments announced this week in the budget have one common theme. They are in support of a wide range of economic projects that create tangible jobs and opportunities.

The Budget

Away from political spin and the desire of the parties across the way to find them at issue, these are the facts that surround our government's path to secure the economy. Balance is what will define the budget as we continue to take every measure possible to ensure that Canada rises above the pandemic with a healthy population while at the same time making long-term investments into creating a post-pandemic growing economy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you and the other members in the House for giving me the opportunity to speak on the budget.

• (1540)

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned tourism. He said that tourism businesses are getting ready to welcome back visitors from all around the world. Well, he is wrong. They are not. Why are they not? It is because they have been begging this government for over a year for some kind of a plan that gives them a sense as to when they are going to be able to that and how they are going to be able to do that. This government has ignored them for over a year. The Prime Minister promised them over a year ago that there would be a plan for them, and that promise has not been kept.

CEO Keith Henry and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada said:

The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada is confused, troubled and disappointed with the federal budget announcement. ...the economic effects of the pandemic have reached catastrophic levels, with many businesses forced to shut their doors permanently.... With an unprecedented amount of spending in the federal budget, the Indigenous tourism industry seems to be left behind. The Indigenous tourism sector needs a national, coordinated, Indigenous-led approach in order to respond, recover and build resiliency from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and this federal budget largely missed the mark for the Indigenous tourism industry in Canada.

That is widely felt among the entire tourism industry.

I would ask the member: Would it not be better to measure success, rather than by billions of dollars that they spend, by actually measuring something that they have accomplished, been able to bring—

The Deputy Speaker: We will have to leave it at that.

We will go to the hon. member for Surrey—Newton.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, when it comes to tourism, heritage, culture and our indigenous peoples' heritage, our government is committed. That is why, if we look at budget 2021, we are investing \$1 billion over the next three years to support tourism. That is exactly what the people on the ground were advocating for.

The finance minister has had many virtual meetings with chambers of commerce and organizations right from the grassroots. That is the input they gave, and so this is what our government is providing to make sure that we are able to support tourism and travel.

[Translation]

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

Earlier this week, I heard the Prime Minister struggling to explain why he was creating two classes of seniors in his budget by increasing old age security only for people aged 75 and over. No

matter whether someone is 72 or 76, the cost of living is going up for everyone, including everything from groceries to rent.

This budget measure is upsetting people in my region, the Lower St. Lawrence, where seniors under 75 are wondering why they are facing this injustice. I would like the member to explain why he thinks these two classes of seniors are being created.

[English]

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, to go back to the 2015 election, the Liberals made a promise to seniors when the Conservatives were trying to bring in a retirement age of 67. The Prime Minister, then the leader of the Liberal Party, made a promise that we would retain the retirement age at 65 so that seniors would not have to go through another two years of poverty.

Now, we see that the most vulnerable group of seniors is particularly 75 years and older, and that is where our government is trying to help them. There will be a one-time, \$500 payment in August 2021 and a 10% increase starting in July 2022, which is going to help approximately 3.3 million seniors—

• (1545)

The Deputy Speaker: We have time for just a very short question from the hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to return to tourism, because I find the member's speech a little perplexing when he talked about tourism getting ready to welcome people back. He talked about \$1 billion as a kind of look-over-here strategy.

Is this member really comfortable with beginning to phase out support to small businesses and tourism and to cut the emergency benefit for workers who depend on it in the tourism industry in the middle of their second lost season starting in July? How does he expect them to survive with those cuts beginning that early?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to supporting tourism, I already explained, but when it comes to supporting small businesses, our government has already extended the business subsidy to the fall to make sure that we are able to support those businesses that need the help the most and the tourism and travel industry is one of them.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking the hon. member for Surrey—Newton for his kind words. I am thankful for the chance to address the House and all Canadians during this time of extreme difficulty for our country, particularly for my province of Ontario.

The Budget

As we encourage residents to stay at home and practise extra vigilance, our federal government will always have Canadians' backs. We exceeded our original quarter one commitments for the total of 9.5 million doses received. With over 13 million now delivered to provinces and territories, we are currently third among G20 countries for people receiving their vaccines and we are well on track to provide a vaccine to every adult who would like one by September.

As we look to our new budget, I want to reflect on how our government has continued to support and invest in Canadians throughout this pandemic. The Canada recovery benefit has now helped more than 1.8 million Canadians put food on the table and pay their bills, including \$14.5 billion in direct support.

Last month, we increased the number of weeks for the program availability to families and workers. The wage subsidy has provided \$73 billion to workers with over three million approved applications to date. There have been 669,000 approved applications for the rent subsidy, totalling over \$2 billion in support. These are crucial supports that support Canadian families, workers and businesses.

On Monday, my two proud daughters watched our first female Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance table a historic budget. As she put it herself, this budget is about completing our fight against COVID-19, alleviating the damage left by the recession it created, and building up to create more opportunities for Canadians to thrive in years to come.

We have not seen such a steep and fast economic contraction in recent times. As many members know first-hand, those disproportionately affected include low-wage workers, young people, women and racialized Canadians. Some businesses have found innovative ways to prosper and even grow and others, due to circumstances outside their control, have had to fight just to survive.

I am thrilled to be able to speak on a budget that is delivering on our government's commitment to creating jobs, growing the middle class, helping businesses get on track for long-term growth, and ensuring that Canadians' future will be healthier, more equitable, greener and more prosperous. Our top priority remains protecting Canadians' health and safety, particularly during this third aggressive wave.

Budget 2021 invests in Canada's biomanufacturing and life sciences sector to rebuild domestic vaccine manufacturing capacity. Our government is proposing a \$3-billion investment to support provinces and territories and ensuring standards for long-term care are applied and permanent changes are established.

We will also provide \$90 million to launch an "age well at home" initiative. This would assist community-based organizations to provide practical support to help low-income and otherwise vulnerable seniors to age in place, such as matching seniors with volunteers who can help with meal preparation, home maintenance, daily errands, yard work and transportation.

Our government is also proposing to increase the old age security for seniors age 75 and over beginning in 2022, including a one-time top-up payment of \$500 this August, as we want to make sure we are there for our seniors who have built our country.

Ontario will see an investment of \$466 million to support health care system capacity in responding to surges in COVID-19 cases, as well as heightened demand for those experiencing challenges related to mental health, substance abuse and homelessness.

The pandemic has created new barriers for those needing access to mental health services and the stresses associated with the pandemic, whether job, health or isolation related. Budget 2021 represents a \$1.2-billion investment nationwide to help mitigate this challenge.

For our economy to reach its full potential, we must ensure we have the highest participation rate possible in our workforce. To do so, our government is proposing a transformative investment to build a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. This unprecedented plan will drive economic growth, increase women's participation in the workforce and ensure each child has the best start in life. We will aim to reduce fees for regulated child care by 50% on average by 2022, with the goal of reaching \$10 per day on average by 2026. We will provide almost \$30 billion over the next five years and provide permanent, ongoing funding.

We are committed to supporting women entrepreneurs as we aim to build back stronger and more inclusively. Our budget proposes allocating \$146 million to strengthen the women entrepreneurship strategy. Women entrepreneurs will have greater access to financing, mentorship and training. We will work with financial institutions to develop a voluntary code to support the inclusion of women and other under-represented entrepreneurs as clients in the financial sector.

To support low-wage workers, our budget proposes to expand the Canada workers benefit to support about one million additional Canadians, helping them return to work and increasing benefits for those most vulnerable. The government will raise the income level at which the benefit starts being reduced to \$22,944 for single individuals without children and to \$26,177 for families.

● (1550)

Investing in youth has never been more important than at this moment. Many young people, recent graduates and students are struggling to find valuable job experience and growth opportunities due to the barriers caused by the pandemic.

Our budget is proposing to waive interest accrual on Canada student loans and Canada apprenticeship loans until March 31, 2023. We are proposing to double student grants for an additional two years, effectively covering 90% of the average undergraduate tuition in Canada for low-income students during the pandemic.

The Budget

Further supports for youth include \$118 million in after-school programming and \$239 million in student work placement programs to support 50,000 work integrative learning opportunities for post-secondary students, up 20,000 from last year.

We will invest \$80 million to help kids learn to code, and \$109 million to create 7,000 more jobs through the youth employment and skills strategy to better meet the needs of vulnerable youth facing various and often multiple barriers to employment. An additional 94,000 job placements will be made available through Canada summer jobs funding.

To further our progress in prioritizing job creation in small business, our budget will extend business and income support measures through to the fall. We will support almost 500,000 new training and work opportunities, including 215,000 opportunities for youth.

Budget 2021 is a plan that puts the government on track to meet its commitment to create one million jobs. Our budget proposes \$700 million over three years for the regional development agencies to support business financing. This would position local economies for long-term growth by transitioning to a green economy and enhancing competitiveness.

We also propose to launch the Canada digital adoption program to assist over 160,000 businesses with the cost of new technology. This will provide businesses with the advice they need to get the most out of new technology, while employing 28,000 young Canadians who will be trained to work with them. In addition, we also propose to allow small businesses to fully expense up to \$1.5 million in capital investments and assets, including digital technology and intellectual property. This constitutes an additional \$2.2 billion investment in the growth of entrepreneurial companies.

Fighting climate change has been and will always be one of our government's biggest priorities. Budget 2021 includes a plan to allow 200,000 Canadians to make their homes greener. Our investments are aimed at reducing the pollution from fuels used in the transportation and production of goods by increasing Canada's production of low carbon fuels, including biofuels. They are aimed at encouraging the developing of innovative new technologies to reduce pollution in heavy industry, and conserving up to one million square kilometres more land and inland waters to help achieve our 25% protected area by 2025 targets.

This plan puts Canada on track to exceed its Paris targets and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 36% by 2030. This also puts us on a path to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

As part of our green recovery plan, we are proposing \$5 billion to the net zero accelerator. This would allow the government to provide up to \$8 billion in support for projects that will help reduce domestic greenhouse gas emissions across the economy.

We are proposing to reduce general, corporate and small business income tax for businesses that manufacture zero emission technologies. More investments in this plan include \$56 million to develop and implement a set of codes and standards for retail ZEV charging and fuelling stations. We will provide \$98 million to support our commitment to power federal buildings with 100% clean energy by 2022, and \$104 million to strengthen greenhouse gas emission reg-

ulations for light and heavy-duty vehicles and off-road residential equipment.

Canada entered the pandemic in a strong fiscal position. This allowed our government to take quick actions, supporting people and businesses, and to make historic investments in the recovery. To respond to the pandemic, \$8 out of \$10 spent in Canada has come from the federal government. I am incredibly proud that our government stepped up to support Canadians through an unprecedented year.

I would like to end today by talking about a conversation I had with a constituent who was filled with emotion just talking about the historic child care announcement and what it meant for her. It meant she would no longer have to choose between staying home to care for her child or going to work only to see a majority of her paycheque go toward paying for costly child care. It would mean giving her child the opportunity to learn and grow in a professional setting, providing this constituent the opportunity to focus on her career and feeling proud that she would be able to contribute to the Canadian economy.

This is why we are here, to make real, positive impacts in the lives of so many. I am proud to stand behind such a historic budget that will support all Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

• (1555)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have heard from a number of operators in the tourism sector who are very disappointed. They look at the announcements in the budget and because of the status of where Canada is in the pandemic, in the midst of a third wave, it is likely another missed tourism season, especially in an area like mine, where there are a lot of seasonal businesses. The fact that the wage subsidy and the rent subsidy will be not only phased out over the summer months, but will have ended by the time September comes around has been a big disappointment for tourism providers.

Could member comment on why the government is cutting so short a segment of the economy that has been so affected by the pandemic.

The Budget

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, our government has always been there to support businesses in many different sectors. Brampton has a tourism sector and a hospitality sector that have been impacted more than other businesses. Through our federal development agencies and through the regional relief recovery fund, many businesses have received support. Of course, there is more to do. We have extended our wage subsidy programs until September 25, I believe, but I also know our government will do whatever it takes to continue to support businesses.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. My question is about the budget more generally.

The government wants to impose standards in long-term care facilities and seniors' homes, but it seems to me that, before it can impose standards, the government should be setting a good example.

One thing that is under federal jurisdiction is border control. March 2020 was too late to close the borders. January was too late to require travellers to have a negative test upon entry. It was too late to ask them to go into quarantine.

The situation in Montreal is fragile right now, because it is too late to close the borders because of the variants.

Do the federal Liberals think they are setting a good example, and is that why they think they can impose things on others?

[English]

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned borders and many other things, but I will focus on borders in this 724-page budget. To keep our borders safe and secure, budget 2021 proposes \$656 million to CBSA, our Canada Border Services Agency, to modernize and enhance CBSA's ability to detect contraband such as drugs and weapons. These initiatives will help streamline trade while protecting Canadians.

An additional \$312 are proposed to help protect Canadians from gun violence and gun smuggling, which will be supported by the RCMP and CBSA to keep our communities safe. Yes, we want to ensure our borders are safe and secure, and in this budget, we are investing more and more money.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke lovingly about watching the historic moment with his daughters when Canada's first woman delivered a budget as Minister of Finance, yet while 5.5 million Canadian workers lost their jobs or had their hours cut, Canada's 47 billionaires made a record \$78 billion during the pandemic.

In her book *Plutocrats: The Rise of the New Global Super-Rich and the Fall of Everyone Else*, the minister wrote that political decisions helped create the super-elite in the first place and as the economic might of the super-elite class grew so did the political muscle.

Was it the political muscles and economic might of the super-elite that resulted in this budget not having a wealth tax or an excise profit tax or consultations rather than real action on tax haven reform?

• (1600)

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, a luxury tax on luxury items such as vehicles and airplanes is included in the budget. There is also a 1% tax on the value of properties for Canada's first national tax on vacant properties owned by non-residents, non-Canadians who can afford property in Canada. We are doing many things to ensure we provide and protect the middle class, and we will continue to do more.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned biofuels in his speech. The B.C. government is looking at proposals to grind up whole trees and whole forests to create biofuel pellets for export. Is this what the government is referring to when it talks about biofuels in the budget.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, today being Earth Day, it is important I take this opportunity to mention that our government will continue to protect our environment. Through budget 2021, we have billions of dollars in investments for a cleaner future. We have great examples in our budget that will ensure we protect our environment, our lands and our oceans.

There are many different investments, such as an additional investment of \$15 billion toward Canada's strengthening climate plan; \$15 billion in public transit across the country; over \$5 billion over the next seven years to the net zero accelerator; \$1 billion to help draw private sector investments from clean tech projects; and an investment tax credit to help Canada's carbon capture program increase its capacity to reduce emissions by 15 megatonnes of CO₂ annually.

We will do whatever it takes to continue to protect our environment and to ensure that we keep Canada as clean and—

The Deputy Speaker: The member will have to leave it there.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Shefford.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by mentioning that I will be sharing my time with my hon. neighbour, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

I feel very bitter as I rise to speak in the House today about the budget tabled on Monday, April 19. I first want to point out that as the critic for the status of women, I can only be delighted that it was tabled by the first female finance minister. Another glass ceiling has been shattered. As a feminist, I can tick that off the list.

The Budget

On Monday evening, some of the headlines were saying that Ottawa supports seniors. The next day, disillusionment quickly set in, especially because the federal government is not addressing our two main demands: adequate, recurrent funding for health, which is the only formal demand from the Quebec government, and an increase to old age security, or OAS, for those 65 and older.

In my speech today, I will focus on the lack of support for seniors and the total lack of health transfers, and I will close with comments about a few good things in the budget.

When it comes to seniors, the government is keeping its election promise to increase old age security for people over 75. This increase amounts to roughly \$766 a year, or \$63.83 a month. This increase will come into effect in 2022 only and will require legislation in order to be implemented. For now, in 2021, the government is only committing to making a one-time payment of \$500 this summer, just for people 75 and up. In short, Ottawa is not honouring our request to avoid creating two classes of seniors and is not formally committing to anything other than a one-time measure before the next election. The FADOQ thinks that is an odd coincidence and that something smells fishy. Essentially, it is still an election promise, as it was in 2019.

From day one of the pandemic, I have repeatedly said that seniors are the primary victims of COVID-19. Overrepresented in the number of deaths, they are also the ones who are hardest hit by the virus: isolation, anxiety, and loss of their spending power. Old age security, which is meant to keep all seniors out of poverty, is missing the mark. Indexing the benefits by a measly 0.1% for the October to December 2020 quarter will not address cost-of-living increases that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

It is estimated that food prices in Quebec in 2021 will rise faster than inflation. Our parents and grandparents, who built the Quebec we live in now, deserve better than being forgotten by the federal government. The FADOQ said that the increase of October 1, 2020, the International Day of Older Persons, represented on average just \$1.50. That is not even enough to buy a Tim Hortons coffee; it is another slap in the face.

The pandemic has exacerbated the decline in seniors' purchasing power. In 2019, and I am not going to go back earlier than 2019 now, the Liberals promised a 10% increase to old age security for seniors aged 75 and over, but that promise has still not been fulfilled with budget 2021. The budget mentions that a bill will be introduced, which is fine, but when? Seniors will have to wait until the end of summer 2022.

Around 6.4 million people aged 65 and over receive old age security. The Liberal's promise for people aged 75 and over, which they reiterated in budget 2021, would leave half of all recipients, aged 65 to 74, out in the cold.

Let us set the record straight. When it was time to change course and significantly increase benefits over the long term, all the Liberals really did for seniors during the pandemic was to provide one-time assistance. They gave seniors who were eligible for old age security benefits a one-time cheque for \$300 and seniors who were eligible for the guaranteed income supplement, or GIS, an extra \$200, for a scant total of \$500. The special one-time payment

through the GST credit came out to be an average of \$375 for seniors living alone and \$510 for couples, which is where we get the figure of almost \$900 for a person living alone. However, seniors were not the only taxpayers who were able to benefit from this special payment. The Liberals added another one-time election-minded cheque for \$500. I am not the one saying it. We heard that from a journalist who interviewed seniors. They are not fooled and they are tired of being used as pawns. The Liberals are demonstrating a real lack of compassion by not keeping their promises at a time when seniors continue to be hit hardest by the pandemic.

Some Liberal members have even personally accused me of fear-mongering to scare seniors. In politics, people sometimes make petty, shameful accusations. It is very frustrating. This outrageous and unwarranted accusation made by some Liberal members is completely appalling. We are not trying to scare seniors. We are advocating for a real increase in their purchasing power. My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I are simply trying to give them a voice.

The real value of the old age security pension has been dropping for years. In 1975, it covered 20% of the average industrial wage. Today, it covers about 13%. We are asking the government to raise OAS coverage to 15% of the average industrial wage over three years and to keep it at that level.

• (1605)

It is not just Bloc members who are saying this. As I said, the FADOQ has denounced the fact that this measure is creating two classes of seniors and it reiterated that people aged 65 and older must be included.

The organization would have liked to see the Liberals at least honour their commitment to increase old age security now, rather than offering a one-time \$500 cheque. The FADOQ applauds the Liberals' intention to help seniors financially, but it believes the government has discriminated against one class of seniors by increasing regular old age security payments by 10% in 2022 for those aged 75 and over, effectively creating two classes of seniors.

As for health transfers, something many seniors' groups talk to me about regularly, we get nothing but radio silence. There is nothing planned for the next five years and the government will not even talk about it, despite its unprecedented spending.

What we need to remember is not so much the size of the deficit, but rather the fact that the Liberals continue to invest everywhere but in health care and that they are failing our seniors. The government is sticking to the \$4 billion already committed unilaterally and separately in Bill C-25, even though the deficit is lower than expected.

The deficit is around \$354 billion, rather than \$382 billion. That is a difference of \$28 billion, which happens to be the exact amount of additional funding for health transfers that Quebec and the provinces are asking for this year. The quicker pace of economic recovery is creating the federal fiscal room to meet this demand. It is a political choice not to do so.

Meanwhile, Ottawa is investing \$3 billion over five years in standards for long-term care facilities starting in 2022-23. This is definitely interference that Quebec opposes, and it serves no purpose since standards already exist. Instead of spending these billions of dollars on standards, it would be better to put them into health transfers in order to hire health care workers and comply with the existing standards.

In the middle of a pandemic, it is unthinkable to spend so much money without making a permanent increase to health transfers as Quebec and all the provinces are demanding. This is just a piecemeal approach consisting of small and even symbolic measures. Ottawa is saying yes to everything but health transfers, despite the consensus of all of Quebec and all the premiers.

The pandemic inflicted lasting wounds on our health care systems that will take years to heal, but the recovery will only happen if the federal government invests heavily in those systems.

By refusing to increase its health care contribution, the government is knowingly turning its back on patients and sending them the message that their health is not a priority, that their cancer diagnosis can wait, that their stress and anguish will not be relieved. The Bloc Québécois believes that is unacceptable, and that is why we are demanding increased health transfers now. We have to make up for time lost due to the pandemic and address the roots of this systemic issue.

Our under-resourced health care systems are being propped up by their overworked staff, yet the federal government is abandoning health care workers. The system was already stretched thin before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the added workload has serious consequences for Quebec's nurses and health care workers. For patients, this means lower-quality care and a greater risk of post-operative complications. Nurses are at risk of burnout and higher stress, and some want to leave the profession because the conditions are unacceptable.

Things have been getting worse for nurses since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. We are hearing more and more devastating stories from health care workers. Many health professionals had chosen to work part time to avoid being overworked, but they were unilaterally forced to work full-time hours to deal with this crisis. As a result, the health care system is struggling to retain nurses, who are quitting in droves in Montreal. More than 800 nurses have quit because of the overwhelming workload.

The provinces and Quebec are unanimous in their demand, which rarely happens. The decision is unanimous across Quebec and Canada. The premiers of all the provinces and Quebec, the major unions, the Quebec National Assembly and the Parliament of Canada, which passed a motion, all agree.

The Liberal government is alone in this. It needs to get with the program and increase health transfers. The government is also alone in its refusal to increase OAS as of age 65.

The Bloc Québécois moved two amendments to the budget in order to add our two main demands and give the government one last chance to listen to reason. In voting against our amendments, the Liberals have all but guaranteed that the Bloc will not support this budget.

The Budget

In closing, I would like to say that the emergency wage subsidy was a good thing for my riding and that there are some good measures in the budget. There is money allocated for the environment, which we will have to keep an eye on because the devil is in the details. That is true for many measures, from agriculture to support for tourism and culture. Many groups, including seniors' groups, also support the Bloc's recommendations for this budget.

I will conclude by sharing what a young man wrote to me yesterday: "My name is Samuel. I would like to know how to present a petition to the House of Commons to pressure the Liberal government about the old age security cheque on behalf of my grandparents."

Well, Samuel, out of respect for the dignity of seniors, let us take action so they can not just survive, but thrive.

• (1610)

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to participate via Zoom.

This budget seems to be a campaign-style or election-style budget. We are in the middle of a COVID pandemic. Does my hon. colleague feel that this was an appropriate time to come out with an election-style budget?

[Translation]

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I did not catch the end of my colleague's question. Could he repeat it, please?

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: It was a relatively short question. I will ask the member for Peace River—Westlock if he could just repeat the middle segment of it and the hon. member will have a go at the response.

The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I was just wondering what my hon. colleague thought about the fact that this seemed to be an election-style budget rather than a pandemic-style budget.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, one thing is certain: We have to be able to use our borrowing power to help people get out of the crisis.

The budget does contain many measures for many groups that need help. This pandemic is not over yet, and it is mainly affecting our health care system. As I said before, the \$30-billion difference between the deficit projected in the 2020 fall economic statement and the deficit projected in Monday's budget could have been used to increase the Canada health transfer to help us get through this pandemic and plan for the post-pandemic future.

The Budget

• (1615)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am deeply disturbed by the current crisis at Laurentian University. It is clear that the Doug Ford government is dismantling an institution that is vital to the francophone, indigenous and anglophone communities in northern Ontario.

However, when I look at what the Liberals are doing, it is clear that the Liberal government has abandoned its obligation to provide funding for the Franco-Ontarian community and protect its rights. Why is the Liberal government refusing to provide funding to help stabilize the situation for the francophone community in northern Ontario?

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, as francophones, we can only stand in solidarity with other francophones and with Franco-Ontarians. We reiterate they have all our support, especially in the context of the crisis involving Laurentian University.

What is happening right now is sad and serious. Our official languages critic, Mario Beaulieu, has talked about this at length. I would like to encourage—

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to remind the hon. member that it is not permitted to name another colleague, but I think the hon. member realized that she did it.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

[English]

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her tireless advocacy for seniors. I have been hearing from seniors in my riding who are upset that the OAS increase is for seniors over the age of 75. They think that the increase should begin at age 65. It is just a matter of fairness. Seniors are dealing with all kinds of issues related to the pandemic, and they need support.

My question for the hon. member is about care in seniors homes and the profit motive of some of the care homes. Does she agree that these homes should be not for profit, community run or co-operative style, rather than for-profit care homes?

[Translation]

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I have worked on seniors' issues with community groups, so I know it is important to offer a range of senior living models and develop more social housing.

I would urge everyone to be very careful with the proposed national long-term care standards. Many long-term care homes and seniors' residences are under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, who are responsible for their management. Anyway, Quebec is already looking at various models and has a range of housing options that suit seniors' diverse needs.

I would like to pick up on the vote-seeking aspect of senior-focused initiatives, which my colleague from Peace River—Westlock raised. Even seniors have been talking to me about the \$500 they will be getting in August, and they are suspicious about the coincidental timing of that payment. That kind of vote-seeking measure is

best avoided in favour of providing long-term support and not taking seniors for fools.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to wish all my colleagues an excellent Earth Day.

Today I am speaking as the Bloc Qu  b  cois aerospace critic.

We are very happy that the budget is finally acknowledging the aerospace sector. Getting there took a lot of work. The Bloc Qu  b  cois really took on the role of patient teacher.

I myself have had to explain repeatedly that air transportation is not the same thing as the aerospace industry. Airlines are one thing, but construction, maintenance, parts recycling, a significant research and development hub and our primary export sector is quite another.

Apparently the message has gotten through at last. The budget even pairs “strategic” and “aerospace” in the same sentence.

We know—

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for North Island—Powell River has a point of order.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for interrupting. I want to make you aware that the interpretation is not working. The interpreter has indicated that the sound is not clear enough.

• (1620)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for pointing that out.

[Translation]

I would like to ask the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot to check whether his headset is working and whether there is a good connection.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that the message has gotten through at last. The budget even pairs “strategic” and “aerospace” in the same sentence.

The government is finally acknowledging that aerospace is a strategic industry, just as the auto industry is strategic for Ontario. The wording is a little unusual because it does not literally say that, but it mentions—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the interpretation is still not working.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I checked and everything seems to be working.

May I continue?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

The Budget

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, would you like me to start over, since some of our colleagues were unable to understand the first part of my speech?

The Deputy Speaker: That is a good idea. The hon. member can start from the end of the first minute of his speech.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, some unusual wording in the budget document does suggest that aerospace is a strategic industry. It does not say that literally, but in a roundabout way, it does say that the spinoffs from this industry are strategic. Again, that is a start.

We have long been calling on the government to provide targeted assistance to the aerospace sector. The government responded that there are already universal programs like the Canada emergency wage subsidy. It is true that the wage subsidy has helped the aerospace industry and that extending it in this budget is good news for the industry.

However, some sectors have been hit harder than others and deserve targeted support. The aerospace sector is one of them, since planes are grounded and sales have dried up. The health crisis did not create all the problems in this sector, but it made them worse. The fact remains that our flagship companies, which took generations to build, are at risk of disappearing in a matter of months.

In practical terms, what does the budget contain for the aerospace industry? The main problem is that the budget is vague and short on details about how it will be implemented, even though it is over 700 pages long. The government has wasted a year doing nothing. We obviously cannot wait another year. Something needs to be done.

When we look more closely at the broad strokes of the budget, we see that it sets out funding in two ways. It allocates \$250 million to help businesses with technological and digital upgrades and \$1.7 billion through the strategic innovation fund.

The \$250 million will be made available through regional digitization agencies. To be clear, it is very commendable to want to help businesses go digital. The money should mainly go to SMEs, and Quebec has 200 SMEs in the aerospace industry.

A country that is home to the third-largest aerospace hub in the world, behind Seattle and Toulouse, and that is capable of building an entire aircraft from nose to tail should not have regional objectives. Rather, it should have a national vision, a consistent strategy that views the entire sector as a—

• (1625)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, but I must interrupt the member again because there is still a bit of a problem with the Internet connection.

We will try again.

I would ask the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot to start his speech again from about the midpoint.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Okay, Mr. Speaker.

As for the \$1.7 billion, the government is essentially lumping the aerospace industry in with other industries such as the energy, mining, steel and aluminum industries. Although the budget is extreme-

ly short on details, I do want to point out that the aerospace industry deserves its own money specifically to work on greening its aircraft.

We are a long way off from the plan that France has announced, which will get its hydrogen-powered plane in the air by 2035. The Canadian government is doing everything piecemeal. France knows how to develop a coherent strategic vision for a vital sector.

Furthermore—

The Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, we do not have any interpretation right now. Does the hon. member have another headset he could use?

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I am using the House-issued headset and I am not sure I have another, but I can check in the office.

The Deputy Speaker: For now, I will ask the hon. member to try to continue his speech, but I would ask him to speak more slowly and put the microphone close to his mouth, to make the interpretation easier.

• (1630)

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, one of the problems is that this plan to help the aerospace and airline industries green their aircraft is so far off from what France is planning. France has announced that its hydrogen-powered plane will be flying by 2035. Here, the government is doing everything piecemeal. France knows how to develop a coherent strategic vision for a vital sector.

Another problem is that the funding is being distributed through the strategic innovation fund. This fund is problematic because its criteria exclude SMEs. For example, if we look at its support for transportation electrification, funds went to Ontario-based multinationals instead of SMEs in Quebec. Quebec's SMEs are actively innovating in the field of electrification, but they cannot access the fund because of its criteria.

It is important to note that 99% of the fund's money went to Ontario, mostly to multinationals based there, even though the Ontario government is against electric vehicles. Members may recall that one of the first things the Government of Ontario did was eliminate electric vehicle purchasing incentives, causing a 50% drop in electric vehicle sales. I will wrap up my remarks about transportation electrification here because I just wanted to point out the flaws in the strategic innovation fund. The fund's criteria must be changed so that Quebec's SMEs can benefit from it.

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Again, when it comes to greening aircraft, Quebec can lead the way in this sector. Take, for example, the Coalition for Greener Aircraft, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to developing smarter, more efficient and effective technologies. The coalition is made up of industry partners. Phase one, set up in 2010 by the Government of Quebec within the framework of the Quebec strategy for research and innovation, lasted until 2015 and involved six large companies, 28 SMEs, and 16 universities and research centres in Quebec. It is now at phase three. That is how a real policy is created.

The machinists' union was right when it said it did not help the workers in the sector. The budget presents a Canada-wide strategy for artificial intelligence. That is very good, but why is there no Canada-wide strategy for the aerospace sector? When will the government understand how important it is?

We will just have to keep educating the government. We managed to make the government understand that the airline industry and the aerospace industry are not the same thing. Now we have to get it to realize that a strategic policy for a strategic industry takes more than financial assistance.

I want to talk about something else related to the aerospace industry, and that is the tax on luxury goods. The sale of private aircraft is part of that.

Canada is a country that exports business aircraft. We have 700 suppliers. We spend an average of about \$1.2 billion on goods and services from Canadian suppliers. That can have an impact. Of course, we need to pay back the debt, which will be huge, and taxing the wealthy is not a problem at all. However, what may cause problems and could impact the supply chain in Quebec and Ontario is the way we go about it.

I completely agree that the government should tax the sale of luxury planes for personal use, but the description set out in the annex of the budget of what constitutes a personal aircraft is very broad. The definition will need to be refined because, with some exceptions, all aircraft with a carrying capacity of 39 passengers or more could fall under the definition of an aircraft for personal use.

A company that buys aircraft for commercial, rather than personal, use could actually fit that definition. That could be problematic. Although the annex mentions that some aircraft used in certain commercial activities, such as public transportation, would be excluded, a company that is making such purchases is not doing so for the purpose of public transportation. That should be clarified.

We also need to go farther in developing a real aerospace policy and a defence policy. National Defence should work with the industrial base to develop technologies. The government needs to fund a National Defence research program. Unfortunately, these are some of the many things that are missing from the budget.

I want to apologize to all my colleagues for the interruptions in my speech. I hope they will not have too much trouble piecing it all together and understanding the logic and what we expect of an aerospace policy.

• (1635)

The Deputy Speaker: I also thank the hon. member for his patience regarding the technical problems we had during his speech. I would also like to acknowledge the patience of the interpreters, who are working hard to make the presentation accessible to everyone.

[English]

Questions and comments, the hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I apologize for interrupting the member's speech. I am glad we figured things out. Of course, I give a huge thanks to the interpreters, who are working in these most concerning situations. This is our COVID reality.

For my question, I will go back to an issue that concerns me greatly. It is about seniors. We know the government has a commitment to increase the OAS for those aged 75 and up. I can think of many seniors across my riding who, at 65, really need the support, especially those receiving the guaranteed income supplement. I was disappointed that this was not raised, as they are the lowest-income seniors in all of Canada.

I am wondering what the member's thoughts are on that.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, of course it makes no sense.

On this issue, I am sure the seniors in my riding are not so different from those in my colleague's riding. We do not have two classes of seniors. A senior is anyone 65 years of age or older. All seniors have seen their purchasing power decline since the beginning of the pandemic. They are also facing a slew of other issues related to loneliness and hardship.

I imagine that many of us have not seen our parents and grandparents for quite some time. If we have seen them, it has been from a distance, and we have not been able to hug them. To address the solitude and the financial situation, political will is needed, but there is none to be found in this budget. The Bloc Québécois's amendment to the amendment should have been adopted.

In closing, I would like to join my colleague in praising our interpreters, who are doing an excellent job. Their task is not an easy one.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague mentioned, it is a big deal to be the third largest hub, after Toulouse and Seattle, in a sector as important as aeronautics and aerospace in Quebec, with everything that goes along with it.

People often compare the investments made in the automotive sector in Ontario against the decisions of governments that, over time, have neglected the aeronautics and aerospace sector, which is so important to Quebec.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Shefford, who is the MP for the riding next to mine.

Aside from the investments, a policy begins with a vision and consultation. If we really want to compare what was done with Ontario, we can see that Ottawa sits down with the industry, the provincial government and the unions to make plans and agree on a policy.

The late Jean Lapierre, who was a predecessor of my colleague from Shefford, said that aerospace was to Quebec what the auto sector is to Ontario. That is quite true. We need to have that vision, and the same sense that aerospace is a strategic sector.

● (1640)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Fredericton, Indigenous Affairs; the hon. member for Bow River, Health; and the hon. member for Lethbridge, Natural Resources.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Scarborough—Rouge Park.

I am proud to join the debate today to speak in support of this historic budget, the first ever tabled by a female Minister of Finance and the most important budget in my lifetime. Budget 2021 will help Canadians recover from COVID-19, and it lays the foundation for a stronger, more resilient and more equitable future.

As the MP for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, I can say that this budget responds directly to the priorities my constituents shared with me in pre-budget consultations. We are providing support for affordable housing through expansions of the national housing strategy. We are making life more affordable for seniors through the increase in OAS for seniors over age 74. We are making historic investments in improving the lives of indigenous peoples. We are extending relief for businesses, extending stimulus and much more.

As the chair of the Liberal caucus in B.C., I can also attest that this budget addresses many of the most pressing issues in my province, and includes measures to seize the incredible opportunities that are here for the taking. In my limited time, I will focus on a selection of measures that are particularly important locally.

The first is child care. We cannot discuss this budget without reference to its historic investment of up to \$30 billion over five years, with an ongoing \$8 billion per year, to ensure high-quality, affordable and accessible early learning and child care across Canada. Now more than ever, the pandemic has highlighted the burden that child care scarcity places on our labour force. It is also a gender issue, as 12 times as many mothers as fathers had to leave their jobs to take care of children during the pandemic, driving women's participation in the labour force to its lowest level in over two decades.

For years, many in my riding have been under strain from a lack of affordable and accessible child care. For example, there are over 5,100 children in the Sea to Sky region under 12 years old who are

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in need of child care and only 1,100 childcare spaces. Wait-lists for these child care spaces are running over two years in length, while the cost of child care ranges between \$85 and \$100 a day. As a result, many families in my riding are forced to pay \$1,800 a month for child care or have to balance dual workdays caring for their children while trying to earn a living, a burden that negatively impacts not only the economy and parents, but children as well.

That is why our government has committed to ensuring that families in Canada are no longer burdened by high child care costs. Budget 2021 will allow for a 50% reduction in average fees for regulated early learning and child care by the end of 2022, with the ultimate goal of bringing fees for regulated child care down to \$10 a day on average within the next five years. We will continue our efforts to grow quality affordable child care spaces across the country, building on the approximately 40,000 new spaces already created through previous federal investments since 2015. We will work with the provinces and territories to support primarily not-for-profit sector child care providers to grow quality spaces across the country, while ensuring that families in all licensed spaces benefit from more affordable child care.

In addition to improving the quality of life for families, our modelling has shown that this will help the economy grow by as much as 1.2%. Just about all leading economists agree that there is no measure that would increase our GDP more than this. This is a fitting flagship program for the first federal budget by Canada's first female Minister of Finance.

Women are not the only hard-hit segment of our country. Given that we are navigating the third wave and that public health restrictions have ravaged small business, we need to first ensure the viability of our existing industry to lay the foundation for a robust recovery. Budget 2021 responds by extending the wage subsidy, rent subsidy and lockdown supports for businesses and non-profits until September 25. The wage subsidy alone has supported over 621,000 jobs in B.C. and has represented a lifeline for business.

I know how important this is because tourism is the biggest sector in my riding. It has been throttled by public health orders, and many places have been forced to close. Extending relief programs has therefore been the number one request of businesses in my riding. They look forward to again welcoming Canadians and the world.

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These measures and the new Canada recovery hiring program, which will provide \$595 million to make it easier for businesses to hire or rehire workers, were all announced in budget 2021, with enough time to start planning for a better summer and a better future. The measures, as well as new investments totalling \$1 billion for tourism, arts and culture, will help businesses get through to the other side. Working toward reducing credit card fees will only help to further stimulate growth in the future.

This budget contains other historic measures that will make a massive impact in B.C. To date, B.C. has been lumped together with the prairie provinces and served by Western Economic Diversification. Given the distinct and diverse economy in B.C., it has been a long-standing priority to establish a separate regional development agency for our province.

• (1645)

Budget 2021 delivers on this by following through on the vision expressed in the fall economic statement and funding a new B.C. RDA to the tune of \$553 million over the next five years. This will allow the RDA to expand from a singular office in our province to serve all regional and local priorities in the province, and to enable enterprises to take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves in rural and urban areas.

Some of the biggest opportunities in Canada and B.C.'s future lie in the digital, bio and clean tech sectors. Part of our challenge in Canada is that while we have leading research being done at our educational institutions, and promising start-ups spinning off from them, we struggle to commercialize and scale. Promising businesses are getting gobbled up by bigger foreign counterparts and moving abroad, resulting in a brain drain.

This budget addresses these challenges with targeted investments. Over \$2.2 billion is going towards growing the life sciences sector, which will also help ensure we are more resilient to future health crises. As part of this \$2.2 billion, \$92 million will go to B.C.-based adMare to ensure that we are not only discovering the delivery mechanisms for world-leading vaccines, as we did for the Pfizer vaccine, but also that Canadian companies can scale, manufacture and create more value-adding jobs.

Budget 2021 will also provide \$360 million to launch a national quantum strategy to amplify Canada's significant strength in quantum research and leading companies already in existence, such as D-Wave. One of the four main quantum hubs will be located in B.C., where we already have significant expertise.

An investment of \$35 million, which will be matched by the Province of B.C., will help establish a B.C. centre for innovation and clean energy to advance the scale-up and commercialization of clean technologies in B.C. and across Canada.

We are going to need cleaner technologies not only to grow the economy, but also to reduce emissions. The \$8 billion net zero accelerator fund, from investments in both this budget and the fall economic statement, will be able to fund promising measures to mitigate emissions from our large point sources and help wide-scale adoption of cleaner technologies across the country.

Our government's past support helped Squamish-based Carbon Engineering to become the top clean-tech company in North America just last year. On top of this, we are going to add an additional \$1 billion in funding to ensure companies can leverage additional private sector funding to become future leaders like Carbon Engineering.

Budget 2021's commitment to lowering corporate taxes by half on companies that manufacture net zero technologies will allow these companies to not only start, but also grow and stay in Canada, continuing to provide the good jobs of the future.

Today at the Earth Summit, Canada announced a new 2030 GHG target that is 40% to 45% below 2005 levels. Decarbonizing our economy through these measures, the newly announced \$40,000 no-interest loan for home energy retrofits, and other measures in budget 2021 will be key to realizing these lofty targets and meeting the aims of the Paris climate accord.

Given that today is Earth Day, it also bears mentioning that budget 2021 will invest over \$4 billion towards ensuring we can protect 25% of our lands and waters by 2025. This process will create thousands of jobs in conservation, which can particularly help groups that are currently underrepresented in our economy, including first nations and youth.

This investment is so important to arrest the biodiversity crisis in Canada. This crisis has manifested in the most notable way in B.C. through the plight of wild Pacific salmon. Since the early 1990s, Pacific salmon stocks have declined by up to 93%. There is no issue that brings British Columbians of all walks of life together like this iconic species, which is critical to our blue economy.

To help prevent their potential extinction and the cascading impact that would have throughout our marine ecosystem, including on the similarly endangered killer whales that rely on them as a food source, budget 2021 provides a generational investment of \$647 million over five years to stabilize and conserve wild salmon populations.

This historic investment will go towards new hatchery facilities, habitat restoration and research, as well as the creation of a Pacific salmon secretariat and restoration centre of expertise that will improve management of commercial and recreational fisheries.

• (1650)

As I see my time is running short, I would just like to say that this budget makes critical investments to ensure we have the backs of Canadians to get through this crisis, while making targeted investments in sectors that will drive job growth in the future. It does this by reducing inequities in our society while ensuring that we have both a green and a blue recovery. These measures are being taken in a manner that ensures our debt-to-GDP ratio will decline over time as we reap the rewards of these important investments in our economy and in the well-being of our communities.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, whom I serve with on the OGGO committee, for his speech today.

He mentioned it is Earth Day, and quite a few people have mentioned that. I also want to mention, and it has been overlooked, that today is the 70th anniversary of the famous battle at Kapyong in the Korean War, which, of course, many young Canadians fought in with the Princess Pats.

The reason it is important, besides being one of the most famous battles, is that a member of Parliament for Athabasca in the 1980s, Jack Shields, was a 21-year-old sergeant at the time. He fought in Kapyong, served there and later served here in the House. I want to mention that important anniversary today. Jack passed in 2004, but I want to thank him for his service in war and also in peace.

To the member's comments today, I grew up in North Vancouver. In North Vancouver is Seaspan, one of the partners in the shipbuilding strategy. It was going to build the *Diefenbaker* polar icebreaker for Canada. That was taken away by the Liberal government and left in suspension. It is not going to go to Seaspan. It is not going to Irving. It has been announced that it is going to Davie. There is nothing in the budget about this desperately needed polar icebreaker.

Can the member comment on why the government has taken it away from North Vancouver? It left it suspended and just is not following through on it.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank my colleague for Edmonton West and fellow member of the Government Operations and Estimates committee for his good question. I would also like wish him a happy Earth Day today, and recognize the incredible service of our veterans in Canada, now and always.

We are fully aware of the incredible importance of Seaspan and the national shipbuilding strategy throughout Canada. We have invested tens of billions of dollars in the shipbuilding strategy, from which Seaspan has benefited greatly. This has had a huge impact throughout the region. It really is a key part of our blue economy writ large. This budget provides plenty of opportunity, both for the north shore and throughout B.C. I think I mentioned some of the very important measures that will ensure that B.C. can continue to lead our country in economic growth.

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[Translation]

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

He spoke about the budget's key measure, the creation of a Canada-wide child care system. It would be difficult to criticize this measure as the government clearly copied what Quebec has been doing for years.

I find it odd to hear Liberal ministers stating that they had no choice but to invest so much money because we are in a pandemic. This measure, like many others, seems to be vote-seeking measure rather than one designed to help people during the pandemic.

The Parliamentary Budget officer stated that the budget did not need to include up to \$70 billion or \$100 billion in investments because the economy would gradually return to normal in the coming years.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that. Does he believe that the deficit is too large?

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her important question.

[English]

When we talk about the cost of having a national child care program, we need to consider if we can afford this and we need to consider if we can afford not to do this. This is the most important measure that we can implement right across the country to ensure that we can grow our economy, more than anything else.

This budget has made investments and has committed to decreasing the debt-to-GDP ratio over time. The important investments we are making now will stimulate the economy to make sure that we have job growth and that we can take advantage of the incredible opportunities we have at our disposal. These investments are going to do just that. They are very targeted in measures that are going to lead directly to job growth.

• (1655)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to say best wishes to you and your wonderful wife Heather in your retirement. Although we sit on opposite sides of the House, I have often been inspired by your humility and integrity. I want to congratulate you and thank you for your service. It has been a pleasure working with you over the last five years.

I am speaking today from the unceded lands of the Algonquin people.

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I want to congratulate the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance on her historic budget. It is historic in many ways, the most important of which is that it is the first federal budget introduced by a female finance minister. It is a historic moment for all of us. Of course, I speak in support of the budget, which offers so much hope to so many people.

Three main objectives are outlined in the budget. First is to finish the fight against COVID-19, a fight that all of us have been engaged in. Second is to heal the wounds of the COVID-19 pandemic. Third is to create more jobs and prosperity for all Canadians.

COVID-19 has impacted all of us in Canada and around the world. In Canada, we have lost over 23,000 people. My thoughts are with all those who have lost family members and friends to the pandemic. I know many have not even been able to celebrate their incredible lives at proper services over the last 14 months. My thoughts are also with the many who have lost their jobs and are struggling to hold on to their businesses.

As I speak today, our hospitals in Ontario are overflowing and are at the brim of collapse. They are struggling to cope with the third wave and are trying to arrest this virus. Scarborough is one of the hot spots. The Scarborough Health Network has done an incredible job, and so has Toronto Public Health, but despite our best efforts the pandemic appears to be out of control.

As a federal government, we have been at the forefront of fighting the pandemic. Eighty cents on the dollar has been spent by the federal government for all COVID-related spending in Canada. We have helped Canadians get back on their feet, and we will continue to do so until the end of the pandemic. Canadians expect all of us to work together at all levels of government, whether it be the provincial, federal or municipal governments. Locally, Canadians expect all of us to collaborate to come up with solutions. Let me make this clear: I intend to work with the other MPs elected in Scarborough, all five of them, along with our provincial and municipal counterparts.

At this moment, I want to acknowledge some of the members of the Scarborough Health Network whom I was fortunate to meet at one of the pop-up clinics: Dr. Lisa Salamon-Switzman, Dr. Kanna Vela and Dr. Mayoorendra Ravichandiran. I also want to acknowledge the TAIBU Community Health Centre, which I was able to visit recently as it was vaccinating people, and its executive director, Liben Gebremikael.

Like all Canadians, I know people who have died and who have survived COVID-19, so let me tell members about a fighter in my community of Scarborough—Rouge Park.

Peter Theraja is a small business owner. Back in January, he was diagnosed with COVID-19. He has been fighting this for the past three months with the help of his amazing family, the staff at Lakewood Health in Ajax and his friends. He celebrated his 70th birthday two days ago, and sure to form, he is fighting one day at a time. I know that his miraculous recovery will return him home to look after his beautiful garden and his grandchildren.

It was a very hopeful birthday for Peter, and many see the light at the end of the tunnel. As vaccines roll out en masse, between 48

million and 50 million over the next 10 weeks, the struggle of all Canadians will come to an end.

As we come out of the pandemic, this budget looks to ensure that we build back better. Here are some of the key aspects of the budget that I wish to highlight.

As was mentioned by many, today is Earth Day. Climate change is real. Today, we are delivering on our commitment to Canadians and increasing our ambition to fight climate change and build a cleaner economy. This morning, our Prime Minister announced at the earth summit that we are committing to cutting emissions from 30% of 2005 levels to between 40% and 45% by 2030. This is where we need to go, for our health, for our economy and for our kids.

● (1700)

We have a credible and tested climate plan that is already delivering results. We have made historic investments of more than \$100 billion to build a cleaner, healthier economy, with more good jobs for all Canadians. This includes \$17.6 million for climate and environment; \$15 billion through the strengthened climate plan; \$15 billion in dedicated, ongoing transit; and \$60 billion in pan-Canadian framework. We will continue to fight climate change, invest in our cleaner future and build a stronger economy.

Locally, in the city of Toronto, we will be supporting many of the initiatives on climate action, including the development of the Rouge National Urban Park, which became a reality in 2016, with the work of many of our colleagues, including my good friend from Scarborough—Guildwood.

The second major aspect of the budget is early learning and child care. We have had to wait over 50 years for a national child care program. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women reported in 1970 on the need for immediate prioritizing of this. Unfortunately, it has taken over 50 years to get here, but nevertheless we are here, and it is a historic moment for us to capture.

In the city of Toronto right now, the average expense of child care is \$1,327 per child. That amount is unaffordable for many. The budget promises to develop a comprehensive plan, with a 50% reduction on the average fees to the end of next year and an average of \$10 per day starting in 2025, with ongoing support thereafter to the provinces and territories to implement a national child care program.

Young Canadians have been critically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and I have had a chance to meet many from the riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park. The University of Toronto, Scarborough campus, Centennial College, Sir Oliver Mowat Collegiate Institute as well as St. Mother Teresa secondary school are all in my riding as are many other elementary schools. They have been impacted significantly on a number of fronts.

The budget proposes to invest \$5.7 billion over the next five years to support young Canadians to get them on their feet and to ensure that the effects of the pandemic are limited to them. We will be waiving interest on student loans for another year, thereby saving \$1.5 million. We will be enhancing repayment assistance, allowing many young people not having to pay back their student loan until they make \$40,000 a year. We are redoubling Canada student loan grants to another 580,000 students and graduates. We are extending disability supports. We will also be providing an additional 50,000 work placements for students as well as 7,000 additional placements through the employment and skill strategy program. We will be providing 85,000 work-integrated learning placements through Mitacs.

The budget offers so much more, including one of the things for which I have been advocating, along with many of my colleagues, including the member for Pickering—Uxbridge as well as my other colleagues who have been directly impacted with long-term care homes. That is the investment of \$3 billion into long-term care homes over the next several years. We have increased old age security payments for those who are over the age of 75 as well as other supports, including a \$15 minimum wage, which is far overdue for those working in the federal sector.

Overall there are many elements of the budget that are critical, including additional investments in indigenous communities as well as combatting racism and investment in black communities.

I am very proud to support the budget. I want to thank all my colleagues for working hard for all Canadians during this pandemic.

• (1705)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about day care. I appreciate support for early childhood education and day care programs for those who wish to have it and those who are most vulnerable, single and low-income parents who need or want to work and deserve to have quality day care spaces that are designed and available specifically for them.

Under the government's plan, will all working parents be required to use a national government-run child care system as their only option to receive financial support while participating in the workforce.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, no, I do not believe that people will be forced to use the program. It will be available for everyone who needs it.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague's speech, in which he talked about my favourite topic: the environment.

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Canada has the highest greenhouse gas emissions per capita in the G20. On the one hand, the government allocates \$17.6 billion in the budget to the green recovery, and, on the other hand, it spends \$17.1 billion on the TransMountain pipeline.

Is this how we create a successful green recovery?

[English]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, what is important is that the commitment made by the Prime Minister this morning at the Earth summit, on Earth Day I might add, to reduce emissions for between 40% and 45% is a significant and a historical move that will get us closer to net zero by 2050. This is a drastic reduction to our original 2030 target set. This budget will support us getting and meeting our environmental objectives.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations a Happy Earth Day.

In relation to tourism, I was talking today to the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, which represent 1,900 indigenous businesses, over 40,000 indigenous jobs and managed a budget of \$20 million in the last fiscal year, which saved thousands of jobs. It was given \$2.4 million in the budget, 3% of what it requested.

It was cited in a release today that the Indigenous Tourism Association was confused, troubled and disappointed with the federal budget announcement. In fact, it said, “this is yet another blow to preserving Indigenous languages, cultures and way of life.”

Is the parliamentary secretary going to go back to the finance minister and get the government to fix this oversight? There are thousands of indigenous jobs, critical jobs, especially in British Columbia in the Nuu-chah-nulth territory, which I represent. Will they fund this organization adequately so they can help be part of the critical recovery in the tourism sector, the hardest hit sector in our country?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate my friend's interventions, particularly his advocacy on issues of indigenous communities and businesses.

The budget proposes \$18 billion in new spending toward indigenous communities. I have been working with many businesses and business associations, along with my fellow Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services. Many supports are available to ensure that indigenous businesses are able to survive and in fact thrive. We hope to continue to support this process over the coming months and years to ensure that all businesses, particularly indigenous businesses, are able to thrive in a post-pandemic world.

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• (1710)

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the shadow minister for women and gender equality, I want to start my speech by congratulating my colleague, the Minister of Finance, on being the first woman to present a federal budget.

I listened closely to the speech the minister delivered Monday on the budget and then read it closely. The minister was right when she said this budget had to be about finishing the COVID fight, healing economic wounds left by the COVID recession and creating more jobs and prosperity for Canadians in the days and decades to come. However, it does not do any of that and it absolutely does nothing to secure long-term prosperity for Canadians.

The minister mentioned that one of the consequences of COVID had been women leaving the workforce. This is true. COVID forced businesses, small and big, to suddenly shut down. The status of women committee heard from witnesses that women left the workforce for several different reasons.

Some left the workforce not by choice, but because they worked in industries, such as retail, travel or hospitality, which were hit the hardest. Others left the workforce because of the additional responsibilities of having to become teachers to their kids and taking care of family members, while for others working from home was just not an option.

The committee heard from these witnesses as well that while many men had returned to the workforce, women still had not at the same rate.

The minister made the conclusion that the reason for this was because of a lack of child care spaces and the need for a universal child care package.

Again, the committee heard evidence from witnesses that this was not the case. As a matter of fact, it heard that child centres were closing because of a lack of children to fill the spaces. Additionally, a universal child care plan is a simple answer to a very complex problem.

Under the Liberal plan, we end up treating all children exactly the same and make day care centres identical from coast to coast to coast. However, their plan has not taken into consideration parental choice and that parents, not the government, are in the best position to make these decisions on what is best for their kids, not a bureaucrat.

The Liberal budget also has not taken into account the cultural sensitivities that exist in such a vast and diverse country like Canada.

For example, I am of an ethnic background where we believe strongly in the importance of not just ensuring our children get a good education, but the preservation and teachings of our culture, language and religion. This is something on which I know that my Bloc colleagues will agree with me. This is why their provincial child care system is unique and important in Quebec. It does just that. It is designed to protect, nurture and instill the French culture, the French language and French history.

Canadians do not need a generic program where they drop off their kids and then pick them up at the end of the day. They need help in supporting their choice of child care, whether that be a day care centre, or grandparents or friends, where the culture, language and values are taught to their children.

For example, I have heard from many how, when their children were younger, grandma and grandpa would watch them throughout the day, and it was there that they learned how to do their fractions. They learned that four quarters of a cup equalled one cup when spending quality time baking delicious cookies and breads, which they enjoyed before their parents would pick them up. This is extremely important to my constituents and the Liberal budget does not achieve that.

I want to highlight in the budget the focus on gender-based violence in Canada.

Since the government was elected, it has constantly talked about gender-based violence and how it impacts negatively women and girls. On average, one in three women and girls in Canada will face some sort of violence in their lifetime. Each time the Minister for Women and Gender Equality appeared at the status of women committee, I asked her repeatedly when Canadian women and girls could finally see the government's national action plan to address gender-based violence.

• (1715)

Do members know what her response is? The minister always replies with acknowledging this is an important issue that the government wants to address, yet there comes a point when words no longer mean anything if they are not followed through with action.

Every single one of our allies who signed the international agreement that gender-based violence is a serious issue, a pandemic, that needs to be addressed has already published at least one national action plan, and in some cases they are already working on versions two and three. We do not even have our first version out.

This is why I was pleased to see in the budget the government's plan to address this very serious issue. However, I was completely disappointed that only now, after years of campaigning and promising from the Prime Minister, the government has decided to appoint a secretariat to develop our plan. Last year, 160 women died because of the government's failure.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 now before the House.

[Translation]

The question is on the amendment.

[English]

Now, in the usual way, if a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request either a recorded division or that the amendment be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate so to the Chair.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

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

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 95*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Calkins
Carrie	Chiu
Chong	Cooper
Cumming	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Deltell	d'Entremont
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Harder
Hoback	Jansen
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kniec	Kram
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
Martel	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Melillo	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Nater
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Rood
Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shin
Shipley	Soroka
Stanton	Steinley
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tochor
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin

Waugh
Williamson
Yurdiga

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Bains
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bergeron
Bessette
Bittle
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Cannings
Casey
Chagger
Champoux
Chen
Cormier
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Fry
Garrison
Gazan
Gill
Green
Hajdu
Harris
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Jaczek
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Manly

The Budget

Webber
Wong
Zimmer— 120

NAYS

Members

Amos
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bagnell
Baker
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bérubé
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blanchet
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boudrias
Bratina
Brunelle-Duceppe
Carr
Chabot
Champagne
Charbonneau
Collins
Dabrusin
Davies
Desbiens
Dhaliwal
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Garneau
Gaudreau
Gerretsen
Gould
Guilbeault
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Ien
Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Larouche
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lemire
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacGregor
Maloney
Marcil

Private Members' Business

Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
McPherson	Mendicino
Michaud	Miller
Monsef	Morrissey
Murray	Ng
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Pauzé	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Powlowski	Qaqqaq
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Regan	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)
Saini	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Simms	Singh
Sorbara	Spengemann
Ste-Marie	Tabbara
Tassi	Thériault
Therrien	Trudeau
Trudel	Turnbull
Van Bynen	van Koevorden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Vignola
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Yip	Young
Zahid	Zann
Zuberi— 213	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

SAFE AND REGULATED SPORTS BETTING ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-218, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sports betting), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

The hon. member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Mr. Speaker, I ask that at report stage the bill be passed on division.

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

● (1805)

Mr. Kevin Waugh moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, what a day we have today. It is certainly an honour for me to speak to this legislation once again. Now we are in our third reading, after a robust study at the justice committee.

It is worth noting that Bill C-218 returns to us with a slight amendment, supported by all parties, to ensure that proper protections are in place for Canada's proud and long-standing horse-racing industry.

At first reading and second reading, and in committee, I had the opportunity to discuss many of the issues at the heart of single-event sports betting. Even though single-event sports betting is prohibited by the Criminal Code, it is still a \$14 billion industry here in Canada. As I have said before in this place, it is all done by unregulated and unsupervised offshore betting sites and black market bookmakers. There are no consumer protections in place. There are no problem-gambling programs offered and no guidelines that bookmakers are required to follow. This also means that the economic benefits are not being felt by Canadians.

I do not want to repeat what I have discussed already through the various stages of this legislative process. However, for the benefit of my colleagues who did not participate in the justice committee study, I want to highlight some of the important points that were raised by witnesses during the justice committee study on Bill C-218.

The first comment is from Shelley White. She is the CEO of the Responsible Gambling Council, which is an independent organization that works to ensure there are adequate gambling safeguards in place to promote the well-being of Canadians and communities. She said:

[I]t is RGC's neutral and independent stance that we recommend Bill C-218 be passed. This is a unique opportunity to bring together stakeholders from health, mental health, education, financial services and the policing sectors with the gambling industry to create a made-in-Canada responsible gambling culture comprised of evidence-informed regulations and leading practices. We have the opportunities to learn from other jurisdictions who've come before us and applied the highest level of safeguards.

This same point was reiterated by Paul Melia, who is the president and CEO of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. He said:

I think the legislation provides an opportunity to provide greater services and support to those who may become addicted to gambling than the current system, where we have an unregulated market and where it's going on. We're not really aware of how much is going on, who may be addicted and who might be harmed, so I think there's an opportunity to provide the appropriate services.

I put these two comments first because they address the concerns I have heard from many constituents of mine and from Canadians who have written to me from coast to coast.

When we talk about gambling in any form, mental health and addictions are major concerns, and rightfully so. However, the reality is that the current situation is far worse for those who are struggling with addiction and mental illness. By allowing offshore sites and black market bookmakers to monopolize single-event sports betting, we are ensuring that adequate consumer protections and assistance programs are not available to those who desperately need them. As addressed by the Responsible Gambling Council and the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, this bill presents an opportunity for us to rectify that issue once and for all.

The next comment I want to touch on is from Unifor president Jerry Dias. He said:

It goes without saying that revenues generated in illicit, illegal, underground black market gaming operations do nothing to contribute to good jobs for workers in Canada. This money is siphoned off into the pockets of offshore operators and organized crime. On the other hand, by creating a legal and regulated market for single-game sports betting in Canada, we could help protect thousands of good, unionized jobs in gaming locations across the country and potentially create many more.

• (1810)

I have two more comments from the committee on which I want to touch.

The first is from Zane Hansen, the CEO of the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority, which is responsible for managing several casinos in my home province of Saskatchewan. He provided some important context for the gaming industry, given the COVID-19 pandemic. He said:

...having single-event wagering as an approved form of gambling to incorporate into our business model will really assist us in rebuilding and going forward. It's going to be a whole new world getting our customers back into our building and feeling safe and comfortable.

By the way, Zane Hansen provides what I feel is important insight from the industry's perspective because it is also from an indigenous perspective.

Bill C-218 would provide a significant opportunity to help the gaming sector begin the rebuilding process. This applies not only to SIGA or Saskatchewan, but to all establishments and communities across the country.

The final comment I want to touch on is from David Shoemaker, CEO of the Canadian Olympic Committee, as it gives an all-encompassing overview of the legislation. He said:

The timing is right for Canada to expand sports betting. This bill has the potential to unlock new growth opportunities, reduce illegal betting and generate revenues for both the sport industry and governments. Our interests are in ensuring that single sport betting is introduced in a responsible, effective and profitable manner.

I am not sure I need to add anything else to Mr. Shoemaker's remarks tonight, other than to point out that the support coming from the Canadian Olympic Committee is representative of the fact it is not just professional sport that wants the legislation to pass, but amateur sport as well. Bill C-218 is in the best interests of all athletes.

We know the legislation has support across party lines, throughout industries and from countless stakeholder groups. Let us not delay any further and get Bill C-218 sent to the Senate so it can be considered and hopefully passed there.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for bringing this bill forward and for getting it through the various stages. Hopefully, tonight we can see this put to an end and it will make its way over to the Senate.

One of the things I find very attractive about the legislation, which the member brought up in his comments, is that as a lot of this activity is already going on, there is an opportunity for the government to get involved and generate legal revenue from it.

Would the member like to expand a bit on that.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Kingston and the Islands for his support on this bill, Bill C-218.

He is absolutely correct. All the federal government has to do is take a single line out of the Criminal Code to give the provinces and territories the much-needed support to move forward with single event sport betting. This is just the first of many processes. If we can get it passed tonight and on to the Senate, where it can look at it and make the necessary adjustments if it wants to, then it will give that power to the provincial governments, through their lotteries, which quite frankly have been dealing with gaming institutions for the past 30-plus years. We are really looking forward to the legislation moving forward.

• (1815)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for introducing his bill. The Bloc Québécois supports the bill, and I would like my colleague to remind us how it can help protect organizations like Loto-Québec from unfair competition from American casinos, for example.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, that is happening in the industry now. In 2018, in the United States, New Jersey challenged the bill, because the only place people could access single game betting was in Nevada. New Jersey took it to the Supreme Court and won.

Therefore, what we have right now, two or three years later, are states like Michigan and New York, which are bordering Canada, offering single game betting already. The member is right. The issue is that in Canada, particularly closer to the border, as Quebec and Ontario are, we do not have that luxury today. Obviously, the benefit goes to those casinos that are closer to Canada as they will take a lot of our money away and the prosperity we could enjoy in Canada, in Quebec, Ontario and B.C. in particular.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood for his work on this. The committee also worked very diligently on a robust study to get it back to the chamber.

Private Members' Business

I have a quick question, though, regarding the money that will be taken away from organized crime. One thing is clear in reflecting on this, and that is that it will actually also take money away from the organized crime that police spend on because organized crime uses that money for other types of criminal activities. There will be a net benefit for Canadians and policing.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Windsor West for all his support going forward with this bill. Unfortunately, his bill in the last Parliament did not pass, so we are here again, trying to push it across the finish line.

The member for Windsor West is correct. We heard in the justice committee testimony that a lot of this money is going to organized crime, fuelling drugs and fuelling guns. We are not going to get it all back. There is \$14 billion that we know is bet, illegally, today in Canada.

A lot of this money needs to come back to the provincial coffers. With this bill passing, I think we are going to do very soon.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to this private member's bill.

I do want to express my support for Bill C-218, the safe and regulated sports betting act that is before us. I also want to take the opportunity to congratulate and thank some other members too, in particular the member for Windsor West, who just asked a question a moment ago. He brought forward a similar bill that did not get to where we think this one will get to after the vote today.

The legislative process is very interesting in the way things can work their way through this House and the way bills can come forward and be lost, but the issue may not be lost and it can keep gaining momentum. Then somebody else will bring it forward, or perhaps a government will bring it forward. Eventually, it will end up getting here. Although the bill from the member for Windsor West did not make it through, it certainly played a role in advancing this issue in this House.

In my own caucus, I think of the member for St. Catharines, who routinely talks about this issue and brings it up, making sure it was at the forefront and people were continually considering it. I had many opportunities over dinner and at various times listening to him talk about this issue.

What we have come to realize is this is a \$14-billion industry in Canada. Right now, a lot of that money, the majority of it, is offshore or in crime. We have an opportunity here to recognize the fact that this is already happening, so why not use it as an opportunity to regulate the industry, control it, and get that money out of crime. Getting that money legitimately into our economy will make sure that governments, whether federal, provincial or regional, have the opportunity to benefit from this as well, and that the money is not just in organized crime or hiding behind legitimate ways of doing business.

One other thing I will add is that I genuinely think this will increase the integrity of sports. It will help, in particular, the booking of sports and the police in doing their work to make sure that things are being done legitimately.

There are a number of good arguments for this legislation. There is the angle of tourism, as it relates to sports betting and what it means to certain tourism industries in certain parts of country. I think of Niagara and Windsor off the top of my head. As I am from Ontario, those are the two that come to mind first.

The government plans to support this piece of legislation. It is long overdue, and I am happy to lend my voice to that support and vote in favour of this when we get to that moment shortly.

● (1820)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I am unable to turn my camera on.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I can confirm that your camera is off. We will move to the next speaker so that the member for Saint-Jean can deal with her technical issues. She will then be able to resume her speech.

[English]

We will move to another speaker for now and come back to the hon. member for Saint-Jean.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to participate again in this process.

I want to thank all the members who were part of this effort, and not only this one but the previous one and even the one before that, which my comments will reflect on.

The former member for Windsor—Tecumseh, Joe Comartin, had a bill that went through this process and it got to the Senate. However, it languished there for a number of years and was never passed. With that lesson in mind, I am hoping that this process will go to the Senate, and the other chamber will be a little more expedient. I thank the government side for its support of this bill, Bill C-218, as well the Conservative Party, and I am hoping that the independent senators will connect and move this forward.

As has been noted, it is very important to acknowledge that things have changed a little, which is one of the reasons why I think the bill before us has more hope and opportunity than the previous ones. The NHL, NBA and other professional sports leagues have not just joined the process of getting this bill passed, but have changed to supporting it from being opposed to it in the past. That related to the fact that they had a monopoly and a system and structure that were based out of Nevada.

The situation with these restrictions today goes back to the United States and the syndicated crime that created Las Vegas. These were struck down by the court's ruling in New Jersey, which said the leagues should not have a monopoly on something that had been invented. They did not necessarily have a right to it. It had evolved over a number of different processes and was shattered, creating these differences.

We are different from other countries in that this type of regulation has come into effect through Europe and other place around the world. We can bet on our phones, we can bet on our computers and we can bet in a number of ways, but that is sending money to organized crime offshore and not helping the public purse. It is not helping people to deal with addictions or to identify strategies.

One of the most important things that we heard at committee was about the responsible gaming element and strategies to have people be registered through the process to get help, to redirect resources to it and to work with people to flag those problems before they get worse. This is as opposed to dealing with bookies in a backyard or over the phone with an offshore account who do everything they can to bait people into gambling more. What is recognized in this process is that we have a responsible, moral and ethical view in dealing with this, because if we do not, we leave vulnerable people in the hands of others.

I will wrap up my comments by reminding members that we have been here before. We had a bill pass in the House of Commons that was pretty much the same as this one and, later on, we had my private member's bill. We have to get this bill to the other chamber and have to get support there. I am working with members in the other chamber already, and I hope all members do.

If we are working on COVID-19, on policy and a whole series of things, one thing we can do right now is direct money away from organized crime and put it to the public good. We are all looking for, and debating, ways to help with the financial constraints during this pandemic. In this situation, more people have been using the online and offshore accounts than ever before.

Unfortunately, right now we cannot help some of the other good industries that are associated with this, like Casino Windsor and other places. However, the reality is that we would redirect traffic from organized crime. If we get this bill, Bill C-218, passed, it promises more resources and more support to make sure that people will be able to do this activity in a responsible, regulated manner.

• (1825)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Saint-Jean. It is lovely to see her.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-218.

I had the privilege of listening to my colleague from Saskatoon—Grasswood when the bill was introduced and during the first round of speeches. I found his remarks very informative. I am taking the opportunity to speak today, but I do not pretend in any way that I will be able to teach the House as much he did.

Bill C-218 is actually quite simple. It consists of three clauses: one for the title of the act, one for its coming into force and one that proposes to replace a Criminal Code paragraph that currently excludes, from the definition of lottery, “bookmaking, pool selling or the making or recording of bets, including bets made through the agency of a pool or pari-mutuel system, on any race or fight, or on a single sporting event or athletic contest”. This would in effect de-

criminalize what is known as single event betting, which usually involves sporting events.

This bill kind of reminds me of a cat, not because it winds up sleeping on a shelf like a cat, which is what sometimes happens to certain committee recommendations that certain governments shelve, but because it has had several lives, as some of my colleagues mentioned earlier.

During the 40th Parliament, NDP MP Joe Comartin's Bill C-267 was never called for debate, unfortunately. During the 41st Parliament, NDP MP Joe Comartin once again introduced the bill, this time as Bill C-290, and it progressed a little farther and was passed at third reading without a recorded division. Back then, the current member for Winnipeg North spoke on behalf of the Liberal Party. Bill C-290 then died in the Senate.

During the 42nd Parliament, the NDP member for Windsor West introduced the bill. Unfortunately, it was defeated at second reading by Liberal and Conservative votes. The Bloc Québécois, on the other hand, voted unanimously in favour of the bill.

At the time, one of the arguments for killing this bill was that decriminalizing single sports betting might lead to cheating. That is like saying that leaving sports betting in the hands of organized crime would ensure that cheating does not happen. It is a weak argument, to say the least. Criminalizing something does not make it disappear. It just drives it underground. That is why this bill seeks to take sports betting out of the hands of organized crime.

In the 43rd Parliament, that version of the bill was passed at second reading with only 15 votes against it. Given that the government has introduced Bill C-13, which is substantively similar to this bill, we can expect Bill C-218 to make it to the Senate this time.

There are several advantages to decriminalizing single sports betting. One is that it would protect gamblers. Allowing the mafia to control sports betting opens the door to things like loansharking.

I will echo my colleagues who mentioned the case of the young man in Laval who ended his life in December 2019. He was only 18. The coroner's inquest showed that the man's suicide was tied to an \$80,000 debt that he racked up on the Internet, on a gambling site that was run by the Montreal mafia.

Private Members' Business

According to an article written at the time, the young man gambled online. To access the site, users entered their name and password on the homepage, at which point they could bet on the results of all sorts of professional sporting events, and even on the results of the U.S. presidential election.

● (1830)

According to our research, the name of the site is registered to a corporation in Panama. This site has been hosted on a server in Costa Rica since March 2015 but did not become active until a year later. Using network management tool MyIP.ms, we can see that the corporation that owns the server hosts roughly 75 other online gambling sites. The site ranks 58th in number of visitors with roughly 200 daily visitors. We learned that the Montreal mafia's sports betting was run by a manager and working under him is an assistant and some bookies, in other words, recruiters. The bookies are responsible for the gamblers they recruit. The interest rate for paying off debt climbs by 3% to 5% per week. We are talking about mafia control and loan sharking. In this case, we are talking about people who lost their home because of online sports betting. What is more, there is no way to protect minors, who can easily access these sites.

If the ownership of these sites could be publicly disclosed, particularly by Crown corporations like Loto-Québec, it would mean that we could also expect more money to be injected into the fight against pathological gambling. Crown corporations also contribute in other ways. They give back to society. For example, Loto-Québec sponsors many events, owns and acquires public assets, and funds cultural events. Society will therefore benefit if we take sports betting out of the hands of organized crime.

Another advantage is that we would be taking money away from organized crime. During an investigation conducted in Quebec as part of Operation Colisée, an expert estimated that, between December 2004 and December 2005, the Rizzuto clan took in approximately \$27 million a year from illegal sports betting. We can expect that amount to be even higher now. By taking this revenue away from organized crime, we would be preventing criminals from diversifying their operations. For example, after a major drug seizure, organized crime can turn to illegal betting to survive. By cutting off this source of income, we are hurting organized crime.

Another advantage that my colleagues have mentioned is that governments could see an increase in revenue from decriminalizing single sports betting. Deloitte has pointed out that within five years of decriminalization, Canada's revenues could go from \$500 million to as much as \$28 billion, which is a handsome sum.

In the U.S., the industry grew after our neighbours to the south legalized it in response to *Murphy v. National Collegiate Athletic Assn.* More than 25 U.S. states now allow sports betting.

Decriminalization could lead to competition. For example, the casinos in Detroit, Michigan, would be in direct competition with those in the riding of the member for Windsor West. Quebec would be no exception, since New York state has legalized sports betting. Gambling establishments in Plattsburgh, which is less than 90 minutes from the U.S. border, could end up competing with Loto-Québec once the border reopens.

In conclusion, beyond all these advantages, we must not forget the gamblers themselves. In talking with my colleagues, I realize that there is interest in sports betting. Many of my colleagues would very likely be happy to be able to make bets legally, if they could do so without contributing to companies that send their income to tax havens without paying tax. Lastly, they could place bets using French-language platforms.

For all these good reasons, the Bloc Québécois will be pleased to support Bill C-218. We hope that this time, the cat will not have to use up its nine lives.

● (1835)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood has five minutes for right of reply.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, the prohibition on single-event sports betting is one where we are all well behind the rest of the world, including our neighbours to the south. I believe, and others believe, it is time that we simply catch up with the rest of the world. Instead of strong regulations and consumer protections, right now we have a system run by criminals and offshore companies. Instead of profits going toward the public good, they are actually going to funding their criminality.

It is time for that to end in this country. There is a clear consensus across party lines that Canadians agree with that tonight. I am very hopeful that in a few moments, we will be able to formalize that consensus and get this legislation sent where it should be, the Senate.

As this will likely be my last opportunity for me to speak in the House on this legislation, I want to thank all the members of Parliament from all sides in this place who have supported Bill C-218 through the legislative process. In particular, though, I want to thank the member for Niagara Falls, the member for Essex and the member for Windsor West for their hard work and support on this file.

I also want to thank the many stakeholders who came forward to provide their expertise and insight to me directly, the justice committee, and all my colleagues for their conversation. Since I brought this bill forward last February, I have heard from provincial and municipal governments, industry organizations, mental health and responsible gambling advocacy groups, amateur and professional sports organizations, sports media and various other groups. All of them provided valuable information, which was so crucial to the development of this legislation.

This could prove to be a historic day for our country. The passage of Bill C-218 here in the House of Commons would be a clear indication that the elected representatives of the people of Canada believe that this change is in the best interest of all Canadians. I am hopeful that upon passage of this legislation, our colleagues in the Senate will take up this legislation with haste, so that this outdated prohibition can finally be removed from the Criminal Code in Canada. It is well past time that we do so again.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

[Translation]

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

[English]

The hon. member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, I ask that this bill pass on division.

• (1840)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I, therefore, declare the motion carried on division.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, this evening, on Earth Day, I am debating an issue I raised on February 19 during question period. The essence of my question was to highlight the inconsistency of the government between what it is saying and actually doing when the rights of indigenous peoples are concerned and in the fight against the climate crisis. While these issues may seem different, they are intricately connected.

First, I want to underline that no communities on this land are fighting more for the natural world than indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are caretakers of mother earth and realize and respect her gifts and her power. They advocate that we must take only what we need, that we must use great care and be aware of how we take and how much, so that future generations will not be put in peril.

In 2015, during the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Prime Minister recognized that “Indigenous peoples have known for thousands of years how to care for our planet. The rest of us have a lot to learn and no time to waste.” He said “no time to waste”. Two years later, using public funds, his government bought the Trans Mountain pipeline. The finance minister at the time cited that this project was in the national interest and, furthermore, an investment in Canada's future. This decision not only will devastate critical ecosystems, such as the home of res-

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ident killer whales, but it was also vehemently opposed by indigenous nations whose territory would be impacted.

This history repeats itself again and again. Today it is playing out in the land of the Inuit people. Funding the oil and mining industry, buying a pipeline and sponsoring nuclear energy that will have disastrous consequences on ecosystems tens of thousands of years from now are not the work of reparation or climate leaders. Disregarding the voice of elders and youth, hereditary and elected chiefs, and consulting after the fact are not consequential steps toward reconciliation. Inconsistencies, incertitude, even deception: This is the perspective of so many who live on this land known as Canada when it comes to the government's decisions pertaining to the climate crisis and reconciliation.

On this Earth Day, it is urgent that the government act with courage and compassion for the planet and all of the people who live on it. For the youth striking every Friday from school, desperate for a response they can believe in, what does the government say to them? Development and surplus will mean nothing when the last ancestral cedar tree is cut down, when the last herd of woodland caribou is extinguished or when every drop of our rivers is polluted. I can hear the inevitable groans from naysayers now, the ones who will dismiss the words of a tree hugger. How have we become so disconnected from the natural world to believe that we are separate and above it?

Honestly committing to respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and fighting the climate crisis is not something we can do intermediately or without conviction. Canadians need a government that will wilfully, without detour or compromise, commit to the future and the future of the generations to come, one where our children have a right and an understood responsibility to the natural world. We must listen, learn and implement the knowledge of the first people, who know the land, its rivers and forests and how to live in harmony and respect with all forms of life.

The government needs to lead this transition, this necessary culture shift, not in 10 years, but now.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge that I am speaking from the unceded territory of the Algonquin people.

I wish the member and everyone a happy Earth Day, as it is a historic day in many ways in the issues she highlighted. First and foremost, the Government of Canada is renewing Canada's relationship with indigenous people based on the affirmation of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership. Since 2016, we have taken a range of important measures that contribute to a renewed, respectful Crown-indigenous relationship and that align both section 35 of our Constitution and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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As my friend knows, as she was part of the Bill C-15 deliberations today, we were able to pass this milestone legislation to committee and off to the other place. As of today, nine federal laws that refer to the declaration have been implemented with regard to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which is a very important document. As I indicated, this historical document will now become Canadian law within weeks.

This legislation represents a fundamental shift in the relationship with indigenous peoples by recognizing rights articulated through the declaration. We are committed to ongoing discussions to make progress together, advancing reconciliation, improving community well-being and renewing Crown-indigenous relationships. In a nutshell, Bill C-15 is about protecting and promoting indigenous rights, including the rights to self-determination and self-government, equality and non-discrimination on the basis of forging stronger relationships with first nations, Inuit and Métis.

The Government of Canada has developed or updated policies and guidance to be consistent with both the declaration and Canada's constitutional framework. These policies assist federal officials in their work when it involves indigenous peoples and helps contribute to the implementation of the declaration. We are at over 150 active negotiation tables with more than 500 communities representing over one million indigenous people to support their visions of self-determination. Our government has also co-developed a new, innovative recognition of rights policy framework with the B.C. government and the First Nations Summit to improve the treaty process and better advance self-determination in British Columbia.

Our government remains committed to a renewed and respectful relationship with indigenous people.

• (1845)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, my hope is that in advancing indigenous rights, we will also move toward addressing the climate crisis as well. We must think about what is truly at stake here, think about our children.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change has mentioned his daughter many times in his speeches. He has even mentioned how she has urged him to do more. The youth are the ones who bring me hope when I feel defeated. They are the ones who give me the energy to use my voice to be part of the solution. They are the leaders of today because they understand the emergency. Grade three curriculum covers life cycles, biodiversity, endangered species. They get it. Why can our elected leaders not get it?

From young Anishinabe activist, Autumn Peltier, fighting for clean water for all, to the Loïck Thomas in New Brunswick, who by the age of four had personally collected 1,000 bags of litter, they remind me that this willingness to protect the environment and the curiosity about the world surrounding us is inherent in the human spirit.

The government needs to act in the best interests of the youth of our country, the ones who will have to find the solutions to the catastrophic problems our government is not courageous to face head-on now.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, we share in the vision of the member opposite. Today, in Washington, the Prime Minister committed at the Earth Summit to reduce and to meet our targets set in Paris and exceed it by 2030, and also to meet our 2050 net-zero emission targets. This is a historical day in many ways.

I want to reiterate that our government passed key legislation to support indigenous languages, affirming indigenous jurisdictions over child welfare and introduced legislation to implement UN-DRIP. It has progressed through the legislative process in the last several days.

While we have made a lot of progress together, we know that much more work needs to be done to build on the investments we made and to keep moving this important relationship and our country forward.

HEALTH

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, words that I am hearing from my riding are: frustration, anger, hopeless, discontent, confusion, despondency, depressed, isolated, weary. The words that we use now are: masks, front-line workers, no masks, family maybe, flu, COVID-19, variants, international travel, no travel, bubble, lockdown, no bubble, restrictions, health care workers, protection, quarantine, border closure, exemptions, hotel quarantine, tickets for being out, businesses open, no funerals, businesses permanently closed, schools open, vaccine passport, mandatory vaccines, shortage, distribution, safety concerns, too few, too many, on and on.

It is at the point that a lot of my constituents no longer trust mainstream media or they are so tired of the negativity that is in it. My constituents are looking for alternate media, looking for alternate things they can find out. They are looking in Google search. They are tired of this and they are weary. Have we lost our social skills because we are lost in Zoom?

Then we have the vaccines recently. I had the first shot, and now we are talking about a four-month delay when we have heard we need to have them in a month. South of the border, they get them in a month.

We talk about the U.S., the U.K., better one day, worse another. We talk about foreign sources. We talk about Canadian sources. We play a crazy numbers game such as we are ranked 42nd, or we are ranked third, or we are ranked fifth. It goes on and on. We talk about science and non-science.

Governments have and are creating the ultimate fear in our society and people are tired of it. They are losing faith in our government, which is charged with providing a safe and secure society. They are desperate for a different leadership to give them hope. This is not about writing and handing out cheques from taxpayer money, which will be paid in the future by our kids and our grandkids. Parliament has been dysfunctional for 13 months. They are looking for a government to provide leadership, a change. They are tired and weary and living in a world of fear. Canadians want positive direction and hope.

That goes along with Trikafta and cystic fibrosis. We have had drugs approved in a short time. This happens by other companies outside, getting drugs developed and all of a sudden they are in Canada and quickly approved. We have a group of people who are so susceptible to germs like COVID-19. There is a drug that has been approved and used in many other countries that is life-changing. However, what happens in Canada? We get stalled in the federal health bureaucracy of approvals. Then there is the step of working with provinces. However, with the vaccines, we seem to get them approved very quickly and for use in the provinces by their health units. Why can we not get this done with Trikafta. It is a life-saving drug and a really good one.

● (1850)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me start where my hon. colleague left off regarding the approval process and our regulators at Health Canada.

The member spoke about Canadians needing to trust, understand and feel hope. While I have a lot of respect for the member opposite as a parliamentarian and I know he has a role to play, I think the diatribe he just went through is quite detrimental to helping Canadians feel safe and secure about our institutions, and in particular about the independent regulators of Health Canada.

If his constituents mistrust the media, again, he has a very important role to play in providing them with resources based on science and fact. There are a lot of conspiracy theories out there. Frankly, there are a lot of conspiracy theories rampant within the Conservative Party and among members in the House. In fact, one of them was removed from the Conservative Party because he seemed to have gone too far. However, there are others in the party who seem to be okay with conspiracy theories.

It is incredibly important that as parliamentarians we demonstrate to Canadians the safety and effectiveness of vaccines and that we have trust in our health regulators. Health Canada is world-renown.

The member opposite spoke about the timing of the approvals of vaccines. That was not without significant investments into Health Canada and human resources. Health Canada officials worked around the clock to ensure that as vaccines were being developed, they were prepared to receive information and review it, given the global pandemic we are facing. In fact, all of the approved drugs in Canada went through a regular review process. We simply put in place measures to speed up that process given the pandemic.

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If we look at hours to hours when it comes to the regulatory review process, they were comparable. Thank God we have the dedicated public servants we do. They put in the incredible work so that as soon as the pharmaceutical companies were ready with vaccines, they could come forward to our world-renown regulator and get the process going.

When it comes to Trikafta, we were waiting for the company to put forward an application, which it has now done. We are very happy for that. I know that many Canadians are looking forward to that process. Frankly, there are a number of things that the pandemic has demonstrated regarding how we can take some of the lessons learned moving forward to put in place even better systems.

When it comes to misinformation or disinformation from the Conservative Party, I hope the member opposite will convey to his constituents how safe and effective the vaccines are. They are going to be a major contributor to getting ourselves out of the pandemic so that Canadians can be safe and healthy again.

● (1855)

Mr. Martin Shields: Madam Speaker, I was repeating the comments of my constituents. This is not from the Conservative Party. These are the words I hear from my constituents.

I am concerned about the health of another group in my constituency: our travel agents. Women make up 85% of these businesses. They are small businesses. They have lost their incomes for 13 months, and it will be a minimum of 13 months before they get money from incoming bookings. They are in a dreadful position.

The Air Canada deal does not protect them from past commissions. They are expressing stress, and they are really in trouble as far as business is concerned. We need to find a way to help travel agencies and address the health of travel agents in Canada.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for raising the concerns of travel agents. I too have heard these concerns, and they are precisely why the budget that was announced this week by the Minister of Finance focused on those who have been adversely affected or most affected during the pandemic, including women. In fact, our budget addressed this head-on.

There are a number of supports for affected sectors, as I said, including for women in particular, who we know have been hit hard. I encourage the member opposite to support this budget and support the funding and the recovery we are going to provide to his constituents and Canadians all across this country.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, energy is the fuel of life and thankfully we have been blessed with a great deal of it. We do not have to be dependent on other nations for fuel, which gives us the competitive edge if we have the common sense to utilize it. What I find extremely disconcerting, however, is the lengths to which the government will go in order to demonize the industry. Instead of celebrating the value it adds to our country by generating revenue, the Prime Minister is trying to phase it out. Why?

The export of our oil and gas brings revenue into Canada which helps pay for schools, hospitals, infrastructure and social programs. The industry provides a net good, not just for Alberta, not just for Western Canada, but for the entire country. Those are the indirect benefits. Now let us look at the direct benefits.

The direct benefits of hydrocarbons, which are the main component in crude oil, are responsible for transporting people, goods and food. They are what empower farmers to produce the things we eat and they are what support many of the medicines that extend human life. They are found in the products that we rely on each and every day, such as eyeglasses, health care equipment and vehicles.

The Liberals like to talk about a greener future, but they are completely misrepresenting the facts. If they want to get rid of hydrocarbons, then we will be living in a world without PPE, without vital medical equipment, without syringes and without sanitary packaging. Let that sink in for a moment. They dumb down the conversation to almost caveman-like language like “this good” or “that bad”. They paint our oil and gas sector with a broad stroke of black as if it is something to be ashamed of.

What they intentionally fail to highlight, however, are the innovations and the technological breakthroughs that reduce carbon emissions. They do not speak about our incredibly high environmental standards, our safety standards or our human rights standards. It is vitally important to take a comprehensive look at these factors, because if we do not improve and build up the energy sector in our own country, then we have to ask ourselves what the alternative is.

It is to increase energy production and exports from other countries, countries like Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, where there are no environmental protections and horrific human rights atrocities that take place on a daily basis. That is not to mention the tremendous damage that is done to the environment by transporting barge after barge of oil across the ocean.

The world is going to need oil for a long time to come. In fact, demand is estimated to increase by 19% by 2040. This is because as developing countries rise out of poverty and their standards of living improve, their need for oil and gas goes up. Canada has an opportunity. If these countries are not going to get their gas and oil from us, then they will go elsewhere.

If the Prime Minister genuinely cares about reducing global greenhouse gas emissions, then the obvious action is to boost production in our own country where the industry works hard to reduce environmental impact and improve performance through con-

stant innovation. Why the Prime Minister continues to annihilate this sector absolutely confounds me.

Canada has the opportunity to be a leader and a responsible resource supplier to countries around the globe. Boosting our oil and gas industry would not only help the rest of the world by supplying clean energy produced under the strictest environmental standards with safe working conditions, but it would also bring an incredible amount of wealth into our nation.

In Canada, we are very proud of our social safety net and our national health care system, but these big-ticket items cost a lot of money to run effectively. When the government works to cancel energy projects or kill pipelines and demonizes the energy industry, it effectively puts our welfare systems at risk. Canada deserves better.

● (1900)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me start off by saying that the member opposite is completely wrong. Our government actually pushed for and supported a different outcome when it came to the Keystone XL pipeline. We are working with the Biden administration to support our energy workers and our energy sector.

We also made clear to the Alberta government of the day that we would continue to be there to support affected workers, families and communities, just as we have had their backs through the shock of the last year, the global price war and on the heels of the pandemic. However, we now have a responsibility to these workers and to all Canadians to build on our relationship with Canada's number one energy customer.

It is important for us to focus on three areas. I will use the example of Canada and the U.S., where our interests are intertwined, to get to the point of the member's question, which is in regard to making sure that Canada is not left behind. First, both governments are determined to work together to, for example, defeat COVID and build our economies back. This will include working with the energy sector, ensuring it is part of the recovery and is prepared to play a role in the energy transformation.

The second area is climate. President Biden has declared this crisis a national security concern, and once again wants the United States to be our ally in this. We have already proven that with a robust climate policy in place in Canada, which is supported by Canadian industry, including many senior oil patch executives. We saw evidence today of the special bond Canada shares with the U.S. on climate policy.

Third is economic integration. The Canada-U.S. relationship goes far beyond single projects. In fact, we are one of the world's most productive and mutually beneficial bilateral relationships. Our entrepreneurs and innovators, as we fully acknowledge, already co-operate on finding clean tech breakthroughs in areas like carbon capture. Our auto industries have been deeply integrated for generations. Energy is at the epicentre of this partnership, supporting many thousands of jobs out west and across the country.

Canada happens to be the largest and most secure foreign source of energy for the United States. Those sources include crude oil, natural gas, hydroelectricity and uranium. Our experts matter to Americans. We can provide carbon-free and affordable hydroelectricity to millions of American homes.

It is not only this innovation, but also our acknowledgement of climate change, that will ensure that as Canadians, we will have energy sector workers' backs. We will be there to support them.

• (1905)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, Canada has the third largest crude oil reserve in the world, yet we import billions of dollars worth of oil from foreign suppliers. Currently, more than half of the oil used in Quebec and Atlantic Canada is imported from countries like the United States, Saudi Arabia, the Russian Federation, Nigeria and the Ivory Coast.

By restricting Canada's oil and gas industry through legislation and bulldozing pipeline projects, the Prime Minister is indirectly boosting production in other countries, where poor environmental

regulations exist and massive human atrocities take place. The Prime Minister would rather boost the production of blood oil overseas than support the production of ethical oil right here in his own backyard.

Canadians do deserve better. Canadians deserve a Prime Minister who will secure a future in the energy sector.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, once again, let us point out the facts.

Let us use the example of U.S. and Canada. We have more than 70 pipelines and 30-odd transmission lines that connect us. We are each other's top energy supplier in virtually every energy source, including oil, gas and hydroelectricity. In doing this, we are partners in energy security. As well, we are making sure that families on both sides of the border can heat and light their homes, and that we can power industries and keep workers employed.

We are absolutely committed to making sure that we can build our partnerships and create good jobs at home. At the same time, we are ensuring that we protect the environment and live up to our climate change commitments.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:08 p.m.)

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