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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 3, 2021

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*English*]

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR DIABETES ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-237, An Act to establish a national framework for diabetes, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

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

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.) 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.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Mr. Speaker, I request that the motion be agreed to on division.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried on division. When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak on my private member's bill, Bill C-237, an act to establish a national framework for diabetes in Canada.

I want to begin by thanking the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, who generously traded his slot so we could begin third reading on this bill today. I would also like to thank all my colleagues in the Standing Committee on Health who unanimously supported this bill in March.

As members of this House know, 2021 is the year we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the discovery of insulin by Sir Frederick Banting and his colleagues at the University of Toronto.

This is still recognized as one of the greatest achievements of medicine in the 20th century and made them the first Canadians to win a Nobel Prize. It has been inspiring to see how the world has recognized this monumental achievement.

On April 14, the University of Toronto hosted 100 years of insulin symposium, which drew more than 6,000 attendees from around the world. This was also the occasion where Canada Post chose to unveil a new stamp that features a quote from Banting's unpublished journal, in his own handwriting, as well as the original insulin bottle with a red cap. I was proud to advocate for the creation of a stamp like this, as it serves both as a celebration of the achievement and as a reminder that the search for a cure continues.

On the same day, the Minister of Health opened the World Health Organization's summit to launch a Global Diabetes Compact, which seeks to improve the diagnosis rate and care for people living with diabetes. She highlighted this bill and said:

Canada has a proud history of diabetes research and innovation. From the discovery of insulin in 1921 to one hundred years later, we continue working to support people living with diabetes. But we cannot take on diabetes alone. We must each share knowledge and foster international collaboration to help people with diabetes live longer, healthier lives — in Canada and around the world.

The director general of the WHO said:

The number of people with diabetes has quadrupled in the last 40 years. It is the only major noncommunicable disease for which the risk of dying early is going up, rather than down. ...The Global Diabetes Compact will help to catalyze political commitment for action to increase the accessibility and affordability of life-saving medicines for diabetes and also for its prevention and diagnosis.

This is why now is the time for all levels of government in Canada to work with stakeholders and create our own strategy to fight and ultimately end this disease, one that coordinates funding for awareness, prevention, education, data collection, treatment and research that will improve health outcomes for all Canadians and one day lead to a cure.

Diabetes rates are three times to four times higher among first nations than among the general Canadian population. Furthermore, indigenous individuals are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes at a younger age than other individuals.

Private Members' Business

In my own community of Brampton, every sixth resident has diabetes or prediabetes. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the challenges faced by people living with diabetes, who are at an increased risk of developing severe symptoms and dying from this infectious disease. Furthermore, the economic insecurity, lack of physical activity and mental health struggles associated with the pandemic all have a negative impact on those living with diabetes.

A national framework for diabetes would provide a common direction for all stakeholders to address diabetes and other chronic diseases with the same common risk factors. It would enhance co-ordinated efforts across federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions and provide a mechanism for tracking and reporting on progress.

The government needs to conduct its own consultation and stakeholder engagement. However, one proposed strategy that could be taken into consideration for the national framework, and which has been considered by the health committee, is diabetes 360°. This was developed in collaboration with more than 120 stakeholders and has strong support not only from the entire diabetes community but also from other key health stakeholders.

• (1105)

I would like to thank all the individuals and organizations that have supported this bill and helped it come together. That support means a lot to me and I know it will make a difference in the lives of 11 million Canadians living with diabetes or prediabetes.

Back in the spring of 2019, I was proud to bring forward the unanimously supported motion to declare November as Diabetes Awareness Month in Canada, but now it is time for more than awareness. It is time for action. Canada, 100 years ago, made the biggest leap in the treatment of diabetes.

Let us pass Bill C-237 today and send it to the Senate. I am very hopeful that passing this bill will help millions of Canadians who are fighting this disease. Canada gave insulin to the world. Why can we not lead the way?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Brampton South for all of her advocacy on diabetes all these years and for a great speech today.

Beyond the national framework that is definitely needed, there are other things the government could do. The member mentioned a 360° Canada plan. Diabetes Canada has been asking for \$150 million of funding from the federal government for a number of years and it has not been funded. Also, the pharmacare the Liberals have been talking about has not been brought forward and there are many people who cannot afford to buy their diabetes medications.

Can the member say whether the Liberal government will support those two things?

• (1110)

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member, who I serve with on the health committee, for her leadership. The government, of course, needs to conduct its own consultation and engage stakeholders. Diabetes Canada has done great work in putting together its 360° strategy. I hope the minister will

take this work into consideration when crafting an official framework, as well as the other testimony and recommendations found in our HESA report. She was in the committee when we did the HESA report. It was a great report.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, we have to applaud our colleague's hard work and dedication with respect to this important disease.

Each of our provinces has an association, and Diabetes Québec is doing great work in Quebec.

What does my colleague think of the purpose and scope of this national strategy given that this is a provincial responsibility?

[English]

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Diabetes Québec association. While I recognize my colleague's interest in creating health transfers to the provinces, during the pandemic the federal government has been there to support that. This includes over \$19 billion in the safe restart agreement. It was announced that an additional \$4 billion would be given to the provinces through the Canada health transfer and another \$1 billion to help with the vaccine rollout. We have stepped up to help all provinces, including Quebec. We will work Diabetes Québec and all provinces. As I said in my bill, we will work with the Diabetes Québec association, provinces and territories—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for bringing forward this private member's bill on this really important issue. Not too long ago, before COVID, I had two young people come and speak to me about juvenile diabetes. One of the biggest challenges was that in one province, all of the things they required were free and part of the program, but in another province they were not. We had outcomes of health that were completely different simply because of the province people were born in.

Does the member agree that diabetes-related medications, supplies and equipment should be included as part of a universal, comprehensive and public pharmacare program?

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for sharing her story and for her advocacy. I agree that no Canadian should have to choose between paying for prescription medication and necessities, like rent or putting food on the table. I would like to remind the member that since taking office, this government has taken historic action to lower drug prices, including by introducing new rules for patent drugs so Canadians can buy their medicine easily. We need to do a lot more. I thank the member for sharing her story and for her advocacy for her constituents. We will work together to pass this bill—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will go to a very short question from the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to start by thanking my colleague for championing the issue of support for families and individuals with diabetes since I have known her, when we were both elected in 2015.

The families I speak with talk often about the serious burden that exists to manage diabetes for themselves or their children, but we do not often hear about the importance from an economic point of view, given the immense cost of diabetes across the health care systems in Canada. I wonder if the hon. member can offer comment not only on the importance of doing this because it is the right thing to do to support people and families, but also the fact that it is the smart thing to do to alleviate the immense burden that lack of proper diabetes care puts on our health care systems.

• (1115)

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on the great work in the budget regarding diabetes. I am so thankful. I know this is very important because it is a big burden on the health care system, as we know through the Diabetes Canada website, with \$40 billion until 2026. This budget is a recovery plan for job growth and resilience, to finish the fight against COVID-19 to ensure that we—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill C-237, the national framework for diabetes act.

I would like to thank the member for Brampton South for bringing it forward and for all her advocacy. From the time we were both elected in 2015, I have participated alongside her. We were both on the health committee when it came up with recommendations to the government on what it should do about diabetes. It is a serious issue for 11 million Canadians who have diabetes or prediabetes. That report was important.

The hon. member has also done numerous other things to raise awareness of diabetes on the Hill. I can remember an event for all the MPs to get tested, to understand how they could see the risk factors for diabetes and find out whether or not they actually had prediabetes or diabetes. That was great. There was another time when we brought in a mobile unit that had the ability to test and

Private Members' Business

treat. These mobile units are very important here in Canada, especially in rural and remote places where, in many cases, it is very difficult to get access to a physician and the medical care that is so important to people who are living with diabetes.

For that, I congratulate the member. I am happy to see this bill being supported unanimously at committee, along with the support for the amendment that the Conservatives brought forward.

For those who are not aware of the different types of diabetes, 11 million Canadians have diabetes or prediabetes. Type 1 diabetics are people who cannot produce insulin, and there are 1.1 million of them. In order to get the insulin they need, they need to either inject it or use insulin pumps, a new technology that has really upgraded the quality of life for individuals. However, those pumps are \$7,000 or \$8,000, so affordability is a key issue there.

The most common type of diabetes is type 2. These individuals cannot use the insulin they are producing, or they are not producing enough insulin, and there are 9.9 million Canadians in this category. There are things that can lessen the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, including healthy eating and regular exercise. However, once people have this condition, they are going to require insulin therapy, medications and sometimes glucose monitoring. There have been good advances in the technology of glucose monitoring that have really improved the quality of life. Again, there is an affordability issue for some.

Canada began this 100 years ago, with Banting and Best and insulin, and we have continued to excel in technology in this area.

The bill itself is a national framework, and as part of that it is going to bring prevention and treatment. There will be training and an emphasis on educational needs, which I think is important. The more people know about diabetes, the risks and how they can prevent or minimize the impact, the better. There is also an important part on research and data collection. The government, over decades, has done excellent work to support diabetes research in Canada, and that needs to continue, along with the data collection.

Private Members' Business

The other part of the bill is information and knowledge sharing, related to preventing and treating diabetes. This will be important because this is a disease that can develop into other complicated conditions. Kidney disease is a common outcome for those who are at risk and who cannot control their insulin levels. Many have foot and leg problems that can result in amputation. There are eye diseases, and increase in heart attack and stroke. All of these issues are not just tragic for the individual, but also a cost to the health care system.

The parliamentary secretary previously made a comment that bringing in this national framework is not just the right thing to do, but it is also a cost-benefit. We know that if diabetes is not adequately controlled in an individual, an emergency room call is \$1,500 and an amputation is \$90,000. All of these things are incredibly costly to the health care system.

● (1120)

Although some concerns have been raised about whether or not the bill will be a problem with provincial jurisdiction, I would say that the provinces absolutely are open to receiving more federal funding to cover things and to do the right thing to prevent more expensive conditions from developing.

In fact, my own national framework on palliative care is a great example of how the federal government can work alongside the provinces to provide the supplemental things that do not exist at the provincial level and to have the provinces use their funding to accelerate the plan. With the palliative care framework, many things related to education, research and data collection, as in this bill, were put in place, but then the provinces also came alongside with money for hospice and for training paramedics and extending all kinds of things that have resulted in more people having access. My hope is that we will see the same thing with this bill. It is important.

The amendment that the Conservatives brought had to do with the disability tax credit. Members may remember that a few years ago there was a change made by CRA and 80% of people who previously were approved for the disability tax credit, which helps people pay for the medications and supplies they need as people living with diabetes, now became 80% rejected, and it was a long period of time of outcry from the opposition parties before the government set that right.

To be fair, the intent of the government was that if people were not eligible for the tax credit, they also were not eligible for the disability pension plan. That plan had been in effect for 10 years, and each individual who qualified had about \$150,000 in the account, so there was a bit of a nefarious attempt to try to take that money away, which fortunately we were able to correct and get that in place.

Our amendment was to make sure that the CRA is administering the disability tax credit fairly and that the disability tax credit is designed to help as many persons with diabetes as possible and is achieving its objectives. This will provide a bit of oversight to ensure that this kind of thing does not happen again, and that will be very important.

What the bill does not do is provide some of the other funding that will be needed, and some of it has been talked about already.

Diabetes Canada does an amazing job of making people aware, helping people living with diabetes, and providing tools and training, but it has a 360° initiative, calling on the federal government for quite a number of years, from the time I was the shadow health minister, and it has not been funded at any point. We need to see the government seriously consider, with 11 million Canadians living with this condition, that we have to be preventive in nature.

There are a lot of initiatives that also could be supported, like Participation, getting people more fit. If we can get children more fit and eating more nutritiously, this is a key factor in preventing people from having type 2 diabetes, so that is an action that the government could take.

When it comes to pharmacare, the Liberals have been talking about this since 1992. Many provinces have plans already in place, and there is a very small number of Canadians who do not have coverage, but in particular there are people with diabetes who are not able to afford their medications. It is a larger cost to the system overall and something that should be addressed and could be quickly addressed through organizations like Diabetes Canada.

In terms of this framework, obviously I am a passionate advocate as well for eliminating diabetes and doing everything we can to help those individuals. I, as well as the Conservative Party, will be supporting this private member's bill. The member is to be commended for her continued advocacy and for her persistence in bringing more and more good ideas to the table. We can see from the reaction of the various parties that everyone wants to work together, alongside the provinces and territories and our indigenous organizations, to make sure that all people living with diabetes receive the help they need.

● (1125)

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, some diseases quietly besiege their victims and can eventually compromise their health and threaten their very survival.

Diabetes is one such disease. More and more people are aware of diabetes because a growing number of Canadians and Quebecers are being diagnosed with it. Personally, the disease has not affected me or any of my family members or friends.

However, in my work as the member of Parliament for Repentigny, I met Juliette Benoît for the first time in October 2018. Juliette was 13, and she came to Parliament Hill to raise parliamentarians' awareness of a disease that tends to be poorly understood by the general public, type 1 diabetes. This disease generally appears in young people under 20 and is characterized by the total absence of insulin production. People with this type of diabetes must have daily insulin injections or be fitted with an insulin pump to survive. Like Juliette, approximately 10% of people with diabetes have type 1 diabetes.

This young girl captured my attention the moment I met her. A few words that come to mind when I think of her are eloquent, precise, determined and brave. She wants to help advance the research on a potentially life-threatening disease that she has had since she was 11 years old. That is why she got involved in the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, which could not ask for a better ambassador.

I have to say that it is because of Juliette Benoît that I am currently a member of the all-party juvenile diabetes caucus. Juliette took a personal problem and used it as an opportunity to shine the light on a disease that affects nearly 300,000 people in Canada. She convinced me to get more involved in this cause and she used her disease to become a force for change. That is wonderful to see.

I thank the member for Brampton South for introducing Bill C-237, which seeks to establish a national framework for diabetes. Section 2 of the bill explains that the national framework must include measures to:

- (a) explain what diabetes and prediabetes are;
- (b) identify the training, education and guidance needs of health care and other professionals related to the prevention and treatment of diabetes, including clinical practice guidelines;
- (c) promote research and improve data collection on diabetes prevention and treatment;
- (d) promote information and knowledge sharing in relation to diabetes prevention and treatment;
- (e) take into consideration any existing diabetes prevention and treatment frameworks, strategies and best practices, including those that focus on addressing health inequalities; and
- (f) ensure that the Canada Revenue Agency is administering the disability tax credit fairly and that the credit, in order to achieve its purposes, is designed to help as many persons with diabetes as possible.

Bill C-237 gives the government one year to develop the strategic framework and five years to report on its effectiveness. The bill provides for the strategy to be designed in consultation with the provincial governments and Quebec. If the bill moves forward, the Bloc Québécois must ensure that the national framework reflects the demands of Quebec and respects its jurisdiction, because that matters to us. Certain aspects of clause 2 fall under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

I already mentioned Juliette, who is living with type 1 diabetes, and now I would like to talk briefly about the two other kinds of diabetes, type 2 and gestational diabetes.

In Canada in 2020, of the more than 3.7 million diagnosed cases of type 1 and type 2 diabetes combined, 90% were type 2. This type of diabetes usually appears in adulthood, in individuals 40 years of age and older. Because of rising obesity rates, diabetes is starting to

Private Members' Business

appear in increasingly younger populations, sometimes as early as childhood in certain risk groups. People with type 2 diabetes cannot properly use the insulin made by their bodies, and they eventually produce less and less of this essential hormone.

Between 3% and 20% of pregnant women experience an increase in blood glucose levels beginning in the second or third trimester of pregnancy. In most cases, this gestational diabetes disappears after the birth, but the mother is at risk of developing type 2 diabetes in the years that follow.

● (1130)

It goes without saying that women should be monitored properly in the months and years after they give birth. That being said, we can all agree that this bill provides a framework that proposes objectives, actions and ambitions that have already been broadly discussed in several specialized forums, including the annual meetings of doctors who specialize in endocrinology and pediatric endocrinology. Seminars, symposiums and research institutes also investigate this sometimes misunderstood and long-stigmatized disease, which may affect more than 13.5 million Canadian citizens in 2030.

Canada is the birthplace of the discovery of insulin. This year marks the 100th anniversary of that discovery, and it is to Canada's credit that it is allocating resources to the advancement of research into diabetes, among other things. This is precisely where the government should be providing support, in addition to increasing transfers, of course.

Research into diabetes and medical treatment for it are advancing quickly. Note that the fact that there are five different types of diabetes has eluded researchers until very recently. In 2019, the renowned scientific journal *The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology* published this finding, made by a team of Scandinavian researchers. Having looked at cases characterized as atypical, these researchers are better prepared to prevent the onset of the disease and better treat people who develop it.

Also in 2019, American scientists in California grew insulin-producing cells in a laboratory. They describe their work as a major breakthrough that could lead to a cure for type 1 diabetes. I invite interested colleagues to read the journal *Nature Cell Biology* to learn about the science that could lead to a cure for insulin-dependent diabetes within a few years.

The prevalence of this disease is alarming, especially with children developing type 2 diabetes, which used to affect only adults, so the need for research will grow. Every aggravating factor leading to the development of diabetes should be meticulously studied, because not only will the health and social costs be enormous, but the direct costs to the health care system could reach almost \$5 billion Canadian by 2030. This was a question asked earlier by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance. We may not have the same figures, as the member for Brampton South had a different figure, but it is important to remember that a great deal of money could be directed to other issues if we could find a cure for diabetes.

Private Members' Business

I spoke about Juliette at the beginning of my speech. What is she doing now, three years after our first meeting? She continues her advocacy with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. Last November, she participated in Kids for a Cure Lobby Day and shared her personal story with some MPs. She was surprised to see just how young some MPs are. Several are in their thirties, and some are even in their twenties. I believe that she is considering getting into politics. She is ambitious, disciplined and has everything it takes to make the world a better place. I thank her for talking to me about her hopes of making a difference for people with diabetes.

• (1135)

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am incredibly pleased to be here today to speak on Bill C-237, an act to establish a national framework for diabetes.

This is an incredibly important private member's bill, because it addresses something that really concerns me: The reality that people with diabetes across Canada are being treated very differently depending on what province or territory they live in. I thank the member for bringing this bill forward and for her passion on this very important issue. I am very happy to be here to discuss why it is important.

A couple of years ago, Juvenile Diabetes spokespersons came to have a conversation with me. I met with two teenagers, one from Alberta and one from British Columbia. As members in the House, we all have moments where we hear stories and think, "This is wrong," and that we have to do something to make it better. That day, I learned that people living with diabetes could have something inserted in their arms that would allow them to scan their blood sugar levels very quickly with their phones. There was no more need for pricking fingers or carrying around those tools: They could quickly scan to see how things were going and address them as needed. The problem is that in one teen's province, there is a monthly fee for this service, and in the other teen's province, there is no fee at all.

It really broke my heart when I heard from the mother of the teen who was in the province where a monthly fee was required. She and her husband had been doing really well paying that monthly fee, until her husband got hurt on the job and was off work. Their income went down significantly. The mother told me that one of the hardest choices they had to make was to acknowledge that they could no longer afford the monthly fee, which meant that their daughter had to have the pump removed and move forward.

No parent ever wants to do that. It completely broke my heart. I do not think any parent in the country would be happy if they had to make a decision between the health and well-being of their child and feeding them. I recognize that across Canada, many parents have children who have health issues. They really struggle to afford, or cannot afford, the basic medication they need to make sure that their children are well cared for, and this is one example. We need a better strategy. It is important to point out that a national pharmacare program would address this issue and ensure that parents would not be making choices, such as these parents had to, between their children's health and well-being and feeding them and keeping a roof over their heads.

The facts are very clear. Individuals with diabetes cannot regulate their blood sugar properly. Diabetes causes many physical health issues, and is a cause of debt for more than 7,000 Canadians every year. Diabetes also impacts the mental health of people who have diabetes, as well as their families. It is time for Canada to take this seriously, and the bill before us is one step towards doing so.

This bill asks the government to bring together all provinces, territories, indigenous leaders and stakeholder groups to create a plan to support those living with diabetes more holistically. Diabetes is a chronic disease, and it is so important that the federal government do more to support Canadians living with diabetes, particularly those who incur significant out-of-pocket costs because of it. Too many Canadians living with diabetes are unable to afford the medications, devices and supplies they need. When medication and supplies are unaffordable it leads to bigger health issues, which can lead to an early death. That is just not acceptable in a country as wealthy as ours. Families and loved ones feel this reality, and it is really scary for them to always worry about what they will do if they cannot afford what those people need.

Not too long ago, I received a message from a constituent who had just been diagnosed with diabetes, and she was really scared. She was not sure how she would afford the medication. When dealing with a chronic illness, the last thing the body needs is the stress of wondering, "Can I afford the most basic supplies and medication that I need?" We know that this is true. A recent report from the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions found that 57% of Canadians with diabetes reported failing to adhere to their prescribed therapies due to affordability issues related to their medications, devices and supplies.

• (1140)

Fifty-seven per cent is more than half of Canadians who have this chronic disease. This is important because research indicates that when a chronic illness is managed, the expense is lower and the health of the individual increases. Preventative supports matter. They allow people to care of themselves and prevent repetitive visits to the emergency room caused by a lack of access to medications, devices and supplies.

Again, we have to think about what this means in Canada. It is one of the most wealthiest countries in the world and these realities exist because people cannot afford their medication.

This is why Canada's New Democrats recognize that there is an urgent need to for universal, comprehensive and public pharmacare, a plan to ensure that all Canadians have access to the medications they need when they need them, that we do not have people like my constituents staying up half the night wondering how they will afford this new expense in their lives. This must include coverage for diabetes devices and supplies, such as test strips, syringes, insulin pumps and continuous glucose monitors.

Private Members' Business

Sadly, we have seen the reality that the Liberals and the Conservative governments, one after another, continue to deny this measure that would create a more affordable and a fair system to care for the well-being of people across Canada. It would save significant money by lessening emergency health care costs, which are extremely high and terrible for the health of people who cannot afford their medication. Universal health care would also support businesses that have multiple challenges when they have a team member or a loved one who has health issues. In some cases, even with health insurance people cannot afford the cost of their medication.

Just weeks ago we heard the government make promises, but when it actually had an opportunity to support pharmacare, it said no. How many times do Canadians have to wait and ask again for this human rights-based approach?

I will be supporting this bill. It is a step that will at least support people living with diabetes. I hope the government will support it as well. The concerning reality is that so many families that apply for the disability tax credit when they have children who are born with diabetes lose it when those children come into adulthood. The Government of Canada has rejected these applicants in the past. When is in place, I hope it stops denying this small tax credit. Most important, ensuring that people have access to the RRSPs they invested in for many years is absolutely key for me.

There is a lot of injustice for people living with chronic illness. I hope the bill will at least help one portion of the community. However, I want to remind everyone in the House that only pharmacare will make it a more fair system for everyone in the country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-237, an act to establish a national framework for diabetes. Once again, I applaud my colleague and friend from Brampton South who has been a staunch advocate for such an important issue that affects millions of Canadians.

Having a national framework for diabetes is long overdue. I want to take the time, first and foremost, to recognize the need. It is important to note the impact diabetes has on the health of over three million people in Canada. Including Canadians who are prediabetic, that number is closer to 10 million-plus, keeping in mind our population of 37.5 million people today.

As a government, we continue working with our partners, including provinces and territories, indigenous organizations, stakeholders and organizations such as Diabetes Canada, to strengthen the efforts that support diabetes prevention and care for all Canadians. For me, it is about prevention and treatment, and there is so much we can do.

I have had the opportunity to speak on this before. I want to emphasize Diabetes Canada and the fantastic work it does. In fact, people can get all the relevant information they need from it, not to mention all the things they can do to improve the quality of their lives or, in some cases, minimize the negative impacts diabetes has on people through healthy living and so forth. If they go to diabetes.ca, there is ample information.

From my perspective, Diabetes Canada clearly shows leadership. As a national organization, it can assist regional organizations. My colleague has hit this right on, that there is a need for a national perspective, a national framework designed to support and improve Canadians' access to information on diabetes prevention and treatment. This bill is all about that. It is about working with provinces and territories, indigenous leaders, communities, different stakeholders, bringing them together and making a real difference. I am hopeful that we can pass the bill.

There are two types of diabetes, and I got this information from the diabetes.ca website, which contains quality of information. Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease and is also known as an insulin-dependent diabetes. People with type 1 diabetes are not able to produce their own insulin and cannot regulate their blood sugar because their body is attacking the pancreas. The website states:

Roughly 10 per cent of people living with diabetes have type 1, insulin-dependent diabetes. Type 1 diabetes generally develops in childhood or adolescence, but can also develop in adulthood. People with type 1 need to inject insulin or use an insulin pump to ensure their bodies have the right amount of insulin.

There is so much we can be doing from a national perspective by encouraging, promoting and supporting, in whatever ways we can, a national strategy.

I commend my colleague from Brampton and those individuals who were there to support her initiative to bring the bill to the floor of the House of Commons. I trust and hope that my colleagues on all sides of the House will see fit to pass this bill as soon as possible, maybe even today.

● (1145)

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak today to Bill C-237, which proposes a national framework for diabetes.

The bill has been brought forward by our colleague, the member for Brampton South, and I would like to take a moment to comment on her dedication to seeing this bill passed and her overall concern for the health of Canadians.

The member, who I served with for many years on the health committee, has always been one of the most non-partisan and collegial members of the committee. Her sincere desire to improve health outcomes for Canadians has always been her underlying motivation, and it has been an absolute pleasure to work with her on that committee.

Private Members' Business

The situation with diabetes in Canada is truly shocking. About three million Canadians live with diabetes. One in three children and one in 10 adults live with the disease. People with diabetes are over three times more likely to be hospitalized with cardiovascular disease, 12 times more likely to be hospitalized with end-stage renal disease and almost 20 times more likely to be hospitalized for non-traumatic lower limb amputation compared to the general population. Diabetes contributes to 30% of strokes, 40% of heart attacks, 50% of kidney failure requiring dialysis, 70% of all non-traumatic leg and foot amputations and is leading the cause of blindness in Canada.

The direct cost to our health care system just last year was \$3.8 billion. It is estimated to rise to about \$5 billion by 2030. That is a huge weight on our health care system.

There is no doubt that diabetes is a serious chronic disease and it is on the rise. It is a disease that occurs when the body is either unable to sufficiently produce or properly use insulin. Over time, left untreated, it can damage blood vessels, nerves and organs such as kidneys, eyes and heart, resulting in the serious complications that I mentioned, and ultimately death. It poses a challenge not only to those living with the disease, but also to their families, communities and the health care system. Therefore, any investment in reducing the rate of diabetes in our country should translate into long-term savings to our health care system. It just makes sense that we deal with this issue head on and deal with it now.

Also, each year close to 200,000 Canadians are newly diagnosed and many more diagnosed as prediabetic. Not all individuals with prediabetes will develop diabetes, but the chances increase if steps are not taken to manage it. Fortunately, recent studies have shown that changes in lifestyle, primarily diet, physical activity and weight management, can delay or even halt the progression. However, there is no question that we need to look at diabetes as a national problem and come up with a national framework, which Bill C-237 proposes.

The aging of the Canadian population, largely a result of baby boom cohort, has been one of the major factors contributing to the increase in the number of Canadians living with diagnosed diabetes. The increasing incidence is shocking. If any other health issue like cancer had increased in comparison, we would declare a national emergency and pull every fire alarm. Why do we not do it in this case? I believe it is because of the ongoing and unfair stigma that those with diabetes are simply lazy, unhealthy and authors of their own problems, which is simply not the case.

Diabetes is complex and the people affected by it are not always in full control of their health conditions. We need to stop thinking that this is entirely a lack of personal health. At the same time, we should also not underestimate the importance of maintaining a healthy weight and lifestyle.

As part of any national framework on addressing diabetes, it is critically important that we look at the issue of organ donation. I know the member for Brampton South is also very supportive of organ donation and improving our system in Canada.

• (1150)

Diabetes, at its root, is a malfunctioning pancreas that fails to make the necessary amounts of insulin at the right time. For type 1 diabetes, there is some hope people could receive a pancreas and/or a kidney transplant. A transplant can cure this problem and eliminate the need for insulin shots, but we need more people to donate these life-saving organs.

For those who undergo a pancreas transplant, the survival rate exceeds 95% after one year and more than 88% after the five-year mark. It is possible to be a living donor and donate a pancreas, but this is rare and most donations come from deceased donors. Typically, these transplants last 10 to 12 years, so unfortunately multiple transplants and multiple donors are required over time.

When it comes to kidney donations, the situation in Canada is quite dire, with more than 3,300 people on the waiting list. The demand is high because kidney transplants are in need for more than just diabetics. The wait time can range from months to years. Many never get their second chance at life.

The good news is that people can be living kidney donors. They can donate one of their kidneys to save another. I admire the member for Edmonton Manning, who did so for his son. Of course, live donations are a complex process and are required because we do not have enough deceased donors.

The point is this: Canadians can dramatically improve the life and health of type 1 diabetics by becoming organ donors, so I strongly encourage all Canadians to register on their provincial organ donation registries and let their loved ones know of their decision.

Sadly, a pancreas transplant is not really an option for those with type 2 diabetes because that type of diabetes occurs when the body generates a resistance to insulin or is unable to utilize it properly. Type 1 diabetics make up about 10% of those with diabetes. Their bodies just do not make insulin, which is a situation where a pancreatic transplant would be required.

A constituent of mine, Brooklyn Rhead, a grade 12 student at St. Francis High School, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes in February of last year. She suffered severe symptoms for about a year before her diagnosis. Her symptoms included extreme thirst, hair loss, fatigue, inability to concentrate and weight loss.

As part of Brooklyn's efforts, she has set out to increase awareness of type 1 diabetes and to raise \$5,000 for diabetes research at her high school. So far, she has raised \$3,900. I am confident that she will reach her goal, so I applaud her. More than 300,000 Canadians have type 1 diabetes, and Brooklyn's efforts are creating awareness. It is an important contribution to finding the answers.

Many are desperately longing for a cure. We know there is a need for a cure. We know there is political will. We know the need is urgent. We know the need is growing. As Parliamentarians, we need to move this bill along as quickly as possible to make that difference.

From my own personal experience, I have seen excellent pieces of legislation die when an election is called, so I hope we can get this to the Senate and get it passed as soon as possible before a writ is possibly dropped. Brooklyn and three million other Canadians are watching. They are counting on us to get the job done, so let us get it done.

• (1155)

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to this bill. Bill C-237, the national framework for diabetes act, would direct the Minister of Health to develop a national framework to support diabetes prevention and treatment in consultation with relevant stakeholders. That is a key aspect of what this bill talks about. It would require the Minister of Health to hold at least one conference with relevant stakeholders to develop the described framework.

As we talk about stakeholders, it is my pleasure to stand in my place today to share with the House the advocacy efforts and work of one of my own constituents, Maya Webster. Maya is 10 years old, and she will continue advocating for type 1 diabetes research until a cure is discovered.

This past November, Maya took part in a lobby effort with more than 30 other delegates as part of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's Kids for a Cure Lobby Day 2020. JDRF is a global charitable organization with the goal of ending type 1 diabetes through research funding and advocacy. Kids for a Cure 2020 was a week-long virtual event that connected youth delegates with Canada's decision-makers and politicians. They were able to illustrate the daily challenges faced by people living with type 1 diabetes and to ask for more direct support from the government.

The foundation had three main asks during that lobby effort. They asked for the federal government to renew a partnership with JDRF and the Canadian Institutes of Health and Research, and for the federal government to create a national diabetes strategy, which is why we are here today. They also asked for more people to be able to access the disability tax credit. As Maya explains, "What I'm doing this year, and what I did in 2018 with this, is trying to find the cure because as much as I have insulin it still isn't a cure".

As part of their consultation, delegates created virtual slide shows to give personal overviews of what living—

• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have eight minutes to continue his speech when we next return to the reading of this bill.

Privilege

The time provided for consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. The order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED MISLEADING COMMENTS BY THE PRIME MINISTER

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question of privilege raised on April 28, 2021, concerning statements the Prime Minister made in this House respecting the allegations of misconduct against the former chief of the defence staff. The member for Portage—Lisgar asserted that the Prime Minister, in denying he was aware of the nature of the allegations against General Vance in 2018, deliberately misled the House.

This response will be quite long, but it is necessary, as this is an extremely serious and important issue, and it is important the government fully responds to the intervention from the member.

I want to begin by repeating what the Prime Minister said on March 11, 2021. He said:

...supporting the women and men who choose to serve in the armed forces is a priority for this government, as it has been for all governments. We have moved forward in significantly strengthening measures to support survivors of sexual assault and to create more processes so that armed forces members do not have to face sexual assault in their workplace or in their service.

I will address the points made by the member for Portage—Lisgar, and I will offer a point-by-point rebuttal that will demonstrate her conclusions can only be reached by a scrambling of the chronology of events and by presenting evidence out of context. In addition to that, the member also provides false information to the House about the date of a statement from the Prime Minister's Office and uses this misleading and incorrect chronology to try to make her case, in what can only be seen as an attempt to mislead the House.

The member is entitled to her own opinions, but she is not entitled to her own facts. Her misleading statements to the House are very serious. From the outset, I would like to state that the Prime Minister never misled the House, deliberately or otherwise. The Prime Minister has been consistent at all times in the information he has provided to the House on this issue. There are some key points I would like to make before I address the specifics raised by the members.

Privilege

First, the member for Portage—Lisgar is absolutely incorrect in her assertion that the Prime Minister knew in 2018 that the allegations against General Vance were a matter of a #MeToo complaint. We know this from a statement he made in the House on February 24, 2021, when he stated, “Mr. Speaker, every person deserves a safe work environment. I first learned of allegations against General Vance in Global News reporting.”

[Translation]

Secondly, the member states that the Prime Minister's Office was aware of the nature or the details of the allegations against General Vance in 2018. Statements in the House and evidence at committee will show this to be false.

Thirdly, the member states that the Privy Council Office, a separate body, independent from the Prime Minister's Office, was aware of the nature or the details of the allegations against General Vance in 2018. Statements in the House and evidence at committee will show this to be false.

Fourthly, the member states that the Minister of National Defence and his office were aware of the nature or the details of the allegations against General Vance. Statements in the House and evidence at committee will show this to be false.

Fifthly, the member states that the Clerk of the Privy Council was aware of the nature or the details of the allegations against General Vance. Statements in the House and evidence at committee will show this to be false.

The member for Portage—Lisgar is trying to show that her argument passes the three-point test to determine if there is a *prima facie* question of privilege. The evidence will show that the first of the three criteria has not been met, which makes the second and third ones impossible to meet.

● (1205)

[English]

The evidence will demonstrate that only by scrambling the chronology and providing information out of context could the member for Portage—Lisgar come to the conclusion that the Prime Minister misled the House. The evidence provided before the House in committees will clearly demonstrate that the Prime Minister did not mislead the House in any way.

I would now like to address the points made by the member, point by point. The member points to responses that the Prime Minister gave to questions from the Leader of the Opposition on April 27. The Leader of the Opposition asked the Prime Minister the following questions in the House:

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence was aware of allegations of sexual misconduct against General Vance in 2018. The Clerk of the Privy Council knew. The Prime Minister's senior advisor knew. The Prime Minister's chief of staff knew. Did the Prime Minister know?

Another question:

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence was aware of sexual misconduct allegations against General Vance in 2018. The Clerk of the Privy Council was aware. The senior adviser, Mr. Marques, to the Prime Minister was aware. The chief of staff to the Prime Minister was aware in 2018. Was the Prime Minister aware of sexual misconduct allegations in 2018?

Let us take a look at both the questions and the answers. First, the assertions in the questions are false. This is backed up by testimony before a standing committee of the House. Let us start with the Minister of National Defence. The minister states very clearly, at the Standing Committee on National Defence on March 12, that he was not aware of the nature or specific allegations against General Vance in 2018:

At the very end of this private conversation, Mr. Walbourne brought up concerns of misconduct involving the former chief of the defence staff. He did not give me any details. I did not allow him to give me any details. I very purposely respected the investigative process to ensure that it remained independent.

The minister also makes clear, at an earlier appearance before the national defence committee on February 19, that he only learned of the nature and specifics of the allegations against General Vance in early 2021, stating:

I was as shocked as everyone else at the allegations that were made public two weeks ago.

The former clerk of the Privy Council, Michael Wernick, in testimony before the national defence committee on April 6, stated the following:

I learned of the specific allegations earlier this year in the media reports...I was not aware of the specifics of the allegation. I became aware of them this year.

Mr. Wernick also states:

There had not been an investigation. The only person who knew about the seriousness of the allegations at the time was Mr. Walbourne.

On the issue of the former senior adviser to the Prime Minister, Elder Marques, who was tasked with following up on allegations against General Vance, here is what he said before the national defence committee on April 19:

I believe I was told that the issue was an issue of personal misconduct. ...I think my presumption was certainly that it could be of a sexual nature, but I don't think I was actually given that information specifically.

On the issue of what the Prime Minister knew, Mr. Marques said the following:

I did not brief the Prime Minister on this issue, and I'm not aware of any briefings of the Prime Minister on this issue.

On why he took the information to the Privy Council Office, Mr. Marques said:

The reason for going to the Clerk of the Privy Council is that the Clerk of the Privy Council is responsible for the apparatus that now needs to do its best with the resources that it has to respond. At this stage, there is not anything that the Prime Minister is supposed to do in relation to this information, and I would suggest in fact it would have been problematic had the Prime Minister or other members of cabinet or other political staff tried to insert themselves at that point.

At that point, PCO is fully engaged. They have advisers who are engaged. No one was not appreciating the seriousness of the issue. I think any involvement at that stage could risk being counterproductive, even if it's in good faith and just trying to ensure things are moving along.

● (1210)

My reason for going to the clerk is that the clerk now had responsibility and he had work to do to make sure that everything that can be done in, frankly, quite unusual circumstances is done and that we hopefully get to a point where there is a proper investigation where we can find out what occurred. That then may lead to the involvement of others who may need to make decisions as a result of that.

We're not anywhere near that.

Mr. Marques was clear he was not aware of the nature or the specifics of the complaint. Mr. Marques brought this information to the independent officials at the Privy Council Office. The government followed the proper process. This is, might I add, the same process the previous government followed.

It is useful for context here to point out the current leader of the official opposition was made aware of misconduct rumours in 2015. It was serious enough that he asked his staff to notify the Prime Minister's chief of staff, who then took it to the Privy Council Office for review. In other words, they took the same steps the government followed. I have a hard time taking the Leader of the Opposition seriously when he criticizes the exact process he and his government followed.

Regarding the Prime Minister's chief of staff, the Prime Minister was clear in the House on March 10 that his office knew of unspecified allegations against General Vance in 2018 but was unaware of the nature of specifics of the allegations. He said:

Mr. Speaker, my office was aware of the minister's direction to the ombudsman to follow up with appropriate authorities, but my office and I learned of the details of the allegations over the past months only.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister told the House that he was not aware of the allegations against General Vance.

Testimony at a House standing committee demonstrated that the Minister of National Defence was not aware of the nature or specifics of the allegations against General Vance in 2018.

Testimony at a House standing committee demonstrated that the Prime Minister's senior adviser was not aware of the nature or specifics of the allegations against General Vance in 2018.

The Prime Minister has told the House that his office, including the chief of staff, was aware of unspecified allegations in 2018 but was not aware of the nature or specifics of these allegations.

Furthermore, testimony at a House standing committee demonstrated that the Clerk of the Privy Council was not aware of the nature or specifics of the allegations.

[English]

Let us take a look at the replies the Prime Minister gave to the questions from the Leader of the Opposition. This is how the Prime Minister replied to the first question:

Mr. Speaker, as I have been saying for some time now, yes, there was a complaint against General Vance. Nobody in my office or in the Minister of National Defence's office knew the nature of the complaint.

We clearly have to improve the process. We have to make sure we create an environment in which people who want to bring forward allegations feel supported. That is the kind of situation and the kind of system we are creating.

Here is how the Prime Minister replied to the second question:

Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition is putting forward is simply untrue. While there was awareness that there was a complaint against General Vance, there was no awareness that it was in fact a #MeToo complaint of a sexual nature. These are issues that we have continued to work on seriously as a government.

I need to highlight that the leader of the official opposition had heard a rumour of misconduct back in 2015. He told his staff, who then told PMO, which told the Privy Council Office. It is the exact same process that played out in 2015 under the previous Conservative government as played out in our government, but we have taken far more actions to change the culture for the better of our military.

Privilege

• (1215)

Context is important here. The Prime Minister was answering questions about what his office and the office of the Minister of National Defence knew in 2018.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister told the House that he was not even aware that there were allegations in 2018 and did not learn about these allegations or the nature of these allegations before the beginning of 2021. The Prime Minister has consistently told the House that his office was aware of unspecified allegations but not of their specifics. The Minister of National Defence told the committee that he and his office were aware of unspecified allegations but not of the nature of these allegations.

All of this evidence demonstrates that the Prime Minister has been consistent in all of his statements in the House regarding what and when he knew, what and when his office knew, and what and when the Minister of National Defence and his office knew.

[English]

I want to address the issue that the member for Portage—Lisgar raises around emails from Janine Sherman, the deputy secretary to the cabinet responsible for Governor in Council appointments. Ms. Sherman sent a draft email that the Minister of National Defence could use to respond to Mr. Walbourne. While she does include the words “allegations of sexual harassment”, I can only speculate that she was making an assumption. This can be the only explanation due to her testimony before the national defence committee.

Ms. Sherman testified at the committee on March 26, where she stated, “I met with Mr. Walbourne on March 16. In my email exchanges and in my meeting with Mr. Walbourne, I did not receive information upon which to take further action.”

Ms. Sherman further testified that, “...based on my conversation with the former ombudsman, I did not have information about the nature of the complaint or specifics that would have enabled further action.”

Other emails also demonstrate that Ms. Sherman did not have any details about the nature of the unspecified allegation. An email to Mr. Walbourne, using the text provided by Ms. Sherman states, “Although the substance and details of the allegations were not discussed the Minister we want to ensure they are properly investigated.”

In a further email to Mr. Walbourne from Ms. Sherman, she states, “I understand that you have information concerning the conduct of a GIC appointee that the Minister has asked that you share with me.”

Privilege

In Mr. Walbourne's testimony before the national defence committee on March 3, he states:

...I told her [Ms. Sherman] that I was surprised she knew about that. I had asked the minister to keep it in confidence, and I told her the same thing I said to this committee, that I wasn't going to give her the name of the complainant or the details of the allegation because the complainant had asked me to respect that confidentiality, and that's exactly what I did.

The information was never shared with Ms. Sherman by Mr. Walbourne. The term "sexual" appeared only once in an early draft email that Ms. Sherman prepared. Contrast this with her testimony before the committee where she was categorical that she did not know the nature of the unspecified allegation and it becomes clear that her early reference in the draft email was speculation. This is backed up by the fact that when this draft email was written, Ms. Sherman had only spoken to Mr. Marques about this issue and he has clearly testified that he was not aware that the allegations against General Vance were sexual in nature.

• (1220)

The member for Portage—Lisgar also points to Ms. Sherman's testimony at the national defence committee, portraying it in a fashion that deliberately attempts to muddy the waters, to try to demonstrate that the Prime Minister and his office knew the nature of the allegations against General Vance. Nothing could be further from the truth. The member points to earlier emails and conflates them as if they were the basis for later discussions with PMO staff. In fact, those discussions were subsequent to Ms. Sherman speaking to Mr. Walbourne.

Further, Ms. Sherman never stated in her testimony before the committee that she discussed the nature of the complaint with the PMO. The opposite is true. She testified that she was not aware of the nature or specifics of the allegations. If Ms. Sherman was not aware of the nature or specifics of the allegations, how can the member assert that the Prime Minister was aware of the nature or specifics of the allegations? How can the member assert that the PMO staff, or the Minister of National Defence and his staff, knew the nature or specifics of the allegations? It just does not make any sense.

[Translation]

All of that shows the following: The Prime Minister was not aware of any allegations, nor of the nature or specifics of any allegations in 2018. The Prime Minister's Office was aware of allegations but not of the nature or specifics of those allegations in 2018. The Minister of National Defence and his office were aware of allegations but not of the nature or specifics of those allegations in 2018.

All of that is completely consistent with what the Prime Minister said in the House.

[English]

I now want to move on to the statement from the Prime Minister on March 10, which the member for Portage—Lisgar referred to. This was in reference to a question from the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill who asked:

Is it the Prime Minister's position that no one made him aware of the allegations of misconduct against General Vance three years ago?

The Prime Minister replied, stating:

Mr. Speaker, my office was aware of the minister's direction to the ombudsman to follow up with appropriate authorities, but my office and I learned of the details of the allegations over the past months only.

Again, that statement is entirely consistent with the facts. The member for Portage—Lisgar referred to an exchange in question period from March 24, in which the Prime Minister stated:

Mr. Speaker, allegations of sexual misconduct or inappropriate behaviour need to be followed up by the appropriate authorities, and that is exactly what happened in this case. The ombudsperson was directed toward the right people in terms of following up on an investigation. The ombudsperson was not able to share further information with the investigators and, therefore, the investigation did not move forward.

We will continue to take very seriously any allegations that come forward, as we always have. We will continue to work to ensure that there is a change in the culture and better systems in place.

The member for Portage—Lisgar offered up this quote as an example that the Prime Minister, his staff, the Minister of National Defence and his staff had specific information about the nature of the allegations against General Vance in 2018. She stated that, "...the Prime Minister [was] speaking on March 24. I am going to repeat that. He even said, 'allegations of sexual misconduct' ". That is simply not the case. That is yet another example of the member playing fast and loose with the chronology of events and trying to use information out of context. In this instance, the Prime Minister commented in March 2021 about a situation from 2018 with added context about the nature of the allegation he informed the House about on February 24, 2021, which he learned from media reports in early 2021.

• (1225)

The member for Portage—Lisgar completely misrepresented the Prime Minister's answer in the House on March 24.

As I stated earlier, the Prime Minister has been clear about when he first learned about the allegations against General Vance. He stated in the House on February 24 that, "Mr. Speaker, every person deserves a safe work environment. I first learned of allegations against General Vance in Global News reporting." The member for Portage—Lisgar brings up the testimony of former national defence ombudsman Gary Walbourne as further proof that the Minister of National Defence knew the nature or specifics of the allegations against General Vance.

When asked about Mr. Walbourne's testimony in the House on March 8, the minister stated, "I disagree with the testimony that Mr. Walbourne provided to the committee, and look forward to setting the record straight when the opportunity comes to speak at the committee." As I stated earlier, when the minister appeared before the national defence committee on March 12, he reinforced the point that he did not receive details about the nature or specifics of the unspecified allegations.

The Conservative House leader, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, acknowledged this very fact in the House on March 8, when he stated, “The minister even refused to look at the evidence presented.”

In his appearance before the national defence committee on March 3, Mr. Walbourne confirmed that the minister was not aware. Mr. Walbourne was asked by the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, “Who else is aware of the information that you have and that you tried to present to [the Minister of National Defence]?” Mr. Walbourne replied, “As far as I know, the person who...made the allegation and I are the only two people who have seen that evidence. As I said, the minister didn't want to see the evidence.”

[Translation]

The minister did the right thing. He did not get involved in the investigation and he asked his office to transfer the non-specific complaint to the independent officials at the Privy Council Office. He followed the same process that was followed by the previous government.

The member for Portage—Lisgar is wrong. She is trying to prove that Mr. Walbourne's testimony undermines the statements made by the Prime Minister in the House on March 10 and 11. That is absolutely not the case. The Prime Minister continued to give consistent answers with regard to what he and his office knew and when.

The evidence showed that the Minister of National Defence told the House and the committee that he did not agree with Mr. Walbourne's testimony to the effect that Mr. Walbourne had shared the nature and specifics of the complaints against General Vance with him. The evidence also shows that Mr. Walbourne testified that only he and the complainant were aware of the evidence. Nothing about Mr. Walbourne's testimony changes the fact that the Prime Minister has been consistent in the information he has provided to the House since day one.

In response to the member for Portage—Lisgar's claims about Mr. Wernick, the former clerk of the Privy Council, the evidence provided earlier indicates that he testified before the Standing Committee on National Defence and that it was not until earlier this year that he learned the nature and specifics of the allegations through the media. The member quoted Mr. Wernick's testimony in committee where, in trying to answer a question, he speculated on the content of emails from three years earlier, emails that he was not copied on and that he did not have access to during his appearance at committee.

● (1230)

This does not prove that the Prime Minister knew about the unspecified allegations against General Vance or the nature and specifics of those allegations in 2018.

This does not prove that his employees or the Minister of National Defence and his employees knew.

On the contrary, Mr. Wernick himself said that he was not aware of the nature or specifics of the allegations until earlier this year.

Privilege

[English]

I want to turn to a very important issue that has been completely misrepresented by the member for Portage—Lisgar. The member tried to portray that the Prime Minister's statements about what his office knew extend to the Privy Council's Office, as if they were one and the same. This is simply not the case.

Janine Sherman, in her testimony before the national defence committee on March 26, made the point about the independence of the Privy Council Office when she stated:

...our role is to be a non-partisan, professional public service. We are able to provide advice impartially and based on principles of good governance to the government of the day.

The member of Parliament for Mississauga—Lakeshore asked Ms. Sherman the following question:

...why is it so important in Canadian public administrative thought and practice that a minister or other elected officials do [not] drive, do not taint and are in no way involved in investigations of the kind we're discussing today?

Ms. Sherman replied:

That is an important principle of Westminster government. The elected representatives do not carry out investigations, and manage the details of those kinds of things, because they are elected. The separation of their role from the independent and non-partisan public service is important in ensuring independence and fairness. All of those principles are necessary in terms of ensuring fair outcomes, and procedural fairness for individuals through processes, such as investigations.

Ray Novak, former chief of staff to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, made the same point when he appeared before the committee on March 22, stating:

The member knows that the Prime Minister's Office is not an investigative body. Senior officials in the Privy Council Office are the ones responsible for interacting with the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces with respect to this matter.

The Minister of National Defence, in his appearance before the national defence committee on March 12, stated, “Investigations into complaints like this should start with proper investigative authority, not with an elected official. To provide Mr. Walbourne with additional support, senior officials in the Privy Council Office were informed of the complaint regarding the former chief of the defence staff.” The minister further stated:

As I stated, me, the Prime Minister or any politician should not get involved in an investigation. What we needed to do—and we did—was to make sure the information got to the Privy Council Office, who are responsible for governor in council appointments...

In addition to these statements before the committee, the Prime Minister addressed this issue before the House on March 10, when he stated:

We take all allegations seriously and ensure they are followed up on by the appropriate independent authorities. That is exactly what happened in this situation.

After the defence ombudsman received a complaint, the minister directed him to independent officials who could investigate. My office was aware of the minister's direction to the ombudsman. Those officials never received further information, so we were unable to move forward with an investigation.

● (1235)

On April 27, the Prime Minister said this in the House:

Mr. Speaker, as a government, we have consistently stood up for survivors. We have stood up against harassment and intimidation in federal workplaces across the country, and indeed in the Canadian Armed Forces. We have made significant investments in improving systems and accountability, and we will continue to do that.

Privilege

In 2018, when a complaint came forward, we forwarded it to the Privy Council Office so it could do the follow-up necessary, but unfortunately the ombudsman was not able to reveal the full extent because he did not have permission. We need to create a system in which people feel supported to come forward.

It is clear that when the Prime Minister was talking about his office, this was his ministerial office and not the Privy Council Office. The Prime Minister, when speaking of the Privy Council Office, has referred to it by name or as an independent official and not as “my office”. The fact that any investigation of Governor in Council appointments happens independently of politicians through the independent official Privy Council Office is a clear demonstration of this separation.

[*Translation*]

The facts speak for themselves. The Prime Minister himself was not aware that there was an unspecified allegation in 2018, much less the nature of that allegation. He has clearly and repeatedly told the House that he was not aware of the nature of the allegations against General Vance, and that he only learned of it after Global News reported it in early 2021.

The testimony from the Minister of National Defence, Ms. Sherman, Mr. Marques and Mr. Wernick confirms that the specifics of the allegations were unknown until Global News reported that information.

The member for Portage—Lisgar claims that the Prime Minister's statements in the House and in the media kept changing. The evidence simply does not support that claim. On the contrary, the Prime Minister's statements have been consistent all along.

Was the Prime Minister personally aware of unspecified allegations against General Vance in 2018?

The answer is no.

Was the Prime Minister aware of the nature of the allegations against General Vance?

The Prime Minister has clearly and consistently told the House and the media that he first learned of the nature and specifics of the allegations against General Vance in early 2021, when Global News reported on them. Nothing that the Prime Minister has said, nothing that the witnesses said, and nothing mentioned in any document contradicts the Prime Minister on this point.

Was the Prime Minister aware of any allegations against General Vance in 2018?

The Prime Minister has clearly and consistently told the House and the media that his office was aware of certain unspecified allegations, but was not aware of the nature or specifics of those allegations. Once again, nothing that the Prime Minister has said, nothing that the witnesses said, and nothing mentioned in any document contradicts the Prime Minister on this point.

● (1240)

[*English*]

On the issue of the statement released by the Prime Minister's Office, again the member for Portage—Lisgar is misrepresenting the chronology. She stated that the statement was issued to the media on February 23, and it states, “The Prime Minister confirmed on

March 10, in the House of Commons, that his office was aware of the concern raised by the defence ombudsman in 2018.”

The member then goes on to state that this means that the Prime Minister issued a public statement prior to his statement in the House that his office was aware of concerns regarding General Vance. Here is what the member Portage—Lisgar said:

That means the Prime Minister has issued a public statement prior to his statement in the House that his office was aware, as the defence minister has stated, that he raised concerns of a sexual nature regarding the chief of the defence staff.

There are two problems with the member's statement. One, it did not happen before the Prime Minister's statement in the House on March 10. The date of the statement from the Prime Minister's Office was April 23 and not February 23. If anyone is misleading the House, it is the member for Portage—Lisgar. The second problem with the member's statement is that it completely mischaracterizes the facts.

The member states that the Prime Minister's Office was aware that the Minister of National Defence raised concerns of sexual misconduct regarding the chief of defence staff. The Minister of National Defence has been consistent that he was not aware of the nature of the specifics of the allegations against General Vance until Global News reported on it earlier this year. The Prime Minister has also been consistent about this.

The member for Portage—Lisgar tries to portray that there is a contradiction between the statement issued by his office on April 23 and the statement he made in the House of Commons on April 27. This is completely false. There is no contradiction. They are entirely consistent with what has been said all along.

As I indicated at the beginning of my intervention, the Prime Minister was answering questions about what he knew in 2018, and as I have outlined, what he knew in 2018 about the specific allegation against General Vance was nothing. His office knew that there were unspecified allegations against General Vance, but did not know the nature of the allegations.

The member for Portage—Lisgar tries to make the case that her arguments demonstrate that this issue meets the test for a *prima facie* question of privilege.

Test one is, did the Prime Minister provide information that was misleading the House? I have provided evidence to the House that demonstrates that the Prime Minister did not provide misleading information to the House. The record is clear, and the record shows that the Prime Minister has been consistent in the information that he provided to the House on this issue at all times.

Test two is, did the Prime Minister know that the information he provided was false? The evidence, as presented, demonstrates that the first test has not even been met, as the Prime Minister did not provide misleading to the House. Given that the first test has not been met, it is impossible for the second test to have been met. The evidence clearly demonstrates that the Prime Minister did not provide misleading information to the House and he could, therefore, not have knowingly done so.

Test three is, was the Prime Minister intending to mislead the House? The evidence I have put forward to the House demonstrates that the Prime Minister was consistent at all times in the information that he provided to the House, and so he did not mislead the House. He could therefore not have knowingly or deliberately done so. Therefore, it is impossible that the third test could have been met.

It is only by scrambling the chronology and providing information out of context that the member for Portage—Lisgar could come to the conclusion that her arguments demonstrate that the three-point test for finding a *prima facie* case of privilege could have been met.

• (1245)

The member for Portage—Lisgar closes her arguments by stating her opinion, an opinion not backed up by testimony and facts, that it is not believable that the Prime Minister was unaware the allegations against General Vance were of a #MeToo sexual complaint nature. I respectfully submit to you, Madam Speaker, that if one selectively presents evidence deliberately out of context, and out of chronological context, perhaps the member for Portage—Lisgar could come to that preconceived conclusion. As I have stated, this can only be seen as an attempt to mislead the House.

However, if one follows the facts and contexts, understands the chronology, listens to the evidence and testimony at committees and the statements made by the Prime Minister in the House, it is clear that none of the three tests necessary to make a finding of *prima facie* privilege exists and that the Prime Minister has not misled the House in any way on this important issue.

[Translation]

There are three other points that I believe are relevant to the present question.

The first is that the House, through the Standing Committee on National Defence, is conducting a study entitled “Addressing Sexual Misconduct Issues in the Canadian Armed Forces, Including the Allegations Against Former Chief of the Defence Staff Jonathan Vance”. The committee is currently hearing witnesses and will eventually prepare a report and present it to the House.

[English]

The second point is that the member for Portage—Lisgar has completely contradicted herself. On Friday, April 30, she gave notice of an opposition day motion for the week after, stating the following:

That, given that:

- (a) women and all members of the Canadian Armed Forces placed their trust in this government to act on claims of sexual misconduct;
- (b) the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff was informed about a specific sexual harassment allegation against General Jonathan Vance three years ago;
- (c) the Prime Minister asserts that this sexual harassment allegation was never brought to his attention; and
- (d) the Prime Minister said that those in a position of authority have a duty to act upon allegations,

the House call upon the Prime Minister to dismiss his Chief of Staff for failing to notify him about a serious sexual harassment allegation at the highest ranks of the Canadian Armed Forces and for being complicit in hiding the truth from Canadians.

Privilege

By virtue of her giving notice of this motion, she is confirming what the Prime Minister has said all along: that he was not aware of allegations against General Vance until early 2021.

We also have the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill who asked the following question in question period on April 28, 2021:

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister stated that his office, like him, takes sexual harassment extraordinarily seriously, but Katie Telford did not take the misconduct allegations against General Vance seriously. If she had, she would have informed the Prime Minister. Only he can replace a chief of the defence staff, not unelected members of his office. His staff made him complicit in the misconduct, denying him the opportunity to act.

If the PM's staff had not kept him in the dark about the allegations against General Vance, would he have removed him?

[Translation]

In asking this question, the Conservative member recognizes that the Prime Minister was not aware of the allegations made in 2018 against General Vance, nor of their nature.

Lastly, as I already mentioned, the Standing Committee on National Defence is currently studying this issue, namely what the Prime Minister knew and when. If the Conservatives are so sure of their argument, why are they continuing with this study?

The third point is that it is not easy to establish that a matter is a *prima facie* question of privilege. The bar is high regardless of the situation.

• (1250)

All three conditions must be met. The member for Portage—Lisgar states that the simple presence of doubt should suffice to establish a *prima facie* question of privilege. I maintain that the bar is much higher than mere doubt. I also maintain that, in this particular case, the evidence demonstrates that there is no doubt at all.

The Prime Minister has been consistent in all of his statements to the House, and combined with the long tradition of accepting members at their word, it is evident that there is no basis for finding a *prima facie* question of privilege. The only way the member could attempt to prove that there is doubt was by scrambling the chronology of events and presenting statements out of context.

[English]

As the Prime Minister himself has said, every person deserves a safe work environment, and we will continue to do everything we can as a government to protect those who serve our country in uniform.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***CANADIAN NET-ZERO EMISSIONS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT**

The House resumed from April 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-12, An Act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has four minutes left in his speech.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am sure the government House leader will come back with further comments to the House in the future.

The issue we are debating is the government's failing response to the climate challenges that Canada and the world face. Canada, under the Liberal government, does not have an effective response plan, and Conservatives have offered an effective alternative that recognizes the truly international dimensions of this crisis.

What we have not heard from the government is a plan that takes into consideration the international dimensions by having appropriate adjustments at borders. Instead, what we have is the government punishing domestic industry in a way that pushes development outside the country but does not actually address the problem.

The government's approach imposes regulation as well as taxation on Canadian industry, but if the same investors move that industrial activity outside the country and then sell back into Canada, they are not subject to any such mechanisms. The system the government has put in place simply creates incentive to push economic activity out of the country rather than respond to these challenges.

We have a government that is very happy to import foreign oil, for example, while making the development of a domestic energy sector very difficult. For the first time, Conservatives are proposing a plan for Canada that takes into consideration this inequality. It says that the same standards would have to apply to products imported into Canada as are being applied in the case of production taking place in Canada.

I know this responds to what my constituents are saying and to what is frankly a source of significant frustration for my constituents. They ask the question of why our oil and gas sector is subject to further and further taxation and inconsistent regulatory burdens, and why, in cases where projects have been approved, the government allows lawless acts of protest to disrupt projects that have already been approved from moving forward. Why is that happening?

On the other hand, we do not hear the same criticisms about the environmental crimes, in many cases, in other parts of the world, as well as violations of human rights taking place in the production of things that then come to Canada. This is where we need to be rethinking our approach and where we have proposed a rethinking of the approach that emphasizes the global nature of the challenge we face.

As we look at Bill C-12, the government's request for a reporting framework, again there is no clear plan on actually responding to the environmental challenges we face. We are also very frustrated that despite the Liberals coming into Parliament and saying that they are going to look at these issues in good faith and consult with other parties, they have already presumed to declare who will be on the advisory board that is supposed to be set up by this legislation.

We have to look at this bill in a context where the government seems to have already preprogrammed certain decisions that it has not been forthright in communicating to the House at all. On that basis, Conservatives have put forward a reasonable amendment to challenge aspects of this framework, to challenge the failure to take into consideration the international dimension of the challenge and the unfortunate decision of the government to announce in advance who is going to be on the panel without consulting.

● (1255)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his intervention. I think I was here to hear the first half of it.

As we talk about our accountability toward getting to net-zero and how we are going to measure that, the government has put a policy in place here, a framework for exactly how that will happen. I know the member is critical of that. However, in all fairness, the Conservatives do not really have a great reputation, as it stands, for being able to properly gauge the direction of environmental legislation of the day. It was not that long ago that the member spoke very adamantly against a carbon tax, and now his party has decided that it is the best way to go.

I am just worried. If we take this member's advice, will he not realize, a couple of years from now, once the public opinion is fully there, that, again, the Conservatives had it wrong?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the government's proposal is to impose taxation on Canadians as a proposed solution to environmental challenges, for the government to take that money and redistribute it according to its own choices, including to include various public works programs in that spending.

Conservatives have been consistent in opposing that Liberal approach. We have proposals that take into consideration the global dimension of the challenges, as well as leaving resources in the pockets of Canadians in order to support their response to environmental challenges. I would submit that this is very different. It is also lowering the price overall. Without taking the same punitive approach, the taxation-oriented approach the Liberals have, we have independent agencies showing that we will achieve environmental targets.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I did hear some rather positive points as I was listening to his speech. For example, he said that the same standards would have to apply to products imported as are being applied in the case of production taking place in Canada. I think that the reciprocity of standards is very important. However, today we are talking about Bill C-12 on reducing greenhouse gases.

Does the member not think that clear standards should be set in Bill C-12? Is he open to adopting amendments to set such standards and allow for an independent oversight authority other than just the minister?

Does the member not think that there is a way to support his constituents by maintaining investments in his region without insisting that these investments be made in the oil sands?

This is not a judgment, but is now not the time to invest in the transition and in other energy sources? The Bloc Québécois will support the people in his region, but we also think that starting the transition is imperative.

What are the member's thoughts on this?

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I will focus on the last point first.

The way we can respond effectively to the environmental challenges we face, recognizing the increasing global need for energy, is to leverage the technology that is being generated through the development of our energy sector, technology that is constantly, aggressively improving the performance of the sector, and work to make that technology available as part of development around the world.

We are not going to address the challenges we face by expecting Canadians and people around the world to stop using energy. If we stopped using energy tomorrow, the rest of the world would still be increasing its use of energy. It is the technology we generate. It is the use of cutting-edge techniques, like carbon capture and storage projects in my riding. It is the—

• (1300)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to give an opportunity for more questions. The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his interesting speech.

I hear the Conservatives criticizing the Liberals for introducing a bill when we are not even on track to meet our 2030 targets, targets that herald back to the good old Conservative days. We just continue to move in a direction that promised that the environmental crisis we are in is going to continue.

Would the member admit that the Conservatives lack total credibility around having an active climate plan that is actually going to get us where we need to get to save the planet?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the member will not be surprised to find that I do not agree with her characterization of things. We can debate some aspects of the policies, but at the end of the day, it should be remembered that the last Conservative govern-

ment was the first government in Canadian history that actually reduced Canada's greenhouse gas emissions output.

Members of the NDP may say it was not enough, but it was the first government in history, unlike the Liberals, who signed the Kyoto Protocol and did absolutely nothing and saw emissions increase. Conservatives have been ahead of the Liberals in terms of actually delivering the goods when it comes to these issues. We continue to see all hat and no cattle from the Liberals when it comes to really achieving results—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the climate change challenge has often been compared to the moon shot of the 1960s. The moon shot involved a redoubling of resolve after a difficult and halting start to the space race in the United States. The moon shot was very much about targeting a seemingly out-of-reach objective on a seemingly impossible timeline: namely, reaching the moon before the end of the decade of the 1960s.

By all accounts, the scientists and engineers who came together to achieve this astounding historic feat that was the moon landing came up against tremendous technological challenges, brick walls that no doubt appeared insurmountable, especially on a tight timeline. NASA scientists were up against a target for which they were held to account by a president who created a public expectation of success with American national security and American pride on the line.

The key words here are “public expectation of success”. That is what the net-zero emissions accountability act is all about: a public expectation of success backed by a legal mechanism aimed at holding successive federal governments to account for fulfilling that expectation.

In the same way NASA scientists followed a critical path informed by experts for reaching their target, Bill C-12 will require the government to set greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets informed by experts, plans for achieving those targets informed by experts, regular reporting by the government on its progress in achieving its targets, regular assessments by the government on the effectiveness of its measures for achieving its targets, and regular independent analysis by the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development of the government's measures aimed at mitigating climate change, including those undertaken to achieve its most recent greenhouse gas emissions target as identified in the relevant assessment report.

More specifically, the government's progress report must provide an update on the progress it has made toward achieving its relevant milestone GHG target and an update on the implementation of its climate plan: that is, the federal measures, sectoral strategies and federal government operations strategies aimed at reaching the relevant milestone target. These progress reports must be prepared no later than two years before the beginning of the relevant milestone year so that adjustments can be made to these measures and strategies.

Government Orders

For its part, the assessment report must contain a summary of Canada's GHG emissions inventory, a statement on whether Canada has achieved its national GHG target for the milestone year and an assessment of how federal measures, sectoral strategies and federal government operations strategies described in the relevant emissions reduction plan contributed to Canada's efforts to achieve the national GHG target for that year.

The strength of this framework is that it does not rely solely on the government's own assessment of its progress and the effectiveness of its climate action plan. It allows for multiple expert voices to weigh in, in a sense to write the government's report card on climate change. In other words, the government will not be grading itself.

Incidentally, the space race achieved more than a target. It achieved a government-driven acceleration of technological progress and economic growth. Similarly, Bill C-12 is not only about meeting a life-saving target for the planet. It is ultimately about driving technological innovation and economic growth associated with the proliferation of the green products and services the world increasingly wants and needs.

There is, however, one difference that I see between the moon shot and the present task at hand. In a sense, the moon shot was a closed system involving a singular locus of scientific activity and a well-defined technological focus, all within the purview of a dedicated government program that obviously involved numerous partnerships.

The quest to meet targets around greenhouse gas emissions reductions in Canada is, in a sense, organizationally more complex, with more moving parts. Achieving net-zero emissions involves technological progress in many areas and simultaneous co-operative actions by many orders of government, where the degree of commitment to the goal of fighting climate change is not always shared equally across jurisdictions.

• (1305)

Added to this is the fact that the federal government lacks exclusive jurisdiction and power in the matter. We are a federation, not a unitary state. Nonetheless, our government has been able to exercise meaningful leadership on climate change.

We have been a government of firsts. Our government was the first federal government to put a national price on carbon and fight for the constitutional right to do so all the way to the Supreme Court. Our government was the first to develop a clean fuel standard.

Our government was the first to have the courage to attempt to negotiate a pan-Canadian framework on climate change with the provinces and territories, and we were successful, thanks to the Prime Minister's political will and capital and the can-do determination of the member for Ottawa Centre, who was the Minister of Environment and Climate Change at the time, but, governments change and can renege, and we have seen this happen.

Our government was the first to provide financial incentives for the purchase of a zero-emission vehicle. Our government was also the first to require environmental assessments of large energy

projects to factor in their GHG emissions. Our government was the first to set a net-zero emissions target, and our government is now the first to create a legal accountability framework for setting and achieving interim GHG targets on the way to net-zero emissions.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I have two quick questions. Do we have a new environment minister in Canada? On Earth Day here in Quebec and in the media it was the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, who is also the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who came to sell us on Canada's new measures. I was wondering about that.

Also, the possible new environment minister mentioned something rather surprising on Radio-Canada. In the past year, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions have increased, as they have in previous years, and the new environment minister said that was good news. He saw good news in that. That is newspeak to me.

What does my colleague think of that?

• (1310)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, I am not aware of the exact quote the member is referring to.

As far as the Minister of Canadian Heritage is concerned, when there are important announcements such as the budget or major steps when it comes to the environment, the entire Liberal caucus looks after delivering the message. There is nothing extraordinary about that.

As members know, many members of cabinet have expertise in the environment. In fact, the Liberal caucus is very concerned about the issue.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask a quick question of my colleague with regard to some of the issues we have with climate change and the opportunity for electric vehicles. One of the things I have been raising recently is a national auto strategy. The United States has moved ahead quite successfully with a lot of investment, and Canada is lagging even on a battery plan.

Why not create a national auto policy that sets targets and goals to achieve low emissions and produce electric vehicles, especially right now, given the fact we need to compete against not only the United States, but also Mexico and the rest of the world?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, first of all, I think it is a very good development that we have a government in the United States that is committed to environmental action. Obviously, it makes things much easier to be working with a like-minded government on a continental basis.

In terms of zero-emission vehicles, the member may know, as I know the industry is very important to him and his riding, that the environment committee of the House of Commons just completed a study on zero-emission vehicles and made a number of recommendations. I believe one of them was very much in line with what the member just mentioned. We will see, going forward, how we can work with auto makers and battery makers to make Canada a leader in the area of zero-emission vehicles.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, at this point, around the world there are 11 countries that have passed climate accountability legislation. Canada's will hold the distinction of being the weakest. If we are looking for a moon shot, and if we are shooting for a moon, this is the equivalent of a stepladder.

Does my hon. colleague not think it would have been wise for the federal government to consult, particularly with the gold standard? The country with the climate accountability that has worked for the longest and the best is the U.K. The legislation before us today differs in substantial ways from theirs, particularly by not having an independent expert group that monitors government progress and reports to the nation, as opposed to a multi-stakeholder advisory group for the minister. Would the member not agree it would be better to try to base our bill on what has worked elsewhere?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, the hon. member's views and insight carry a lot of weight in this chamber. As the member knows, the bill will hopefully be passed at second reading and make its way to the environment committee, where amendments will no doubt be tabled and we can have discussion about the points the member has raised.

However, it is important to acknowledge that there is much room for expert advice in this bill, and this is key. It is important that we do rely on expert advice and indeed that any consultative body be not just a diverse group of individuals who represent the country the way this House does. We need also some expertise to move forward, so I appreciate the member's point.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to speak to the draft legislation of Bill C-12, with regard to net-zero emissions. I am also very pleased to highlight some of our party's positions, which are set out in our position paper, entitled "Secure the Environment". With a Conservative government, Canada will meet its Paris Agreement targets, importantly, without killing jobs or taxing an already over-taxed population. Our plan will help the environment while also helping Canadians succeed in every region of the country and in all sectors.

The Liberal plan is based on an ever-increasing taxation plan that, while being presented as being revenue neutral to the government, is certainly not revenue neutral to the taxpayer. At best it is a tax scheme that redistributes wealth away from those living in parts of the country where greater energy consumption is a fact of life. Why are they being punished for that?

Government Orders

The Conservative plan, on the other hand, is much fairer in that it sets aside some of the money that each consumer will pay for energy consumption into a personal savings account that the consumer can spend or invest as they see best for their own purposes on green options.

The big distinction between the Liberal carbon tax and the Conservatives' plan to secure the environment is that Conservatives trust Canadians to do the right thing, spend their money wisely, be incentivized to think green, act responsibly with regard to the environment and do their part. We all want to do that. The Liberals, on the other hand, think that government knows best. We think educated Canadians know best.

Bill C-12, while being promoted as a significant step forward in the fight against climate change, is really more symbolic than substantive. It might give the casual political observer the impression that something significant is happening, but keep in mind that Bill C-12 follows up from Canada's dismal record of setting, and then missing, its emissions reductions targets.

What does Bill C-12 do? I think this is important and should be read into the record, so let us take a look at section 16. This is under the heading "Failure to achieve target", and it states:

If the Minister concludes that Canada has not achieved its national greenhouse gas emissions target for a milestone year or for 2050, as the case may be, the Minister must, after consulting with the ministers referred to in section 12, include the following in the assessment report:

- (a) the reasons why Canada failed to meet the target;
- (b) a description of actions the Government of Canada is taking or will take to address the failure to achieve the target; and
- (c) any other information that the Minister considers appropriate.

What happens if we miss the target? Not much, we just set another target. We create more reports, and the conversation just continues as though nothing happened. If anything, this would help Canada's pulp and paper industry as more and more reports are being printed.

Canada is a federal country, as has been noted by some of the previous speakers, with parliamentary sovereignty shared among two levels of government. Much of what is needed to be accomplished in protecting the environment falls within the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces under section 92(13) of the Constitution Act, 1867, property and civil rights within the province.

The federal government cannot do it on its own. It must work with the provinces. Sadly, the Liberal government's record is one of being sued by the provinces. The federal government won the last round, so I guess congratulations are in order, but Canadians are wondering why intergovernmental affairs on something as important as the environment needs to resort to the courts in the first place.

Government Orders

Why does the federal government not work with the provinces and come to a consensus on how to move forward? Conservatives understand the significance of that, and we will work with the provinces. Conservatives also recognize that the fight against global climate change is, in fact, global.

Canada cannot do it on its own. If it is global, after all, solutions also must be global. Canada is a large expanse of land. It is in the northern hemisphere. It is cold, and people must travel a lot and heat their homes and offices. That is just a fact of life in Canada.

• (1315)

Canada produces only a small fraction of the total world's greenhouse gas emissions, something often overlooked. Canadians want to do their part. We are inventive, we have great universities, we are leaders in technological advances and with strategic partnerships, we can develop and export green technology around the globe, not only for our own use domestically but internationally. We are a trading nation, but that trade must be fair. We have to be on an even playing field and if we are to impose tough environmental standards on ourselves, and I agree that we must, then it is only fair that others who trade with us should be held to the same or comparable standards.

Producers in countries with emission reductions targets and mechanisms compatible with our own would be exempt. Countries that do not and have high-emission reductions standards would have to pay. That way, the Conservative plan would secure both the environment and Canadian industry and jobs and would urge our American trading partner, our biggest trading partner, to adopt the same approach.

I want to talk about the oil and gas sector. Canada is a big producer, but also a responsible producer. We have the best minds in the world working on cleaner energy production, and that applies not only to renewable energy but also the more traditional oil and gas extraction, production, processing and delivery. We are a leader in all of that. To say that this sector needs to be phased out misses the reality of an ever-improving industry and the very obvious fact that the world needs Canada's oil and gas.

The International Energy Agency has projected that demand for oil will remain high for decades, and this is particularly true with the downturn in U.S. shale production. The world needs our oil and we need to produce it responsibly. We do not need to be talking about phasing it out.

The government's stated goal in phasing out oil and gas also overlooks the fact that since 1998, investment and production of Canada's oil sands is one of driving forces behind Canada's economic growth, and that must be true as we look to a pandemic recovery plan as well.

I also want to talk about LNG. The province of British Columbia is a big producer of natural gas and it can be a big tool in Canada helping the world become cleaner. Natural gas burns much cleaner than other fossil fuels and should be used at home and abroad to replace other more polluting energy sources. Using LNG instead of coal cuts emissions in half and countries across Asia are eager to do business with us.

Red tape imposed by the Liberal government means massive projects like Kitimat LNG being in danger of cancellation. This would not only hurt Canadians and Canadian jobs, but the planet. What Canada needs is a government that sends a message to the world that we are proud of our natural resources and that we will develop them in a responsible way. We will attract investment, not scare it off.

When we talk about investment, the Conservatives recognize that industry leaders are already changing their world view and investment strategies to be looked at through an ESG lens, an environmental, social and governance lens. Our plan recognizes that increasingly there is an expectation in global capital markets that ESG is an important factor. Our ESG leadership would help demonstrate the leadership of our oil and gas sector with respect to emissions-intensity reduction.

I want to mention indigenous peoples. We need to acknowledge the historic fact that they have not been treated respectfully. Canada needs to show leadership here as well. The current government has often said that no relationship is more important to it than with our indigenous peoples, but let us look at how that has worked out recently.

Coastal GasLink investors thought they had an understanding with the Wet'suwet'en people, the people whose traditional lands the pipeline will be built across, and who should be benefiting from that investment and structure. However, so far, it is not built and the protects continue—

• (1320)

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

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member has said that the only difference between the Conservatives' new price on pollution and the existing one this government has is that Conservatives appear to apparently trust Canadians in how to spend their money. Nothing could be further from the truth.

On this side of the House, the government plan was put in place where the money that was collected through the price on pollution would go back equally and be evenly distributed within the province. People get to decide how to spend their money. At least that is the case in Ontario since the federal government stepped in.

The plan from the Conservatives literally takes people's money, puts it into a special bank account and then people have to go to the Conservative Party boutique to decide what green product they will buy. It clearly demonstrates that the Conservatives are trying to control what people can spend their own money on.

Could the member please add some clarity to the fact that he has suggested that the Conservative plan gives people more decision-making power on their?

• (1325)

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives trust Canadians to do the right things, but we have heard from members of the Liberal side of the House that under a Conservative plan, Canadians would actually be incentivized to drive more, burn more to earn more. That is so cynical. That is not the way Conservatives think of our fellow citizens. We are confident that given the right incentives, Canadians will do the right thing. Clearly, government does not always know best. Let individuals make their own decisions.

As to the Liberals' carbon tax plan, it is a redistribution of wealth; it is not—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I hear again and again from the Conservatives that we cannot turn the taps off tomorrow when it comes to the oil and gas industry. I would recommend that we end subsidies to the oil and gas industry immediately, because that money is needed. It is needed to be invested in the transition that must happen and it is imperative. We need to look at where we are going, not just where we are today. It is important for our future on all measures, including the economy and the environment.

Does the member agree that Canada needs to take action now and that the bill needs to have firmer targets that will put us in line with the international commitment that Canada has made?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, the premise of the member's question ignores the fact that a lot of money is being invested in the oil and gas sector by oil and gas companies into cleaner, better and more responsible ways to produce oil and gas. There have been drastic improvements and we should be encouraging that industry to keep on doing that, to keep on becoming cleaner and greener. We should not be talking about phasing them out. There are a lot of jobs, a lot of investment and this is what drives Canada's economy. That is being ignored, sadly.

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I want to draw some attention to the enormity of the targets we are talking about here. Since 2005, we have only decreased our emissions by about 1% when we look at 2019. The Prime Minister has recently agreed to reduce them by an additional 45%. We have had carbon taxes in Ontario, where there is the Green Energy Act that increased the cost of electricity by \$37 billion for Ontario citizens.

Some experts have said that COVID has likely only reduced our emissions by about 7%. I do not know how we are going to meet

45% and I surely do not know how we are going to get to net zero without destroying our economy.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, I would reiterate that Bill C-12 purports to set targets and to be aggressive, but it is not really that at all. It misses the target in many ways. The accountability section is almost meaningless; it is without teeth.

A Conservative government would take meeting our targets very seriously and we would do so without killing jobs and without phasing out of our energy resource industries. We recognize that it is an important part of our economy and—

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

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise virtually in the House today to speak on Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act.

Bill C-12 emphasizes the action needed to meet our goals toward fighting climate change and reducing our carbon footprint.

For years, our youth have been calling for action. Advocates alike have been demanding targets and concrete change. We have had rallies for decades, and scientists and experts alike have warned of the damage to come should we not act.

The bill is comprised of five themes: accountability, transparency, target measures, monitoring and holding all governments, current and future, accountable. Specifically, the proposed bill will require tabling and publicizing targets, plans, progress reports and assessment reports. We need robust parliamentary accountability mechanisms to fulfill our commitment to be transparent to the public, to set and achieve target measures, monitor progress and, last, ensure that this government and future governments alike remain accountable to every principle in the bill.

On that note, in December 2015, Canada joined 194 parties in signing the Paris agreement, a historic agreement that would be the start of the commitment to address climate change. That agreement aimed to limit the global temperature increase to well below 2°C above the pre-industrial level and to pursue efforts to limit our temperature increase to 1.5°C. Since 2015, our government has been working hard to achieve this goal, listening to the advice of scientists and experts. This momentum of remaining accountable must continue. Bill C-12 would require a target and establish an emissions reduction plan to be put in place, both to be tabled in Parliament within six months of the coming into force of this act.

Government Orders

Furthermore, the bill would set a legally binding process for the federal government to set climate targets and bring forward an ambitious climate plan every five years between 2030 and 2050. This would mean that a 2030 progress report must be tabled before the end of 2027, and a 2030 assessment report to be tabled within 30 days of the 2030 national inventory report data.

In addition, an annual report detailing how the federal government is managing the financial risk of climate change and the opportunities must be conducted and tabled in Parliament.

Finally, a review by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development within five years of coming into force of this act must be conducted.

The dates are aligned with the very structure of the Paris agreement based on 2030, as are plans in provinces like B.C. and Quebec and those around the world.

To promote transparency as well as accountability in relation to meeting those targets, the enactment also requires that the several reports mentioned above to be tabled and published to the public. Canadians deserve to know the targets being set, our plan to meet these targets and our progress along the way. Importantly, having a Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development providing an analysis of the government's plan at least once every five years adds additional scrutiny and transparency. This is yet another example of how we plan to be transparent to Canadians.

Our government believes in science and evidence-based research, and we will continue to include science and research in every step. That is why an advisory body composed of up to 15 experts will be established to provide the Minister of Environment and Climate Change advice with respect to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

This advisory body will engage with experts, stakeholders, indigenous people and the public to ensure that its advice is grounded in the priorities and ideas of all Canadians. The advisory body will submit an annual report to the minister of the environment with respect to its advice and activities. The creation of an advisory board is consistent with other actions taken by our peer countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, New Zealand and France.

● (1330)

This bill aims to hold the federal government to its commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 and to exceed our 2030 Paris target.

On Earth Day, the Prime Minister announced at the Earth Summit a commitment to cut emissions by 40 to 45% by 2030. It is an ambitious goal that I am sure we can achieve, if done right with co-operation on all fronts. This is why Bill C-12 is so important.

Let me reiterate that prior to 2030, the target measures entail the following: Within six months of the act coming into force, the 2030 milestone target and tabling the 2030 milestone plan would be set; before the end of 2027, a 2030 progress report would be completed and tabled; and within 30 days of all 2030 national inventory report data, there would be a 2030 assessment report.

Post-2030, the target measures would entail the following: At least five years before each milestone year of 2035, 2040 and 2045, the milestone must be set; two years prior to each milestone year, preparations for a progress report for the milestone year would commence; and within 30 days of national inventory report data for each milestone year, preparation of an assessment report for the milestone would be under way. Last but not least, there would also be targets associated with the Environment Commissioner, and the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development must, at least once every five years, examine and report on the Government of Canada's implementation of the measures aimed at mitigating climate change, including those undertaken to achieve its most recent greenhouse gas emissions target as identified in the relevant assessment report.

Everything that I have outlined is necessary to monitoring our progress and reaching the benchmarks that will be set for each target milestone. It is crucial that we set up mechanisms to fully monitor our progress, and that is why this advisory board is crucial.

Again, it is crucial that we act. Countries around the world are accelerating their transition to a net-zero economy and Canada cannot fall behind. It is crucial that we set targets and make every effort to meet them. Net zero is not just a plan for a healthier environment: It is a plan to build a cleaner, more competitive economy. I encourage my colleagues from all parties to support this bill. We must work together to ensure that we collectively reduce our emissions. We need to act to ensure that the momentum of this progress continues well after this Parliament. This is exactly what this bill intends, and this is exactly what we plan to do.

As the representative of the beautiful riding of Richmond Hill, I am proud to support this bill that members of my environmental community council have been strong advocates of. This bill is an opportunity to move toward a greener and cleaner environment and economy. This is why there are several key initiatives, 43 different measures, in budget 2021 that will not only help us achieve this target but move Canadians to innovation in clean and green technology.

In closing, Bill C-12 is a bill for Canada and a bill for Canadians. Once again it is a promise made and a promise kept for a greener and cleaner economy and environment.

● (1335)

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, we need a climate change bill, and a promise is a promise. However, there is a flaw in this bill that has to be fixed. The bill may tell us that certain actions must be taken, but it does not tell us what targets must be achieved by 2025 or 2030. Regardless, we already know Canada will not hit its targets.

What concrete steps does my colleague intend to take to ensure that this bill contains not only targets, but also measures that will enable us to meet those targets?

[English]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, the concrete actions we are taking are the 43 measures that have been highlighted in budget 2021. I strongly suggest that the member look through budget.gc.ca, as I am sure she has, to look at those measures.

I would also like to say that the Liberal government has already invested over \$60 billion to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help Canadians adapt to the changing climate. Those are all concrete actions, from putting a price on pollution to planning to plant two billion trees, making investments in electric vehicles, making investments in retrofits, making investments in clean energy—

• (1340)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to follow up on my Bloc colleague's question. It is great to talk about what one is going to do and great to talk about the investments, yet with the problem we are trying to solve and the actions the Liberal government has taken, there does not seem to be any connection between achieving results and what it has done.

Could the member please give us an idea of how the measures the Liberal government has put in place are actually achieving real targets?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, the achievement is quite clear. We have put measures in and have introduced a price on pollution, especially a price on carbon. That policy has been rolled out and is already resulting in many Canadians having the opportunity to use the money being transferred to them as part of the reimbursement to invest in green retrofits for their homes. Actually, I used that retrofit to change some of my light bulbs to LED light bulbs and to change my thermostat, which helps with the greening of my house and also helps improve the efficiency of my house.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, Bill C-12 illustrates quite clearly why the committee stage is such an important part of the legislative process. Bill C-12 is a good start, but like any first draft, it does need some revisions.

Would the member agree that when this bill gets to committee, there should be some strengthening in the language around putting in a real target for the year 2025 but also making sure the proposed advisory committee has a very specific role in setting targets and reviewing the kinds of assessments we are putting in place for all of this? Would he agree those two specific areas need strengthening in this bill at committee stage?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, that is why we have the process we do for the review of bills. Bills go to committee so we are able to hear from various witnesses. As I said in my speech, our government is committed to making sure the decisions we are making are evidence-based and based on research, science and fact. I look forward to receiving those facts, as well as receiving input

Government Orders

from other members in the House and in the committee to make sure the bill we are putting forward is strong.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is once again an honour to rise in this place to debate another piece of legislation.

We are debating Bill C-12, which is one of the bills I have heard a significant amount of feedback on from constituents. Over the course of the next 10 minutes or so, I hope to be able to outline some of the specifics of what this bill is and is not, and to dispel some of the myths that the members opposite, especially, like to propagate, both about their so-called environmental plan and how they attempt to label Conservatives.

I plan to talk with great pride about some of the work being done within my constituency and the industries that I am proud to represent, and how some of my constituents are leading the way on ensuring that we have a strong environment for today and in the future.

First, I want to dispel some myths. I find it interesting that the members opposite will talk at length about how Conservatives somehow hate the environment, about how Conservatives refuse to take action, about Conservatives this and Conservatives that, yet as with so many aspects of what the government talks about, the talking points do not reflect reality.

If I had more time, I would highlight some of the significant achievements of past Conservative governments, but also the ways that Conservatives stand up for the environment. I can certainly speak to the fact that Alberta is a place that over the last half a century, except for four unfortunate years of Socialist intervention, has had largely Conservative governments and has led the way in ensuring both emissions reductions and environmental plans that have really created a framework for ensuring a strong environment for today and for future generations.

Quite often the Liberals will take a piece of a policy, yet forget the big picture. They will criticize the Conservatives for something, simply saying, "Oh, well, it is because Harper was so evil, and therefore Conservatives must hate everything to do with the environment and all of that." It could not be further from the truth. One of the most telling aspects of the Liberals' narrative of trying to label Conservatives as somehow anti-environment is that, when they took over government, most of the targets and mandates were kept the same as the previous government had negotiated.

Somehow the Liberals think they own the narrative on the environment, when the reality could not be further from the truth. I am proud to represent 53,000 square kilometres of beautiful east central Alberta, where environmental stewardship has defined much of that region's legacy, and will continue to into the future.

Government Orders

I would just note that five generations of my family have worked the land in what is called Alberta's Special Areas. It is a testament to the stewardship of Albertans. "Special Areas" is a unique name in terms of a municipality, but let me give a quick history lesson. Back in the drought years of the 1930s, the government basically deemed that area unfit for habitation and was buying back land. My family was one of the few in the area to stick around. I would like to think that is where my family gets some of its tough nature from.

Over the last close to a century, we have seen the Special Areas go from being deemed almost unfit to becoming incredibly productive through successive generations of good agricultural practices and advancements in technology. The list goes on and on about the incredible advancements that ensured this region, which was largely misunderstood a century ago because of the challenges it faced during the drought, would have the strength it now does in terms of the environment. It leads as an example of good soil management, land management and agriculture.

We are truly the heart of the energy industry in Canada. I say this because in Hardisty, Alberta, billions of dollars of Canadian energy flow through the region. It is at the heart of the energy industry. Some incredible advancements in the environment have come about as a result of Canada's world-class oil and gas industry.

• (1345)

I note my time is quickly escaping. That happens when I talk with such pride about my constituency.

The hypocrisy of the Liberal agenda is highlighted so clearly in Bill C-12. Let me get into some of the specifics of that.

In laymen's terms, Bill C-12 is simply to bring forward a plan that will report on its plan and make changes if the plan does not go according to plan. I say that a bit facetiously, but that really is what Bill C-12 is about.

Further, there is a 15-member panel the minister plans to bring forward. It is interesting because all members of this House I think, certainly from the Conservative side, support a strong environment for our future, but we also believe that needs to go hand in hand with the economy, yet this panel has been pre-chosen by the minister opposite.

I would note some of the activism that defines the past, specifically I think of the minister of heritage who literally went to prison for breaking the law regarding environmental activism. That is the sort of agenda that in some cases is defining members who have been preselected, before Parliament has even passed this bill, to be on this 15-member panel that will present a plan to the plan that will evaluate the plan, and so on. It is rich that the government has said that somehow this will solve all the woes of the world, that it will accomplish its failures, when I know that, and this may surprise members opposite, the reality is this. Donald Trump had a better record for reducing emissions than the Prime Minister opposite. That may be surprising to some, but the numbers speak otherwise. The member opposite, specifically the Prime Minister, likes to contrast himself with the former president of the United States. That certainly is a contrast point, but I am not sure it is one the Prime Minister would be proud of, when Donald Trump has beaten his

record on the environment and done so by a fairly substantial margin.

That highlights a few of the challenges I see with Bill C-12, the inconsistencies in the Liberal agenda and how the Liberals somehow think that, once again, punting something a bit further down the road releases them from accountability on this issue. I would suggest they have defined much of the conversation around it, but failed when it comes to actual action on the environment.

Let me get into a few examples of why I am proud to represent a region of the country that is really leading the world. I have talked a bit about energy. A few miles outside of the boundaries of Battle River—Crowfoot, in one of my neighbouring colleague's ridings, is an oil basin that a particular energy company works in and is able to produce net-zero oil. According to some of the most conservative estimates, energy demand is going to increase over the next couple of decades. Some estimates show it further than that. We are seeing a resurgence of demand, notably the price of oil has increased to much beyond pre-pandemic levels, and we are seeing demand for the actual volume of oil likely to surpass pre-pandemic levels at some point this year. Imagine net-zero oil. There should not be one member of this House who is opposed to the energy industry when we have demonstrated that we can, in the most environmental and ethical way, I would note, possible to ensure we have energy that can secure not only our country's future but the world's future.

We can look at biomass. I have a couple of biomass companies that are pioneering the way. We can secure carbon permanently from agricultural practices and building supplies, agricultural advancements that are absolutely incredible, such as carbon sequestration in the soil, and the list goes on.

There is a wide divide between what the Conservatives and the members opposite say on the environment, but I will say one thing. Canadians can count on the Conservatives to stand up for taking action on the environment, not just talk like the members opposite.

• (1350)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member started off his speech today by talking about Conservatives not having the narrative on climate action and how somehow Conservatives are seen as those who do not take climate action seriously. I can tell the member that I have heard members of the Conservative party, who are sitting in this House right now, talk about climate change as though it is not something that is human-caused. Of the membership of this member's party, 54% have said they do not believe in climate action.

Does he agree with the 54% that climate change is not made by humans?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, once again it is spin that is misleading at best and unparliamentary language at worst. I find it interesting. I would ask the member—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a point of order.

Government Orders

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, if a member is going to suggest I am using unparliamentary language, I would at least like to know what he is referring to, so I could address it and apologize for it, if that is the case.

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member has a point. We do not use that lightly, so I would invite the member for Battle River—Crowfoot to explain to us what he meant.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, in response to the point of order, I find it interesting the member actually is bringing forward a point that has been litigated at length in the House regarding a motion that was brought forward regarding the—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: What did I say that was unparliamentary?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. members will not start to debate, please. That is exactly the question that has to be answered.

What was unparliamentary in the member's question?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, the member opposite referenced very specifically a motion that was brought forward at the Conservative Party convention. It was three paragraphs. He referenced six words of the beginning of that, and he knows full well, at least I hope he does, if he has actually read the motion that was brought forward—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Question of privilege.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member is not necessarily explaining what unparliamentary language was used by the member for Kingston and the Islands.

The hon member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a question of privilege.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as with any member of this Parliament, it is assumed that we hold honour here and that our integrity means something. If a member is going to come into this House and start to throw around that I am using unparliamentary language, that member owes me an explanation as to what it was I said that was unparliamentary, or retract that comment.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, with respect to the hon. member, I would not use “unparliamentary language” to describe comments the previous member made, and endeavoured to explain how the point he was making was not actually an accurate representation of what is being discussed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am not going to go back to the Hansard right now to ensure the words were used or not. We will look into it.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

[Translation]

CANADIAN NET-ZERO EMISSIONS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that C-12, An Act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, my question for my colleague is very simple. Does he believe climate change is a real threat?

It is true that we cannot eliminate oil completely, but does he not think it would be wise to reduce our reliance on oil and start switching to renewable energy sources?

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question, because I think here lies a significant question that all Canadians need to ask, whether from Quebec, Alberta, the Maritimes, the west coast or whatever the case may be, and that is where we get our oil while this transition takes place. Do we get it from jurisdictions that have very poor environmental standards, jurisdictions that have few or no ethical standards, or from a choice supplier that could be Alberta?

I think many Canadians would agree they would rather have oil and energy produced by a jurisdiction like Alberta versus foreign jurisdictions that do not have those same standards. I hope the member from the Bloc would support that sort of initiative, which is truly good for not just Albertans or Quebecers, but all Canadians.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member's remarks. At one point he suggested that parties other than his claim to own the narrative around climate change, and I would argue the Conservatives have certainly owned a narrative around the issue, it is simply not the narrative that resonates with most Canadians.

The vote at second reading on Bill C-12 is a vote on the principle of holding the government to account on its climate targets. If the Conservative party votes against the bill at second reading, how is anyone to understand that as anything other than a vote against the principle of climate accountability?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I find it interesting that the members opposite would be suggesting things that I am not sure are entirely within the scope of what is being debated here.

I look at Bill C-12 and I see many concerns. I have highlighted some of them and there are others that some of my colleagues have also done a great job at highlighting. There is a lot of work that needs to be done. Certainly, if this bill passes, a lot of questions will need to be asked and answered, hopefully along with changes made at committee.

Statements by Members

Our job here in this House, the job of each and every member, is to represent our constituents. That is something that I will do each and every day to ensure that their voices are heard in this place.

I am so honoured to represent Strathcona County and Fort Saskatchewan. A strong community and social solidarity will continue to get us through and keep us moving forward.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise virtually to #GetReal about mental health. This week is the CMHA's annual mental health awareness week. It is crucial that we come together to address mental illness in Canada.

This past month I had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Samantha Wells from CMHA, who has reported findings on the mental health of Canadians during this pandemic, and Glenn Brimacombe from the Canadian Psychological Association, whose team is studying mental health parity in Canada. Both have highlighted the importance of evidence-based research and the direct impact of COVID-19 on Canadians' mental health.

As well, my friend from the other chamber, Dr. Kutcher, reminds us of the five principles that we need to stay well: exercise, sleep, support system, healthy practising and helping others.

I want to thank these organizations in my riding, which are doing great work on the ground: Home on the Hill, Krasman Centre, CMHA York Simcoe, 360 Kids, and Ample Labs.

Let us keep—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

STRATHCONA COUNTY FIRE

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, right before the pandemic hit, I attended the grand opening of a Little Caesars restaurant in my riding, owned by a local entrepreneur, Ravi Prakash Singh. Tragically, in the early morning hours of Saturday, April 24, this business, along with five others, burned to the ground. The other businesses are K-Lee Boutique, KFC, Chopped Leaf, Dr. Bernstein Clinic and Great Clips.

My heart goes out to all who were affected. This terrible event comes on top of all the strain and pain that local business owners and their employees have been experiencing. Literally or metaphorically, many have seen decades of hard work go up in flames.

I want to recognize the Strathcona fire department, which worked through the night of the fire to contain the damage. As always, our community comes together in the face of tragedy, with GoFundMe pages launched and random gifts delivered to the lawns of business owners. I took my kids to an ice cream store owned by the proprietor of the same Little Caesars that was destroyed. Eating ice cream is a form of solidarity that my children would like to see us practise more often.

230TH ANNIVERSARY OF POLISH CONSTITUTION

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today Polish Canadians across Canada and abroad will celebrate the 230th anniversary of the adoption by Poland of the constitution of May 3, the first written constitution in modern Europe and the second constitution in the world, after that of the United States. The constitution of May 3 introduced bold and progressive democratic reforms that included a constitutional monarchy and the separation of powers between branches of government.

Here in Canada, Polish Canadians traditionally celebrate Constitution Day by gathering in Polish halls and church basements to sing hymns, enact plays, recite poems and reflect on Poland's legacy of fighting for freedom. This year, though we will celebrate a little differently, I join all Polish Canadians in commemorating this important holiday, one that reminds us that we must always stand on guard for democracy and our rights and freedoms.

I join all Polish Canadians in reciting these beautiful words: *“Witaj maj, trzeci maj, dla Polaków błogi raj.”*

[Translation]

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is the beginning of the 70th annual Mental Health Week. This year's theme is “Get Real”, because the first step toward mental health is to name the emotions we are feeling. I encourage everyone to “get real” by conquering their fears and realizing that asking for help is not only okay, it is healthy.

As for politicians, they also have a second responsibility. They need to “get real” and take real action. In the middle of a pandemic that is having a huge impact on our mental health, the federal budget is investing money to create national mental health standards. We do not need standards. Quebec's professionals are doing an outstanding job. We need money, workers, professionals to treat people. By refusing to increase health transfers, the federal government is not doing its job.

Let us talk about mental health, but those whose responsibility it is to act must do so.

THE ECONOMY IN MADAWASKA—RESTIGOUCHE

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the resilience of the people of Madawaska—Restigouche. First of all, after being in zone 4 and enduring two lockdowns since January 2021, we returned to the orange level as of a week ago. On top of that, all of the regional economies neighbouring my riding have been hit hard, as all cross-border traffic from our immediate neighbours, Quebec and Maine, was halted because of the health measures put in place. Businesses in the Campbellton, Edmundston and Upper Madawaska regions have major challenges to overcome since losing most of their customers from neighbouring regions. As we wait for things to return to normal, there is only one way to contribute to the economic recovery of our beautiful regions and to preserve our jobs, and that is to shop local.

I would like to thank the people of our community for supporting our businesses, following public health guidelines and getting vaccinated in large numbers. We are all contributing in our own way so we can get back to business as usual.

* * *

● (1405)

ADDING A SPLASH OF COLOUR TO SPRING

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): During this time of COVID-19, we need to adapt.

Let us add a splash of colour to spring. That was the theme of the invitation I extended to the people of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier in February when I asked them to submit colourful drawings to create a mural or poster to brighten our seniors' spring. We got a nice surprise. We received over 350 drawings from across the riding to help create this collective piece of artwork.

The posters will be sent to 33 seniors' residences in the riding. I believe this wave of colour will bring them a little bit of comfort in the circumstances that we are all facing. This is a good way to remind our precious seniors that we are thinking of them and that we need to keep going and not give up.

Once again, I am very proud of the people of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier. Congratulations to Léa Roy from Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier and Victoria Cantin from Neuville who are the lucky winners of the two gift bags. Their names were chosen at random from among all those who submitted a drawing. I thank all participants, both young and not-so-young, and I wish them all a happy spring.

* * *

[English]

400TH ANNIVERSARY OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 1, Sikhs across Canada and throughout the world celebrated the 400th birth anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib, the ninth of 10 gurus who founded the Sikh religion. He is honoured and remembered as a pioneer who championed human rights and religious freedoms for all, and he was martyred for raising his voice against injustice and oppression. Particularly in the times we are living in, the teachings of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib are very relevant and, if followed, can bring peace and justice in our society.

Statements by Members

I want to wish everyone a very happy 400th birth anniversary of the great Guru Ji.

* * *

[Translation]

YOUTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians across the country have been feeling the impact of COVID-19 for the past year in many ways. The pandemic has indiscriminately affected a lot of Canadians' mental health, and this is especially true for young people.

[English]

The psychosocial effects of COVID-19 disproportionately affect youth. Social isolation and almost a complete loss of all activities, including school, work and extracurricular activities, have led to high levels of anxiety and depression among youth. Children worry about whether they will see their friends and relatives, go to school and get sick. Young adults are worried about graduating and not finding work in their field, as there are long-lasting effects on income and health beyond the period of economic recession, as well as risks of future insecure employment.

[Translation]

I encourage parents to be vigilant and ask for help if they have concerns about their children's mental health. Early intervention can prevent long-term consequences.

I invite all young Canadians aged 12 to 25 and their parents to a discussion on mental health on May 10 in French and May 11 in English. They will be able to talk to experts and get advice on coping mechanisms. I invite parents to join the discussion if they think it could benefit their child.

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LOCAL AGRICULTURE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during these difficult times we are living in, and as the new season approaches, food sovereignty is all the more important for the well-being of Canadians.

I encourage everyone, big or small, to try their hand at the good old-fashioned pastime of gardening and discover the pleasure of growing their own produce.

It is essential nowadays to buy local in order to support those whose unstinting efforts produce the basic food we need to survive, not to mention culinary delights and unique, refined products to please our palates.

If every one of us spent a bit more money at the local level every week, we would see an entirely new eco-friendly economy that would stimulate and encourage our next generation of farmers and business owners.

Statements by Members

In closing, I wish everyone a good planting season. Every effort is sure to pay off because we always reap what we sow.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

BUSINESSES IN FLEETWOOD—PORT KELLS

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout the pandemic, our government has been there with supports for Canadian businesses and we have had amazing partners. At home, the Fleetwood Business Improvement Association and executive director Dean Barber have guided our Fraser Highway business community through these difficult times, helping it adapt to pandemic realities, making it fun and rewarding for people to shop close to home. I can report that we have 12 more small businesses with open doors now than we did before the pandemic.

As Surrey grows into the industrial heart of metro Vancouver, another shout-out must go to the Surrey Board of Trade's executive director Anita Huberman, who always tirelessly advocates for businesses large and small and, I must add, very effectively for the supports our government has provided.

Today, it is a parliamentary salute to Anita, Dean and every local BIA, board of trade and chamber of commerce, great partners for business and great partners for government, too.

* * *

BILL C-10

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like all of the Liberals' policies, Bill C-10 is a poorly thought-out piece of legislation that will have a tidal wave of consequences for everyday Canadians, first and foremost curtailing their freedom of speech online. This is unacceptable.

The Liberals have removed the clause that confirmed the charter right to freedom of speech would be upheld. Looking deeper, Canadians can see the Liberals' effort to give the CRTC policing powers to oversee user-generated content, giving it the power to order take-downs on online content it deems objectionable.

By what right can the Liberals or the CRTC judge whether someone's content is objectionable? Do we not have freedom of expression in this country? Who made the heritage minister the arbiter of acceptable content? A former CRTC commissioner says this is "a full-blown assault upon...the foundations of democracy".

Conservatives will not stand for it. Bill C-10 must be withdrawn or amended to protect freedom of speech in Canada.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for 70 years now the Canadian Mental Health Association has recognized Mental Health Week, and today marks the beginning of yet another. Thankfully, the conversation around mental health, mental illness and mental injury has evolved over the last 70 years. The stigma associated with mental illness has been reduced,

but this is not good enough. Ultimately, the stigma must be eliminated.

One in five Canadians experiences a mental health issue in any given year, but all have mental health. Sadly, the last year of lockdowns, isolation, job losses and uncertainty has led to more anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts and feelings.

As we begin Mental Health Week this year, my message to Canadians is this: It is okay not to be okay. These are not normal times, but we will get back to normal. There is a light at the end of the tunnel. They are loved and the world is a better place because they are in it. We must check on family, friends, neighbours and colleagues, talk to them, but more importantly, listen and be kind.

Let us continue the conversation and let us end the stigma. There is no health without mental health.

* * *

TRIBUTE TO FAMILY MEMBER

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I wish to honour one of my heroes, my niece Hannah Turner. Hannah is a leader, courageous, kind, loving, wise, and at only 18 years of age, she has continued to rise in spite of uncontrollable life circumstances, losing her father at age 11, and supporting her mother, my courageous sister Sarah Gazan, through two bouts of breast cancer.

She is a basketball star, an A-plus student, a mentor, a friend and a leader who walks on the earth in non-judgment. Hannah is so funny, a brilliant writer and such a dear friend to me. Hannah gives me hope that we will achieve a better world for all. Hannah has vision and walks through life with dignity. Hannah is graduating this year at the top of her class.

I love Hannah. She makes auntie so proud. She is my hero.

* * *

[Translation]

MARCEL CHAREST

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a former vice-principal of Polyvalente Deux-Montagnes because I want to highlight the retirement of a pillar of this school, Marcel Charest.

Marcel has been a full-time volunteer for two decades and has also held the honourable position of president of the Fondation de la Polyvalente Deux-Montagnes, which Antonio Lavigne and I founded in 1997.

My dear Marcel, you have walked the halls of this venerable institution for decades. You know this school like the back of your hand, because you explored it, enhanced it and made it a magnificent place.

Everyone knows and loves Marcel. He is a discreet, efficient, generous and passionate man who has given the best of himself to the cause of education, and we all are grateful for his efforts.

Marcel, your quiet presence will always be felt in the hallways of our school. You have our gratitude and our respect.

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

BILL C-10

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, dangerous, draconian, the worst thing to happen to free speech in our history: One would think I am describing legislation proposed in a communist regime or a dictatorship, but unbelievably, in fact, this is how experts are describing legislation proposed right here in Canada with the Liberals' Bill C-10. However, maybe we should not be surprised. We all remember how the Prime Minister professes admiration for China's basic dictatorship.

Unlike the heritage minister, I will be clear. Bill C-10 opens the door for state regulation and control of the Internet. The former commissioner of the CRTC said this is "a full-blown assault" on free expression and "the foundations of [our] democracy". The Liberals want to control what we see on YouTube, Netflix and Twitter, or if it is content that they do not agree with or that does not align with Liberal virtue, the Prime Minister is giving himself the authority to have it removed.

Clearly, this is a move to silence Canadians' free speech and freedom of expression. Conservatives will not support this. We want all Canadians to be the voice of defending our free speech.

* * *

[Translation]

GEORGES-PHILIPPE GADOURY-SANSFAÇON

Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, students are the future leaders of our communities, and I think it is important to encourage them and recognize their contributions.

That is why I want to recognize Georges-Philippe Gadoury-Sansfaçon, a mathematics and applied psychology student at Bishop's University. This year, this young man from Bedford was awarded the 3M National Student Fellowship, which recognizes 10 Canadian students who have demonstrated leadership and involvement on campus and in their communities.

Georges-Philippe helped design a service to assist professors in finding innovative solutions to pandemic-related challenges. His

Oral Questions

work modernized classrooms and helped hundreds of students with their virtual learning during a turbulent school year.

This award is one of many honours he has received during his academic career. He was also selected to participate in a forum for the world's 100 most promising young researchers.

I congratulate Georges-Philippe for all of his accomplishments, and I hope he keeps up the excellent work.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cover-up of the cover-up of sexual misconduct allegations against the former chief of the defence staff by the government is getting uglier and uglier by the day.

The Prime Minister said that he did not know, but changes his story often. Just hours ago, the Liberal chair, for no reason, cancelled the committee meeting shedding light on this very issue. The Liberals are clearly trying to run and hide.

Last week in the House, the Prime Minister was asked nine times that if he had known the allegations were sexual in nature, would he have dismissed General Vance. The Prime Minister would not answer. Why is that?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have always respected the work done by my colleagues at the committee. For this study, I have appeared at the committee for six hours along with senior defence officials. The committee has already heard from Ray Novak, who laid out the process that was followed when rumours were brought forward in 2015.

In fact, many questions remain unanswered from the leader of the official opposition on what he knew in 2015 when he brought forward those rumours, yet still appointed General Vance while he was under active investigation by the CFNIS.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives heard rumours, we acted. When the Liberals saw evidence, they ran and hid.

It would appear the Prime Minister knew in 2018 that he was facing much more serious evidence of inappropriate sexual harassment, which begs the valid question about the Prime Minister's own state of mind at that time. If the Prime Minister had held General Vance to a standard of zero tolerance for #MeToo allegations, he would have to have held himself to the same standard. He was not prepared to do that and so he looked the other way.

Is it not true that the Prime Minister decided to sacrifice women who were being sexually victimized in the military in order to protect himself?

Oral Questions

• (1420)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will always take strong actions when it comes to protecting women in the Canadian Armed Forces, but last week we learned some very troubling news. Former Prime Minister Harper appointed General Vance in July 2015 even though he was under active investigation by the CFNIS. Just days after the Conservatives appointed him, the investigation was suddenly dropped. According to an ATIP, the commanding officer said that he was under pressure. By who?

The Leader of the Opposition says that he passed along sexual misconduct allegations by General Vance in July of 2015, claiming that they were being looked into. How is it possible General Vance was appointed at that time even though there was an investigation currently going on?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is what we know happened since 2018 when the Prime Minister's Office knew about these allegations. The Prime Minister publicly praised General Vance for his leadership of Operation Honour. He signed off on making him the longest-serving chief of the defence staff. He even signed off on a \$50,000 raise, all the while apparently his chief of staff knew there was sexual misconduct allegations against the general.

Are we to believe that Katie Telford kept the Prime Minister in the dark about sexual misconduct allegations while she watched him reward, praise and even promote General Vance?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said at committee, no, I did not know the nature of the specific details. I repeat that Mr. Walbourne brought up concerns of misconduct involving the former chief of the defence staff. He did not give me any details.

However, who did have the details? The leader of the official opposition knew of rumours in 2015 regarding General Vance that he felt were serious enough for the prime minister's chief of staff to know about. Perhaps we should learn what details the Leader of the Opposition knew at that time.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the sorry saga of General Vance and sexual harassment of women in uniform, the Liberals are continuing their cover-up in an absolutely repugnant way.

The Standing Committee on National Defence was to meet this morning to discuss the case. What did the Liberal government do, through its Liberal committee chair? It cancelled the meeting. That is completely unacceptable.

Why are the Liberals continuing their cover-up in this sad saga of sexual harassment of women in the armed forces?

[English]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I respect the work of all my colleagues on all committees, and I take my responsibilities as chair of the national defence committee very seriously. I have worked hard to serve the members of the committee in an unbiased way. This should be about improving

the lives of the women and men of CAF. It should be about respecting and supporting survivors and those impacted by this abominable behaviour. It should be about preventing more abuse and trauma. The committee is developing recommendations for the government to this end, and the committee will be meeting later this week.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure that the best way to go deep into the reality is to shut down the committee, as the hon. member did this morning.

[Translation]

If the member is willing to answer questions, could she explain to us why the chief of staff received an email on March 2, 2018, that specifically used the words sexual harassment, even though the Prime Minister continues to claim that, for three years, no one in his cabinet was aware that the allegation was about sexual harassment?

Who does the chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence think is telling the truth?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said at committee, I did not know the nature of the specifics of the details. However, and I want to repeat, Mr. Walbourne brought up concerns of misconduct involving the former chief of defence staff. He did not give any details, but we know who had the details. The leader of the official opposition knew of rumours back in 2015 regarding General Vance that he felt were serious enough that they had to inform the prime minister's chief of staff. Perhaps we should learn more about these details from the leader of the official opposition.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the culture of silence in the military is alarming.

Yesterday, former ombudsman Gary Walbourne again reiterated that he made it clear to the Minister of National Defence that he had received a complaint of “inappropriate sexual behaviour” against the former chief of the defence staff. He reiterated that the minister refused to review the complaint. The minister said that the nature of the complaint did not matter, and he just said he did not know what it was. I am not making this up.

Does the minister, himself a former member of the military, realize that he contributed to that culture of silence?

• (1425)

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely committed to rooting out any type of misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces.

As I stated before, and at committee, I did not know the nature of the specifics of the case that Mr. Walbourne brought up concerning misconduct involving the former chief of defence staff. Immediately, we took action, and that action was followed up the following day by PCO officials to contact Mr. Walbourne so further action could be taken.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are none so deaf as those who will not hear.

The minister has appointed Louise Arbour to tackle the culture of silence that he himself embodies. He deliberately turned a blind eye to the subject of the sexual misconduct complaint against the former chief of the defence staff. The allegations were presented to him, but he refused to look at them.

How does he think Ms. Arbour will judge those who acted as he did, who upheld that culture of silence in cabinet?

Does he really think Ms. Arbour will see him as part of the solution?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear that I disagree with the assertion the member is making. Any misconduct is taken extremely seriously, and that is exactly what we did: take immediate action. However, no politician should ever be involved in any type of investigation for any type of interference. That information was followed up immediately and the very next day, the Privy Council followed up. Any allegation that was ever brought to my attention was immediately and always acted upon.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the issue of sexual misconduct and the Canadian Forces is fundamentally about equality. While there is a culture that tolerates sexual misconduct, women cannot serve equally.

In the House, the Liberals and the Conservatives are arguing about who failed the most on this file. Servicewomen, all women, deserve better. This requires action. With the utmost respect to Justice Arbour, servicewomen do not need another report.

Why have the minister and the Prime Minister ignored the survivors in favour of protecting General Vance?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Armed Forces members make enormous sacrifices to protect Canadians, regardless of rank or gender, and have an undeniable right to serve with safety.

It is clear that we have not lived up to our responsibility to protect our members from misconduct, and we will do better. That is why we have announced that Madame Louise Arbour will lead an independent, external, comprehensive review into harassment and sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces and DND. We have also named Lieutenant-General Jennie Carignan as the chief, Professional Conduct and Culture.

These are just the first few steps that we are taking. We have more work to do, and we will get it done.

Oral Questions

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Liberals offered up their solution to the toxic sexual culture against women in the armed forces; another report. Maybe they forgot that we already have a report. Actually, we have several, but the Deschamps report has been collecting dust for six years, while women continue to experience unfair treatment while doing their best to serve our country.

Women in Canada's Armed Forces deserve a government that will protect them, not one that is only willing to protect its own image. Will the Prime Minister commit to finally implementing the recommendations in the Deschamps report, like the Liberals promised years ago?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely committed to making sure that we have an inclusive environment for all, especially women, in the Canadian Armed Forces. We have absolutely no tolerance for misconduct.

Institutional culture changes are complex, but the time for patience is over. It is time to get this done. That is why I have announced that we are also creating a new internal organization, which will be led by Lieutenant-General Jennie Carignan as chief of professional conduct and culture. She will be tasked with unifying, integrating and coordinating all policies, programs and activities that currently address systemic misconduct and supporting culture change across all of national defence and the Canadian Armed Forces.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals recently changed their own legislation, Bill C-10.

They removed the one section that safeguarded individuals from online government censorship. Why?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the Conservative member for Saskatoon—Grasswood. On November 19, he said, “The legislation does nothing to address social media companies, such as Facebook and Google, and their various properties, such as YouTube, to pay its fair share.”

On March 26, in committee, he even added, “To the Professional Music Publishers' Association, you're right on about YouTube. It is not regulated in Bill C-10, and everybody is using YouTube. We are going to have an issue. As you pointed out, correctly, this should be regulated and it's not.”

I agree with the Conservative member for Saskatoon—Grasswood. I am only saddened by the fact that his own party does not.

Oral Questions

● (1430)

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is sad that the minister still does not have an answer to this question. It has been asked for days now, and still, he continues to point to big organizations, such as Google and Facebook, rather than talking about the protection of individual rights and freedoms, which is the question at hand.

Bills like Bill C-10 are put through a sniff test, which means that the justice department goes through them and decides whether or not they adhere to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

At committee last week, I put forward a motion asking that there be another review done to this bill because it has substantially undergone change. Experts have stated that we need a new evaluation from the justice minister to determine if Bill C-10 respects the charter.

Does the minister agree?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it incredibly hypocritical that the member for Lethbridge, who, given the opportunity, would not hesitate one minute to remove a woman's right to choose, a right protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, would like us, and Canadians, to believe that all of a sudden she cares deeply about said charter.

I have rarely seen such hypocrisy before in my life.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. We have a point of order, which are not usually carried during question period unless it is for a technical issue. Perhaps the hon. member would like to bring it up afterward? I have a good feeling of where the hon. member wants to go with this.

The proceedings, in order to continue, take a certain amount of respect amongst individuals. When someone speaks with a microphone—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Let us try this again. I believe the technician had to resort to muting everyone, including the Speaker, which is not a good way to run the chamber. I am sure you will all agree. We have to have some respect for each other. Heckling online in a virtual setting really breaks everything up. Respect does go both ways.

The hon. member for Lethbridge.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, because the minister lacks answers to the real questions that Canadians have, he resorts to attacking me on a very personal level. It is incredibly inappropriate, and I look forward to his apology at the end of the day.

Nevertheless, at committee last week, Conservatives put forward a motion that would ensure this newly modified bill is still compliant with the charter and protects the fundamental rights and freedoms of Canadians. As legislators, this is our utmost responsibility. It is always the right thing to contend for Canadians' charter rights.

Nevertheless, the Liberals shut down debate on our important motion last week. Why?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the Coalition for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which said, “Bill C-10 on broadcasting has come under unprecedented attack in recent days from the Conservative Party.... Conservatives sacrifice culture on the altar of partisanship.”

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have lost count of the number of experts who have spoken out categorically against the new version of the Liberals' Bill C-10.

A former CRTC commissioner, former CRTC national directors, lawyers, university professors and experts in freedom of expression all said that the bill went much too far and that it stepped over an unacceptable line.

Why are the minister and the Liberal government refusing to listen to all these experts?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote what the executive director of the Professional Music Publishers' Association said to the member from Richmond—Arthabaska. He said, “[I]t is very disappointing that you and the Conservative Party of Canada chose partisanship over our Quebec and Canadian culture. The study of Bill C-10 is not even completed. Freedom of expression is not threatened in Canada by any party but yours.”

It is pure politics. The system has a decades-long proven track record—the Conservative Party of Canada has chosen web giants over our culture.

● (1435)

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, whether the minister likes it or not, the list of critics is getting longer by the day, and the minister knows it. He also knows that his new version of Bill C-10 does nothing to protect freedom of expression. Even worse, it is a direct attack on it and an affront to our democracy.

Michael Geist, professor emeritus in the faculty of law at the University of Ottawa, has said that this is “the most anti-Internet government in Canadian history”. It is not the Conservative Party saying that, but rather a professor emeritus of law.

Why do this minister and his Liberal government refuse to listen to the experts, plain and simple?

Oral Questions

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this time I would like to quote the president of the Fédération nationale des communications et de la culture. Speaking directly to the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, she said, “With all due respect, we have had enough conversations in which you agreed with Bill C-10. You wanted to help us improve the legislation. You know that the legislation does not target social media users and does not limit freedom of expression. The cultural community is counting on you to explain this to your Conservative Party colleagues and stop the grandstanding. Our cultural future and the French language are at stake, as well as our production capacity. Do not let us down.”

Unfortunately, the Conservative Party has let down our artists and Quebec and Canadian culture.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is incredible and I feel like laughing when I listen to the heritage minister.

He is rejecting the advice of all the experts in the country who have spoken out since the start of the week. He is attempting to defend the indefensible. Let us be clear, Bill C-10 does not regulate copyright, nor does it ensure that web giants pay their due and it does not revisit the role of CBC/Radio-Canada.

With the surprise amendments he made to Bill C-10 last week without warning, he is giving the CRTC more power by allowing it to censor everyday social media users. That is the reality.

Why is the minister bent on heading in this direction and why is he not listening to the experts once and for all?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the chair of the Coalition for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions who, in responding to the member, reminded him that for 50 years the CRTC has never regulated content on radio or television and has never restricted freedom of expression in broadcasting.

The law does not allow the CRTC to do that and yet the Conservative Party of Canada is the only entity to continue to spread this false news, misinformation and political rhetoric. It is appalling.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the tax filing deadline has passed, and victims of CERB fraud are worried. They should not have to pay taxes on money that they did not apply for and did not receive. That seems obvious to me.

However, the Canada Revenue Agency is telling people to pay now and that an investigation will be done. If they were indeed the victim of fraud, they will be reimbursed.

Instead, could the minister tell victims that it is not their fault, that they do not have to pay anything before the investigations are completed, and that they will not be penalized in any way?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my hon. colleague that the number of returns filed so far is comparable to pre-pandemic years.

I remind Canadians that although personal income tax season is over, they should file their returns as soon as possible so that they do not experience any disruption in their benefits.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I guess that was an answer.

This time, the minister needs to give the victims a straight answer.

She could have extended the tax deadline to allow for an investigation. That is obvious, but she refused to do it.

She could have been clear and told people to wait before paying taxes on fraudulent payments, but she refused to be clear with the victims.

People saw what a disaster the Phoenix pay system was. They do not really want to send a cheque to Ottawa based on a promise of reimbursement, because they fear it could take years to get their money back.

Why does the minister refuse to take the victims' side?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remind my colleague that the Canada Revenue Agency has said that people who were victims of fraud will not have to reimburse the government.

In addition, there will be no interest or penalties until April 2022 for people who file their tax returns.

I encourage people to file their returns so that they can get the credits and benefits they are entitled to.

● (1440)

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last year, Revenu Québec collected more money from tax havens thanks to information in the Panama papers than the Canada Revenue Agency collected in all of Canada.

I have a suggestion for the minister. Rather than harassing victims of CERB fraud, as she is doing now, perhaps she could leave them alone until the investigations are complete and focus her energy on tax havens, instead of ruining the lives of honest people.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely disappointed to hear the Bloc Québécois asking people not to file their tax returns and depriving the most vulnerable of the credits to which they would be entitled.

Speaking of the Panama papers, I also want to inform my colleague that 900 Canadians have been identified, 160 audits are under way and over 200 audits have been completed. We are on the right track.

*Oral Questions**[English]***HEALTH**

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a press conference given moments ago, NACI recommended mRNA vaccines over the AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson vaccines, saying that, given reports of blood clotting, individuals should be able to make an informed choice on whether they should wait to take an mRNA vaccine. A representative from NACI actually said they do not know how common the incidents of blood clotting are with those two vaccines, suggesting that the incidents might be as high as one in 100,000.

Therefore, what does Health Canada advise? This is different than what we have been hearing. Does Health Canada advise taking the first vaccine offered or to wait, if one can, for an mRNA vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank NACI for its ongoing work in helping provinces and territories determine how to deliver the vaccines that are approved for use in Canada.

As the member opposite might realize from listening to witness testimonies at the health committee, Health Canada is responsible for approving vaccines for use in Canada and has given specific use requirements. NACI then takes the evidence and provides advice on how best to administer it. If any Canadian is questioning whether a vaccine is right for them, the best place to get information is from their health care professional.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is going to leave a lot of Canadians even more confused than the press conference that just happened, so I will ask again because the minister is responsible for Health Canada.

NACI is saying that individuals should be able to make an informed choice on whether they should take AstraZeneca or Johnson & Johnson or wait for an mRNA vaccine, but the minister has been saying to take the first vaccine that is offered. Therefore, what is the advice from Health Canada? Is it for Canadians to take the first vaccine that is offered, no matter what it is, or is it to, if they can because they work from home or for whatever reason, wait for an mRNA vaccine? What is it?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat disconcerting to see the member opposite trying to instill a fear of our health care institutions, which of course guide patients toward the best medication for them. These vaccines are being delivered by health care professionals who know how to screen, ask the correct questions and determine which vaccine is indeed the best for that particular patient.

For the member to imply that patients would not get that expert advice from their medical professionals shows a lack of confidence in all of our provincial and territorial partners, who are doing so much work to ensure that Canadians get the right vaccine for them.

*[Translation]***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we found out that the chair of the defence committee cancelled today's meeting on the instructions of her Prime Minister.

Her disregard for the parliamentary process is clear, because she did not even provide committee members a reason for the cancellation. This is another shameful attempt by the Liberals to cover up the Prime Minister's inaction on sexual misconduct at the Canadian Armed Forces.

From one lieutenant-colonel to another, will the chair of the defence committee allow Katie Telford to come testify before the committee?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have all the respect for the work done—

• (1445)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Ah, fuck, did you send it to Sajjan?

Some hon. members: Oh, Oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

I am not sure exactly where that language came from, but I believe we as parliamentarians deserve an apology.

Order, please.

I believe the government House leader has something to bring up.

[Translation]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues mentioned, I am the one who used unacceptable language. I apologize.

[English]

The Speaker: I want to remind all hon. members if they are not answering or asking a question to please put their microphones on mute.

After consulting with the table officers, the question was not directly asked to the Chair of the committee, but if she wants to answer I will leave it up to her to decide.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Yes, please, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to assure my colleague that the defence committee will be meeting at its normal time this coming Friday at one o'clock.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a national action plan to implement the calls to justice in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is almost two years late, and every time I try to get an update from the minister she tells me she is working on it.

Another woman goes missing or murdered: “I’m working on it.”

A girl goes missing, leaving her family searching for their loved one: “We’re making progress.”

A 2SLGBTQIA individual is beaten: “I’m working on it.”

The Liberal stalling is costing lives. When will the government release a national action plan to address this ongoing genocide?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her concern, and our hearts are with all the families and survivors in this ongoing tragedy. There is no question the 100 indigenous women and two-spirited and LGBTQIA+ people working on this plan were very, very pleased to see \$2.2 billion put in last week’s budget to put in place the concrete actions that will stop this tragedy.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week at committee bureaucrats said the government would not have long-term solutions to clean drinking water on reserves before 2026, five years after they were promised. This is an unacceptable failure by the Prime Minister and his government. The minister at least acknowledged this, saying, “It’s unacceptable in a country that is financially one of the most wealthy in the world”.

We are agreed, minister: it is. Can the minister outline what lessons he has learned during the last five years of failure that will allow him to deliver on a promise to end the inhumane conditions in 2021 by 2026?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. Our government is not abandoning, and will not abandon, our commitment to ensuring first nations on reserve have access to safe and clean drinking water. The plan is working, and together we have lifted 106 long-term advisories and have prevented 180 short-term advisories from becoming long-term.

I want to assure Canadians and first nations that in every community with a long-term drinking water advisory there is a project team and action plan in place to resolve it. Our government stands with first nations to ensure another generation does not have to grow up without clean drinking water.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May is Asian Heritage Month in Canada. It is a time to commemorate all the achievements and contributions Asian-Canadians have made to this country. However, spurred on by pandemic fears, anti-Asian racism continues to rise in Canada, including in Scarborough, where earlier this month a man was sent to the hospital after being assaulted at a restaurant, and graffiti was found outside the

Oral Questions

Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto. That is why today I am asking the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth what our government is doing to combat anti-Asian racism.

• (1450)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the work by the member for Scarborough—Agincourt to combat anti-Asian racism remains necessary and is noticed.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of May as Asian Heritage Month, yet Canadians of Asian descent continue to face violence fuelled by ignorance. Our government implemented Canada’s anti-racism strategy, including the anti-racism secretariat, and launched the Digital Citizen Initiative to counter anti-Asian racism. Through budget 2021, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation will establish a national coalition of Asian-Canadian communities and create a fund for racialized communities impacted by the increased acts of racism during the pandemic.

This Asian Heritage Month, I urge all to stand together against anti-Asian racism.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government claims it is working to ensure that Enbridge Line 5 is not shut down on May 12. We have been calling for the Prime Minister to get involved in this file for six months. Last week, the National Post reported that officials were frustrated by how much time they were spending on the matter. Canadians are frustrated by the lack of results from the government. May 12 is a mere nine days away, and so far the Prime Minister has not been engaged with the President.

With 25,000 jobs at risk, when will the Prime Minister recognize the urgency of solving this issue?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Line 5 is non-negotiable. People will not be left out in the cold.

I would like to thank the members of the Canada-U.S. special committee for their hard work on studying Line 5. We have received the report and are reviewing it.

It is clear there is no daylight between the parties and Canadians on this issue. Line 5 is essential for Canada’s energy security. Line 5 is not just vital for Canada and the United States, but also for North America. We will stop at nothing to make sure it is not shut down.

Oral Questions

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those are nice-sounding words. The minister, and now the parliamentary secretary, keep stating that keeping Line 5 open is “non-negotiable”, yet we are still in limbo. The environmental impact of shutting down Line 5 would be devastating. It would require 15,000 trucks and 800 rail cars per day to replace the supply shortage. For a government that claims to be addressing climate change, it is simply sitting under a tree waiting for others to do its job.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what the plan is to keep this vital infrastructure open?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the House that we are looking at all the options. We will leave no stone unturned in defending Canada's energy security. We are working at the political level, the diplomatic level and the legal level. We are ready to intervene at precisely the right moment.

Line 5 is non-negotiable. We are standing up for energy workers and for Canada's energy security. People will not be left out in the cold.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week at committee the Minister of International Development claimed that hateful content in UNRWA-produced materials was not produced by UNRWA and was removed last year, but a February impact report demonstrates the continuing presence of hateful content in UNRWA-produced study materials, which denounce Arab states over the Abraham Accords and call for the banishment of Jews from Israel.

Could the minister confirm that she is now aware that hateful content persists in UNRWA-produced materials and tell the House what she intends to do about it?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said numerous times, this government stands against anti-Semitism, and we have been very clear about that.

As soon as I learned about this material I was deeply concerned and contacted my officials, as well as UNRWA itself, to get to the bottom of this. I have been in touch with counterparts around the world, and we are working with UNRWA to ensure that the materials it teaches, which are provided by the jurisdiction in which it operates, meet UN values and uphold the principles of neutrality.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister says she takes anti-Semitism seriously, but her government is funding it in UNRWA-produced study materials. Again, these are UNRWA-produced study materials. The European Parliament has denounced UNRWA for hateful comments in study materials that it produces and continues to use, but the minister is still badly mis-characterizing the situation by referring to Palestinian authority textbooks. She had promised an investigation. She is failing to follow up and Canadian taxpayer dollars are still funding anti-Semitic hate.

When will the minister recognize what is happening and actually take action in response?

• (1455)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have communicated to the House on several occasions, we take this issue with the utmost seriousness and became engaged as soon as we learned of it. I continue to engage with UNRWA on this, but let me remind the hon. member that UNRWA provides education to 500,000 Palestinian students. Without UNRWA, they would not have access to education.

We remain absolutely committed to upholding UN values and the principle of neutrality. We will continue to work with UNRWA to ensure that these objectives are met, but we also know that they provide a valuable service to 500,000 Palestinian children.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic cannot be used as an excuse for everything when it comes to immigration.

New refugees have been separated from their children for months, even up to two years, or more, because of delays at the federal level. Canada is abandoning children in countries where conditions are often unsafe, while their parents await a decision from Ottawa to finally bring the children here. In addition to the trauma of separation, these children are often being mistreated and abused.

I know that the minister does not condone this violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but what is he doing to quickly reunite families and protect these vulnerable children?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of our refugee system. We have made a lot of investments in it.

Over the past three years, Canada has done more than any other country to bring parents and children together again. Canada will continue to be a leader around the world.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, those most vulnerable are the ones who are the victims of the federal government's immigration problems.

Delays are jeopardizing an official request that the Prime Minister made to the Minister of Immigration in his mandate letter. The Prime Minister asked the minister to introduce a fast-track system for 250 humanitarian workers, human rights advocates and journalists who are at risk from oppressive regimes.

A year and a half later, this specific program still does not exist and will be threatened if an early election is called. What is the minister doing to ensure that the people in question will not be victims of his party's election agenda?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I already said, Canada is a leader in promoting human rights.

Over the past three years, Canada has done more work for refugees than any other country. We will continue to provide all of the necessary investments and resources to respond to needs and protect all refugees. That is the work that I am doing in partnership with my Quebec counterpart.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was already disappointed watching the Liberal filibuster at defence committee last Friday that is preventing key testimony from the Prime Minister's chief of staff. I was shocked to see this morning the chair cancel the committee meetings for today. When I have former female Canadian Armed Forces officers reaching out to me in reaction to this lack of accountability and failure of leadership, and stating that “this is a nightmare that never ends”, this cover-up needs to stop.

From one former officer to another, will the defence chair stop the cover-up and tell Parliament why she cancelled the defence committee meeting this morning and why she will not allow a vote on calling Katie Telford to testify?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that I respect all the work being done by all colleagues in all committees. Really, this should be about improving the lives of the women and men in the Canadian Forces. It should be about supporting the survivors and those impacted by this abominable behaviour, and it should be about preventing further abuse. The committee will continue its work in coming up with recommendations for the government, and the committee will meet on Friday at its regular time.

* * *

● (1500)

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the correctional service is in crisis. Local guards in my constituency are reaching out to me, describing the situation at the Drumheller Institution as a powder keg. There has been a lack of direction related to COVID-19, inconsistent and changing rules for employees and inmates, PPE being turned into weapons and reductions to needed staff services. This has left many CSC employees working in an impossible environment where they have even been told to eat in the bathroom to stay safe.

Will the minister take action today to fix these challenges?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for

Oral Questions

his concern for our corrections workers and our inmates. We share that concern.

I am very pleased to tell him that Correctional Service of Canada has done extraordinary work throughout the entire course of the pandemic to ensure that people working in our corrections facilities were provided with personal protection equipment. We did safety audits at each of our facilities. In fact, they have now all been prioritized by our government for vaccinations. We are moving ahead very quickly to ensure inmates and our corrections workers are all vaccinated. We will take every step to protect the people working in our corrections services.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Durham region was shaken by two shootings in Ajax last week, which appear to be gang related. According to Statistics Canada, the number of gang-related murders since the Liberals first took office has been higher ever single year than any year under the previous Conservative government. The Liberal government's soft-on-crime approach through bills like Bill C-22 and Bill C-75 has made Canada a safe haven for gang activity.

When will caring about gang violence, the true source of gun crime in Canada, become a priority for the Liberal government?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear the member for Oshawa's concern. He may recall that we introduced a budget that provided \$327 million to law enforcement in the country, the federal police, and provincial and municipal police services, to do gun and gang investigations. Unfortunately the member for Oshawa voted against it.

We have also brought forward a new measure to provide \$250 million for community organizations working in the community to reduce gun and gang violence. I am hopeful that this time he may find it in his heart to provide that support.

The police and our community organizations are doing extraordinary work and we will support them.

* * *

[Translation]

STATISTICS CANADA

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2016, Canadians from coast to coast to coast, including those in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, were so excited about the return of the long-form census that the response rate was the highest ever.

Oral Questions

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that accurate, high-quality data is vital to helping governments, businesses, non-profits and researchers make informed decisions.

Unlike the Harper Conservatives, who, for no good reason, scrapped the long-form census and cut Statistics Canada's funding, our government understands the crucial importance of science and data.

Would the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry please tell the House—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for that excellent question.

I am pleased to announce that the 2021 census is officially under way as of today. Our government has invested in modernizing Statistics Canada to ensure it can continue to deliver relevant, world-class data. Statistics Canada employees have worked tirelessly to adapt to the COVID-19 situation.

I encourage all Canadians to visit census.gc.ca to learn more and help us plan the future together.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the heritage minister quoted me asking to stop child sexual abuse material on Pornhub to justify his free speech attack in Bill C-10. The Criminal Code defines that child pornography websites break the law with such vile videos and images, but rather than go after companies profiting from child exploitation and non-consensual videos, the Liberals have decided they will go after Canadians' Facebook posts instead.

How can the Liberals use the failure to charge, prosecute and convict on child sexual abuse material as an excuse for their assault on Canadian rights and freedoms?

• (1505)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite will be happy to learn that I will be tabling legislation on online harms in the coming week.

On the issue of cultural reproduction and the fact that web giants should be paying their fair share, as I mentioned earlier, her colleague, the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood, stated he wanted us to do that, and we are doing exactly that.

However, what is happening is that the Conservative Party got cold feet. Google and YouTube are very powerful companies and when the going got tough, those members ran for the hills. We are standing up for Canadian artists, for Canadian music and for Canadian culture.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they say that imitation is the finest form of flattery and, if so, George Orwell must be blushing with the Liberals' Orwellian at-

tempt through Bill C-10 to control Internet content and social media.

A few days ago, the minister embarrassingly and incoherently attempted to justify the inclusion of user content in the bill. Canadians are rightfully outraged.

Will the minister dump this bill, or re-protect user content, or insult me like he insulted the member for Lethbridge or will he again try to explain this unexplainable infringement on Canadian freedoms?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I would do is quote the member's colleague, the Conservative MP for Saskatoon—Grasswood. I will say it again. I think this needs to sink in. He said, “the legislation does nothing to address social media companies, such as Facebook and Google, and their various properties, such as YouTube, to pay its fair share.” Then the member added at a later date, “To the Professional Music Publishers' Association, you're right on about YouTube. It is not regulated in Bill C-10, and everybody is using YouTube. We are going to have an issue. As you pointed out, correctly, this should be regulated.”

That is what the Conservative member for Saskatoon—Grasswood has said. I agree with him, not with the most radical elements of the Conservative Party of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is pushing ahead with using the Broadcasting Act to give itself the power to regulate content on social media even though social media platforms do not use public airwaves.

The Internet was supposed to give people the freedom to express themselves, and even Canadian Heritage saw the value of exempting YouTube and Facebook from the new CRTC rules. Why did the Liberals end up pushing for these companies to be censored?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is another example of the disinformation campaign the Conservative Party of Canada is waging against the Canadian public.

An impressive number of stakeholders came to committee to testify on Bill C-10, and they told us how necessary this legislation is. It has nothing to do with moderating content and everything to do with getting web giants to pay their fair share for Quebec and Canadian culture.

The Conservatives have chosen to side with Google and YouTube, some of the richest companies on the planet, over our artists and our culture in Quebec and Canada. It is disappointing, and the Conservatives should—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

[English]

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while all Canadians have been hard hit by the pandemic, Canada's tourism sector has been perhaps the hardest hit. Not only were the people and businesses in this sector among the first to be impacted by COVID-19, when economies reopen, the tourism sector will still take some time to recover.

Could the minister responsible for tourism tell the House how budget 2021 will help our tourism sector rebound from the pandemic and come back stronger?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that people working in the tourism sector have been extremely hard hit by the pandemic and economic crisis. That is why we heard their call for more help. That is exactly why we have announced in the budget that we will be providing \$1 billion more in support for the tourism sector, including a tourism relief fund to help our local tourism businesses.

We cannot wait to welcome back Canadians and the world to our cities and regions when it is safe to do so, but meanwhile, people in the tourism industry should know that our government has their backs.

* * *

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the big airlines continue to sit on billions of dollars of Canadians' hard-earned money for cancelled flights. For months we called on the minister to help, but instead of siding with Canadians, he sided with the airlines, saying there was nothing he could do to force refunds. Now we have emails showing that the government knew early on about gaps in the rules that allowed companies to keep Canadians' money, yet it waited half a year before even starting to make changes.

Will the government explain to Canadians why it took so long to get them their money back?

• (1510)

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to be committed to making sure Canadians get their refunds. We know that the airline sector has been hit very hard because of the pandemic, so we have been working with the Canadian Transportation Agency, with the aviation sector and with airlines on making sure passengers receive their refunds.

Yes, the hon. member is referring to a letter written by my predecessor last December, but there was a lot of work done prior to that letter. He only referred to that letter and did not talk about the months and weeks of work that the previous minister and—

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, a grocery worker in a western province contacted me

Business of Supply

because his employer told him he could not come to work if he did not get the COVID vaccine. In the U.S.A., the COVID vaccines are authorized under an emergency use authorization and when a treatment is authorized in this way, it is illegal to force employees to take it.

In Canada, we use a similar interim authorization for the vaccines. In the opinion of the minister, should this grocery clerk be fired if he chooses not to take the vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will decline to comment on the specifics of the individual situation since I would like to understand more about his concerns. However, there is no federal statute that compels people to get vaccinated. Different workplaces and different settings will require vaccination for a variety of illnesses.

For example, many school boards require common childhood immunizations prior to a child being enrolled. These are not unprecedented decisions that employers in some settings have taken, and, of course, none of them are federally decided upon.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order that arises from question period.

In light of the exchange that took place regarding UNRWA, I am hopeful you will find unanimous consent for me to table the February report of the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education, which details contemporary examples of anti-Semitic hate in UNRWA-produced study materials. This report demonstrates that, contrary to claims by the minister, hateful content appeared in UNRWA-produced materials.

I would be happy to table that report, if there is unanimous consent.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1515)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ACCESS TO COVID-19 VACCINES

The House resumed from April 29 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:13 p.m., pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the Leader of the Opposition relating to the business of supply.

Business of Supply

[English]

Call in the members.

● (1525)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 104)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Calkins	Carrie
Chiu	Chong
Cooper	Cumming
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
d'Entremont	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeschen	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	Kmiec
Kram	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukowski	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
Seebach	Shields
Shin	Shipley
Soroka	Stanton
Steinley	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tochor	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Viersen
Vis	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williamson

Wong
Zimmer— 119

Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Bachrach	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baker	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Bérubé	Besette
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bratina	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Champagne	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chen
Cormier	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hardie	Harris
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	LeFebvre
Lemire	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Manly
Marcil	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)

McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	McPherson
Mendès	Mendicino
Michaud	Miller
Monsef	Morrissey
Murray	Ng
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	Pauzé
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Regan
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Sahota (Brampton North)	Saini
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Simms
Singh	Sloan
Sorbara	Spengemann
Ste-Marie	Tabbara
Tassi	Thériault
Therrien	Trudeau
Trudel	Turnbull
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Vignola
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Yip	Young
Zahid	Zann— 208

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

[English]

We have a point of order. The hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask you to review the tapes. Prior to the vote, a member in this chamber proceeded to get out of his seat and deliberately walk out this chamber without a mask. I ask you to remind the members of the policy here, because I witnessed that member walk by pages and other people in here. As you know, we can speak without a mask in our designated seats, but we are not supposed to move without that mask, without the proper PPE.

I would ask you to review the tapes to see whether that member has done this before and to ensure that our clerks, our other staff who are here, especially on the Hill where we do not have some of the same benefits for health and safety as other places, are protected. It is not just about members like myself who are distanced in this case, but it is also about the people they come into contact with as they move through this chamber, who do not get the same benefits for health and safety that I enjoy. I would ask you to review the tapes and come back and remind the House of the penalties and consequences for disobeying and directly not following the safety guidelines as recommended by health experts.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for Windsor West for his point of order. I do want to remind all members in the

Routine Proceedings

House that there are standards that we have to follow in the House. They were agreed to by everyone in the House, including the members and all the staff. If you are walking around at all and you are not at your seat, you do have to wear a mask. It is not only for your own safety, but the safety of others. This is about mutual respect for each other, which is something that we talk about often and we should practise.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1530)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HEALTH

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 12th report of the Standing Committee of Health in relation to its study of the Main Estimates, 2021-22, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022. The committee has considered the estimates referred by the House and reports the same.

* * *

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES MEMBERS DAY ACT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-292, An Act to establish Canadian Armed Forces Members Day.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to introduce my private member's bill, the Canadian Armed Forces members day act. I would like to acknowledge and thank the member for North Island—Powell River for seconding the bill as our party's critic for Veterans Affairs.

I have always had incredible admiration and respect for the men and women who serve and have served our country in the Canadian Armed Forces. In addition to Remembrance Day, October 22 has taken on significant importance for the veterans community in my riding, particularly those who are members of Malahat Legion Branch 134. October 22 is forever seared into our country's memory. It was the day when a gunman shot and killed Corporal Nathan Cirillo while he was on guard at our National War Memorial before the storming of Parliament Centre Block.

This day is recognized every year in my riding in honour of Canadian Armed Forces members who have lost their lives on Canadian soil during peacetime. The bill I am introducing today will formally recognize October 22 as Canadian Armed Forces members day in their memory. In closing, I want to recognize Bob Collins as the driving force behind this bill and thank him, James Baird, Keenan Hayes, Brianna Wilson and Rachel Wilson for standing guard at the cenotaph in Cobble Hill in remembrance and for their service.

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

*Privilege***PETITIONS****FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table this petition initiated by constituents in Nanaimo—Ladysmith and signed by 12,920 Canadians.

The petitioners are deeply concerned about protecting British Columbia's endangered old-growth forests from logging. They note that old-growth ecosystems provide immeasurable benefits, including carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and cultural, recreational and educational value.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to work with the provinces and first nations to immediately halt logging of endangered old-growth ecosystems, fund the long-term protection of old-growth ecosystems as a priority for Canada's climate action plan and reconciliation with indigenous peoples, support value-added forestry initiatives in partnership with first nations to ensure Canada's forestry industry is sustainable and based on the harvesting of second- and third-growth forests, ban the export of raw logs and maximize resource uses for local jobs, and ban the use of whole trees for wood pellet biofuel production.

• (1535)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be presenting three petitions to the House this afternoon.

The first petition highlights the issue of forced organ harvesting and trafficking and calls on the House to quickly support the passage of Bill S-204, a bill that would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ that was taken without consent. The bill would also create a mechanism by which a person could be deemed inadmissible to Canada if they had been involved in forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

The bill is currently before the Senate at third reading. The petitioners are calling on the House to support the rapid adoption of this bill.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights the ongoing genocide of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China. It calls upon the Government of Canada to finally take the step of recognizing this genocide and also impose Magnitsky sanctions on those who have been responsible. To date, the government has still failed to take a position on the issue of genocide recognition.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third and final petition highlights the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. I have met with many Canadians recently highlighting human rights concerns in Ethiopia and Tigray as well as in other parts of the country.

The petitioners want to see increased Canadian engagement with the human rights situation in Ethiopia, including engagement in the form of short-, medium- and long-term election monitoring. There

is a great deal of concern about the situation throughout the country, and I would encourage members to reflect on and engage with those concerns that commend all of these petitions to the consideration of my colleagues.

HUMANE TREATMENT OF WILDLIFE

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from Canadians across this great country who call upon the Government of Canada to take immediate measures to end the use of strychnine, Compound 1080 and sodium cyanide for killing wolves, bears, coyotes and other large vertebrate. The petitioners note that this is a very inhumane method of killing due to the intensity and prolonged duration of the dying process. Professional organizations in Canada and around the world agree. The use of chemicals also kills non-target animals, including wild and endangered species, pet and farm animals. It is also a threat to human health.

Again, the petitioners are calling upon the government to immediately end the use of strychnine, Compound 1080 and sodium cyanide.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The Chair has received notice of a question of privilege.

The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

* * *

PRIVILEGE**ALLEGED MISLEADING COMMENTS BY THE PRIME MINISTER**

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to speak briefly about the question of privilege that was raised by the member for Portage—Lisgar on Wednesday, April 28 about the Prime Minister's comments in the House concerning facts arising from the complaints process against General Vance, more specifically former chief of the defence staff Jonathan Vance.

The comments that the Prime Minister made in the House on April 27 differ from the testimony and documents submitted to the Standing Committee on National Defence and from what the Prime Minister himself said during question period on March 10 and 11.

In the testimony given in committee, it came to light that not only was the Minister of National Defence aware of the nature of the actions in question, but so were the Clerk of the Privy Council; the Prime Minister's senior adviser, Mr. Marques; and the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford.

Clearly, the Prime Minister's Office and the Prime Minister himself are providing two different versions.

On the one hand, testimony pertaining to the facts and the documentary evidence show that the Minister of National Defence and several people in the PCO and the PMO were aware of the nature of the allegations against General Vance. On the other hand, the Prime Minister said that nobody was aware of the exact nature of the allegations while the complaint was being dealt with. Statements made by the Prime Minister on March 10 and 11 and on April 27 differ with respect to whether the nature of the complaint was known or not.

This morning, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons tried to clear up the confusion about the dates on which the Prime Minister made his statements, about whether the nature of the complaint was known or not, and about the specifics of the allegations and the unspecified allegations, among other things.

Mr. Speaker, I invite you and all my colleagues to familiarize themselves with the evidence and the testimony given before the defence committee, which appear to contradict the Prime Minister's statements.

We know that questions of privilege concerning misleading statements are not easy to resolve, but we must get to the truth of this matter. It is important to democracy, and it is important to the parliamentary process.

To dispel any doubts, I refer you to the ruling of February 1, 2002, at pages 8581 and 8582 of the Debates, in which your predecessor Speaker Milliken found that the three criteria had not been met to find a *prima facie* contempt of the House.

The criteria in question are the fact that the Prime Minister made a misleading statement to the House, that the Prime Minister knew that the statement he was making was false at the moment he made his speech, and finally that the Prime Minister acted with the intent to mislead the House.

In that case, Speaker Milliken stated, "On the basis of the arguments presented by hon. members and in view of the gravity of the matter, I have concluded that the situation before us where the House is left with two versions of events is one that merits further consideration by an appropriate committee, if only to clear the air."

In the circumstances, since the House also received two contradictory versions of the same events, whether or not this is a *prima facie* case of contempt, we ask that the case be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for a detailed study of the matter, to allow the House to get some clarification on the Prime Minister's statement.

• (1540)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord for his additional comments. The Chair will certainly return to the House on this matter within the next few days.

Government Orders

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADIAN NET-ZERO EMISSIONS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-12, An Act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 13 minutes.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Repentigny has the floor.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a federal bill that paves the way for real government accountability in the fight against climate change is very urgently needed.

I would be shocked if there were still elected members in this 43rd Parliament who would deny that the climate crisis will affect the entire planet in this century if governments do not legislate appropriately.

We are already feeling the effects of climate change, as evidenced by the increase in such extreme weather events as floods, forest fires, heat waves and so on.

Bill C-12 must not be taken lightly, and the provisions that must be included in it will require painstaking work in order to secure the future of the next generations.

We are being asked to lay the foundation for the common good. Our work must be done in a spirit of collaboration and willingness to listen. Legislating climate accountability is probably the most important challenge of the 21st century.

After Bill C-12 was introduced, we were able to identify the problems with it and rightfully raise red flags. We also had the time to compare this bill to other countries' legislation, gather information, share research, consult experts and reflect on what amendments would be required for such a bill to emerge and, above all, what it would need to come to fruition.

Government Orders

First, Bill C-12 does not include mandatory reduction targets. Instead, it requires the minister to set the targets. Therefore it is false to say that Bill C-12 would force the government to take action that would meet greenhouse gas reduction targets. It is a bit difficult to follow. The member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie stated that his government was ready to set targets and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change stated that he could perhaps include them in the bill. This is a reason for studying the bill in committee. However, at present, there is nothing in the bill to that effect and it is crucial.

Furthermore, the bill does not require the minister to fulfill his commitments. It requires him to prepare a progress report. If Canada does not meet its target, which, again, is not identified in the current version of the bill, then the minister is asked to include in his report the reasons Canada did not meet its target. That is it. Federal government officials confirmed that the bill does not provide for any binding measures or penalties for failing to meet targets.

The Prime Minister of Canada's defence against this criticism is that it is up to the voters to penalize the government if it fails. He said:

We live in a democracy, and ultimately it is up to Canadians to continue to choose governments that are serious about fighting climate change and that will be accountable to the public every five years.

Even though it is true that voters ultimately have the power to punish politicians, this statement primarily shows that the Prime Minister is opposed to making the greenhouse gas reduction targets binding. This means that he is opposed to requiring that Canada fulfill its international commitments, even though he just increased his targets in front of the many countries attending the U.S. President's summit.

The government cannot say that Bill C-12 contains restrictive measures while at the same time saying that the only real restriction is the election result. I remind the government that the climate crisis, the global risks associated with this crisis and its immeasurable consequences have nothing to do with election strategies. The government has a role and a responsibility as a legislator, and in my opinion, it is irresponsible and unconscionable for it to cheapen this legislation by shifting them to future governments.

In this version of Bill C-12, the action plan, the minister's reports and the method of calculating emissions are not subject to review by an independent authority. An essential component of this type of legislation depends on the diligent efforts of what Bill C-12 refers to as an advisory body. I mention this because Canada cannot achieve its ambitions or optimal progress on climate change until the government clarifies certain details about this body.

We will have to be vigilant with respect to the key aspects of this proposed advisory body. Its duties must be spelled out in the legislation, it must be composed of experts in relevant fields who have no conflicts of interest, and it must be completely independent. In our view, the people on this advisory body should not represent Canadians. There are 338 MPs in this place to do that. What we need are scientists.

Let us look at other countries with this type of body. In the United Kingdom, scientists represent 67% of the members; in France, 85%; in New Zealand, 33%; in Quebec, 75%; and in Canada, 7%.

● (1545)

Expert Corinne Le Quéré, who Quebec can be proud to count among those trained in its universities, has an incredible amount of experience preparing legislation combatting climate change.

She has spoken extensively about the absolute need to include specific targets in the act. There is no doubt that she has knowledge and advice to share regarding good governance because she contributed to the success of the U.K. climate change committee and she chairs France's high council on climate.

Corinne Le Quéré, the scientific community and environmental groups agree on the following essential elements: The committee's mandate and powers must be set out in the act; the act must specify that the committee must have access to all of the climate-related scientific knowledge, including indigenous knowledge; the committee must be properly funded; the committee must be able to provide its expertise in an independent manner, whether of its own initiative or at the request of parliamentarians; and the committee must be officially involved in establishing greenhouse gas reduction targets, monitoring progress and preparing related reports.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change has repeatedly stated that he is open to working with opposition parties to improve Bill C-12. As we know, people are becoming more and more aware of how the decisions we are making now will affect the future of the planet.

The Bloc Québécois has taken a firm stance on environmental issues in Canada, and we want to collaborate on this bill because, as we all know, this is a whole-of-government issue that transcends borders.

The only way we can achieve any progress is by viewing the climate crisis through that lens. Still, there are undeniable facts we must face. The first is that the clock is ticking. We have to get to net zero as fast as we can, before 2050 if possible. If we acknowledge that premise, this climate change act has to include all the right tools to ensure we get there as fast as possible.

We are calling on the government to be ambitious and courageous enough to put an end to the cycle that has resulted in Canada consistently missing its targets and failing to achieve its goals in recent decades.

The international community expects better. Lord Deben, chairman of the UK Committee on Climate Change, explained to the parliamentarians present at the preparatory meeting for COP 26, which I attended, that Canada must fully grasp how its behaviour and climate inaction affect other countries around the world and realize that every country counts. He concluded with some words of wisdom: Humankind has not learned to live with respect for biodiversity, the environment and the health of our oceans. Humanity's very existence is weakened by what could happen in the future, and that is why we must fully grasp what is happening and avoid repeating the mistakes that brought us to where we are now.

We must protect biodiversity and preserve natural habitats for future generations. The areas that are supposedly protected by federal legislation must be truly protected. They must not be compromised, as when the government authorizes drilling off the coast of Newfoundland to cater to the oil industry.

I do not want the shores of the St. Lawrence River to erode or Quebec's native wildlife to disappear. I do not want to hear that thousands of people are dying because of pollution. Health Canada estimates that 15,300 premature deaths per year in Canada can be linked to pollution. I no longer want to witness the despair of people around the globe who are overwhelmed by the effects of our inaction. If their habitats are destroyed, they are forced to leave their islands and their homes, becoming climate refugees, while the sums promised by rich countries to help them adapt fall short of what is needed to address the real climate catastrophes.

Now is the time to get our priorities straight. Together we can still change the trajectory. Never before have we been in a situation where the earth is warming so fast, with the global temperature expected to rise by two degrees centigrade by 2043, which is not far off. We are running out of time, and small steps are no longer good enough. We need to take a giant leap forward.

• (1550)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her speech.

Bill C-12 would do nothing more than create a committee and make recommendations to the government for coming up with a plan. In other words, the Liberals currently do not have a plan. What does the member think about that?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

In my opinion, the government has a plan, but it lacks long-term vision. It presented 45 or 48 recommendations shortly before Christmas. However, there was nothing binding. We are at the point where we need binding measures if we want to meet our climate targets.

The problem is not the belugas in the St. Lawrence or the polar bears. The problem has to do with our children since they are the ones who will pay for all of our negligence of the past few decades and for our current negligence.

Government Orders

• (1555)

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like the member, I also hold out great hope for the work the environment committee has to do on this bill. There are some significant improvements that need to be made to the wording.

I want to ask the member about the importance of following up these words with action. We have a Liberal government that invested billions of our public dollars into purchasing a pipeline and is right now trying to increase its exporting capacity. I would like to hear the member's comments about where that money could have gone, and about the importance of starting a just transition for energy workers in provinces such as Alberta and Saskatchewan to those transferable skills we need for the renewable energy economy of the future.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I will make a comparison. The budget includes a \$17.6-billion investment for the transition to a green economy, but there was also a \$17.1-billion investment in a pipeline, with more to come. This means that the amount allocated to the green economic recovery for all of Canada is only slightly higher than the cost of the pipeline.

My leader, the member for Beloeil—Chambly, has already said that he was willing for the pipeline money to be invested in Alberta so that workers could receive training or switch careers.

We already know about different energy sources that are within reach. Whether it is solar, wind or geothermal energy, they are all ready to go. We do not even have to do any research, we just have to get on board.

When my leader, the member for Beloeil—Chambly, made his remarks, he was standing in solidarity with the people of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

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

We have worked together at some conferences of the parties, including the one on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

She raised some really good points about other countries, their legislation and their advisory bodies. However, she did not mention the United Kingdom, which has an advisory body entirely made up of experts and scientists.

Why does she think the government introduced such a weak bill like Bill C-12 when we have such strong examples?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, with whom I have worked many times.

Government Orders

Bill C-12 was very weak. It was not what we expected, given the climate crisis we are currently experiencing. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change is open to amendments. The Bloc Québécois is prepared to propose a number of amendments to make the bill binding and ensure that we can meet our targets.

As I said in my speech, this is not about belugas and polar bears. This is about our children and grandchildren.

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Western Economic Diversification Canada) and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (Canada Water Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak to Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act. This bill fulfills an important commitment made by the government to put in place legally binding requirements for this government, and future governments, to set climate targets and publish plans to meet those targets in consultation with the public and interested stakeholders.

It includes important transparency and accountability mechanisms, including the requirement to publish milestone plans to achieve the targets we set, progress reports to assess whether we are on track to meet our targets, and assessment reports to determine whether targets have been met. If a target is not met, the minister must outline the reasons Canada failed to meet its target and give a description of actions the government will take to meet the target, as well as any other information the minister deems appropriate.

Bill C-12 also includes a role for the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, requiring the commissioner to examine and report on the government's implementation of measures to mitigate climate change every five years.

Our government recognizes that we are faced with a climate emergency and we must act now. The overwhelming evidence behind climate change compels us to take action. That is why in December we released our strengthened climate plan, which contains over 64 measures and \$15 billion in investments. Recently, budget 2021 included additional measures that will enable us to go even further, reflecting the government's ambition and the seriousness of the challenge before us.

Science is the foundation of the Government of Canada's action on climate change. We ended the war on science when a Liberal government was elected in 2015. Our government relies on evidence-based policy-making and depends on our scientists to provide information that helps us protect the environment. Canada has a strong science and knowledge base to draw on. This scientific foundation not only enables targeted action, but also allows us to evaluate the effectiveness of our actions and to adjust as needed.

Climate change is a global issue, and we cannot tackle it alone. That is why governments around the world rely on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a valuable, credible and independent source of scientific information, to inform their actions on climate change.

The IPCC "Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C", released in fall 2018, tells us that limiting future warming to 1.5°C instead of 2°C would reduce the negative impacts of climate

change and allow most terrestrial and marine species to keep up with the pace of climate change, preserve coral reefs, increase the chance of keeping sea level rise below one metre this century, allow some Arctic sea ice to remain in the summer and allow more scope for adaptation, particularly in the agricultural sector.

The objective of the ECCC-led "Canada's Changing Climate Report", released in 2019, was to understand how and why Canada's climate is changing and will continue to change in the future. This report is a comprehensive science assessment to help Canadians and policy-makers understand Canada's changing climate so we can strengthen our resilience to climate change through adaptation and mitigation actions. The assessment confirms Canada's climate has warmed mainly in response to global emissions of carbon dioxide from human activity. The effects of widespread warming are already evident in many parts of Canada and are projected to intensify in the near future.

The following conclusions, based on the report's headline statements, tell a story about Canada's changing climate. Canada's climate has warmed and will warm further in the future, driven by human activity, and this warming is effectively irreversible. Both past and future warming in Canada is, on average, about double the magnitude of global average temperature increases. Changing temperature and precipitation, and changes in snow and ice, have important implications for freshwater supply, and the seasonal availability of fresh water is changing with an increased risk of water supply shortages in summer. A warmer climate will intensify weather extremes in the future: extreme hot temperatures will become more frequent and more intense, which will increase the severity of heat waves; there will be increased drought and wildfire risks, since projected increases in precipitation are not sufficient to offset the effects of projected warming; and the projected increase in heavy precipitation, a main cause of urban and rural floods, will increase future flood risks that are now costing us billions. We have seen those kinds of floods up close and personal in my home province of Manitoba.

● (1600)

Achieving a future with limited warming requires Canada and the rest of the world to reduce emissions to net zero around mid-century. This is why we are embarking on a pathway of rapid emission reductions. We recently announced an ambitious target of 40% to 45% reductions by 2030, putting us on a path to net zero by 2050.

The science is clear that urgent action to reduce greenhouse gases is needed if this future, which is consistent with achieving the long-term temperature goals of the Paris agreement, is to be achieved. The evolving science continues to support an increased need for urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate action must continue in parallel with research efforts, drawing on existing knowledge and incorporating new insights as they become available.

The cycle of setting targets, establishing reduction plans and reporting on progress set out in the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act provides key opportunities for state-of-the-science information to be integrated into the government's efforts to achieve net zero by 2050.

I hope all members in the House will join the government in recognizing the urgency of climate change and support sending this important legislation to committee. The government has expressed its willingness to consider constructive amendments and hopes to work with all parties to strengthen and pass the legislation.

● (1605)

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I always find it fascinating to hear the Liberals talk about their commitments and their environmental convictions.

In 2017, this Liberal government established new manufacturing standards for insulation boards that contained a highly polluting foaming agent. Companies that manufacture these boards, including Soprema, near Drummondville, in my riding, had four years, or until January 1, 2021, to comply with the new regulations.

However, for so-called economic reasons, this same government decided to grant exemptions to multinational companies, even though they already possessed the required technology, as the government knew full well. Could the member tell me how anyone can believe this government and trust it on environmental matters, when it does not even honour its own commitments or enforce its own industry standards?

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, we did make commitments in the 2015 election platform that we would put a price on pollution and proceed down this path to getting a handle on our emissions. Indeed, we saw in the budget \$17.6 billion to help create a more clean and sustainable future, including major investments in retrofits and other housing needs. Therefore, we are addressing the housing issue from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary said that the Liberals were open to considering some amendments at committee. Opposition members would like to see just what kind of considerations the Liberals are concerned about here. We have already been public about the need for a 2025 milestone target, about clearer and stronger accountability on progress reporting, the assessment reporting, emissions reduction planning. We would also like to see the environment commissioner strengthened and made an independent officer.

Government Orders

Could the parliamentary secretary give us some feedback on those specific proposals and whether the Liberals will support those amendments at committee?

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, although I wish I could, I am not a member of the environment committee, but I know there are people of good will and of intelligence on the committee. They produced the CEPA report unanimously in the last Parliament. I am sure they will come to a consensus on some of the issues the hon. member has mentioned. I do detect the hon. member supports the spirit of the bill, and we look forward to a good discussion at the environment committee.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not see anything in Bill C-12 that is concrete action to advance us toward the targets. I know the Liberals are not on track to meet even the 2030 targets. Could the member tell me what in the bill is evidence of a plan that would actually meet net zero by 2050?

● (1610)

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I served with the hon. member on the status of women committee and enjoyed her able chairmanship.

The reality is that we have not had hard targets previously. We have not had accountability legislation. That is entirely new. We intend to be very accountable. Unfortunately we never saw that from the Stephen Harper government. It cancelled Kyoto, conducted a very active war on science and, as we know, there are doubts in the Conservative party about the reality of climate change.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-12. We have had quite a lively debate today.

If we talk about this net zero by 2050 target and we look at the bill to see what it would actually do, we see it is a typical smoke-and-mirrors Liberal bill that does not have any substance to it. It essentially would put together a committee of liberal-leaning anti-oil and gas folks, who, by the way, have already been selected before Parliament even has had a chance to debate this legislation and amend it. That shows a real disrespect for the parliamentary process, and it is not a surprise because we see that continually from the Liberals. However, we have to wait until we have thorough debate here before moving on.

We are looking at a committee that will advise the government on a plan to get to net zero by 2050. Does this not imply that the Liberals do not have a plan right now? This is what that says. They have a whole department of climate change scientists and they have not achieved the 2030 targets. They have not made progress toward that. Emissions were at 730 megatonnes. They are still at 730 megatonnes now, and that is from 2005 to now.

Government Orders

Therefore, I do not see anything in the bill that really has the teeth to reach the goal of net zero, and not surprisingly. The Liberals did not meet the 2030 targets, as I mentioned. It is ridiculous that the Prime Minister has proposed even more stringent 2030 targets when he will not even meet the already committed targets by Stephen Harper.

If I look at the plans that the Liberals have already outlined, they have not really made a lot of progress. The government was going to plant two billion trees. How is that going? Have any been planted? If the government cannot even plant trees, how can it get the rest of this done?

With my time, I will talk a bit about what ought to be done. It is not just my role as the opposition to criticize; it is my opposition duty to say what would be better.

First, when it comes to net zero, there is a lot of rhetoric in the House that the Liberals are science based. If they were science based, then the definition of net zero should be that which is emitted minus that which is absorbed. I already alluded to the amount that is emitted, which is 730 megatonnes for Canada. Then if we look at the things that are absorbed, we would look at the different ways carbon dioxide, for example, is absorbed. Land mass is one way that carbon dioxide is absorbed. Canada has a huge land mass. Water is another way that carbon dioxide is absorbed, and we have a huge water mass in Canada. Forest and agricultural plants are all taking carbon dioxide out of the air, so they should be counted as well. However, on the government website, these things are not counted.

When looking at forests, they are counting all the emissions that come from forest fires and all the emissions that come from processing trees into furniture and downstream things, but they give no credit for all the carbon dioxide that is being sucked out of the air, so that is a problem. It is the same on the agriculture side. We are talking about a substantial amount of absorption.

A 2014 report of the global carbon project stated that 37% of emissions were absorbed by land, the combination of soil, forest and agriculture, and 27% were absorbed by water. If we apply that to our 730 megatonnes of emissions, that would leave 263 megatonnes that we need to find a plan to reduce to actually achieve net zero from a science point of view.

How can we do that? A number of technologies are out there, including carbon sequestration and carbon sinks, for example, and we know projects are on the books to help address that. Those would take care of, arguably, 20 to 30 megatonnes, so that will not take it the whole way. The Conservatives have come up with a plan that actually would meet our 2030 targets and would put us in a very good path to meet net zero by 2050.

• (1615)

If we look at what has been successful in the world, and I know people did not like the last administration to the south, but sadly, it was one of the few countries that actually met the targets that were agreed upon. How was it done? It was not done with committees and rhetoric. The targets were met by incentivizing emissions reduction technology to be put in place in the major industrial emitters. That is an area that Canada should focus on. There is a sub-

stantial amount of that 263 megatonnes we need to find that we could find if we incentivized our major industrial emitters.

We also know that transportation emissions are a substantial portion. Our plan outlines how we would get those reduced. There is a number of good ideas there. In terms of building emissions, we know that is another source. The greening of buildings and the implementation of clean technology is key. However, we have more.

We can think about some of the great technologies, such as nuclear. There are these portable 30 and 50 megawatt nuclear stations that could replace diesel in the north and even beyond that. They could be leveraged to those places in the world that are on coal and other things. This is a great Canadian technology, which we should be putting in place to help here at home and then further away. Of course, going to lower carbon intensity fuels is another great idea.

Our Conservative plan has been verified by a reputable third party organization to actually meet the targets. That is important because targets without plans are dreams. That is what the Liberal government has right now. It has dreams and a lot of rhetoric, but it is not actually making tracks and making progress towards even achieving the 2030 targets, let alone the net-zero targets that have been suggested.

Our plan has been very well received by all of the experts out there. I am going to read some of the quotes. The principal economist for the Canadian Institute for Climate Choices said, "The Conservative plan is credible."

Nic Rivers, associate professor for the University of Ottawa and the Canada research chair in climate and energy policy, wrote, "Overall, I'm impressed. I don't like everything in this plan, but it's a serious plan (with some details missing), and I'm really happy to see competition for stronger environmental policy, rather than weaker. Modeling shows approach meets target."

Dale Beugin, VP of research and analysis at the Canadian Institute for Climate Choices, said, "First, credit where credit is due for a serious plan. They've used modelling to ensure no magical thinking. They're relying on policies that will drive real emissions reductions. They are taking climate policy seriously."

It is clear, from all of the people who have shown their support for the Conservative plan, that we are on the right track. That is not to say there is not more to be done. I am not opposed to planting trees. Trees are a carbon sink, but they have to be planted. One cannot just plan to plant them.

When we look at Bill C-12, I do not really see anything in here other than reporting mechanisms. There are targets but, again, they do not come with any teeth or any idea about how we would meet those targets.

I would encourage, when this bill goes to committee, the committee members take a look at exactly what needs to be put into this bill so that the tactics are clear for how we are going to get to net-zero emissions, and that they would actually amend the definition so that it would make sense. The way it is today, the Liberals are not counting everything that is absorbed and that will be important to the formula.

I think it is clear that I will not be supporting Bill C-12 in its current state. I would like to see some actual teeth to this. I am also very upset that in selecting the members for the committee, the government has selected a lot of anti-oil and gas people. I think that is stacking the deck in a direction that is not helpful. We will have oil and gas in Canada for a period of time, as we transition to a greener economy. There is a huge amount of emissions reduction that could be done in that area. Those people have already expressed that they have net-zero 2050 plans and are willing to participate.

Let us take advantage of that. Let us all work together. Let us come with a real plan to get to net zero by 2050.

• (1620)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this will be a comment. The member indicated that there were a number of credible economists who are touting the new Conservative plan as a great plan and that putting a price on pollution is the right way to go. We have been trying to say that for four or five years. We have been quoting various economists from throughout the country who have been saying that we have to put a price mechanism on pollution if we want to do something about it.

I find it remarkable that the Conservatives are now coming in here and literally using the exact same phrases we have been using for the last four or five years to justify what we did.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, we have been clear that the punishing Liberal carbon tax does zero to reduce emissions in the atmosphere. It just puts money in the government coffers. Our plan is going to put the money back in the pockets of Canadians, so all together, we can participate in helping our country reduce its overall footprint. That is a good thing.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to say it out loud because I have not yet had the chance to. It is good to see this conversation about how we can reduce emissions and an attempt to get to a real plan.

It would be great to see Conservatives in this country join the Conservative leadership over decades, going back to Margaret Thatcher, in understanding that climate science requires a response. The concern I have is that the hon. member has suggested that carbon sequestration should be offset in the addition of our megatonnes of pollution.

We already know from our scientists that Canada's boreal forests are a net source of carbon because of insects, diseases and fires. We already know that our permafrost is thawing, creating its role as a net source of carbon.

Going back to Bill C-12, I do have a question for my hon. colleague. While I agree that it is egregious that the minister skipped the parliamentary committee process in appointing a committee in

Government Orders

advance of amendments, would she agree it would be far better to have the committee based entirely on experts who could actually hold the government as a whole to account, not merely advise the minister?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is always passionate about this file.

It is very sad that the government, with a whole department of climate experts, does not have a plan. It has had six years in government, running on an agenda to do something to address climate change, and it has failed. What is important is to come up with a plan that all parties could agree to, so regardless of who is in the driver's seat, it will happen.

The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands pointed out the boreal forest and the fact it is a net emitter. That is what it is. That is a fact. Gaming the system to try to not count things because we do not like what they say is not science. Net-zero is net emissions minus net absorptions, regardless of where they are. I know that makes finding solutions and reducing more complicated, but we cannot just play a game with this. It is real.

• (1625)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Sarnia—Lambton for her speech. I will pick up where she and the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands left off talking about the forests and their contributions.

The member said it was gaming the system to not count the contributions of the forest. What I would say is those forests have been sequestering carbon, or not, for millennia. They are neither our emissions nor our sequestrations.

Where we can make a difference is by reducing our emissions. We can change that in the forest by how we manage the forest, but we cannot count all those carbon sequestration figures the forests are doing as our sequestration or as cutting down our emissions.

The member is a scientist. Perhaps she could comment on that.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I would say, as a scientist, that net-zero is exactly that. It is net emissions. Regardless of the source, there are emissions that are man-made and emissions that are not man-made. That is all the emissions. Then, in the same light, there are absorptions. Net-zero really has to look at all of that. If it does not, then it is not really looking at the whole picture and people are picking and choosing what ought to be there.

I agree very much with the member that when it comes to forests, managing the wild fires and all these things we have seen, there are things we could do better. There are solutions the member pointed to. These are the conversations that we need to have, not the conversation in Bill C-12, which would do nothing to come up with any of those plans.

Government Orders

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the introduction of the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act, our government is introducing legislation that will help address the extreme risks of climate change. The science is clear: Human activities are causing unprecedented changes to the earth's climate. Climate change also poses significant risks to human health and safety; the environment, including biodiversity; and economic growth.

Canada's climate is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world's and three times as fast in our northern regions. The effect of this warming is evident in many parts of Canada and will intensify in the future. The consequences of these changes are multiple. For example, the average participation is projected to increase for most of Canada. Also, the availability of fresh water is changing toward an increased risk of summer water shortages, and a warmer climate will intensify certain extreme weather conditions in the future, such as heat waves and floods. Canadians are already feeling the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events, including the changing intensity and frequency of floods, storms and fires; coastal erosion; extreme heat events; melting permafrost; and rising sea levels. These impacts pose a significant risk to the safety, health and well-being of all Canadians; to our communities; to the economy; and to the natural environment.

It is important to ensure that Canadians are protected from these climate change risks. Achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 is critical to mitigating the risks of climate change, not only for Canada, but on a global scale. Indeed, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has concluded that meeting this target is necessary to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and reduce the risks of climate change. Limiting the temperature rise to 1.5°C is especially important because it would make a marked difference in the impacts of climate change on all fronts. It would also give us more options for adapting to the effects of climate change, as opposed to a global temperature rise of 2°C.

When Canada ratified the Paris Agreement in 2016, it committed to setting and communicating ambitious national targets and taking ambitious domestic climate change mitigation actions to achieve them. Recall that the Paris Agreement aims to strengthen the efforts to limit the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C and, if possible, to limit this increase to 1.5°C. Currently, the target included in Canada's nationally determined contribution, communicated in accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is for Canada to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. The government is committed to meeting and exceeding this target.

Our government is also committed to developing a plan for a prosperous carbon-neutral future for Canada by 2050, supported by public participation, provincial and territorial governments and expert advice. Canadians know that climate change threatens their health, their way of life and their planet. They want climate action now, and that is what this government will continue to do by immediately putting in place the plan to exceed Canada's 2030 climate targets and by legislating a carbon-neutral goal by 2050.

Achieving carbon neutrality by the government requires engaging in a process that takes into account the considerations of those most affected by climate change. Canada's aboriginal peoples and

northern communities, while demonstrating exceptional resilience, are particularly vulnerable because of factors such as remoteness, inaccessibility, cold climate, aging and inefficient infrastructure, and reliance on diesel fuel systems to generate electricity and heat homes. That is why the government has committed to advancing the right spaced approach reflective in section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The government is also committed to strengthening its collaboration with Canada's aboriginal peoples on climate change mitigation measures. This commitment builds on initiatives already in place. For example, the government is funding and collaborating with first nations, Métis and Inuit on projects to monitor climate change and indigenous communities, build resilient infrastructure, prepare and implement strategic climate change adaption plans and develop green energy options that reduce reliance on diesel.

● (1630)

The plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 should also make the Canadian economy more resilient, inclusive and competitive. With the goal of creating a stronger, more resilient Canada in the wake of the current pandemic, climate action will be a cornerstone of our plan to sustain and create one million jobs across the country.

Despite the global issue of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change continues to progress. It remains important to recognize that climate change is a global issue that requires immediate action by all governments in Canada, as well as by industry, non-governmental organizations and individual Canadians. However, the government recognizes the important collective and individual actions that have already been taken and wants to sustain the momentum to mitigate climate change.

For example, the federal government and Alberta have launched a Canadian Emissions Reduction Innovation Network to support innovation that would enable the oil and gas industry to meet emissions regulations in a cost-effective manner by funding technology testing infrastructure at key facilities in Alberta and across the country to accelerate the commercialization of these technologies. This type of action demonstrates that it is possible to collectively contribute to climate change mitigation while respecting provincial autonomy, as the act intended to do.

In addition, last year the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change jointly announced a \$100-million investment in Clean Resource Innovation Network to support research and development projects that promote environmental and economic performance in the oil and gas sector.

Government-wide collaboration on climate change mitigation is critical, which is why the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act provides for consultations with federal ministers who have responsibilities for action that can be taken to achieve our greenhouse gas emissions targets.

The Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act will contribute to further action on climate change mitigation by requiring the establishment of national greenhouse gas emission reduction targets based on the best available science and by promoting transparency and accountability in meeting those targets. In doing so, the bill will support Canada's achievement of carbon neutrality by 2015 and Canada's international commitments to mitigate climate change.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, considering how poorly the Liberal government has managed the pandemic for Canadians, I am wondering why they should have any confidence that the government can manage the environment, something that is so much more complicated.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, I will strongly disagree with my neighbour and colleague, the member of Parliament for Cloverdale—Langley City. Our handling of the pandemic has been noted by magazines, newspapers and media around the world. Canadians have had the most vaccinations procured for them, as compared with any other country in the world. This week we have 20 million vaccinations.

I got calls today from our provincial folks, our Minister of Health and others on how to roll out even more vaccines and get them into the arms of Canadians. Over 33% of Canadians have already been vaccinated with one shot. We are number three in the G20. We are doing very well. We have one of the highest success rates in controlling COVID-19 and are keeping the death toll and serious illness rates to a very low minimum. That is being done in combination with Canadians, who have put grit and commitment toward controlling COVID-19, which has been active. At the same time, we are helping Canadians get—

• (1635)

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have so many concerns.

I do not know whether my colleague listened to the speech given by my esteemed colleague from Repentigny. It is actually hard for me to explain to the people of Laurentides—Labelle how this translates into accountability. The first thing they are going to ask me is what is going on with Bill C-12. I will reply that we have to look at the purpose of the bill.

Government Orders

It says that the purpose of the bill is not to set targets, but rather require that targets be set. It is 2021. Now is the time to do that. It also says that we need to support international commitments. That will help Canada meet its obligations. People are afraid.

During the pandemic, we have been relying on science. Why can we not do the same for the environment, as people have been calling for, loud and clear, for decades?

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

[English]

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, I live in a province that has accepted the science, and folks on the other side of the aisle are now thinking carbon pricing is a great idea. Imitation is the best form of flattery, so I thank them for that.

In my province of British Columbia, climate pricing has been in place for over a decade now, and we have been seeing the results of it. Almost one out of every 10 vehicles sold is electric, and oil and gas consumption at the petrol pumps has been down significantly. B.C. has been cleaning its environment in that respect, and nationally we have physical attributes, such as planting two billion trees. There are industry standards, even in the oil and gas sector, that are helping to reduce carbon emissions. There are even comments from some CEOs, like the head of Shell Canada, who think that Bill C-10 is the right direction.

Whether we look at industry, the average Canadian or stakeholders—

The Deputy Speaker: We will try to get one more question in.

The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would simply ask the member why this bill is so timid and so late. Jack Layton tabled a similar bill 15 years ago and it was killed by the Conservatives. The Liberals have been in power for six years and this is what we get.

Why have we not seen more urgency and more action from the government?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, we have been working hard on this since forming government in 2015. We committed to the Paris accord, and there now is a government south of the border that has reinstated itself in it. We have even committed to increasing the targets of the Paris accord.

Government Orders

The Liberal government has been committed ever since it has been in government. Challenges have happened in the past, and as the member opposite said, the Conservatives killed a bill previously. Every member of the Conservative Party has fought tooth and nail not to have any environmental policies put in place. However, our government, the Liberal government, hopefully along with other parties in the House, will continue to commit to a direction to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, clean the environment and have one of the best climate action plans on this planet.

• (1640)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Regina—Lewvan, Public Services and Procurement; the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Ethics; the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon, Health.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, environment and climate change are issues that consistently rank as top concerns for the constituents of my riding in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. That is why I am pleased to have this short opportunity to intervene and give some of my thoughts on the bill that is before us, Bill C-12.

The reason this issue ranks so highly in concern among my constituents is that we have had consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments that have failed to meet a single climate target. I think Canadians are quite tired at this point, it being 2021, of governments committing to targets and then missing them again and again and again. We are running out of time to turn things around.

I often wonder where we would be today if, all the way back in 2010, the Senate had not killed Jack Layton's climate change accountability act, which was passed by the democratically elected House of Commons. We would have had 11 years of legislated targets in place, and I think Canada would be well on its way to achieving what we need to as a country.

Climate scientists have most definitely reached a strong consensus that, in the absence of any measures to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions significantly, changes in our climate will be substantial and will have long-lasting effects on many of earth's physical and biological systems. The evidence is very clear. It is no longer in dispute. We have observable data. We can compare it with the fossil record and with what we see in earth's geographic record. It is there for all to see.

We know these changes are going to bring about more frequent and more severe winter storms and summer hurricanes. Many parts of the world are going to see deadly heat waves that will result in mass casualties. We are going to see desertification spread and prolonged droughts. Many populations that are already suffering extreme water shortages are going to see those problems exacerbated.

Here in Canada, we are already becoming familiar with the wild-fire season, which is beginning earlier, lasting longer and is much more intense, especially in provinces such as Alberta and British Columbia. Of course, because Canada has the longest coastline in

the world, and much of the world's population lives on the coast-line, we are going to be impacted by the sea level rise. The levels the oceans will rise by may not look like all that much, but when these are combined with shifting tides and storms, many cities are going to face some extreme flooding dangers, and many in the world have already seen this.

We have seen a rise in ocean acidification, which has an impact on our fisheries because of the bleaching of corals and combines with all sorts of problems in our oceans. Of course, all of these problems are going to contribute to the migration of millions of climate refugees. Although Canada, by virtue of its geography, is separated from much of the world by the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, we live in an increasingly globalized world, and for us to say we will be immune to all of these problems is a venture into fantasy.

We know we will be impacted by negative supply shocks. We know many of these climate-related weather phenomena are going to have a physical impact on Canadian infrastructure. We know our financial system is going to be negatively impacted, and we can see that in some of the data that already exists. According to some reports, climate-related disasters cost the world approximately \$650 billion from 2016-2018. We know that a warming world is going to depress growth in agricultural yields by upwards of 30% by the year 2050. That is going to impact many small-scale farmers around the world.

The UN Environment Programme estimates the global cost of adapting to climate impacts to grow to anywhere from \$140 billion to \$300 billion per year in just nine short years: by the year 2030. This could increase to almost \$500 billion per year by 2050. When I hear members in the House of Commons wonder aloud about the costs of the transition, I do not think we fully appreciate the costs of doing nothing or of not doing enough.

• (1645)

I have a very real concern about the biological effects of climate change and what it is going to do to our ecosystems, but for those who are more aligned to the monetary matters of our country, we have to be prepared to ask ourselves how much, as a country, we are prepared to spend in future years' tax revenues. How much are we prepared to spend to adapt to a changing climate and to fix the disasters? These are going to range in the billions of dollars just for Canada. The smart economics are for us to start making changes now and address this problem before the costs start spiralling out of control. This is why we, as a country, must have legislated targets in order to reduce our emissions.

I understand that Canada has fossil fuels. We have been developing them and exporting them, and we have many people whose livelihoods depend on the sector. The changes coming our way are not going to be easy, but they are going to be necessary. This is why, if we are going to do justice to the energy workers currently employed in the oil and gas sector, we absolutely must have a just transition strategy in place. We can already see the writing on the wall. Increasingly, investment is drying up and we are going to see more and more investment firms and banks start listing fossil fuel reserves as stranded assets. We need to identify the fact that many energy workers have transferable skills that are going to be needed in the renewable energy economy in the future. In addition, in Bill C-12 we need to start employing that just transition strategy so that we can take advantage of their skill sets and really position ourselves where we need to be.

I think Bill C-12 is a great first draft and, like any first draft, there is a nucleus of an idea there that we can work with. However, I believe that it needs substantial revisions. The legislation as it is currently written would allow targets to be set by the minister of the environment for the years 2030, 2035, 2040 and 2045. The bill also requires that we have an emissions reduction plan, a progress report and assessment report for each target. It would establish an arm's-length advisory body to provide the minister of the environment with advice on how to achieve net zero emissions. It would require the minister of finance to prepare an annual report detailing how we are managing financial risks and so on. While there are some good things in place, and it is a step in the right direction, I believe that, given we are arguably in the most critical decade for addressing climate change, waiting until 2030 is a bridge too far. When the bill gets to committee, I would like to see committee members work constructively together to make some significant amendments to the bill.

I think that we absolutely must have a 2025 milestone target that would require a progress report by 2023 and an assessment in 2027. I also believe that we need far clearer and stronger accountability measures put in place on progress reporting, assessment reporting, emissions reduction planning and target setting. Again, this is a moment in time, and given what we know about climate change, we need to be upfront and very transparent with the Canadian people about what we as a country need to do. Also, the environment commissioner needs to be made an independent officer, similar to other independent officers of Parliament. As well, the legislation before us should not be by itself but should come along with those significant investments in that just and sustainable recovery plan that is going to support our workers, families and communities with training and good jobs.

To conclude, I implore my colleagues, even those who have doubts about the bill, to not throw the baby out with the bathwater. Let us recognize that Bill C-12 has its flaws and that there is a lot to be desired within the bill, but let us at least vote in principle to support the idea behind the bill, get it to committee and allow important witness testimony to inform the amendments that it needs in order to make it a much better bill and one that Canada needs.

• (1650)

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Nature Energy just put out a study from the University of

Government Orders

California that states roughly 20% of electric vehicle owners in California replaced their cars with gas ones, with the main reason being the length of time to charge.

Does the member recognize the serious problem of discontinuance due to the technological challenges we still face at this time?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, like any early stage of a technology that is being adopted, we still have more advances that can be done. The technology with respect to zero-emission vehicles is growing rapidly. A lot of car companies are now starting to throw considerable financial weight into this, and I think we are going to see in short order a huge improvement not only in battery life but also in battery charge capacity.

I own a zero-emission vehicle. It depends on the kind of charger one gets, but it allows me to meet my needs quite ably and it is very satisfying knowing I am going around town not having any emissions. In a recent Angus Reid poll, only 34% of Conservative Party supporters said they believed climate change was human-caused. The Conservatives have a real problem, and the Conservative Party has to own up to that and really have a frank conversation with its membership on the seriousness of this problem.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is so incredibly short-sighted when Conservative members try to use the early place in the evolution of a particular product as an excuse for why we need to abandon it completely. The first electric car I had was not fully electric. It was a Chevy Volt and only had 40 kilometres' worth of electricity on a charge. The electric car I have now, the Hyundai Kona, can get me to Ottawa on a charge and then I charge it here before going back home.

Did the member feel like banging his head against the wall the way I did when he listened to the previous question he heard?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I need to save my forehead from that kind of pain, but in all seriousness, to the member's point, it is important to underline that with any early adaptation of a technology there will always be growing pains. We saw it at the turn of the last century when people were transitioning from horses and buggies to the first petrol-powered cars. It will take time for the infrastructure to spread and for electric cars to really get to where people need them to be, but it is happening. Many vehicles out there now have a 400-kilometre or 500-kilometre range on a single charge, which is a huge improvement over just five years of the technology being out there.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. In terms of banging heads against the wall, I cannot say the Liberals are helping much. I also think that there are many things giving them a headache at the end of the day.

Government Orders

Bill C-215, introduced by my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, was a climate bill with teeth that required the government to meet its targets by 2050. The bill we are currently studying is very timid, although we support it in principle. I would like to know whether my colleague sees the many paradoxes in the Liberals' actions in the fight against climate change.

• (1655)

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I live in a province where the Liberals spent billions of our dollars to buy a bitumen-exporting pipeline and are spending billions more to increase its exporting capacity, so I very much understand his concerns.

I recognize what the Bloc has done on climate change. I also want to recognize the member for Winnipeg Centre in our own party, who has also brought up similar legislation. There are a lot of efforts from all parties, and we all need to collectively come together to treat this issue with the seriousness it deserves and make sure our actions meet our words in the House of Commons.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-12, such an important bill. I do not think there is anything more important than what this bill seeks to set in motion.

We have made it very clear that we must reach net-zero by 2050 and that we must exceed the Paris climate targets by 2030. What this bill would do is set the framework to establish and measure those targets, but more importantly, afterwards, figure out if something needs to be adjusted and hold accountability back to Parliament for whatever governments come and go between now and 2050, so that Canadians have an ability to assess how we are doing.

I say that nothing is more important than this, because I cannot think of any particular piece of legislation that could trump this in terms of the impact it would have for generations to come.

I think of my children, who are 17, four and two, and the world they will live in 50 years from now. I worry about what it will look like from an environmental perspective and from an ecosystem perspective, not just here in Canada, as there is no doubt, in my opinion, that we are probably one of the better-off countries in terms of the effects of climate change, but what climate change will mean to things like world order. What impact will climate refugees, those seeking refugee status as a result of climate change, have in our world? Nothing matters more, in my opinion, than what this legislation attempts to hold governments to account on as we move into the future.

I think of some of the discussions that have been had today, and I think of what it is going to take to get to this. A lot of people talk about how this is going to be very challenging, how there is a lot of work that needs to be done, how electric vehicles are not where they need to be and what the real impact on reducing those emissions will be, and it is daunting to think about it. I think we really have to change a lot of what we do.

However, if we stop there and only consider the daunting perspective of what needs to be done, we will completely miss the opportunity that comes along with it. In my opinion, there is a great opportunity here to be leaders in the technology. Who does not

want to develop those new technologies that the world will adopt? Who does not want to be an exporter of great technology? We need to be at the leading edge of this so that we are exporting our technologies around the world, as other nations that are developing are looking for ways to do things differently and to be more environmentally sensitive so that the impact is more environmentally correct, but also on a more localized level.

I will never forget one of the climate strike rallies in Kingston on a Friday afternoon a couple of years ago. One of the organizers of the event, Gavin Hutchison, whom I know very well as he helped me in my 2015 campaign, came up to me and said, "Think of the potential for job creation in doing what we need to do." Kingston is renowned for its old buildings, and of course old buildings do not lend themselves well to being extremely efficient until they have been retrofitted. Gavin pointed over to Kingston city hall and said, "Think of the work that has to be done to change those windows to triple-pane windows and relook at the way we do our heating systems by using geothermal and other ways of doing things." All of this will employ thousands of people in the short, medium and long term in order to get to where we need to be.

• (1700)

When we have a debate like this, I think of somebody like Gavin. For somebody who is so incredibly passionate and who understands the dire circumstances we are in, he still has the ability to be optimistic. He still looks at the glass as half-full, rather than saying, "Oh well, I can only drive 300 kilometres with my electric car, so I may as well go back to the F-150", which, by the way, is going electric in the next couple of years. People like Gavin do not think like that. The vast majority of Canadians do not think like that. They look at things from an optimistic perspective. Our economy and markets look at things optimistically: Where will the leading-edge technology be? Capital for anything with the term "green" attached to it is readily available because the markets know that this is where the future is.

We are about to unlock incredible potential with the way our commitment to our environmental responsibilities is changing. I think of some of the opposition to this bill that I have heard today and I cannot seem to wrap my head around it. Conservative members seem to suggest that they are against this bill and I cannot understand why. When we think about it, this bill basically says that we establish benchmarks and then measure ourselves against them. What more would an opposition party want than that? We are literally putting this into legislation. We are saying, this is what we are going to accomplish and, by the way, we are going to follow up to see if we actually did it. With the ammunition it would give to the Conservative Party in attacking and holding a government to account, I cannot understand why anybody would be against this. Even if someone was against doing anything with respect to climate change, there is still the opportunity to hold the government to account.

That brings me to my next point. Are the Conservatives really against this bill, or are they against the evolution and modernizing of our economy so that we can get to where we are being more environmentally responsible? It is so funny that the member for Battle River—Crowfoot, who was speaking earlier, was talking about Liberals being hypocrites. This is coming from a party that, by the way, now supports pricing pollution and clean fuel standards. For years, they fought us on this. They repeatedly said that the Liberals were trying to pass a carbon tax, that they cannot and will not have it, and now it is suddenly what they are going to do.

As if that was not the best part, I want to read something the member for Battle River—Crowfoot said in this House today. Members might find this interesting. The member said, “all members of this House...certainly from the Conservative side, support a strong environment for our future, but we also believe that needs to go hand in hand with the economy”. A Conservative member in this House today said the environment needs to go hand in hand with the economy. I feel for the previous minister of environment, the member for Ottawa Centre, who for years sat in the House saying the exact same thing and she was heckled repeatedly for it. What is next? Are the Conservatives going to come in here and say “the middle class and those working hard to join it”? Is that the next line that is going to start coming from the Conservatives?

I will end with where I started. Nothing is more important than this bill. Nothing is more important than defining what our future will look like and, even more importantly, holding any government to account to make sure it delivers, and if it does not, understanding exactly what it is going to do differently so that it does. Without this, nothing else really matters. This is the most important thing that we can do for future generations.

• (1705)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actions speak louder than words. My hon. colleague has said what the government is going to do, but the government has been in power for almost six years and emissions have not gone down. The government has filibustered at committee, obfuscated and done everything it can to avoid making sure that information is provided to this House, to Parliament and to Canadians.

Can my hon. colleague tell us exactly how this legislation will hold the government to account?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I do remember very well when this member helped get this government into power in 2015.

The legislation is very clear. It talks about establishing the framework. It has the years in it for which accountability will come back once the benchmarks are established. The opposition can then follow along in the timeline to see if the government has reached the targets. If it has not, then it might be time for another energetic question period. That is basically how they will be able to follow along and make sure that the government is held accountable.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when I listen to my colleague, I cannot help but think of the novel *1984* by George Orwell.

Government Orders

I am not thinking of the party in power in the Orwell's novel, but rather of his concept of doublethink. Doublethink is the ability to hold two completely different opinions and to believe them both while forgetting that they are completely contradictory.

In its budget, the Liberal Party has allocated \$21.6 billion for a green recovery. However, it spent \$17 billion on a pipeline and gave the go-ahead to offshore drilling without an environmental assessment. At present, it is introducing Bill C-12, which contains nothing that is binding on the government.

Can my hon. colleague tell me why the government voted against Bill C-215 and is now proposing a much more timid bill?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, there is no doublethink here. I am on the record as having said that I did not think it was a good idea to purchase a pipeline. I am on the record as having said that. I am saying what I think. I am standing here as an individual member of Parliament to deliver that.

This bill is at the stage where we would like to get it to committee, so that if a member is interested in advocating for why targets need to be in this bill, as opposed to it just being a framework, then I think it would be a great opportunity for the member and others to do that at committee. I have heard others say that, and I am not even completely against it. I would love to hear what the committee has to say about that.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member said that we have to change a lot of what we do, and yet we have seen the Liberal government continuing and increasing the massive oil and gas subsidies that are given, but it has given very little to clean energy.

What I really want to talk about is the Trans Mountain pipeline. The latest estimate from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, and also by the company, is \$18.5 billion, to build the pipeline and ram it through. It will result in the mutilation and destruction of the Burnett Creek watershed, which is just a few kilometres from here. It will substantially increase greenhouse gas emissions. It is a massive mega project that essentially means Canada will never be able to meet its commitments under Paris.

My question is very simple. The government is ramming this pipeline through, which means 50 years of increased oil and gas exports, raw bitumen. Why is the government not actually walking the talk?

Government Orders

• (1710)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, one might think the member did not hear the answer to the previous question. I just finished saying that I am on the record as having said that I am not in favour of the purchase of that pipeline. I do respect the fact that there are competing challenges when we do these things. I realize that the government would have had to weigh a whole host of different variables into making that decision, and I respect that.

On oil and gas subsidies, I could not agree with the member more. Again, that is another thing I am on the record for, as saying that I do not think we should be subsidizing oil and gas in Canada.

I would encourage the member to listen to my speech and then ask me a question. If he is going to go off topic onto something that is completely different, like the two issues he brought up, he should at least find out what my position is on them, so that we can have a meaningful discussion about it when he does ask me a question.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak to Bill C-12, an act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050.

The legislation before the House is nothing more than more virtue-signalling from a virtue-signalling government led by a virtue-signalling Prime Minister. The Liberals talk the talk when it comes to reducing GHGs, but when it comes to walking the walk and actually delivering, the government, without more, gets a big fat F.

Accountability is in the title of the bill. Accountability is mentioned eight more times in the body of the bill. However, make no mistake that when the Liberals talk about accountability and when they incorporate the word "accountability" into their own legislation, they mean not accountability for the Liberals. After all, the first targets provided for in the bill are in the year 2030, which is nearly a decade from now, likely long after the government has left office and almost certainly long after the Prime Minister has left office.

When the Liberals talk about accountability therefore, they are talking about accountability for future governments, but not for themselves. So much for the Liberals talking about accountability. It is no wonder that the Liberals want to impose accountability on future government, while exempting themselves from the same accountability. This is not the first time the government has set targets for reducing GHG emissions and then completely failing to meet them. When the Prime Minister took office in 2015, he committed to the Paris climate accord and with it the Paris targets of a 30% reduction of GHG emissions from 2005 levels by the year 2030.

How is the government fairing with respect to meeting that target? According to the national inventory report published by the Department of Environment and Climate Change, the government is projected to miss its 2030 targets by a full 15%. It is important to emphasize that the national inventory report is a government report. That is the government's own projection. It is missing the mark by 15%. In response to that, this projection is likely wildly optimistic given the fact that over the last six years under the government's watch GHG emissions have gone up, not down.

It is important to note that not only is the government way off from meeting its 2030 Paris commitments, it failed to meet the previous 2020 commitment of reducing GHGs 17% below 2005 levels. The government missed that target by a whopping 123 million tonnes. To put that into context, that is the equivalent of Canada's entire agricultural sector and a good part of Canada's electricity sector.

It should be noted that while the government completely failed to meet its 2020 targets of a 17% reduction, our neighbour to the south, the United States, actually did achieve those targets set by the previous Obama administration in 2009. The U.S. reduced its GHG levels by 21% under the Trump administration.

• (1715)

I know the Prime Minister likes to compare himself to President Trump, but I certainly think he would be rather embarrassed to learn that under the Trump administration the U.S. achieved its 2020 targets, while he completely missed the mark.

What does the Prime Minister say after completely blowing the 2020 targets and being completely off track with regard to 2030? The Prime Minister's answer, being the virtue-signalling Prime Minister he is, is to simply pull a new number out of a hat and come up with a new and more ambitious target, forgetting the fact he cannot even meet his Paris target.

When the government tabled its budget, the government said that we should forget 30% and that it would up the ante to a 36% reduction. Then, three days later when the Prime Minister appeared at the Biden climate summit, the Prime Minister said that 36% was nothing, that it was a pittance, how about 45%? That is a 9% increase with respect to a commitment to reduce Canada's GHGs within the span of three days.

At the U.S. Biden climate summit, President Biden committed to a 50% to 52% reduction. How much longer will it be before the Prime Minister suddenly announces that it will not be 45% but that will be 50% to 52%? Surely the Prime Minister, being a virtue signaller, will want to outpace President Biden. Why not 55%, 60% or maybe even 80%? What a sham this is.

If the policies implemented by the government to justify its targets did not have such a devastating effect on entire sectors of the Canadian economy, the Prime Minister changing targets seemingly every day on a napkin would constitute a national joke. While the Prime Minister seemingly could not outbid himself fast enough before President Biden, lapping it up with other world leaders, there was a world leader also at the summit, who leads a country that produces the most GHG emissions in the world, that being President Xi of China.

What was President Xi's commitment at the summit? He said that China would "strive to peak carbon dioxide emissions before 2030". Let us let that sink in. In other words, President Xi committed to increasing GHG emissions over the next 10 years. This is from a country that contributes to 28% of global emissions, and is rising every day, compared to Canada's 1.5%. What was the Prime Minister's response to President Xi's total lack of a commitment? He said nothing. He is apparently fine with China increasing GHG emissions. He is apparently fine with China building hundreds of coal-fired power plants as we speak.

Simply put, the best that can be said for the Prime Minister's approach when it comes to reducing GHGs is that it is a wholly unserious one from a wholly unserious Prime Minister.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech.

Honestly, for the sake of future generations, I have a hard time swallowing what the government on the other side of the House and the former government have to say. I was around in 2009. This issue was top of mind for me when the Copenhagen meeting was being held. What happened then? His own government threw in the towel.

It is therefore hard for me to participate in these debates and see what kind of resolve there is. Earlier I spoke about targets and objectives, and I wondered if the government was going to walk the talk. All I can say is that I am ashamed.

[English]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague from Laurentides—Labelle that under the leadership of Prime Minister Harper, Canada actually saw a real reduction in GHGs. The Chrétien government signed the Kyoto accord and did precisely nothing. The current government signed on to the Paris agreement and we have gone backward, not forward.

With respect to the Conservative Party, we have put forward a comprehensive plan that recognizes this is a global issue that requires working with our allies and that we have to deal with countries that are the biggest emitters, including China.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the climate crisis is the foundational political issue of our times. There are rarely issues in politics that are existential, but this is one of them. Our planet is at stake. Ecosystems may be permanently destroyed, species may go extinct and human existence will be irreparably altered.

Over the last 25 years, we have seen numerous targets and pledges made by successive Liberal governments to meet carbon reduction targets and the Liberals have missed every single one of them. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

Given that the Liberals have a 100% record at failing to hit their targets as well as their contradictory behaviour in expanding fossil fuel infrastructure, could the member tell me how Canadians could

possibly trust the Liberal government to hit these targets without annual mandatory reductions or a 2025 target?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the member for Vancouver Kingsway is absolutely right. The current government has missed the mark time and time again.

As I noted at the beginning of my speech, one of the problems with this bill is that the first target is set in 2030, nearly 10 years from now, roughly three elections or four elections away. Very simply put, the government is not serious when it comes to transparency or accountability.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a farmer, I have been in the business of carbon sequestration all my life and it is pretty exciting to see what kind of things we can do. If we take a look at the greenhouse, we pump CO₂ in there. We go from 400 parts per million to 1,000 parts per million and we get a 21% to 61% increase in crop yield. It is amazing.

I wonder if my colleague could talk about the Conservatives' plan to support and encourage individual Canadian innovators in finding new technologies that improve our environment.

• (1725)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, my friend from Cloverdale—Langley City is absolutely right that carbon sequestration is key to reducing Canada's GHG emissions. I know my province of Alberta had called on the federal government to step up to the plate and provide real leadership. We saw a mere pittance in the budget toward supporting carbon capture and storage.

By contrast, the Conservative Party has a real plan, including a \$5-billion commitment to build carbon capture capacity and innovation. It is absolutely key. The Conservatives are committed to doing it, and working with the provinces toward reducing GHGs.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to rise today to speak to Bill C-12 from the territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation, and to serve the communities in Nanaimo—Ladysmith and the unceded territory of Snaw-naw-as, Stz'uminus, Snuneymuxw and Lyackson first nations.

Government Orders

Climate concerns rank very high in my riding. On November 21, I had the pleasure of taking part in the inaugural meeting of the Community Climate Hub here in Nanaimo. There were some great presentations and sharing of ideas about what we can do as a community to combat climate change. The ideas included creating active, transportation-friendly streets; improving our local food system and lowering the carbon footprint of our food; energy retrofits for homes, businesses and institutions; and transitioning from fossil-fuel heating, oil and fracked gas to electricity and heat pumps. There were suggestions for better public transit and for protecting the local natural environment with green spaces to ensure a vibrant biodiversity both within the city and in the surrounding area. It was an energizing meeting. Climate action at the personal and community level is important and necessary, but all of the actions that Canadians take individually and locally can be wiped out with the approval of a single diluted bitumen pipeline or a liquefied fracked gas terminal.

Just days before this community meeting, the federal government tabled Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act. Unfortunately, this piece of legislation will not hold this government to account for emissions reductions or the next government or the government after that. The accountability does not start until 2030, and that accountability is weak at best. We need climate action and accountability now.

In 2015, this government went to the Paris summit with the Harper government's target to reduce emissions by 30% over 2005 levels by 2030. The government left Paris with that pathetic target in place and tried to pretend that it was the Paris target. In the Paris climate accord decision document, Canada agreed to set new emissions reduction targets in 2020 and every five years after that. It did not happen. It was not until Earth Day this year under pressure from the Biden administration that the government increased the target to between 40% to 45% by 2030. That target is still completely inadequate and fails to address the urgency of the climate crisis. We still do not have a 2025 target that we committed to under the Paris accord.

The last IPCC report states that we have just 10 years to bring emissions down substantially or we cannot keep global warming to under 1.5°. The prospect of a livable future for our children and grandchildren is in peril.

I have heard the argument too many times that what Canada does in terms of climate action will make no difference, but, in fact, we are the ninth highest emitter of greenhouse gases on the planet and the eleventh highest emitter of greenhouse gases per capita. When we compare greenhouse gas emissions reductions, we have the worst record of the G8. Canada is a climate laggard.

The U.K. has a carbon budget law that binds governments to emissions targets and holds them accountable. In other words, it eliminates politics from climate action. In 1990, the U.K. produced 25% more emissions than Canada. It has reduced its emissions by 42% and made a commitment at Paris to reduce emissions by 68% by 2030. Collectively, the 27 countries of the European Union have reduced their emissions by 25% since 1990.

Canada's current emission levels are 21% higher than they were in 1990. That is not climate leadership, it is shameful. Successive

Liberal and Conservative governments have signed on to nine international climate accords and have failed on every account. None of the governments that signed those agreements created a plan, and Canada has not met a single one of the commitments it has made.

Canada's last target, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 17% below 2005 levels by 2020, was set by the Harper Conservative government in 2009. Eight provinces and three territories representing 85% of Canada's population were on track to meet that target, but two provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan, increased greenhouse gas emissions so much that they completely wiped out the sacrifices, investments and advancements to climate action made by the rest of the country.

● (1730)

These emissions increases can be attributed almost exclusively to the oil and gas industry. Where is the accountability? How is it that the federal government cannot ensure that the provinces work together to meet our international commitments?

Now British Columbia is joining the rogue provinces ignoring Canada's commitment to climate action and accountability. B.C. is providing billions of dollars in fossil fuel subsidies for fracking and the export of liquified fracked gas. LNG Canada is owned and controlled by five foreign multinationals. It will be the largest single source of greenhouse gas emissions in British Columbia. The B.C. government is practically giving the resource away by providing fracking companies with billions of dollars in deep-well subsidies while only collecting a fraction in royalties.

From the wellhead to the end consumer, fracked gas has the equivalent greenhouse gas footprint as burning coal for electricity. Extracting natural gas through hydraulic fracking releases methane into the atmosphere. For the first 20 years after it is released, methane is 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas. Fracking uses and poisons huge amounts of water, poisons airsheds and has been linked to increased risks of asthma, cancer and birth defects. Fracking causes earthquakes, and yet the B.C. government allows it in the vicinity of huge hydroelectric dams.

Many jurisdictions around the world have either placed moratoriums on hydraulic gas fracking or banned it outright. Some jurisdictions are also banning the installation of gas heating and gas appliances in new construction. Why? It is because they understand that creating more demand for a product that releases climate-destroying methane is irresponsible.

Fracking needs to be banned in Canada. It is incompatible with lowering carbon emissions, combatting climate change, protecting fresh water, maintaining a healthy environment, and respecting indigenous sovereignty, rights and title.

As I speak, some of the last big-tree old-growth forests in B.C. are either being logged or are under immediate threat of being logged, trees that sequester massive amounts of carbon, far more than an acre of seedlings. The B.C. government is allowing those trees to be cut down. The B.C. government is also allowing whole trees to be ground up into pellets and exported as biofuel. That is not climate leadership.

These are just some of the reasons that Canada needs a carbon budget law. We need to take politics out of climate action, and follow the science. The priorities of the government demonstrate that it is not serious enough about the existential threat of climate change. The government is spending \$17 billion on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. Trans Mountain is not just a climate loser, it is a money loser. According to the Parliamentary Budget Office, the only way that TMX will not result in billions of dollars in losses is if the government abandons action on climate change and increases oil sands production.

We need a just transition for fossil fuel workers and an end to all subsidies to the oil and gas industry. Research conducted by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which breaks down new and recycled spending promises, shows that the government is proposing to allocate just 0.25% of Canada's GDP toward climate action. That is far less than the 2% of GDP that leading climate economist Nicholas Stern says is needed to stop global warming from surpassing two degrees.

Canada has committed \$5.1 billion per year towards climate action, when we need to be committing \$40 billion a year. That is not climate leadership. The climate crisis is the defining struggle of our generation, just as World War II was the struggle of our grandparents' generation. Focusing on incentives for households and businesses is not enough. The government must take charge, force the provinces into line to meet our international commitments and bind us to a whole-of-government approach that mandates action to win this struggle.

The real obstacle is not the climate deniers, it is politicians who recognize the science but lack the courage to remove politics from climate action. We need a carbon budget law. Bill C-12 is not it, and does not meet the challenge before us. It provides a false sense of security, and pushes long overdue action and accountability down the road for another decade.

• (1735)

Young people across this country are demanding better from us. They, our children and our grandchildren deserve more than this weak piece of legislation.

Government Orders

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to go back to the part of the member's speech where he was talking about the offsets between different provinces. To be completely honest, it is not something I was entirely aware of. He was suggesting that some provinces have done better and that a couple of others have done worse, which is how the offset was calculated. Can he expand on that?

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, if we look at the analysis of our 2020 target for the Copenhagen Accord, Ontario met the target. Other provinces reduced their emissions and had a plan they followed through on. They reduced their emissions by almost 17%, which was what the target was. Alberta and Saskatchewan increased their emissions so much that we basically flatlined between 2005 and 2020, so we did not meet those targets.

What is happening now in British Columbia means we are going to see a massive expansion in fracking for LNG Canada. We know that gas fracking is terrible for the climate. It is a climate killer. When we put methane into the atmosphere, it is 80 times more potent as a greenhouse gas. It is going to create a serious problem for us. We have a third province that has now hopped onto this bandwagon of being a climate rogue and the federal government needs to step up, show leadership and make sure the provinces are held to account for our international agreements.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague's detailed speech. We will remember these failures for the rest of our lives.

I would like to hear his thoughts on the bill that unfortunately never came to be, as well as on the need to act very quickly, without the usual partisanship we see always focused on protecting the economy.

If we had invested in innovation and the environment in recent decades, we would have already transitioned to green energies. I would like to hear my colleague speak to that.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, we are so far behind in this country that other countries are far ahead of us. There is technology that is being developed in Canada that is being used in Europe. Corvus Energy in Richmond designed the battery system that has electrified the ferry fleets in Denmark, Sweden and Norway. We have a company in Mississauga that is creating hydrogen trains, locomotives, for the European train system. Canadian technology is being developed. We could be further ahead on that kind of technology development if we were promoting it as a government and not just sitting back and having our economy dependent on the extraction, rip and ship, of raw resources so that when a pipeline gets cancelled we have to have an emergency debate.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have heard the term “walk the walk” many times today. It reminds me of when I was at a G20 energy meeting in Argentina three years ago where the U.K. minister got up and said, “We have to walk the walk.” He was referring to climate accountability legislation the U.K. brought in. We now have a bill before us that kicks the can down the road another decade with weak targets. I guess I am despairing about what we have to do here to get that sense of urgency. I wonder if the member can comment on that.

• (1740)

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, I feel the member's urgency. I am a grandfather now and I fear for the future of my children and my grandchildren. This bill is not accountable at all. To do a review in 2028 of our 2030 targets is not good enough. We are supposed to be taking stock in 2023 of how our targets are being adhered to for our 2025 target. The Paris accord does not even mention 2030. We are climate laggards in this country. We need to get down to it and be accountable. We need a carbon budget law like the U.K. has.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House today to debate Bill C-12, which our government introduced in the House.

This bill, which is entitled the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, is the culmination of many years of advocacy, work and national and international negotiations. It proposes a legislative framework to support our goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050. The need for this net-zero target is based on the best scientific knowledge available, which was clearly set out in the most recent special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, in 2018.

The report clearly illustrates the devastating effects of global warming of 1.5°C. It shows that human-induced warming has already reached an average of approximately 1°C above pre-industrial levels. I want to clarify, for the benefit of the House, that experts agree that humans are responsible for this warming, unlike what was said at the Conservative Party convention.

The science is clear: to hold the temperature increase to 1.5°C and stave off the worst effects of climate warming, we must achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. The Paris Agreement, to which Canada is a signatory, echoes these findings. It calls on gov-

ernments around the world to take urgent, ambitious climate change action to maintain climate warming well below the bar of 2°C and pursue efforts to limit it to below 1.5°C. This would prevent the worst consequences of climate change, and it is urgent that we act quickly so as not miss this positive opportunity that is slipping through our fingers.

It is extremely important to not only act quickly, but effectively. That is why the government established the net-zero advisory body, an independent body that will help Canada achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. It will ensure that national greenhouse gas emission targets are established using the best available data. This advisory body will provide the Government of Canada with expert advice on how to reduce our emissions, reach our objectives and ensure that Canada excels in the net-zero economy of the 21st century. We expect that the proposed measures will serve as a catalyst for long-term growth that fosters low carbon emissions, sustainable jobs and our collective health and safety.

Canada is not alone in aiming for net zero by 2050. Many other countries, as well as provincial and state governments, cities and businesses have rallied to the net zero by 2050 target. Some countries have already legislated or signalled their intent to legislate their commitment to achieve net zero by 2050. These include Norway, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, New Zealand and Japan. Here in Canada, Quebec has committed, Nova Scotia has legislated its commitment, and British Columbia's current government has also pledged to do so.

This push to achieve net zero by 2050 and the steps many governments have pledged to take to achieve that goal unite not just the international community but all segments of society, including environmental government agencies, unions, first nations, indigenous peoples and the private sector. Furthermore, environmental organizations such as Ecojustice, the David Suzuki Foundation, Équiterre and many others see the introduction of Bill C-12 as a major step forward for Canada.

Combined with a strong plan to fight climate change, this legislative framework will provide the necessary transparency and accountability, no matter which party is in power, throughout the entirety of the important and crucial challenge of achieving net-zero emissions.

Many large Canadian companies have already committed to reaching net-zero emissions by 2050. Furthermore, some Canadian companies such as Maple Leaf Foods and the Canadian Automobile Association, or CAA, are already carbon neutral.

In light of these efforts on all fronts, it is now Canada's turn to commit to reaching net-zero emissions by introducing the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act. This act will require national greenhouse gas emissions targets to be set every five years starting in 2030 in order to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. This approach will ensure transparency with regard to the measures and progress necessary to reach this goal, earning Canadians' trust.

• (1745)

This legislation will create accountability to ensure we are meeting our targets. It also gives the Minister of Environment and Climate Change additional responsibilities, including the tabling of several progress reports and plans before Parliament.

If the target is not met in any given year, Canada will have to disclose why the target was not met. It will also be required to provide a description of actions the government is taking or will take to address the failure to achieve the target.

The legislation also requires the Minister of Finance to work with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to prepare an annual report respecting key measures that the federal public administration has taken to manage its financial risks and opportunities related to climate change.

We know that the cost of climate inaction can be very high. We need only think of the financial implications of natural disasters, not to mention the immense and immeasurable cost of lost biodiversity. These reports, enshrined in law, will ensure this financial transparency related to climate risks.

Finally, the legislation requires the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development to examine and report on the government's implementation of measures aimed at mitigating climate change at least once every five years.

All of these measures in the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act will ensure a clear and credible process for setting our targets and will allow for transparency and accountability on the progress made. This accountability is essential as Canada commits to net-zero emissions by 2050 and as we meet our new and ambitious target for 2030.

I remind members that the government announced a more detailed plan to meet our Paris commitments last fall. This plan included new investments to support and encourage Canadian businesses and help them expedite the transition to a successful, net-zero and sustainable economy that is, most importantly, globally competitive.

As the Prime Minister said, "Our most important international partners and competitors are positioning themselves to attract investment in new clean technologies. Canada needs to do at least that, if not more."

Net zero offers the biggest economic opportunities of our age and will ensure a viable future for us, our children and our chil-

Government Orders

dren's children. A few months after releasing our detailed plan, we responded to Canadians, who called on us to be even more ambitious and exceed our 2030 target under the Paris Agreement by almost a third for a total greenhouse gas emissions reduction of 40% to 45% by 2030.

Achieving our climate targets is ambitious, long-term work that requires immediate action on the part of all governments in Canada, industry, government organizations, indigenous peoples and the entire population. It is important to recognize the individual and collective actions already taken on this front. Provincial and territorial actions are very important to ensuring Canada's success in the fight against climate change. They will complement our actions and enable us to exceed our targets. The provinces and territories continue to announce ambitious new objectives and actions.

Just recently, the Government of Quebec launched the 2030 plan for a green economy, a policy framework for the electrification of transportation and to fight climate change. Although the bill before us today does not impose any obligations on the provinces and territories, their opinions and contributions, along with those of indigenous peoples, experts, non-governmental organizations and citizens, will be solicited with regard to the targets and plans prepared under the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act.

A single government cannot transform our economy for the future and ensure a prosperous net-zero emissions future by 2050 on its own. I dream of the day that the Conservative Party of Canada, like the Conservative Party of Great Britain, will recognize the importance of climate change and of having serious plans and targets in place to address it.

I hope that the members of the opposition will support Bill C-12, which will hold us all accountable for this net-zero emissions future. This bill is necessary not only for the transparency it will bring, but also for the positive impact it will have on the health, opportunities and well-being of our children and grandchildren. It is a question of fairness.

• (1750)

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, as I listened intently to the minister, I heard the word "effectively". However, with all due respect to him, I do have one question.

Bill C-12 is indeed a step forward. Technically, no one in the House, not even our Conservative colleagues, can deny the realities of 2021.

Government Orders

There has been much talk of 2050. We would actually like to know what will happen in 2030, since there seems to be no desire to try and assess the targets.

Considering all the expertise he acquired in a previous life before he entered politics, what does the minister think of our position on this planet, which is dying because of greenhouse gases?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

I too find it alarming that one party in the House of Commons does not share our unease and concern about climate change.

With respect to Canada's international performance in the fight against climate change, I humbly confess that that is not only why I got into politics, but also why I joined the Liberal Party of Canada. For more than 25 years, I have been crusading for the environment and specifically for action on climate change.

I have seen governments come and go, here and elsewhere. I was impressed by what I saw from 2015 to 2019: carbon pricing, record-setting investments in public transit, transportation electrification and record-setting investments in nature-based solutions.

I would like to point out that, between 1992 and 2015, Canada managed to protect barely 2% of its marine areas. By 2019, that figure was around 19%. That all happened in four short years.

Nevertheless, we still have a lot to do. That is why we presented an even more ambitious action plan in December. As my colleague probably knows—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I apologize to the hon. minister, but I have to allow another member to ask a question. The minister could possibly add what he wanted to clarify.

The member for Windsor West.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals talk about electrification, especially electric vehicles, and green technologies. I would like to ask the minister about his party. Back in 2015, the Prime Minister talked about how we had to transition out of manufacturing. In many respects, the auto industry has done that. How can the minister reconcile his party's plan?

Maybe he can tell us when was the last time Canada had a greenfield site. Maybe he can tell us why Canada does not have a battery plant. Could he tell us why Mexico and the United States are getting massive investments in new manufacturing, including Magna, a Canadian company that is not expanding its operations in Canada?

Perhaps the minister can explain why we are becoming dependent upon vehicle manufacturing of others instead of green, clean technology domestically, just like we are dependent upon vaccines from others right now? We are going to be completely dependent upon new lower-emission vehicles. Perhaps the minister can explain why the Liberal strategy is not producing any results and when Canada last had a greenfield site.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Madam Speaker, I would beg to differ with the hon. member's characterization of what is happening in Canada.

Just a few months ago, there was an announcement by the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the Province of Ontario and Unifor, for the construction of North America's largest electric vehicle plant. Since then, we have heard more good news on this front. We are seeing a collaboration between the federal government and the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario, and many others, on the development of battery-powered vehicles. I could talk about the recent investment in Lion Electric, a Quebec company that produces electric school buses and all kinds of different types of trucks.

The member is right. He does have a point: It is an international race and Canada must be at the forefront of that race. If we do not do that, then we will become dependent. We are doing everything we can to ensure that Canada is at the forefront of this race. There is some very encouraging discussion with the new U.S. administration with respect to Canada-U.S. collaboration on electrification and on green technologies; conversations that unfortunately were not possible until just a few months ago.

• (1755)

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to join the discussion today on Bill C-12. This is an issue of great importance for me as climate change is an urgent issue for me and for many of my constituents across the Kenora riding and of course, many Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

In northwestern Ontario, we have seen many environmental changes and challenges in recent years. There have been shorter and warmer winter seasons. There have been more sporadic weather patterns and changing behaviour of wildlife and these are all new realities that we must face. That is why I believe it is incredibly important that we work with Canadians and with industries to ensure that we are doing our part to aid in the global effort to preserve and protect our environment for future generations. I will speak to that in more detail shortly.

First, I want to address the bill directly as I believe that the title of the bill in itself is somewhat misleading to Canadians who may be watching at home or see the speech online. I believe the bill does very little to bring transparency and accountability to Canada's efforts of reaching net zero by 2050. I believe that the bill is a typical Liberal bill. It places accountability on future governments, not its own. Through nearly six years of the Liberal government, it spent the majority of time either pointing fingers and criticizing past governments or making commitments such as this one for future governments. The one thing that the Liberals failed to do is hold themselves accountable.

The bill proposes the goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050, but there are very few details on how the government is planning to get there. The goal of net zero is something that our party shares with the current government. We also know that many Canadian industries share that goal and they are already on a path to reduce their emissions, diversify their operations and find innovative solutions to help Canada reach these goals. Again, the bill does not truly provide any support for those solutions. It is in many ways simply stating the target that they were planning to get to.

The government is already failing to meet its current climate commitment set for the year 2030. It is interesting that instead of taking action to reach the government's current goal, Liberals are now instead looking further down the road and committing to more aspirational goals. Unfortunately, given their track record thus far, I have very little faith in their ability to put Canada on track to meeting either the 2030 or 2050 targets.

Truly this is a government that has been big on promises and short on action on the environment. We know Liberals said they would plant two billion trees, but they have no plan to reach that target. They said they would put Canada on a path to reducing emissions, yet emissions continue to rise. They also continue to export non-recyclable Canadian waste abroad and in my riding they failed to take meaningful action to protect Lake of the Woods.

What is worse, the Liberals claim that they would balance economic activity with environmental protections, but even as they have been missing these environmental targets, they have done nothing to allow Canadian industry, which is some of the cleanest in the world, to thrive. We know that Canadian oil and gas holds itself to very high environmental standards and many in the industry are already committed to net zero by 2050.

Last year, I had the opportunity to visit Fort McMurray, Alberta. I was joined by the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka and others. I toured Suncor and I learned about the great work it is doing to supply clean and sustainable energy to the world and ensure that the environmental impacts of this are as minimal as possible. Suncor alone has planted over eight million trees as part of its reclamation programs and we know that is many more trees than the Liberals have been able to plant. That is in addition to the belated efforts of other energy companies that have similar programs. I believe overall that Canadian energy companies, often vilified by the Liberals, are actually doing more for the environment than the government itself.

The cement industry as well is taking ambitious steps to lower its emissions by transitioning to lower intensity, Portland Limestone Cement is investing hundreds of millions in low-carbon fuels. This is an industry that employs many in my riding and across the country.

• (1800)

I would like to talk about the forestry industry as well. It is a big employer in northwestern Ontario. It is taking a leadership role in helping Canada reach its low-carbon goals. Weyerhaeuser, which has an operation in Kenora, reduced its GHGs by 53% over the past two decades. It is becoming greener and more efficient every year. Resolute Forest Products, which has a mill in Ignace, has reduced its emissions by 83% compared to 2000 levels. Since 2010, only a

Government Orders

decade ago, Domtar, which has an operation in Dryden, has seen its emissions decrease by nearly 20%. These are figures that the government could only dream of meeting itself.

If we look at the mining industry, which also employs many in my riding and is a major employer of first nations, it is taking great strides to reduce its environmental impact. Evolution, which has a mine in Balmertown, has increased by 11% the amount of water it is able to reuse. It is also continuing to take steps to reach its climate risk mitigation targets. Lastly, we know that clean, Canadian natural gas has the potential to lower global emissions by displacing less clean forms of energy and preventing carbon leakage abroad.

Canada's Conservatives recognize that industry must be at the table when we are talking about reaching net zero. We can lean on its expertise to help us reach our climate goals, while supplying the world with sustainable, ethically harvested natural resources. That is why it is so incredibly disappointing that the Liberals continue to take their cues from activists who are determined to destroy our industries instead of recognizing their environmental leadership.

The government has failed to address many environmental concerns and is on track to miss its targets. The government's only climate plan is to implement a tax redistribution scheme that makes life more difficult for hard-working, rural Canadians, and also lets big emitters off the hook.

I would like to take some time to discuss some of the tangible actions we must take to meet our targets. Primarily, we must incentivize and invest in innovative technologies to reduce emissions. We must incentivize Canadians to make their homes and their businesses more efficient and support industries as they make their operations cleaner and greener. We can do our part to reduce global emissions by supporting the responsible production of clean, Canadian energy and get it to international markets, reducing the world's reliance on coal and other high-intensity forms of energy.

Government Orders

We also need to continue to invest in conservation initiatives so future generations can continue to enjoy cleaner air, cleaner water and the beauty of our natural environment. We must not forget that it was under a Conservative government with former prime minister Brian Mulroney that we took decisive action on the acid rain crisis. I believe we now need a Conservative government with a similar vision to address the environmental questions of our time. That is exactly what we intend to do.

The Leader of the Opposition recently announced our climate plan. It is ambitious, but it is practical, with real targets and concrete steps to reach them. Under a Conservative government, Canada would embrace innovation, making real investments in the production of electric cars and trucks, as well as hydrogen vehicles. We would also invest \$1 billion to deploy small modular reactors, a zero-emission source of electricity and heat across the country.

We would work with our neighbours to the south to establish North American standards for industry with border adjustments to prevent big emitters from outsourcing their emissions and their jobs to countries with lower environmental standards. We would place carbon border tariffs on goods imported from big polluters, like China, to ensure that we are holding all nations to the same standards that we set for ourselves. Additionally, we would invest \$5 billion in carbon capture, utilization and storage to help our energy sector reduce emissions while continuing to provide high-paying jobs for Canadians.

I could go on, but I see that I am limited in time. I would like to say that Canada's Conservatives are going to move forward on this plan and many other things I cannot get to right now, but this is the plan that Canada needs as we seek to secure a greener future, not more empty rhetoric from the Liberals. If we want to combat the effects of climate change, Canada needs more than aspirational goals and empty words, but unfortunately, empty words are all that the Liberal bill provides.

Canadians deserve better and the world deserves better. For years, the Liberals have been spinning their wheels in the fight against climate change. Conservatives actually have a road map and we are ready to get in the driver's seat to implement it.

• (1805)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really like this member. He speaks clearly, and he comes here and speaks what I believe to be his own mind, but I just cannot get over it when Conservatives routinely hark back to Brian Mulroney. That is like me taking credit for the formation of this country, because I happen to come from the same riding as Sir John A. Macdonald. The Conservative party of Brian Mulroney does not exist anymore. They need to stop invoking his name.

When the member talks about the ability of people to invest in their homes to make them more energy efficient, how does he think the new plan that is presented by the Conservative party accomplishes that? All it would do is put money into the bank accounts of people who are wealthy, people who can afford to do those renovations anyway. How does he propose their plan would help those who do not have the resources to retrofit their homes?

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I always appreciate the member for Kingston and the Islands asking me questions and partici-

pating in the debate. We know he has a lot of thoughts and a lot of opinions he likes to share.

I would just say, with respect to the member, that we clearly disagree on the substance of the low-carbon savings account he was talking about. We know this is a measure that would keep more money in the pockets of Canadians. It would allow them to invest in greener technologies for themselves. It would not be a big government program that gives more revenue to the government and redistributes it across the country to those who have not been paying.

I stand by our plan. It is a credible and tangible plan that would help Canada reach its climate goals, and at the same time it would ensure we have more economic activity and more jobs than under the Liberal plan.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague, whom I very much appreciate and would like to acknowledge. He is a fine member, and I hear he works hard for his constituents every day.

I just heard the last question from our Liberal friend, who said that the Conservatives keep talking about Brian Mulroney. Well, the Liberals keep talking about Pierre Elliott Trudeau, so they should not be so quick to criticize.

Now that my colleague has been criticized for talking about Brian Mulroney, I would like to hear what my colleague thinks about what the current Prime Minister of Canada has done for climate change, now that he has been in office for six years.

[English]

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I will answer in English, because my colleague will probably actually understand me better than if I tried my French.

It is important to note, as I have said in my speech, that the current Prime Minister talks a very good game on climate change, but when it comes to delivering, he has really been absent. I do believe the government needs to do more to work with our industries and to work with those who are already doing great work to help Canada reach environmental goals, instead of vilifying them and making them out to be the enemy.

That is the approach I would like to see the government take, and that is the approach we will take under the next Conservative government.

• (1810)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I can see the good intentions in Bill C-12, but like any first draft, I think it needs some revisions.

We have identified some ways in committee that we would like to see some substantive amendments come forward: 2025 milestone target, more powers for the advisory committee and maybe separating some of the targets and the plans away from the minister's mandate.

Does the member have any suggestions to the House about some of the improvements and amendments he would like to see to this bill to make it substantially stronger than what we have right before us?

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I believe there need to be binding targets on the government. I am not looking at 2030 or 2050. We need to ensure that we are doing our job to hold the government to account. Right now, I believe that is an important step, and I would add as well that we need to make sure the advisory body that is working with the government on this needs to have representatives from our energy industries and from natural resources, so that we can ensure we are leaning on their expertise and the innovation they have been working toward to help us reach our goals.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate.

[Translation]

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the amendment.

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

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would ask for a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, May 4, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:43 p.m.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Orders of the Day

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

The House resumed from April 19 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak yet again on this very important matter. I was quite encouraged by a couple of things today. I understand that we have delivered more than 14.5 million doses of vaccine to the provinces and territories. I believe it is 14,700,000. While I was sitting at the convention centre in Winnipeg, I did a bit of research on my cellphone and found out, from one particular site, that 12,696,698 people have been vaccinated with their first dose. As of this afternoon, I am one of the individuals who have been vaccinated, and I am very grateful.

Like others, I waited for my turn. Other people's turns will come and they will become eligible too. It is therefore really imperative that all members of Parliament and leaders within our communities encourage constituents to get vaccinated. Somewhere in the neighbourhood of 34% of our population has been vaccinated, and the rate is growing. That is really quite encouraging. Compared with other G20 countries, we are a strong and healthy third in getting out the first dose. I am really quite pleased and wanted to start off on this very positive note.

Canadians from coast to coast to coast have heard so many speeches, facts, numbers and statistics over the last number of months, so I thought I would pick up on something a little different. It is something we have talked a great deal about since last summer, going into September.

The Prime Minister has often said that as we go through the pandemic, there are things we can learn from, such as what was taking place in personal care facilities in different regions of our country and concerns related to the financial supports provided to Canadians. The Prime Minister wanted us to listen, take action, lobby and advocate not only for changes, but for ways we could build back better. A number of members of Parliament will often use the phrase "build back better", and I really believe we can do that.

It is really quite encouraging to see how successful the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and the parliamentary secretary were in canvassing our country and the many stakeholders to ultimately present a budget. Others were involved too, but I highlight those three people in particular.

Orders of the Day

The Deputy Prime Minister put forward an economic statement in November of last year, and most recently, a couple of weeks ago, we had the budget. If we read it and get an understanding of what the Minister of Finance has put to the House of Commons, we will see that it reflects what we have been hearing across the country. I know this has been very important to the Prime Minister and the Liberal caucus as a whole. We wanted to ensure that what was put on the floor of the House of Commons reflected what is being talked about in our communities. I will highlight a couple of examples of that.

• (1815)

We all know, for example, what has taken place with our seniors. They have had a very difficult time as a result of the pandemic, and there are things we have learned from that. We take supporting our seniors very seriously. We need to make life easier and more affordable for them. We understand that, and it is something we all heard about in a very clear and tangible way. We would often see in our newscasts, media reports and consultations with a wide spectrum of stakeholders that the need is there, it is real and it is tangible, and the government has responded very positively.

We are going to support Canada's seniors. This is absolutely essential, especially as many seniors continue to cope with isolation not only from their loved ones in particular, but in general. They are experiencing financial difficulties, not to mention the many different health struggles that have resulted from the pandemic and the outcomes that have followed. We are particularly concerned about the long-term care facilities as well.

Budget 2021 highlights a plan of action that deals with COVID-19 and the issues it has created, among many other things affecting our seniors. It is why I am so glad we committed to a one-time payment of \$500 for old age security, which will be distributed in August 2021 for seniors who are age 75 and over. We also provided a permanent increase of 10% to the OAS pension, a significant increase, for those age 75 and over. It will take effect in July 2022. These commitments are going to strengthen the financial security of over three million seniors, and it is estimated that they will lift well over 60,000 seniors out of poverty. Also, when we look at the numbers with a gender lens, 65% of that group is women. I am very proud of that initiative.

At the same time, it fulfills a campaign election commitment the government made in the last election, just over a year and a half ago, when we said we would increase OAS for seniors over 75. To a certain degree it is a little disappointing that other political parties are being critical of us for giving that 10% to them, because it was an election promise. However, it is exactly what has been filled out, in addition to providing other support.

We also created, through budget 2021, the age well at home initiative. It will assist seniors in being able to stay in their homes longer by funding supports for community-based organizations.

I was a fairly proactive member of the Manitoba legislature for just under 20 years, and I can say that on many different occasions, whether it was inside the Manitoba legislature or in talking to seniors, we advocated for them. We can support our seniors best by providing supports wherever we can to enable them to stay living in

their communities longer. Within this budget, we are seeing just that. I see it as a very strong commitment to seniors.

• (1820)

We talk about supporting provinces and territories to ensure that long-term care standards will be applied, so that seniors can feel safe in their environments and have dignified conditions. This is absolutely essential. We learned that while going through the pandemic, and the Deputy Prime Minister listened.

This government is responding to that, yet unfortunately there are still those who criticize the government for doing it, whether members from the Conservatives or from the Bloc. We need to recognize, as Canadians have, that the national government has a role to play and we can look at best practices in jurisdictions across Canada. We can provide some support financially to encourage that standard. Those who would say that the federal government has no jurisdiction need to listen to their constituents and to Canadians as a whole. The expectation of Canadians is that the Government of Canada will bring in, promote and encourage those national standards.

We talk about building, repairing and supporting an additional 35,000 affordable housing units for vulnerable Canadians, including seniors. There are many ways in which we are supporting seniors in Canada, directly or indirectly, through the last budget and through many actions to date.

Another item I want to highlight is in regard to the child care commitment. Members should all be saying that it is a great way to build back better, and that it will make a difference. We often talk about child care in the province of Quebec, and how Quebec has been fairly successful at enabling both parents or a single parent to get into the workforce because the desire is often there and sometimes the economic need is there.

We see that the government has recognized that value by supporting a nationwide program. It is a tangible commitment. We are going to be looking for leadership among the provinces, territories and even other stakeholders to come to the table to recognize the true value. Depending on whom we talk to, an economist or whomever it might be, we will see that there is great value in expanding the workforce, not to mention benefits for the individuals who will be recipients of child care. It is a generational change that will have a profoundly positive impact on Canadians from coast to coast. Whether or not people have children, they will benefit because a nationwide child care program will contribute to overall success and increase Canada's GDP, which will enable us to do more as a nation.

Orders of the Day

• (1825)

A list of things comes to mind that I could comment on, such as housing. I am going to be encouraging my constituents to look at opportunities so they can take advantage of federal programs to assist them with interest-free loans, if possible, to improve some of the structures within our communities: our homes. As our housing stock continues to age, it provides opportunities for our constituents not only to build or improve their homes, but also to be energy efficient. It will be better for our environment. Individuals can go to, for example, high-efficiency furnaces and air conditioners and look to the government for support to do that. It is a program that I believe will make a huge difference.

Having said all of that, there are some other aspects that I want to provide my thoughts on to members. I look at Canadian priorities. From day one, this government has been there in a very real and tangible way. It is one of the reasons why Liberal members of Parliament regularly provided information to the Government of Canada and the ministers, to ensure that we listened and brought in the programs that were necessary.

When I think of the pillars of Canada's COVID-19 economic response, I think of programs such as the emergency business account and the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program, not to mention the lockdown support program. My personal favourites were the emergency response benefit, CERB, and the Canada emergency wage subsidy. These put cash into the pockets of Canadians when they needed it most. CERB was a hugely successful program, with close to nine million Canadians directly benefiting from it. The wage subsidy program literally saved tens of thousands of jobs in different regions of our country, as opposed to companies going bankrupt or having to permanently lay off workers. As a result of those types of investments, we are going to be able to recover more quickly.

We continue on through the recovery sickness benefit, the caregiving benefit and the Canada recovery benefit. We have seen a suite of programs to support Canadians. I made reference to our seniors already and the one-time payment for seniors last summer. I could talk about the disability payments or the many different supports for students and young people, such as the enhancement of the summer youth program. We are talking about significant numbers.

While the Conservatives have been focused on the negative side of politics, the Prime Minister, the government and the Liberal members of the House of Commons have been focused on minimizing the damage caused by the coronavirus day in and day out, 24 hours a day and, I would suggest, seven days a week. We want to be able to build back better and are committed to doing just that. That is where this budget and all of this consultation leading up to the budget has put us today.

• (1830)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. I enjoyed his speech.

As usual, he obviously had no choice but to brag about his government and his party. That is okay. I understand. However, I think he is honest enough to say that it took the work of all of the opposition parties and the government to make possible the emergency programs, such as the Canada emergency response benefit and the Canada emergency wage subsidy.

However, there is still a problem that affects our seniors. Today, Solange called me and she was very upset. She is 75 years old and will be receiving the \$500 cheque this summer for the old age security pension. She will also be entitled to the 10% increase scheduled for next year. However, her sister Lise, who is 72, will not get any of that. Solange wants an answer from the government—not a politician's answer, but an answer that will truly explain why her sister Lise will not get the same benefits as her.

• (1835)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, part of the answer, to make it very clear to the member's constituents, is that in 2019 there was an election promise that we would do 10% for those 75 years old and above.

Having said that, the member is right. There was a very high sense of co-operation within the chamber for the first few months, and then the Conservatives kind of cut out and the Bloc would have continued on. However, there have been some co-operative moments that have helped to facilitate things.

I would not want to give a false impression. The Prime Minister was clear at the very beginning that we wanted a team Canada approach in combatting the coronavirus, and that meant getting everyone onside working together, whether opposition parties, provincial governments, indigenous leaders, other stakeholders or so many others.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about a little of everything, but the debate is on concurring in the finance committee's report on the pre-budget submission to the government.

Over the years, we have seen that the number of recommendations being accepted by the Government of Canada keeps going down. I think it is around 25% to 30%. However, I want to draw the member's attention to recommendation 123, which is to withdraw from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. An all-party committee has recommended something that I have been requesting for nearly four years now.

Why did the Government of Canada not withdraw from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank following the series of human and democratic rights violations we saw in Hong Kong, in China seizing the South China Sea and also in the continued persecution of Muslim Uighurs in Xinjiang province?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives have a certain slant or spin that they like to take.

I am wondering if the member would provide his thoughts at a future time as to some of the projects that have actually been accomplished. I can recall one, for example, that assisted in flood-proofing in the Philippines, which was needed.

Orders of the Day

It is easy to bash China, and lately the Conservatives have been fairly good at it, but it should also be noted that it was Stephen Harper who agreed to a secret trade agreement, which did not even come to the House of Commons. It seems when he was prime minister, he was all gung ho: "Let's do everything with China." Since the new leadership, the Conservatives seem to have taken a 180° turn.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, too many Canadian families are suffering from the high cost of prescription medication. The situation has been made far worse by the pandemic, because many Canadians have lost their jobs or seen their hours reduced and have seen their coverage under workplace plans eliminated. This can have devastating and very negative consequences for family budgets.

The Liberals first made a promise for a national pharmacare plan back in 1997, which was 24 years ago, yet here in the most recent budget, in 2021, we saw a half-page mention of it. I do not know what happened. Did the Liberals cave to the pressure from big pharma, or is this just another promise that they want to drag out for another few election cycles? Working families cannot wait. They need to have this kind of plan in place. It is the missing element for our health care system.

My question is this. How much longer are Canadians going to have wait before the Liberals actually get serious about this plan? When can we expect to see some substantive action on this file?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, a few years ago I was with my daughter, Cindy, on Keewatin Street pushing for a national pharmacare plan, and the Winnipeg Sun had us on the front page of the paper. We have put forward petitions, and I have spoken on many occasions about it. I was really pleased to see it was in the throne speech back in September 2020. I am an optimist, and believe we are going to see a national pharmacare plan.

The NDP needs to realize that, in order to maximize the benefits of a national pharmacare plan, we need to have provinces on board. We cannot have a truly national plan that maximizes the benefits without the provinces. If he reads the throne speech, he will see it specifically references, I believe, needing to continue to look at working with provinces on ways in which we can implement a national pharmacare program. In the last four years, we have had more discussions about pharmacare than I have seen in the previous 26 years of my parliamentary experience.

• (1840)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with the NDP asking why pharmacare has not taken place, and the Conservatives asking why we have not planted all these trees, one would think they were oblivious to the fact that we are in the middle of a global pandemic, which has capitalized a ton of the resources of the various departments and ministers. This is where their time has been focused.

At the same time, we are seeing promised legislation continue to advance, but perhaps not at the speed we would have liked had there not been a pandemic. Could the parliamentary secretary comment on how the government has responded to what is going on right now while balancing that against some of these other, very important initiatives, which have been brought forward?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I will answer in two parts. First, I love our announcement about the two billion trees. It is something tangible and Canadians can really relate to it. I look forward to its ultimate realization, as we have actually seen tangible movement.

Second, I have frustration with Bill C-14 and how the Conservatives decided to play politics more so than act in Canadians' best interests. It is an absolute and total shame that, when Canadians needed us most, when we needed to be there, the Conservatives squandered away opportunities to see Bill C-14 pass, which would have enhanced things for Canadians, whether through the wage subsidy or the Canada child benefit program.

I am very proud of the fact that the Prime Minister has never lost sight of the first priority of this government, which is the pandemic. We are combatting it and ultimately striving to build back better.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to come back to the question raised by my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean a little earlier.

I too have had discussions with seniors about the controversial \$500 payment and 10% increase in old age security. These measures apply to people 75 and over and ignore seniors 65 to 75.

I spent half an hour on the phone with a Mrs. Guévin from my riding, who was in tears at first. She was shocked, depressed and discouraged because she needs that money but is under 75. She wonders about the reason behind this decision to exclude seniors under 75 and to focus only on seniors 75 and up, when those aged 65 to 75 have just as many needs as those 75 and up.

I would like to hear what the parliamentary secretary has to say about that.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, shortly after being elected in 2015, one of the first things we did was increase the guaranteed income supplement substantially. I think about \$920 would have been the maximum. At the end of the day, it lifted hundreds of seniors out of poverty here in Winnipeg North alone and tens of thousands, going well into hundreds of thousands, across Canada. This included people aged 65 and over.

There are other things the government is doing to hopefully make life a bit easier for all seniors. The age of 75 is something that was an election promise, and I think Canadians recognize the value of giving a 10% increase to the three million Canadians who are 75 and over.

Orders of the Day

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to say hello to all of the members who are taking part in the debate on the report of the Standing Committee on Finance. As we know, finance committee reports mean budgetary policy.

At this stage, we are being asked to concur in the report of the Standing Committee on Finance, but since the budget has already been tabled, we might as well talk about that. For starters, it was two years in the making and was introduced one year into an unprecedented, global health crisis.

In Canada, this budget is the result of a tendency to want to erode the power of members, who are increasingly being asked to rubber-stamp the government's propositions in favour of ministerial power. Decision-making power is ever more concentrated within the Prime Minister's inner circle. This new culture is reflected in extremely lengthy omnibus bills that are tabled without the possibility of being amended and that are being rammed through the parliamentary process.

The budget comes after a year-long health crisis, a year of the government not being transparent with the public, parliamentarians, the Parliamentary Budget Officer or the Auditor General's office, a year of scandals and failures—which, in a particular case, led to the resignation of the Minister of Finance, one might say out of an excess of charity—a year in which Parliament was prorogued for six weeks, paralyzing the democratic process.

It was never clear why the government was so afraid to table a budget, especially in these troubled times. The budget was long overdue, but not necessarily the one we were hoping for. Now that we have seen it, this budget marks a new offensive in Ottawa's gluttonous drive to centralize power. Indeed, this budget is in keeping with Ottawa's deeply rooted tradition of wanting to build a government that is the only one to set the priorities, strategies and actions that will ultimately be implemented.

On paper the so-called Canadian confederation is composed of provinces that are free to follow their own destiny and only share certain responsibilities, but this budget clearly says that that is just a sham. This budget shows us that Canada is not a confederation at all, that it can only have one legitimate state, Ottawa, and that the provinces are mere administrators responsible for managing the losses, begging for money and enforcing the decisions of the central state.

Canada—and this is its intrinsic logic—will be increasingly called upon to become a unitary state. The approach is disconcertingly simple but undeniably effective: to further drain Quebec and the provinces financially by deploying a maximum number of new pan-Canadian structures, national strategies and centralized and centralizing standards. That is how Canada will erode Quebec's ability to act and then impose its choices, choices that Quebec would probably not have made if it had made its own decisions freely. According to this vision, Quebec will no longer be the home of a nation, but a mere administrator for outsourcing.

I would like to make an aside. Last fall, when the Bloc Québécois moved a motion calling for an official apology from Ot-

tawa for enacting the War Measures Act in 1970, under which hundreds of people were arrested, one government member spent 10 minutes of his speaking time talking about everything other than the motion. We asked him about this during questions and comments, and he told us that he was not interested in history and the past.

I am bringing this up because the Bloc Québécois has no problem looking back on, learning about or understanding the past. We can learn a lot from history, and what history tells us about the budget and the financial situation we are talking about today is that English Canada, whether you are talking about the British or Canadian government, has always taken advantage of crises to hold Quebec back. This was true in the 19th century after the patriots' rebellions, it was true after the 1980 referendum, it was true after the 1995 referendum, and it is true now in this health crisis.

● (1845)

After the failure of the Patriotes' rebellion in 1837-38, the government took advantage of the new balance of power to pass the 1840 Act of Union to take away our power. After the failure of the 1980 Quebec referendum, the government took advantage of the new balance of power to unilaterally patriate the Constitution, without Quebec's agreement, in essence excluding Quebec from the decision. To this day, Quebec is still not among the signatories.

After the failure of the 1995 Quebec referendum, the government once more took advantage of the situation to put in place its plan B. It is very similar to what we see happening today. The plan involved several parts. The spectre of the partition of Quebec was raised. A law was passed, the Clarity Act, which denied Quebec democracy. A mass propaganda campaign was waged, along with an ideological invasion through the sponsorship program. Quebec's efforts at diplomacy were sabotaged. I would remind members that during the post-referendum years, the Premier of Quebec was uninited from international ceremonies at the behest of scheming Canadian embassies.

Then came the financial destabilization, which has been known for years as the fiscal imbalance. In this case, the plan was to unilaterally reduce transfers and use that money to interfere in Quebec's jurisdictions under the guise of providing assistance. Does that remind my colleagues of anything?

Between 1993 and 1997, the government reduced the provincial transfers in an effort to eliminate its deficit. These reductions were equivalent to five times the cuts the government was making to these programs. The government made more cuts, diverting money from the employment insurance fund. Between 1993 and 2001, the percentage of unemployed workers eligible for benefits dropped from 65% to 49%.

To offset those cuts, the Government of Quebec had to take on \$845 million between 1990 and 1997 in expenditures normally covered by Ottawa. This was also the case for the health transfers. In 1997, when he was leader of the federal Progressive Conservatives, Jean Charest contradicted what he had repeated ad nauseam during his years in Quebec. He said, "Forget Lucien Bouchard and Jean Rochon. The person who is really responsible for hospital closures and the deterioration of our health care system is Jean Chrétien."

Orders of the Day

Subsequent federal budgets contained numerous announcements of federal investments in areas of shared jurisdiction or areas exclusively under provincial jurisdiction, particularly health and education. At the time, federal Liberal minister Marcel Massé was disconcertingly candid when he said, “When Bouchard has to make cuts, we in Ottawa will be able to show that we have the means to preserve the future of our social programs”. He deserves credit for being clear, albeit extremely cynical.

Now, in 2021, nothing much has changed. As we know, the Government of Canada's budget does not provide for any increases in health transfers for the provinces. The COVID-19 crisis has shown how important it is to have an optimal health care system that is prepared to deal with the most challenging of situations. The effectiveness of the health care system is certainly not solely dependent on funding, but funding is an essential component. The provincial governments need to hire doctors, nurses and orderlies. Needs are increasing exponentially, and Quebec is responsible for dealing with them since health falls under the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces. However, the money remains tied up in Ottawa at a time when the health care system is overburdened.

This is a long-standing problem, as I said. Since 1995, federal transfers for health care have melted away like snow in the sun. Even before the pandemic, population aging was already a real challenge. In Quebec, the population segment aged 85 and over will triple over the next 30 years. When the Medical Care Act was first passed in 1968, Ottawa was to provide 50% of the funding for health care. Today, federal support is closer to 23%. I would remind the House that we were not even asking for 50%. We were asking for 35%, but even that was too much to ask. The financial shock has been enormous for Quebec. It has had to deal with mass retirements and chronic underfunding.

In Quebec, spending on health and social services represented 9% of GDP and 50% of the public budget last year. That is huge. According to an organization called Force Jeunesse, by 2048, those figures will increase to 15% of GDP and between 65% and 82% of public spending. Think about that.

● (1850)

This poses very serious political problems for provincial governments, which quite simply are losing their budgetary autonomy. The shortfall will continue to grow, and the provinces will have one obsession, which is to fund their health care system, ignoring everything else.

In the past, now and in the future, the transfers must be adequate and unconditional. I remind members that it would not be a gift from Ottawa. We pay our taxes, it is our money, and it should be spent on health care.

Liberal and Conservative federal governments alike have never increased the transfers. Even worse, the current Prime Minister lectured Quebec about its management of the vaccination rollout, even though it was his government that was unable to supply the provinces as it should have.

Of course, that was not the only criticism from the Prime Minister of Canada. He is also talking about imposing federal standards on long-term care facilities. He might want to look after our seniors

the same way he looked after the borders during the pandemic, but I am saying no thank you.

The Bloc Québécois made health transfers a central issue a long time ago. As a matter of fact, in December 2019, I remember we had just started to sit. It was our first week. My first speech ever in the House, which at that point was not yet doing virtual sittings, was about this subject. If I am not mistaken, it was during debate on the throne speech. We will not back down.

Part of the reason we are pressing this issue is that we are thinking of the working conditions of our amazing health care workers. I commend them for their heroic efforts. Let us not mince words, they are working in veritable war zones, taking huge risks, yet they still manage to keep smiling. I sincerely commend them for their devotion and their courage. They deserve the greatest recognition.

As I was saying, costs will go through the roof, putting Quebec in an untenable position. It will no longer be able to concentrate on anything other than its health care system. This is the only issue we will hear about in the coming years and decades. Make no mistake, the window opened by the Quiet Revolution fostered Quebec's identity as a nation in its own right instead of a province among many, but this could close that window a little more. We were even at the stage where we were developing relations with other countries in the world through a system of diplomatic representation. We had developed our own programs, our own Crown corporations and even our own diplomatic ties.

Today, that is no longer in our reach. We are being reduced to the status of a local branch, a mere administrator, while Ottawa co-opts and monopolizes all the flexibility to make decisions. We can read in the pages of this budget that in conjunction with draining Quebec and the provinces of their ability to act, the federal tentacles are coming out, as they did after 1838, after 1980, after 1995. As it dismantles Quebec, Canada builds itself up. Ottawa is setting up the infrastructure to be able to permanently interfere in the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

Let us take a look at what is in the budget: long-term care centres, a national child care program, possibly pharmacare, women's health issues, a framework for mental health with Wellness Together Canada, reproductive health, a Canada water management agency, critical mineral management, securities, a federal office for recognizing foreign credentials, a federal framework for skills training and other sectoral initiatives in employment, an initiative to help seniors age well at home, a national advisory board on child care, a new program to support skills for success, a new apprenticeship program, a new data commissioner, and a natural infrastructure fund.

It is safe to say that the 739-page budget document does not skimp on intrusions of all kinds, in every way and in every facet imaginable. Need I point out that there is no right to opt out with compensation? No, because that goes without saying.

These multiple intrusions were even denounced in a letter from André Pratte that was published in the *Montreal Gazette*. Remember, André Pratte was a senator and editorial writer for *La Presse*, and he is most definitely not a sovereignist.

I also want to quote the columnist Antoine Robitaille, who wrote:

...as is often the case in Canada, when something seems necessary and desirable, the federal big brother ignores the constitutional rules and takes the lead.

• (1855)

In his article, Antoine Robitaille quoted Justice Rowe, who was himself quoting constitutional expert Peter Hogg:

According to the latter, if in a federal nation paramount central power “completely overlapped regional power”, then that nation stops being federal. In such a system, the provinces can exercise their jurisdiction as they please—“as long as they do so in a manner that the federal legislation authorizes”!

It is a declaration of war, war on independence, war on the merest hint of the people's desire to assert themselves as a nation or affirm provincial autonomy.

Whenever we raise these issues, as we do on a regular basis, people always accuse us of trying to pick a fight. What are we supposed to do, though?

Should Quebec keep quiet, suck it up, accept these limitations, settle for never being more than a province, never being more than a minority? Every day that it exists within this system, Quebec loses a little bit of itself. Are we supposed to tell ourselves that is not so bad? No thanks.

Contrary to what the feds would have us believe, political power and the ability to act is a real issue, especially in times of crisis. This is not some wacky fixation on a fight over a flag. This is about power, political power.

Naturally I am going to say that the only way to escape dependence is to gain independence. This will certainly not come as a surprise to anyone, but independence requires that we have budget autonomy in every respect and at any price.

Former separatist finance minister Bernard Landry spoke of strangulation by the tentacles of big government. One of his successors, the former federalist finance minister Yves Séguin, directly compared Ottawa to a vampire. His metaphor was even stronger, adding a bloody touch to the comparison.

This must stop at all costs. Ottawa must stop and re-examine its boundaries. To be honest, I do not think it will happen. As I was saying, I believe that the only way to escape dependence is to gain independence.

• (1900)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I liked that the member gave us a history of political debates in Quebec over the past 30 years.

However, I would like to come back to a comment one of the Bloc Québécois members made about old age security. In the budget, the federal government decided to give \$500 to those 75 and older.

Can my colleague tell me why, in his opinion, the government decided to proceed in this way, when the best option would have been to give that amount to seniors who receive the guaranteed income supplement, in other words those with an income of less than \$18,744?

Orders of the Day

I know that the Bloc is interested in this topic. We know that the demographics of our country is changing and that our life expectancy is going up. I would like my colleague's opinion on this.

If the government really wanted to help seniors, why did it decide to give this money to a certain group of seniors, but not another, when it could have done more to help seniors who have a much lower income than others in this country?

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Calgary Shepard for his question.

He rightly mentioned that the population is aging, which would require an increase to health transfers, even during the pandemic. The pandemic has exacerbated the situation, but it did not create it. Regardless, the government should have increased these transfers because of the aging population and the increased costs associated with that.

In response to his question about seniors, I would say that the solution we would advocate for, do advocate for and will advocate for is a permanent increase to the GIS, as opposed to a single payment in the lead-up to a potential election. We are talking about a real, permanent increase.

Seniors are people over the age of 65, not 75. When I talk about increasing old age security I am talking about all seniors, no matter what age range they fit into.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, right before we started the debate to concur in the report from the finance committee, we spent most of the day today debating the government's bill, Bill C-12. I think there is widespread agreement that the bill needs some strengthening at committee.

I specifically notice recommendation 66 of this report to increase serious investments in infrastructure for fighting climate change. That is a very worthy initiative, and I do not think we will find any disagreement on that. However, what does the member think when we see a recommendation like that but then contrast it with the fact that the Liberals spent billions of our taxpayer dollars on buying a bitumen exporting pipeline? Of course, they are now spending billions more trying to upgrade its capacity. We are all being warned that this is the most serious decade for us to get real climate change action coming from the government.

I wonder if my hon. colleague has any comments on the actual infrastructure spending that is going on versus what is being recommended in the finance committee's report.

• (1905)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I think we need to invest more in the electrification of transportation rather than in fossil fuels. That is the kind of simplistic solution we have come to expect from the Liberals. For example, they bought a pipeline by claiming that the revenue would be used to plant trees. In the end, those trees were never planted. That is fairly typical of the government.

Orders of the Day

As everyone knows, the Bloc Québécois also introduced its own bill, which set out real, binding targets and a real accountability mechanism. It is all well and good to say that there are targets, but if the government does not make a real effort to meet them, then it is never going to happen.

The government needs to continue to decrease funding for fossil fuels. Obviously, we are not asking the government to cut that funding off overnight because we need to make a transition. Investing that much money in fossil fuels is inconsistent with our environmental goals. That goes without saying.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, what fine words from my colleague.

I heard him say the words “dependence” and “independence”. I would like him to explain to me what we came to understand during this health crisis, when we had to collaborate with the government and try to adjust certain programs.

At one point, the government went it alone. Now, we are hearing over and over that the provinces need the necessary funding to see to the things that fall within their jurisdiction.

Does my colleague think there is a movement afoot with regard to the funding that has not been transferred and that would go a long way to help each and every province, especially Quebec?

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Laurentides-Labelle for her question, and I will take this opportunity to acknowledge her excellent work.

I will say, however, that it must be easy to be a Liberal. It is a pretty easy approach to say that the money will not be sent. When opposition members challenge this, they are told, among other things, that these are squabbles, abstract issues, or that it all belongs in the past.

It must be very easy to hide behind that kind of reasoning, behind the all-powerful veil of federalism, while telling members that the issue of sovereignty is an abstract one—although the government would never dare question Canadian sovereignty, for example. I will leave the Liberals to their contradictions.

There is definitely a movement, and it is clear to the unions, the National Assembly of Quebec and health care workers. It goes without saying that this government must give us what was once called our due. We need it and we pay for it. They would not be giving us a gift, because it is our money.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to recognize the excellent work of my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Honestly, I have to say that it is a joy and pleasure to talk to him about international trade, the economy and all sorts of business-related issues. He is a very interesting source of information, and his speech was further proof of that. I commend him and invite all my colleagues in the House to give him a call from time to time to talk to him and get his opinion. It often helps one to see more clearly.

What does my colleague think about the current government's habit or tendency to impose conditions on the money that it trans-

fers to Quebec and the provinces? For example, health transfers always come with certain conditions.

• (1910)

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Drummond for his fine words.

I always find it strange to answer questions from my colleagues, but unlike what we see every day in question period, I can assure the House that we did not agree on the question in advance.

The government's centralizing tendency to always impose these types of conditions is real. It confirms that Canada is not a confederation or a sharing of certain interests, but an increasingly unilateral state. The evidence is that, any time the government sends the provinces a bit of money, it has to be on its terms. It has to impose standards and tell us which direction to take. I would like to remind members of what the constitutional expert that I quoted earlier said, and that is that the provinces are free as long as they follow the rules imposed on them.

How is there any flexibility or independence in that? I am still looking for the answer.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, today I am speaking from the traditional unceded territory of the Qayqayt first nation and the Salish peoples.

[English]

I want to start by sharing with all members of Parliament and all Canadians our deep appreciation for the frontline workers, for the first responders and for health care workers, who have been carrying us with such courage and bravery through this pandemic. We know how costly this pandemic has been. The third wave has now hit. We have lost over 24,000 Canadians over the course of the last year and a bit.

It is with an appreciation for the courage of those frontline workers, those first responders, those health care workers that I speak today about what has been a traditional right of passage in Parliament. I have been on the finance committee for a number of years, so I have been through a number of different versions of this, where the finance committee goes out and does pre-budget consultations across the country.

This year, due to the pandemic, these consultations were conducted largely by email and on Zoom. In previous years, we have seen, regardless of whether the administration was Conservative or Liberal, members of the House of Commons finance committee going out across the length and breadth of our country and having hearings on what the shape and form of the budget should be.

The budget, after all, is really the seminal document for the course of the year. The budget document is the most important document, and the budget implementation act is the most important legislation that we see over the course of the year.

Every year we see Canadians, organizations and communities step up to offer a very compelling vision of the future of this country. We have seen municipalities across the length and breadth of this country, and I would like to speak both to the City of Burnaby and the City of New Westminster, which spoke over the course of the last year to the finance committee.

We see as well organizations, seniors, groups of students, workers and labour organizations all stepping forward and putting an enormous amount of time into making sure that the submissions they provide and the statements they make to the finance committee fully communicate the importance of a shift in our budget orientations and essentially a shift in our values. People with disabilities step forward as well to talk about their vision of the country.

This has been happening for years. We have Canadians stepping forward in good faith, providing remarkably detailed suggestions and a vision for the future of our country. Every year, whether it is a Conservative administration or a Liberal government, we see the finance committee take all those great suggestions and documents and leave 90% of them on the cutting room floor.

We see in the budget even less reflection of the importance of what we need to do as a country moving forward. Often we will hear Liberals and Conservatives say that we do not have the money for this, and ask how we can get the money for these compelling issues that people are bringing forward, compelling solutions that would make a difference in Canadians' lives.

Permit me for a moment a detour around the issue of how we pay for this compelling vision that the vast majority of Canadians share. I have been in Parliament since the Conservatives and the outset of the financial crisis in 2008-09. They did not think of small businesses, did not think of people, workers or families. Their first thought was to the big bankers and bank profits, so they waded in with an unprecedented, at that time, \$116 billion in liquidity supports for Canada's big banks. The first priority of the Harper Conservatives was making sure that the banking sector maintained high levels of profit, so \$116 billion was put forward for the banking sector.

• (1915)

We now fast-forward to this pandemic, a crisis that we have not seen certainly since the Second World War, arguably a crisis, a pandemic of this nature that we have not seen in a century. The first thought of the Liberal government was not families, small businesses or communities. The first thought was maintaining banking profits. Therefore, the first and most important decision financially that the federal government took under the Liberals was, this time, \$750 billion in liquidity supports. That is three-quarters of a trillion dollars showered on Canada's big banks to make sure that their profits were maintained.

There is no doubt that when we raise those figures with Canadians, they find it astounding that the same members of the parties that are constantly asking "How do we pay for this?" are willing to turn on a shower of money without precedents, both in the previous financial crisis and now during this pandemic.

The words "How do we pay for these things?" ring hollow when we compare the amount of money that both Liberals and Conserva-

tives have been prepared to put forward to make sure that the banking industry is going well, but we will talk about some of the other items they have showered money on in a moment.

The point is that we have Canadians of good will coming forward each year and putting forward a compelling vision of this country that ends up on the cutting room floor because Liberals and Conservatives prefer to go to Bay Street and make sure that Bay Street's vision of the country is maintained, rather than the Main Street vision that so many Canadians share.

[Translation]

This is not just about liquidity supports for the banking system. This is also about the \$25 billion that flows to tax havens every year. Over 10 years, that is a quarter of a trillion dollars, \$250 billion, that the Conservatives and Liberals have injected into the system to help this country's ultra-rich. That is the difference between what the vast majority of Canadians see and what they get, whether it is the Conservatives or the Liberals in power.

[English]

What is the compelling vision that Canadians brought forward? We saw this from witness after witness in the hundreds of briefs that we received from across this country: Canadians want to see the ultrarich actually pay their fair share. The \$25 billion per year that goes to overseas tax havens is tax dollars, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer has indicated so carefully. That is a quarter of a trillion dollars over the course of the last decade. If we couple that with \$750 billion for the banking sector, we see that a trillion dollars has been granted in a heartbeat to the ultrarich.

What Canadians want to see is an end to those practices, an end to Canada being perceived as and very clearly indicating that it is a home for those who want to take their money overseas and not ever pay a cent of taxes.

Canadians want to see a wealth tax. They believe that as we have gone through this pandemic, the ultrarich should actually pay their fair share of taxes. The Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives have indicated that this is a \$10-billion-a-year investment that Canadians could receive for things like resolving the homelessness crisis, ensuring that we have in place public universal pharmacare, ensuring that we actually adequately fund our health care system. We are looking to put in place a national child care. It has been promised for 30 years and is still being promised by the Liberals, but as yet they have not made any concrete steps.

These things are all indicative of a broader vision that Canadians have, a vision of building a country where nobody is left behind. As we know, last week the Parliamentary Budget Officer also indicated that a pandemic profits tax would bring another \$8 billion. That is enough to resolve the homelessness crisis in our country and ensure that everyone has the right to housing and a roof over their head at night.

Previous governments had a better vision and were more in tune with where Canadians are. In the Second World War, we had an excess profits tax. We ensured that everybody was in it together.

Orders of the Day

● (1920)

Those taxes, the wealth tax and profits tax, served to fuel our fight against fascism and Nazism and to win it, and to ensure that when women and men in the service came back home after the Second World War, we could make unparalleled investments in housing, transportation, health care and education.

That is not the vision the Liberals and Conservatives put forward today. In the pre-budget consultations, we see a scant reference to tax justice, except in the NDP dissenting report. We see a scant understanding of the vision that so many organizations and Canadians provided to the finance committee as a road map to follow, not something to be rejected because Bay Street wanted to have a free ride.

What are the other compelling components that were part of this vision Canadians brought forward?

[Translation]

Here is what Canadians wanted or would have liked to see in the budget that was just tabled: every person's right to affordable housing, pharmacare and a social safety net that is not full of holes. Every one of those elements is extremely important, and that is the vision Canadians share.

[English]

Over the course of the last year, we have seen the cuts in real terms. I fault the Conservatives and Liberals equally on this. They have, over time, simply not provided the needed funding for health care. As a result of that, we see our health care system struggling under the weight of this pandemic. That is a vision Canadians put forward to the finance committee, to ensure we had adequate funding for health care, to ensure that these cuts, which have been gradual but nonetheless very present, would get reversed.

Canadians had a compelling vision also that they shared with the finance committee of applying home care. We know that in providing supports for home care we save enormously in the health care system. It is much better to have seniors provided with the support in their homes rather than in a hospital bed at a much greater cost and a much lower quality of life in one of the nation's health care centres.

Ensuring home care, public universal pharmacare and dental care are put into place are all part of a vision that Canadians share. When Tommy Douglas brought forward and forced a former government back in the 1960s to put in place universal health care, his dream, and the dream of Canadians, always was to expand and ensure we had, as the member for Burnaby South, the national leader of the NDP, said so compellingly, "from the top of our head to the soles of our feet" health care that would cover everything. That was the vision Tommy Douglas brought forward, repeated now and amplified by the member for Burnaby South. It is a vision the vast majority of Canadians share.

A few years ago Canadians from all walks of life, all backgrounds and creeds were asked who their most famous Canadian in history was, their favourite Canadian, the one who best typified Canadian values. They overwhelmingly chose Tommy Douglas. They share this vision of ensuring that we have a full public and

universal health care system that includes all the other elements, pharmacare, dental care and home care as well.

At a time now, when 10 million Canadians have difficulty paying for their medication and have no access to a drug plan during a pandemic, any weakness in health care, like not being able to fully pay for one's medication, can lead to inestimable tragedy. This means those people are more vulnerable. At all those times, it strikes again. I think the number of Canadians who massively support public universal pharmacare is at a rate of more than 80%.

● (1925)

For the Liberals and Conservatives to have said no, to have voted down the Canada pharmacare act at the end of February is something that strikes at how hypocritical it is when Liberal and Conservative MPs say that they will listen to this vision of tomorrow, but will reject it and not provide any supports for it. However, for bankers and billionaires who want to take their money overseas, they will ensure everything is in their favour so they can accomplish that.

When we look at the overall situation in our country, we know that Canadians are struggling to make ends meet, that more than 50% of Canadians are \$200 away from insolvency on any given month. We know that people with disabilities struggle. Half of those people have to go to food banks and half of them are homeless. A growing number of homeless across the length and breadth of our country are people with disabilities, yet the Liberal government showed alacrity in providing \$750 billion in liquidity supports for banks within four days of the pandemic hitting.

We should contrast that with the fight that the NDP had to undertake for months to get a one-time \$600 payment to people with disabilities. Even in that case, the Liberals refused to provide it to everybody with a disability. Let us contrast that \$750 billion for Canada's big banks and that \$600 for about a third of Canadians with disabilities, who are struggling with the pandemic as they have had to struggle in their everyday lives. Again, the statistic is something that needs to be absorbed by all of us. Half of those who go to food banks to make ends meet are Canadians with disabilities. Half of them are homeless.

The tens of thousands of Canadians who are homeless across the length and breadth of our land are people with disabilities, yet the finance committee report does not reflect the urgent nature of putting in place something like a guaranteed livable basic income or provide income supports for people with disabilities. There is no reflection of that. We have, instead, and the budget confirmed a study that would take a number of years and would lead to nothing.

In the case of an urgent need for people with disabilities, not only did the finance committee majority not step up but the Liberal government, in its budget, did not step up at all. We are seeing an increasing inequality that is profoundly disturbing.

[Translation]

Currently 1% of Canadians hold more than a quarter of all the wealth in Canada. It is clear that 40% of Canadians are sharing almost nothing because of the alarming growth in the rate of inequality. For their part, Canadian billionaires saw their wealth grow to \$78 billion during the pandemic. This creates an enormous gap between the needs of Canadians and what the governments, whether Conservative or Liberal, provide to the public.

● (1930)

[English]

What should the finance committee pre-budget consultation really have included? It should have accurately reflected the views of Canadian organizations from coast to coast. It should have set out that compelling vision of ensuring that we would build a country where every single Canadian would matter, where nobody would be left behind. It should have put in place public, universal pharmacare, not promise it for 30 years, and universal child care. It should have ensured there was a right to housing for all Canadians. It should have put in place a guaranteed livable basic income. It should have ensured the needs of Canadians, regardless of their backgrounds, regardless of the region they live in, would be met. That would have been a finance committee report that we could all stand behind and that would have reflected where Canadians want Canada to go.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, earlier in his intervention, the member talked about child care and the important need for it. I could not help but wonder about that. I believe he was elected in 2004 and was here when Paul Martin brought in a budget in a minority government that had child care in it. Then shortly thereafter, that member and his party sided with the Conservatives, taking down the government. As a result, Canadians did not get the child care that was in that budget.

We are in another minority Parliament here with a similar situation. Will he see this budget through to the end, so that child care can get to those Canadian families that have been waiting so long for it?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, that is complete and utter science fiction. Paul Martin brought forward a budget that was massively padded with corporate tax cuts. Paul Martin represented the corporate sector, and that is what he put forward. Members may recall there were \$5.4 billion in corporate tax cuts. Jack Layton and the NDP caucus said that they would not support that budget and wanted the massive corporate handouts to stop. They wanted money for post-secondary education, public transit, seniors and housing. They forced the government to basically change its budget, stop massive corporate tax breaks and invest in people.

There is social housing just a few kilometres away from my home, where I am speaking from now, that is just one example of how Jack Layton's vision made a difference in that budget.

I simply reject that science fiction. The member should speak from facts.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague to comment on what

Orders of the Day

we have been hearing for the past 10 minutes or so, that the budget does not reflect what the community needs, that there are inequalities, that there is greater support for decisions to protect the major players and that the web giants, among others, need to be taxed.

I am hearing a lot of dissatisfaction with the budget. I know all about it. My party and I voted against the budget. Why did we do that? We did it for essentially two reasons: a \$110 monthly increase for our seniors 65 and over, and not 75 and over, and immediate health transfers with no conditions.

After hearing all that, how is it that he and his party voted in favour of the budget?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, as the member knows full well, we have a document. There is also the budget implementation bill, which will be passed in the next few weeks. At this time, we will study the bill as a whole and propose amendments to those elements I just mentioned.

All the reasons for dissatisfaction, as the member stated, will be considered by the NDP. In my opinion, Canadians are generally dissatisfied. From the beginning, the NDP has managed to change the government's mind. We greatly improved the programs offered during the pandemic. The NDP is not just here to vote against measures, it is here to improve and change things to help people. As the member knows very well, the NDP managed to do this during the pandemic, and it will continue to do so.

● (1935)

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a quick question for the member from the NDP.

The budget outlines an extension to the wage subsidy and the rent subsidy. I have heard from quite a few constituents, especially in the seasonal tourism sector, who have found this extension to be not nearly enough. It leaves them at a disadvantage in terms of their businesses being able to recover. I am curious if the member from the NDP has any further thoughts or comments on that.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, this is a major problem, because what we see with the budget is the Liberals basically doing a victory lap. They are going around saying, "Hey, we beat COVID", so they can wrap up all of these programs that the NDP forced them to put in place in the first place, because things are going great.

I need to caution this government on the victory-lap mentality it seems to have with this budget. We are in the midst of a third wave that is deadlier than the previous two. We are seeing variants coming from various parts of the world that are strongly worrisome, because they seem to be outpacing the very slow acquisition of vaccines.

Orders of the Day

We need to make sure that all of these programs continue for the tourism sector, as the member pointed out, and for a wide variety of other sectors that will be profoundly economically damaged if we start to see the cutbacks that the Liberals are forecasting. In nine weeks they are going to start slashing programs, and this is simply not the time to be irresponsible. It is simply not the time to do a victory lap. It is the time to take care of Canadians and make sure that supports are in place.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have to shake my head at the most recent intervention by the member for Kingston and the Islands complaining about the NDP when he conveniently forgets the fact that the Liberals had majority governments in 1993, 1997 and 2000. Why did they not use that time to get child care done?

The member for New Westminster—Burnaby has been in the House for a while and has been witness to things that would give a lot of people cynicism in politics. He saw Jack Layton's climate change bill killed in the Senate. He saw his most recent bill, Bill C-213, voted down by the Liberals who profess to have an interest in pharmacare.

When it comes to things such as tackling climate change, health care and poverty, our approach has always been that those investments are really important at the front end. They might seem costly, but they will have measurable impacts on people's lives at the back end. Those investments and dollars can have real, tangible results for people.

The member touched on some of those aspects in his speech, but could he expand a little more on how these investments are so important to addressing the very real and evident gaps that so many people in all of our ridings are facing daily?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for his question. He is extraordinarily hard working and one of the most learned members in the House of Commons. His contributions to debates every day are always at the highest possible level. He really does his constituents proud with his work in the House of Commons. I am very honoured to work with him.

The member raised a couple of questions. First, the child care myth that the Liberals put out is unbelievable. I guess the member for Kingston and the Islands was given something by the Prime Minister's Office that said, "Oh, remember Paul Martin's budget". This is not Trumpism, and we cannot make up our own facts. Anyone who can do fact checking, and who actually understands the 2005 budget that Paul Martin put out, knows that it was a disaster. There was not a single mention of child care. There were just massive corporate tax cuts. The Liberals either disingenuously are trying to change that reality from the past or they are simply ignorant of how bad their government actually was. Massive corporate tax cuts were their siren song.

We see the huge gaps. Canadian families are the most indebted among those in all of the industrialized countries. More than half of Canadians are \$200 away from insolvency in any given month. We see rampant inequality and hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are homeless, and the Liberals say, "Hey, we got the job done". They have not, and I think it is time for them to move over

and allow a government that is actually going to take the interests of people over the interests of the ultra-rich so that we can actually get things done in this country.

• (1940)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, maybe the best place to start is where we left off with the last speaker. Although I admired his quip about the PMO handing me documents, I will assure the member that I have three extremely capable, young, energetic staffers who do the vast majority of my research. Since I am singling them out, I am going to name them: Parth, Kaitlin and Kelly. They are absolutely incredible, and they do amazing work for me. They are the ones who quite often bring these very important pieces of information forward that I can use in debate. I am extremely lucky to have those incredible young Canadians working for me.

To the member's point about fact checking, let us fact check. I will admit I was younger at the time and not as engaged in politics as I am now; however, my understanding is that Paul Martin and Ken Dryden had worked out a deal with all the provinces. That is kind of required in these constitutional things. I know the member completely disregarded that with the pharmacare private member's bill he brought in. Of course, he does not see the need to work with our partners, especially the ones we are constitutionally required to work with.

Nonetheless, Ken Dryden and Paul Martin worked with the provinces and finally got the infrastructure or the programming structure set up so that national child care could be brought into Canada. This is where the budget part comes into it. This member, with the Conservatives, teamed up against Paul Martin and Ken Dryden and took down the government. That is why we do not have national child care. That is the reality of the situation. He should really go and do some fact checking on that, although I assume that he would have known, given that he was here at the time. However, who am I? I was only 29 at the time, and perhaps not paying as much attention as I should have been.

I really look forward to using the remaining 18 minutes of my time to talk about this very important concurrence motion that was introduced by the member for Carleton. He brought in the concurrence motion on the report from the finance committee. It is a very important report, with 145 recommendations in total, outlining the budget consultation process and what the government should be focusing on as it looks toward the budgeting process.

I know the previous speaker said he was very disappointed that the budget seemed to miss the mark on a number of different initiatives brought forward during the time of the consultation. He went to great lengths to explain how the consultation is done.

I would like to highlight some of the recommendations within the report that I thought were very good. Some made it into the budget and will have a meaningful impact on, and beneficial changes for, the lives of Canadians. There are a number of different sections to the recommendations. I will start in the section on health care.

Orders of the Day

One of the recommendations there, specifically with regard to mental health, was extremely important. We are living in a day and age when mental health is finally being recognized as the health problem that it is. I find it very frustrating that we have always been able to focus on the health issues that affect people's physical well being, and are very quick and responsive to invest money there, but we are not as good when it comes to mental health. I say that as a society. Certainly, there is always more that could be done.

A number of years ago the government brought in big stimulus for research and for helping to give people with mental health issues the supports they need. There is always going to be so much more work to be done, and I am glad to see that the committee came to that conclusion, based on research and recommendations given by various stakeholders throughout the process.

● (1945)

The other item in the health care section that I really liked seeing, and is something that has been talked about a lot in this House lately, was the request for long-term care national standards. What we have realized during this pandemic is that we have failed Canadians. Again, I do not say this as one particular party or another; I just mean society as a whole. We failed our seniors. We did not set up the right systems in order to protect them at a time when they would need it the most. The responsibility for this needs to be shared by everybody, by society as a whole, and we need to do better. If there is anything we have learned from this pandemic, it is that we have an opportunity to do better when it comes to long-term care standards and we need to act on that.

I know there are some members of this House who are very concerned about national standards for long-term care, including my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois. However, I really think that this does not have to be a top-down approach, as they are suggesting it is. It can actually be an opportunity to share best practices, to develop standards that can then be used throughout the country as provinces see fit.

I have said this many times and I will say it again: I compare it to something like our National Building Code. A lot of people probably do not even realize that there is a National Building Code in Canada because provincial jurisdictions use the building code. At least people who live in Ontario or Quebec may not realize that the National Building Code exists because Ontario and Quebec have their own building codes. The rest of the country pretty much uses those national standards. When we think of a building code, we think of the best practices that are put in there. If we compare the National Building Code to Ontario's Building Code, with which I am more familiar than I am with the Quebec one, we will see that the two are almost identical because Ontario is getting its best practices from the national code and I am sure that the national code is also influenced heavily by Ontario's Building Code and Quebec's Construction Code.

Therefore, I look at this as an opportunity to do something very similar as it relates to national long-term care standards. It is to develop some standards, not to impose them and force them upon provinces but to set the standards so that they can be adopted as best practices where provinces see fit.

One of the other sections that I enjoyed seeing in this report was the section on children and families in particular, and talking about a national child care system. Members heard me speak about this at the beginning of my speech and in the questions I was asking for the previous speaker. It is long overdue. I know there is a tendency to say, "What about this? What about that?" The Liberals have been promising it since the early 1990s when I was still in high school. I do not know what the situation is and why this happened, other than what I have been referencing around the Paul Martin time, but, as a parent who has children who have gone through nursery school and day care, I see so many parents out there, more often women, who do not put their kids into day care or child care because it just does not make economic sense. One of the parents, more often than not the woman, ends up staying home and she does not have the opportunity to realize her full potential in the marketplace.

When I talk about child care, it is not just about taking care of children in day care and giving the parents a break; this is about unleashing an economic opportunity here. Imagine what it would mean to put so many more people into the workforce and what that would mean for our economy. If one does not care about the social impact of child care, one should at least consider the economic impact of it. It has the opportunity to unleash new people working in our marketplace, which is only good for the growth of our economy.

I also note that there was a recommendation with respect to domestic abuse victim supports. I liked seeing that. There will never be enough that we can do to support victims of domestic abuse.

● (1950)

When I was younger, in high school in the early nineties, as I alluded to earlier, my mother worked at the Kingston Interval House, which was a special house to support more often than not women who were subject to domestic abuse and give them the support they needed right then and there to help them. To know the committee has heard from people in our country who are advocating for this is important. As we move forward I hope we will see more supports being put into this particular initiative of protecting and giving supports to those who have been subject to domestic abuse.

Another section I found very interesting when I was reading through the report was on employment and labour. There was a recommendation to fund Statistics Canada to make sure it had the funding it needed to do its job. My predecessor Ted Hsu introduced a private member's bill on this particular topic about reinstating the long-form census. Nothing is more important to government, agencies and businesses for that matter than good data. Getting that data and making sure Statistics Canada can compile that data in order for organizations, businesses and government to utilize is truly important for our economy and the social fabric of our communities.

There were also, in the employment and labour section, recommendations on supporting and developing training for green jobs. I talked about this earlier when we were discussing Bill C-12. The opportunity here of Canada being at the forefront of those green jobs and allowing Canadians to really expand their skills as these new industries are created in our economy is truly important, but we need to make sure people, and particular workers, have the skills they need for these jobs.

Orders of the Day

Along those lines, I know in the education and training section of the report there were also recommendations on investing in young Canadians for skills training specifically. I do not know if anybody has tried to hire a plumber or an electrician lately, but they are not easy to get and can pretty much charge whatever they want.

I come from this generation where my parents are immigrants from Italy and Holland who came here very young. They saw the struggles their parents went through, and the only thing their parents wanted was for their children to be lawyers, doctors and teachers, or “professionals”. That gets passed down to the next generation, and unfortunately, in the process of doing that, we have somehow devalued the core skills of those really important jobs. We made a giant mistake in doing that, as a society, when I say “we”.

To put resources into making sure that skills training can continue and people can get trained for those skilled trades jobs in particular truly is important in this day and age. If any of my three children come to me and say they want to get into a skilled trade, I will be beside myself and excited by this because I know they will be set for life and will be making money taking care of everybody else's problems for years to come.

There was also a lot in the report about arts, culture and hospitality. I come from a riding that really needs a lot of supports right now. About 11% or 12% of the economy in Kingston specifically is in tourism. These industries are struggling right now. We have a number of museums in Kingston, which make up the tour in Kingston, that literally have been sitting empty for a year, and these museums and cultural amenities that exist throughout the country really need the supports to get through this particular time so we can still have those cultural assets when we get through this pandemic. I was really happy to see that recommendation in there.

● (1955)

Perhaps the part of the recommendations I liked the most were the last five recommendations of the report, which focus on electric vehicles. I think there is such a huge opportunity here, as we discover that we will transition to electrified vehicles. There is no stopping that. It is going to happen. I genuinely believe we have passed the tipping point. It is really going to take off, and it will do so at a much more increased pace than it is now.

I heard a member from British Columbia, I believe it was one of the Green Party members, indicate that B.C. is now selling approximately 10% of its vehicles as electric vehicles. This industry is really going to take off, so putting investments and incentives into research and development, which is what one of the recommendations calls for, makes me wonder about what that will lead to.

When NASA does research to build new things for space, quite often we get a ton of spinoffs that end up becoming new products, which become available for more residential and commercial uses. Therefore, the spinoffs that will come from research and development in electrifying vehicles, for example, will be tremendous.

I also think there is a huge opportunity here. We are starting to see electric vehicles get to the end of their lifespan, as some have been around for a good 10 or 15 years now, and there is an opportunity to do a lot of research and development in what to do with an electric vehicle when it gets to the end of its life. I think there is a

huge opportunity here, and I am really glad to see that was in one of the recommendations of this concurrence report.

Of course, there was also another recommendation in that same section on incentivizing the purchase of electric vehicles. I think it is extremely important to do that, but I know there are a lot of people out there who criticize the incentivization of electric vehicles.

I will be the first to admit that I have taken advantage of those incentives in Ontario on a number of occasions. We are on our fourth electric vehicle. People who are overly critical of these incentives are being very short-sighted on how much we actually help the fossil fuel industry in Canada, in particular with the incentives that are out there and the credits that are being applied to the fossil fuel industry.

Of course, there was another recommendation to increase the electrification of the federal government fleet dramatically. That is something I am very encouraged to see. It is another great recommendation, which I think the government should act on. We need to be leaders. If we are going to convince other people to buy an electric vehicle, the government needs to introduce a lot of electric vehicles into its own fleet.

I made a comment earlier about electric vehicles being an industry that is evolving. I can tell members that our first electric vehicle we had was a Chevy Volt. We could get 40 kilometres after plugging it in, and then we were using gas after that. We now have a Chrysler Pacifica, which is a minivan. We get about 60km and then use gas.

Then we have a Hyundai Kona, which I get about 400 kilometres on and which I drive to and from Ottawa. To see the evolution, just from my own limited experience of how these vehicles have changed in such a short period of eight or nine years, is truly inspiring. I know it is only a matter of time before they are flooding the market and everybody will be driving electric vehicles.

● (2000)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I always love speeches from the member for Kingston and the Islands because I appreciate his honesty and sincerity. In response to one of my questions earlier he told the House that he was against buying the pipeline. It is amazing that he can say so even though his party was the one that bought it.

He spoke about education, day care services, long-term care homes and standards in these homes. I suggest that he go to Queen's Park, since those are all provincial jurisdictions.

From the beginning of the debate I have been hearing that the Liberals promised to increase old age security for seniors aged 75 and over, which is why seniors under the age of 75 do not get an increase. However, the pandemic started after the last election. Drug and food prices have gone up and seniors have been the hardest hit.

I would like to hear the honest and sincere answer I know he is capable of giving. Why are seniors 75 and under not eligible for this increase?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, to answer the question as directly as I can, I think the member is confusing two issues. Yes, we have a pandemic, on one side, but on the other side, we have a commitment to seniors. To answer his question, we need to divide the two issues and not bring them together like he is trying to do.

On the one side, people are struggling in the pandemic and are having difficulties, which have changed dramatically since the pandemic began. We need to be there to help them and make sure they get the supports they need. I would argue that the government has been doing this.

On the other side, which relates to seniors, we know that seniors are living longer now. As they get to an older age, over 75, seniors need more supports by default because what they had when they retired is starting to deplete by that point. Is there an opportunity to have more discussions on the age? I do not think the age as a number matters as much as the data that shows when some people need more support than others. The number is irrelevant; it is about what the data says about when people need supports the most.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, part of the concurrence report, under recommendation 55, spoke to the support for the cultural, tourism and hospitality sectors. It asked about providing additional financial support to those sectors until COVID-19-related restrictions can be safely lifted.

One thing in the budget was disappointing for the stakeholder community, and there was almost unanimity in my conversations with stakeholder groups and the tourism industry. They were looking for an extension to the CEWS and the CERS programs until at least the end of the year. Some have even indicated that they may need them into the new year as we transition along, because tourism is not going to recover immediately. It is not like we are going to snap our fingers and 14 million people, who traditionally would come to Niagara Falls, are going to magically reappear. This is going to take time, and it is going to take effort and support for those sectors to get their feet back under them.

The member talks about tourism in his own community. Is he a little disappointed in the early end of these programs?

• (2005)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, anything that is or is not there for the tourism sector definitely impacts my riding and means something to me. It is something I am watching very carefully. However, the government has demonstrated through the work of Parliament and in working with the other side of the House, quite often through unanimous consent motions, that it will be there for small businesses and will be there for the industry. It has been there for over a year now.

Although the particular item the member is looking for might not be in this budget, I have no doubt that the government will be there for small businesses and these sectors until we get through the pandemic and they can start to get on their feet again.

Orders of the Day

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I quite enjoyed the member's speech and I want to compliment him on his delivery. It was quite passionate.

I want to know if he has looked further into the impacts of child care. I have been reading about this. When we look at the Quebec model, not only did it grow the economy, but it also took the female workforce employment rate from being one of the lowest across Canada to becoming one of the highest across Canada. When we compare Ontario and Quebec now, Quebec stands at 81% female workforce participation and Ontario only stands at 75%.

I definitely think that many improvements were made when Quebec moved to this model. I want an opinion from the member as to what he thinks about that and what he thinks about the wasting of skills and intellect that we are currently seeing across the country by not providing women and families with the support they need with their children.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I sit on the PROC committee with the member for Brampton North. I have not been there in a while and I miss it, quite frankly, so I am looking forward to getting back on the committee.

The member is absolutely correct. This is why I said earlier that if not for the social reasons of supporting child care because it will help families, we should think of the economic impact alone. The economic impact, as demonstrated in Quebec, is significant when we can unleash the potential of people who want to work. As the member indicated, as I said during my speech, more often than not it is the woman who ends up staying at home. By making sure the supports are there, women can then realize the full potential of what they want to do.

It is a strategic decision that is being made by families. One parent may say he or she will stay at home because even if that parent works, after income taxes and paying child care, the family will only be ahead \$50 a week, or whatever it might be. It just does not make sense. If we can conquer that problem, the economic impact of this and the growth of our economy will be incredible. Not only that, but people get to realize their full potential and their dreams of what they want to do, not to sound cliché.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, earlier I heard the question from my colleague who wanted to know why seniors aged 65 to 74 are not entitled to the \$500 cheque or the proposed increase of \$63.50 a month, as opposed to \$110 a month as the Bloc wants. I heard that it was not a question of age but of statistics.

I do not know what to say to my constituents when I return to my riding. There is obviously frustration. People feel left behind, and there are two classes of seniors. I would like to see the figures because I just do not believe it.

*Orders of the Day**[English]*

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I do not think there is any evidence to suggest that there are two classes. What I was saying in response to the previous Bloc question was that, to me, what is important is that people are taken care of. There is evidence to suggest that the older people get, the more their savings are depleted along the way.

Five years ago people could not retire at age 65, it was 67, which is a whole other issue. When people retire at 65, they have more saved-up wealth that they can then use. As they get older, we are seeing that people are finding it harder and harder to meet their basic needs. When I say that the number does not matter, it is because I do not think the number is arbitrary. I think the number has been set because it properly reflects when people need increased supports.

• (2010)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to enter into debate on this concurrence report and, more broadly, the budget in general.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Cariboo—Prince George.

More than a year late, swimming in red ink and rife with risky new economic strategies based on the Liberals' reimagined Canada, the Liberals appear to be doubling down on failures. It is with great disappointment that we look back at the budget presented a couple of weeks ago and see how, in so many ways, it misses the mark on what Canadians need.

I am going to try something a little bit different in this speech. My communications assistant has livestreamed my speech as well. I am going to try to get some comments on the record from constituents, some of whom have written to me about the budget in the past and others who I am expecting will comment on Facebook. This is the first time I have tried something like this, so we will go from there.

Audrey from my constituency says clearly, "Instead of begging other countries for vaccines, we need to ensure Canadian manufacturing, like Providence Therapeutics that I would note just announced that they may be moving out of Canada. Without vaccines we won't be able to get back to work and a large percentage of small businesses that employ women may no longer exist".

Debra says, "There would be money for programs if the Prime Minister's Liberals stop giving our money away to the Infrastructure Bank, China and their friends."

Fred says, "With budget debate starting today, could we possibly get an answer as to why the OAS increase starts at 75 instead of 65 when OAS starts? Is that the Prime Minister's way to save money since by 75 there are some who will already have passed on?"

Those are a few of the concerns that I have heard from constituents.

When we look at other aspects of the budget we see a child care plan. I agree that a child care strategy is needed. In 2006, this was a heavily litigated issue in the election. In fact, it was Conservatives

who ran on a universal child care plan. The Liberals like to take credit for the Canada child care benefit, but really what they did was take over a program that was introduced by the Conservatives and was incredibly popular. It was first brought forward in 2006 during that election. The Liberals adjusted it a little bit. Instead of paying taxes based on income, with a flat rate for every Canadian, they made it income dependent. They then ran on it as their own and claimed it as their own, but it was an idea brought forward by Canada's Conservatives and it was incredibly popular. It ensured that the playing field was level.

It is interesting because what is proposed in this budget actually goes against what the Prime Minister wrote in the Minister of Finance's mandate letter. He talked about her being careful not to introduce any more permanent spending. We have an Ottawa-knows-best approach to child care.

I am a Conservative, so ideologically I would suggest that often we can see that the government is not overly effective at delivering these programs. If we look, for example, at many of the government-run agencies and institutions across the country, we can simply see that they are not the best use of tax dollars. They are not effective in terms of providing the best services for Canadians. I have heard from some constituents and will admit there are some who are happy about the possibility of more child care spaces, but they are concerned that these will be focused on urban areas and will leave rural Canada behind, as we often see in these big government programs. There are many others who have alternative child care arrangements, such as when one parent chooses to stay home because they have a small business or differing hours, or when a grandparent, aunt, uncle or whomever provides child care. They may use an unregistered day care, which is how many Canadians get their child care. Those are all not part of the plan. It is an Ottawa-knows-best approach.

We see the \$100 billion green infrastructure fund, which is a slush fund with little accountability. Forgive me for not trusting the government with that kind of money when we see 9,000 missing projects with the Canada Infrastructure Bank, and now the government wants another \$100 billion.

• (2015)

With the rent and wage subsidy, my hon. colleague from Niagara Falls articulated very well some of the challenges. I have two communities in particular, and other small businesses across my constituency, that depend on seasonal tourism. To see it phased out at a time when we will hopefully just be starting to see a recovery is very problematic in terms of these businesses being able to survive.

I will get into a few more of those specifics, but I would just like to read a few of the comments I am getting on Facebook. Jesse is talking about the budget and feeling very sad for Canada. Shauna talks about the reimagined economy and that risky economic idea. It is troubling that, at a time when Canadians need leadership, we are not seeing it.

I have a comment from Ken saying he is concerned about how the Liberals seem to deflect the very valid questions Canadians are asking. These are not my comments. These are comments from, in this case, followers on Facebook. Canadians are asking some very serious questions.

I find this interesting with this budget. I have spent a great deal of time over the last number of months talking about the need for democracy, an essential service, and the Liberals talk often about a team Canada approach to the COVID response and otherwise. It is interesting to see who is included in team Canada. We saw with Parliament shut down there was so often a lack of collaboration.

I would add that I hope I have a new follower on Facebook in the member for Kingston and the Islands. I am certain my constituents will appreciate his comment.

This team Canada approach seems to leave many behind. It is unfortunate because, at a time when Canadians need leadership, they are left wanting. This may be because of the 750 pages in the budget, which many pundits and political observers have suggested is simply the precursor for an election platform.

The Prime Minister even let it slip over the Christmas holidays about expecting an election. Canadians are not looking for an election. They are looking for leadership out of some incredibly challenging times.

We see so clearly the need for leadership at a time when, as many have rightly suggested, we face significant challenges, whether as small businesses, families, women or young people who do not have the opportunities that should be present.

It has been interesting to try Facebook Live while doing a speech in the House of Commons. I am not sure that has been done before, but I look forward to maybe incorporating this again in the future.

I am seeing questions asking where the money coming from. I have a tremendous amount of research on swimming in red ink, as I mentioned before. We saw a deficit in the last year where there was no budgetary framework. It was approximately equivalent to the previous year's entire federal budget. That is debt being accrued by our country.

As I read through the budget, the debt repayment plan that has been outlined by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has just been to make sure we refinance at a lower interest rate. That is not a debt and fiscal plan that Canadians can trust will not damage our future. That is money that will have to be paid back. I know it is the sort of thinking that could cause significant economic damage to our nation's future, the very future that the Prime Minister and the government talk about, yet they are being left behind by some of these risky strategies.

I look forward to taking some question from other members of the House. I would note that the member for Kingston and the Is-

lands did comment on my Facebook post. I am not sure if that counts as his intervention or not.

● (2020)

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned infrastructure, slush funds and money that he thinks is not being well spent. This morning there was an announcement in my city of Brampton for electric buses. We are finally getting electric buses out on the road starting tomorrow.

Just a couple of weeks before that, we had an infrastructure announcement for a third bus facility in my neighbouring riding, the largest of its kind in that riding. This is really going to help set Brampton up to be a great city. To me, it is a requirement. We have a growing immigrant population and a lot of people really need good, clean and safe transportation to get to work. These investments can be life-changing.

What part of the budget would he like to see cut for Canadians?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I find it interesting that the members opposite are always so quick to say that it is all about what we would cut.

Conservatives look at things a little differently. The metric for success for the Liberals seems to be the more money they can shovel out the door, the more successful a program is. The reality is very different. Conservatives are focused on ensuring that dollars actually deliver for Canadians and that every dollar spent is respected, is held accountable and has the biggest benefit possible. I would suggest that is a fundamental difference between Conservatives and Liberals.

When it comes to this infrastructure project, \$100 billion would buy a lot of buses. Certainly, I hope that is not a precursor to some of the conversations that we had when the previous minister of infrastructure, when bragging about billions and billions spent, was only able to talk about a few buses that were purchased. Canadians expect a lot more than a few buses for \$100 billion.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I did comment on the member's Facebook page, although he did not read out my comment, which is fair. I will say that I admire his desire to use technology for the purpose that he did. I thought that was very creative, so kudos for that.

I do not think the member answered the question from the member for Brampton North. The question was about what he would actually take out. It is fair, when he says he does not support this level of spending, to ask him to tell us where he would start to remove money.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I did answer the question. The engagement on my Facebook page from the member opposite will make waves in the constituency of Battle River—Crowfoot, I have no doubt.

Orders of the Day

Again, I bring it back to the base level of what we are taking about. Dollars spent are not a metric of success. We have spent a tremendous amount during the COVID pandemic, and Conservatives have supported much of that spending because Canadians needed it. Would we have done things differently? Absolutely. We would have adjusted programs. In fact, we made a lot of suggestions and the Liberals did take some of our advice, but on other fronts they did not.

We have seen what happens at different times throughout our history when the finances of the country are not kept in mind, and when there is not a strong fiscal framework, let alone there not being a budget or a budgetary framework for an entire year. We have had nothing more than a fiscal selfie, yet there is such extraordinary spending. Now, we see increasing evidence that we are being set up for an inflation rate that could drive more Canadians into poverty.

These are all very concerning things. The government simply talks about the more dollars spent, the better. If we are going to spend money, let us make sure that it actually serves Canadians, that every dollar is respected and that there is accountability to ensure that it is actually serving the best interests of the Canadians who pay those taxes, which is why it can be spent in the first place.

● (2025)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this evening to speak to the concurrence motion for the first report of the Standing Committee on Finance, entitled “Investing in Tomorrow: Canadian Priorities for Economic Growth and Recovery”. There is a lot in the 378-page report that I am sure the minister did not have a chance to look or did not even look at.

For the sake of time, I would like to focus my speech this evening on a few key priorities that affect my riding. However, first, I want to speak to something our colleague, the member for Kingston and the Islands spoke about, and that is mental health.

The House unanimously supported a motion I put forward 143 days ago to bring a simple three-digit national suicide prevention hotline to our country. It has been 143 days. Let us put that in perspective. We know by the statistics that 11 Canadians take their own lives every 24 hours and another 275 attempt to take their lives every 24 hours. To do the simple math, 143 days equates to 1,573 people who have lost their lives and another 39,325 who have attempted to take their lives. Let that sink in for a moment. While my Liberal friends can sit there and talk about \$1 billion, which is not a small number, in supports that this budget included, we need to be better and we need to do better. It is incumbent upon all 338 members of the House to do better for Canadians when it comes to mental health. There is no health without mental health. I will leave members with that.

I would like to talk about recommendation 55, support for tourism and culture; recommendation 63, support for municipal assets; recommendation 72, support for rural Canadian infrastructure; and recommendation 74, support for high-speed Internet in rural Canada.

Recommendation 55 talks about the chance to support local, cultural, tourism and hospitality sectors. I have stood in the House and

spoke about how COVID has impacted companies such as Central Display and C+ Rodeos ranch in my riding. I have talked about how areas in my community, such as Williams Lake, Quesnel, Vanderhoof and Prince George, depend so dearly on their events, like the Williams Lake Stampede, the greatest show on dirt; Billy Barker Days; the BC Northern Exhibition; or the the Vanderhoof International Airshow. These communities are struggling. However, what we have seen in this budget is really not a lot of support for these companies.

I spoke about how Roy and Earl Call ran the C+ Rodeos ranch for over 25 years. They are the tops in the rodeo business in terms of rodeo stock. They are among the top 10 in Canada. When those companies have to downsize, it means animals lose their lives. Regardless of whether a show is going on or not, those animals need to be fed. If no dollars are coming in to support and feed those animals, sadly, they have to be euthanized. We know that this has gone on right across our country. That rodeo stock is bred specifically for high performance; they are athletes. If no shows are going on, then something needs to be done.

I talked about Central Display, a company that puts on conventions and conferences all across northern British Columbia. It has been struggling to make ends meet. I talked about all types of organizations, such as Barkerville, a historic site in our country. It is struggling to make ends meet.

This budget falls short with respect to our national post-pandemic needs in so many ways. If members do not believe me, let us talk about all the premiers and mayors who have spoken out about it from coast to coast to coast. It seems like our Liberal colleagues believe that once COVID is done, it is just a flip of a switch and everything will be all right. Sadly, we know we are going to face a mental health crisis like never before.

● (2030)

We know that over 200,000 businesses have had to close their doors. That is millions of Canadians who are out of work. We know that as we sit today one in six businesses is considering closing its doors.

I want to talk about support for municipal infrastructure: roads, roads, roads. If members follow my Twitter feed, they will see that over 200 roads in my riding are compromised by landslides and washouts or are impassible altogether. I want to talk about the Quesnel-Hydraulic Road, where in April 2020 a 400-metre section was washed out. This forced the residents of that area to ride or drive and travel on a mountain pass logging road, one that should not be intended for passenger vehicles, for over a year. Emergency crews will not go on it. Ambulance and fire support will not go on it. School districts will not send their school buses on that road.

Orders of the Day

If Canadians who are listening want to see images of what that road looks like and some of the other damage that is going on, they can go to my Twitter feed. They will see that on my social media. Those are real-time photos, and there is more coming. We have been raising these issues with the infrastructure minister, as well as the transportation minister, since 2017. We knew there were going to be challenges with the 2017 wildfires and the root structures that are missing.

Another thing I want to talk about is connectivity. This budget announces a billion dollars toward getting Canadians connected. Then there is \$4 billion for getting businesses online. Is that not backwards? Should we not be doing everything we can to get Canadians connected?

Madam Speaker, you of all people will know the challenges that MPs from coast to coast to coast face with our connectivity issues every day. We were just having a storm up here in Prince George and I was worried that I would not be able to make my speech because in a blink, just like that, we can get booted off because of our connectivity issues. We have to do everything in our power so that all Canadians, regardless of where they are, are connected and have access to the Internet. That makes sense post-pandemic, that we have telehealth, that Canadians can connect with their friends and family better, that we are putting a concerted effort and getting businesses and rural and remote communities connected.

There are lessons that we should have learned over COVID, but sadly what we have seen in this budget is that the Liberals just want to pay off their friends and create a further divide between urban and rural. That is sad.

I believe it was one of our NDP colleagues who said that the budget is always an important document and it is always an important week when the budget comes out because this really is our key-stone document as we move forward. We have just had two years of no budget and we have gone through perhaps the worst year in our country's history, and then we see a budget like this. There are a lot of great recommendations in this report. Sadly, what we have seen with this budget is that this is not a budget; rather, it is a pre-election platform. When the election is called, when the writ is dropped, I suggest that the word "budget" will be taken out and the word "platform" will be submitted.

• (2035)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member and I spend a lot of time together on the veterans committee, and I really appreciate the work he does there.

My question for the member goes back to veterans. What we have seen in this last budget is another announcement for an interim program to help veterans who are on a huge wait-list, up to two years, for their disability pensions, for the supports they desperately need. Here we have another program. What we heard at committee again and again is that what veterans and their families want is one person who knows their story so they do not have to repeat it again and again. I wonder if the member could speak to this and how we are continuously seeing veterans failed in Canada.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I get fairly emotional when we talk about our veterans and those who serve our country and our community.

Our freedom is not free. It comes at a very real cost and a very real sacrifice to those who serve our country and their families. Sadly, what we have seen is that time and again they are forgotten. They are told to go to the back of the line instead of being told, "Thank you, your bill has been paid in full."

We need to do more. We need to make sure that they have that one-stop shop and that they do not have to continually relive the stories. It re-traumatizes veterans and their families. We can do more. We should do more. Sadly, this budget would not do more.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about small businesses and some of the challenges that owners are facing.

Dave Ball, who owns VanIsle Wine and Beer Makers, got a CEBA loan. Five months ago, the government announced the increase to the CEBA and he applied for it. Now, there is a technical issue and he cannot get the increase. Here we are five months later, he cannot get the increase and we hear that there are 60,000 business owners in the same position. We have written to the minister, we cannot get a reply. There is no hotline for Dave to call to get information about his application. In fact, we have been asking the government to increase the CEBA loan from \$60,000 to \$80,000 because we are in the third wave where many business owners are struggling for their businesses to survive.

Could my colleague share whether he has constituents in the same situation, who have applied for the CEBA loan extension but cannot get an answer as to whether they are going to get it? Does he think that we should increase the CEBA loan for those business owners who need extra help, especially those in hospitality and tourism and those being impacted most greatly by the pandemic?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, my hon. B.C. colleague from Courtenay—Alberni also reminded me of another thing.

Absolutely, I have heard the exact same thing. We are failing small business owners and we need to do more for them.

The member reminded me of something I failed to mention in my speech, and that is the opioid crisis in British Columbia. We are facing dire times, not only here in our province but right across this country, and this budget fails to do anything for that. We need to do better for those who are struggling with mental health and addiction, and this budget falls short.

Orders of the Day

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate what the member has been talking about but I wanted to emphasize that under programs such as the provincial restart program, the federal government has invested tens of millions, going into hundreds of millions, of dollars into health support with a special focus on mental health. Other provinces have played an important role by working with Ottawa to deal with this issue. I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts in regard to the fact that we have been investing more money in mental health than the previous administration had.

● (2040)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, our previous Conservative government set up the Mental Health Commission. We need to do more. We are failing Canadians when it comes to mental health. There is no health without mental health, and until we actually view mental health in parity with physical health we are failing Canadians.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, as some members will know, I used to sit on the finance committee in a previous Parliament. I do not get to do that now as chair for the Conservative caucus, but I see this is a report that has 145 recommendations and is one of the biggest in the past five to six years. Typically, what I have noticed is that the Liberal government has been ignoring the finance committee's recommendations, and in this concurrence report we have an opportunity to compare what is in the recommendations from the pre-budget submission to the government, created by the Standing Committee on Finance, with the actual budget document. We can compare the two and what has been proposed.

Some of these recommendations I actually agree with, but I know the government has no intentions of following through. The recommendations are either not in the budget document, or the Liberals have gone completely silent, so I want to highlight those issues I am most interested in.

Recommendation 12 is a good one: "Ensure that the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board changes do not create barriers for new medicines for Canadians." It is Canadians with rare diseases who would be impacted by these changes. January 1 was when these new regulations were supposed to be coming in. I do not think I have spoken to a single patient advocacy group or stakeholder group that has said these changes were terrific and that they should go through, especially during a pandemic when we have interim health orders and special rules put in place by the federal health minister to manage the pandemic. This is the wrong time to be introducing changes such as this.

Now they have been delayed to July 1, so we have less than two short months, and the federal government should be delaying it further. This is the wrong time to be introducing PMPRB changes that would deeply impact new medications coming onto the market, including vaccinations that will be coming onto the market here in Canada, because they provide so little direction to provincial governments, health insurers and benefit plans. It would create more uncertainty.

In fact, it would create so much uncertainty that Alberta Health Services, the operator of the Alberta health care system, sent a letter to the federal health minister saying that these rules did not make sense. It could not inform the manufacturers or the people it negotiated with to give them any type of certainty on what the future would look like. That is Alberta Health Services, the provincial health insurer, telling the federal government it had gotten it wrong and that even it was confused by the contents. That was repeated by the Quebec government, and the British Columbia government said the same thing.

One of the biggest worries I have is that the federal government is taking its lead from an organization that, in its annual report to Parliament, says that medication is going up in cost and is actually one of the biggest drivers of health care costs in Canada, with 70% of those costs coming from expensive drugs for rare diseases. These are very expensive drugs, of which Kalydeco is a good example. The problem with what the PMPRB is doing is that, in that 70%, there are many rare disease medications that are given for everyday conditions. The health care systems decide that a rare disease medication works for a condition really well, and they allow it to be prescribed off-label. The federal regulator, this organization that is only supposed to look at excessive pricing of medication, is saying it is going to include that as if it was given to someone with a rare disease, and that is wrong. That is not the way it should be done. I have called them out on it at the health committee. I continue to do so in public advocacy, but recommendation 12 is very good. I think the finance committee got it correct, and the federal government is getting it wrong.

Recommendation 15 is about Diabetes Canada asking for Diabetes 360° to be implemented in Canada. I think this is a very good recommendation. I know there are many diabetics in my riding who suffer from it. This, to the government's credit, is in budget 2021. Diabetes is a condition that is chronic, and its numbers are going up. Every single year in Canada, more Canadians suffer from it. This is one of these chronic conditions that will crush the different medical systems in Canada, because there are so many associated costs. I have a friend who lost half of his foot to diabetes. It is a terrible condition, so I am pleased it is in both the pre-budget submission and budget 2021.

I will move on to recommendation 23, to “Uncouple the eligibility for the disability tax credit...and a registered disability savings plan”, so if someone loses access to the DTC, they would not also lose the RDSP and have to refund the RDSP. Members will remember that in the last Parliament the federal government, through the CRA, went through an audit process in which it denied tens of thousands of people with type 2 diabetes very unfairly. Many of those then also lost access to the RDSP and were forced into this massive refund.

● (2045)

There are many members on the Conservative side, in other parties, and on the Liberal benches as well, although not in the government unfortunately, who thought this was deeply unfair. Uncoupling it would be the right way to go, but it would be much better if the CRA simply ceased going after diabetics in this country and treated them like people who have a very bad chronic medical condition.

Recommendation 24, asking to make the disability tax credit refundable, is a very good recommendation. I had a private member's bill on this in the last Parliament, which I am hoping to reintroduce with some tweaks in this Parliament.

The disability tax credit is for Canadians with disabilities that never go away. Some people are unable to walk, like my daughter who passed away in the last Parliament. People with a rare condition like Patau syndrome, which she had, Edwards syndrome or spinal muscular atrophy will never walk, and the disability tax credit makes it possible for parents, when they still need support, to pay for things like a wheelchair or assistance to get into a bed. It pays for those costs. However, with the way it is set up right now, lower-income Canadians do not get access to it because they are not paying taxes. This is a good recommendation, and I really wish the government had taken it up, because it would help lower-income Canadians especially.

I am going to move on to recommendation 45, which asks us to adopt Bill C-395, the opportunity for workers with disabilities act, from the 42nd Parliament. It is also about disabilities. The member for Carleton actually proposed this private member's bill. This is a terrific idea for a person who chooses to work when they have a disability, like a learning disability or a physical disability, that makes them unable to work perhaps a full week or makes it challenging for them to go to a workplace every day even though they want to. They get innate dignity from working and a great sense of self-worth just for showing up to work and doing a job with their own two hands, and they should not be made worse off at the end of the day. There are a lot of programs, such as PDD and AISH in Alberta, that penalize people who go to work. They actually lose more money than they get from them.

I am glad to see that the finance committee decided to put that recommendation in. However, it is very sad that for budget 2021, it was not added into the bill. It would bring a great amount of fairness to persons with disabilities.

I have looked at the content of the pre-budget report and budget 2021. There is a Yiddish proverb that says, “It doesn't cost anything to look”, so I'm looking through the window at what's being done.

Orders of the Day

Recommendation 62 says, “Simplify access and implementation of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation funds for housing.” I have been a huge critic of the CMHC and I make no apologies for it whatsoever. However, I do welcome Romy Bowers, who is the new chief executive officer, and look forward to filing many, many access to information requests with the CMHC.

I do not like this recommendation because the CMHC is there to provide one service. I know it tried to rename itself “housing Canada”, and I believe it misled a parliamentary committee when it pretended that it was not using current funds to fund the rebranding. This has been set aside during the pandemic as something to do in the future, but hopefully CMHC will return to Parliament to ask for more money to do the project.

It has a project called the first-time home buyer incentive, which was introduced before the 2019 federal election. At the time I called it an election gimmick. Officials were saying that this was going to help 100,000 first-time homebuyers in Canada, but by my count, as of January 31, 2021, there have been 9,108 approvals. One hundred thousand people were supposed to be helped between 2019 and 2022. We are about at the midway point now, and we have 9,108 approvals. Also, an approval does not mean that a first-time homebuyer actually followed through and accepted the offer to have the government share in the equity of their home in a purchase. I strongly believe that even if we simplified access and implementation, this program would still be a failure.

During the 2019 election, the governing party announced that it was going to change the rules for the incentive to make it easier, to broaden the reach and to expand the income levels so that people could still apply for it. The city where the most people applied for it and took the offer from the federal government through the CMHC is Edmonton. Edmonton is perhaps an expensive city in the Alberta context, but it is nothing compared with Vancouver or Toronto. Very few people in those two large metropolitan areas took advantage of it.

Orders of the Day

● (2050)

I do not like this recommendation because, frankly, the CMHC's primary purpose for existing is to provide mortgage insurance for chartered banks, credit unions and financial institutions. That is its primary role and it should focus on that job. It acts as a backstop. It does an immense service by providing and broadening the ability of first-time homebuyers to become homeowners. That is the purpose of its existence. I am happy to continue to criticize the previous CEO now that he has joined Alberta Investment Management Corporation, but that is the purpose of CMHC. Home ownership is the purpose of CMHC. That is what it was created for. I do not like this recommendation because I do not like it getting more powers. I am sure I will get a letter in the mail from someone at CMHC disagreeing with me and I look forward to submitting an ATIP for the drafting of that letter as well.

Recommendation No. 90 says, "Require the companies receiving the Large Employer Emergency Financing Facility", which was the LEEFF program, a program that some employers in Calgary did take advantage of, "to prove that their business plans are in line with the Paris Agreement target to limit temperature increase to 1.5 degrees." This is interesting because the Paris Agreement does not say 1.5°C. It has several models in it, too. The IPCC also talks about several different models. A lot of that work is based on the social cost of carbon by William Nordhaus, who is an award-winning Nobel laureate.

This is the stuff that really worries my constituents. This is the stuff where they start accusing the government of trying to reimagine the economy and taking advantage of a crisis to force through its ideas. The large employer emergency financing facility was to help large employers during a pandemic. It should not be used to then leverage them on the one side to do policy objectives of the government and, on top of that, who is going to review these business plans? Who is going to sit down and kind of add up what is leading to the Celsius degree reach?

For a trucking company I might be able to understand it, but what about a really large employer like a post-secondary institution? That is where it becomes really difficult. Who is going to review my business plan if I am trying to teach tens of thousands of students every single year? What does that have to do with demonstrating my temperature increase? Do I need to lower the thermostat in my buildings? Stuff like that seems kind of ridiculous, so I am perplexed as to why it is in this finance pre-budget document.

The report goes on like that. There are some good ideas and some bad ones. Recommendation No. 109 says, "Require airlines to reimburse their customers whose flights are cancelled." I agree with that. I have a lot of constituents who are extremely angry at the airlines. Calgary is home to WestJet, which used to be its biggest employer after the downturn in the oil and gas economy. Now that the pandemic has hit, oil has drastically rebounded and is very close to \$70 for West Texas Intermediate and Western Canadian Select is just a few dollars behind it, so the price of a barrel of oil is very strong right now.

A lot of my constituents still have not gotten their refunds. The government has struck a deal with Air Canada and WestJet is still waiting to hear from the federal government, but independent travel

advisers also cannot be hurt with any refund. I know the two major airlines, and others have been doing it too, are leveraging independent travel advisers, trying to extract out of them their commissions for services already rendered. I really wish this recommendation had included independent travel advisers. I have probably met with 40 to 50 in my riding several times. They are suffering. They are small business owners, typically they are single parents and it is a really big deal.

Recommendation No. 123 says, "Withdraw from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank." I have been on this train for four years now trying to get the federal government to withdraw from this bank. It was the member for Malpeque who put it best to the government when he said that the federal government needed to wake up and smell the roses. This is the only way we are going to find leverage.

Canadians are being held against their will in the People's Republic of China. It has cracked down on democracy activists in Hong Kong and reneged on the basic agreement it signed with the United Kingdom. It has intimidated Taiwan, which is an ally and close friend of Canada. It has tried to annex the South China Sea. It has persecuted over a million Muslim Uighurs, an ethnic minority in Xinjiang province, that it has interned in concentration camps to try to wipe them out culturally.

The least the federal government could do is get a stick and withdraw from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as a way to apply political pressure, to have a G7 country back out of the AIIB, a bank that is based in Beijing, has built pipelines in the suburbs of Beijing, has built pipelines in other countries and financed projects. In Recommendation No. 123, I really wish the federal government had taken this on.

● (2055)

It is nice to see an all-party committee such as the Standing Committee on Finance actually say to the federal government that it is right, and no less than the chair of the committee tell the federal government it is wrong on the matter of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. We need to withdraw from it. It would send a signal to Beijing that we will not be intimidated and that we will stand up for the two Michaels, and other Canadians who could be, in the future, held hostage by a regime that has taken advantage of the federal government at every single opportunity.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 8:56 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

[Translation]

The question is on the motion.

[English]

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.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I request that it carry on division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I declare the motion agreed to on division.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, we find ourselves here following from the questions I posed to the Prime Minister with respect to the ongoing cover-up we have seen the government undertake, which came out of the very early days of the pandemic.

Early on we saw all parties profess to want to take a team Canada approach and to really want to make sure helping Canadians was the first thing we did, but the first thing the government did was propose legislation that would have given it the ability to tax and spend without parliamentary oversight for almost two years, so that definitely got the radar up of opposition parties and the parliamentary press gallery.

We learned of course that the Prime Minister had dealings with the WE Charity. Later we would learn that this organization had paid members of the Prime Minister's family about half a million dollars in cash and other benefits. What we learned in the very early days of the pandemic, just over a year ago, is that the government was prepared to give a half-billion-dollar, sole-source contribution agreement to the same organization, which would have benefited that organization by more than \$40 million.

Tough questions were asked last summer, and we saw unprecedented interest during these committee hearings. We saw the Prime Minister testify, and we had massive document requests of the government. On the eve of those documents being delivered, and they documents that would have given us information about speaking fees paid to members of the Prime Minister's family, the Prime Minister shut down Parliament.

We have this pattern, which has developed with the government since it first came to office in 2015. As revealed in the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's report entitled "The Trudeau Report", with the ill-fated trip to billionaire island, and with the SNC-Lavalin scandal in the Ethics Commissioner's report entitled "Trudeau II Report", we saw that the Prime Minister does not be-

Adjournment Proceedings

lieve the rules of this place, the laws parliamentarians are expected to follow, apply to him and to his government.

Here we are again, with the Prime Minister under investigation for a third time, awaiting a report from the Ethics Commissioner. The House ordered, by a majority vote, that witnesses appear at the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics and at the Standing Committee on National Defence. What did those witnesses do? They were instructed by their employer, by ministers of the Crown, to defy an order of Canada's Parliament.

It is unbelievable, but that is the lengths the Liberals will go to in order to hide the truth from Canadians. It is one set of rules for them and one set of rules for everybody else. They want us to believe they are following ministerial accountability, but what the Liberals have subjected us to is anything but that.

My question tonight is this: Why is it that the government and these Liberals think the rules do not apply to them?

● (2100)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The Prime Minister is very committed to accountability and transparency. He was committed to those principles even before becoming the Prime Minister of Canada.

Since the 2015 federal election, the Conservatives have left no stone unturned as they continue to look for any possible way to be critical of the personalities within government. We have seen that virtually from day one. One might think that during the pandemic the Conservative Party might refocus and demonstrate more concern about Canadians.

At the beginning, it looked pretty encouraging. Thirteen or fourteen months ago, we saw a Conservative Party with a higher sense of co-operation, wanting to be a part of that team Canada taking on the pandemic. However, it did not take too long for the Conservatives to fall back into the ditch, with character assassination as their primary focus.

No matter what the Conservative game is, I can assure Canadians that the Government of Canada, and in particular the Prime Minister, will continue to focus on them, first and foremost, with priority one being minimizing the negatives of the pandemic, ensuring they are getting the vaccine and that we are able to build back better. One only needs to look at the most recent budget to get a better understanding of the environment we are in today, in good part because the Prime Minister, over a year ago, took that team Canada approach, bringing together provinces, territories, indigenous leaders and many different stakeholders, and challenging members of Parliament on all political sides to come together and be there in a real and tangible way for Canadians.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Minister of Health, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement work day, day out to ensure that Canada and Canadians are well served by ministers and parliamentary secretaries, who are prepared to put in the sacrifice, working with other stakeholders, in particular other jurisdictions.

I would invite the Conservatives to get on board once again, to get out of the ditches and the gutters, and support what Canadians want us to be talking about, and that is the pandemic.

I always appreciate the opportunity to share a few words and thoughts in hopes that my friend will see the benefits. When he talks about the thousands of questions during summer, it is too bad some of those questions were not on the vaccines. We would probably be a little better off if the Conservatives would have put more priority on the pandemic and less on character assassination. That is the bottom line.

I have no problem comparing performance of the current Prime Minister to any prime minister in the last 30 to 40 years. He has been there for Canadians in a very real and tangible way, whether it was putting money in the pockets of Canadians through CERB, or protecting jobs through the wage subsidy program or the whole suite of programs that the government introduced with the support of Canadians and working with civil servants.

• (2105)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the spirited response from the parliamentary secretary. It was creative, and I am sure it would be a good bedtime story for some.

I also wish more time was spent on vaccines in the summer by the government, instead of partnering with the Communist China-owned CanSino. Instead, it could have developed domestic vaccine production capacity, like our friends in the UK.

What we have seen with the government is that it first looks to help its friends instead of helping Canadians. That is what is disappointing. The Prime Minister is the first one found guilty of breaking the Conflict of Interest Act, the first Prime Minister in Canadian history. He would say that there has only been two. One or two, he is the only one who has that distinction.

We expect better. We expect answers from the Liberals. Canadians expect better from their government. When are they going to get it?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, every day good government, transparency and accountability are practised by this Prime Minister, his ministers and indeed all Liberal members of Parliament, and I suspect a good number of members of Parliament, no matter what their political stripe is. It is a relatively smaller number of the official opposition who seem to be so focused on the negatives and the character assassinations.

The member talked about how we should have been producing vaccines domestically, but it was the Conservative government that destroyed our capacity. The member talked about the agreement with China, but Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca are the companies that are delivering. We are getting the vaccines. We will have 50 million doses before the end of June. We are the third best in the G20. We are on track. We are very grateful for all the support we are getting from—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. members for Regina—Lewvan and Dufferin—Caledon are not present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice had been given. Accordingly, the notices are deemed withdrawn.

The motion to adjourn the House is now 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 9:07 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, May 3, 2021

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

National Framework for Diabetes Act

Bill C-237. Report stage.....	6495
Ms. Sidhu (Brampton South).....	6495
Motion for concurrence.....	6495
Motion agreed to.....	6495
Third reading.....	6495
Ms. Gladu.....	6496
Ms. Chabot.....	6496
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River).....	6496
Mr. Fraser.....	6497
Ms. Gladu.....	6497
Ms. Pauzé.....	6498
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River).....	6500
Mr. Lamoureux.....	6501
Mr. Webber.....	6501
Mr. Baldinelli.....	6503

Privilege

Alleged Misleading Comments by the Prime Minister	
Mr. Rodriguez.....	6503

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act

Bill C-12. Second reading.....	6510
Mr. Genuis.....	6510
Mr. Gerretsen.....	6510
Mr. Perron.....	6510
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River).....	6511
Mr. Scarpaleggia.....	6511
Mr. Trudel.....	6512
Mr. Masse.....	6512
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands).....	6513
Mr. Van Popta.....	6513
Mr. Gerretsen.....	6514
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River).....	6515
Mr. Sloan.....	6515
Mr. Jowhari.....	6515
Ms. Chabot.....	6516
Ms. Alleslev.....	6517
Mr. MacGregor.....	6517
Mr. Kurek.....	6517
Mr. Gerretsen.....	6518

Privilege

Alleged Unparliamentary Language	
Mr. Gerretsen.....	6519
Mr. Kurek.....	6519

Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act

Bill C-12. Second reading.....	6519
--------------------------------	------

Mr. Beaulieu.....	6519
Mr. Kurek.....	6519
Mr. Bachrach.....	6519

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mental Health Week

Mr. Jowhari.....	6520
------------------	------

Strathcona County Fire

Mr. Genuis.....	6520
-----------------	------

230th Anniversary of Polish Constitution

Mr. Kusmierczyk.....	6520
----------------------	------

Mental Health Week

Mr. Thériault.....	6520
--------------------	------

The Economy in Madawaska—Restigouche

Mr. Arseneault.....	6521
---------------------	------

Adding a Splash of Colour to Spring

Mr. Godin.....	6521
----------------	------

400th Anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur

Mr. Dhaliwal.....	6521
-------------------	------

Youth and Mental Health

Ms. Lambropoulos.....	6521
-----------------------	------

Local Agriculture

Mr. Gourde.....	6521
-----------------	------

Businesses in Fleetwood—Port Kells

Mr. Hardie.....	6522
-----------------	------

Bill C-10

Ms. Gladu.....	6522
----------------	------

Mental Health Week

Mr. Doherty.....	6522
------------------	------

Tribute to Family Member

Ms. Gazan.....	6522
----------------	------

Marcel Charest

Mr. Desilets.....	6522
-------------------	------

Bill C-10

Mr. Barlow.....	6523
-----------------	------

Georges-Philippe Gadoury-Sansfaçon

Mrs. Bessette.....	6523
--------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

National Defence

Ms. Bergen.....	6523
Mr. Sajjan.....	6523
Ms. Bergen.....	6523

Mr. Sajjan	6524	Mr. Serré	6529
Ms. Bergen	6524	Mr. McLean	6530
Mr. Sajjan	6524	Mr. Serré	6530
Mr. Deltell	6524	International Development	
Mrs. McCrimmon	6524	Mr. Genuis	6530
Mr. Deltell	6524	Ms. Gould	6530
Mr. Sajjan	6524	Mr. Genuis	6530
Mr. Therrien	6524	Ms. Gould	6530
Mr. Sajjan	6524	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Mr. Therrien	6525	Ms. Normandin	6530
Mr. Sajjan	6525	Mr. Mendicino	6530
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	6525	Ms. Normandin	6530
Mr. Sajjan	6525	Mr. Mendicino	6531
Ms. Mathysen	6525	National Defence	
Mr. Sajjan	6525	Mr. Ruff	6531
Canadian Heritage		Mrs. McCrimmon	6531
Ms. Harder	6525	Correctional Service of Canada	
Mr. Guilbeault	6525	Mr. Kurek	6531
Ms. Harder	6526	Mr. Blair	6531
Mr. Guilbeault	6526	Public Safety	
Ms. Harder	6526	Mr. Carrie	6531
Mr. Guilbeault	6526	Mr. Blair	6531
Mr. Rayes	6526	Statistics Canada	
Mr. Guilbeault	6526	Mr. Drouin	6531
Mr. Rayes	6526	Mr. Champagne	6532
Mr. Guilbeault	6527	Canadian Heritage	
Mr. Rayes	6527	Mrs. Stubbs	6532
Mr. Guilbeault	6527	Mr. Guilbeault	6532
Canada Revenue Agency		Mr. Seebach	6532
Mr. Desilets	6527	Mr. Guilbeault	6532
Mrs. Lebouthillier	6527	Mr. Généreux	6532
Mr. Desilets	6527	Mr. Guilbeault	6532
Mrs. Lebouthillier	6527	Tourism Industry	
Health		Mr. Weiler	6533
Ms. Rempel Garner	6528	Ms. Joly	6533
Ms. Hajdu	6528	Airline Industry	
Ms. Rempel Garner	6528	Mr. Bachrach	6533
Ms. Hajdu	6528	Mr. Alghabra	6533
National Defence		Health	
Mr. Paul-Hus	6528	Mr. Sloan	6533
Mr. Sajjan	6528	Ms. Hajdu	6533
Mrs. McCrimmon	6528	GOVERNMENT ORDERS	
Indigenous Affairs		Business of Supply	
Ms. Gazan	6529	Opposition Motion—Access to COVID-19 Vaccines	
Ms. Bennett	6529	Motion	6533
Ms. Ashton	6529	Motion negated	6535
Ms. Damoff	6529		
Public Safety			
Ms. Yip	6529		
Ms. Chagger	6529		
Natural Resources			
Mr. McLean	6529		

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Committees of the House

Health

Mr. McKinnon 6535

Canadian Armed Forces Members Day Act

Mr. MacGregor 6535

Bill C-292. Introduction and first reading 6535

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) 6535

Petitions

Forestry Industry

Mr. Manly 6536

Human Organ Trafficking

Mr. Genuis 6536

Human Rights

Mr. Genuis 6536

Ethiopia

Mr. Genuis 6536

Humane Treatment of Wildlife

Mr. Webber 6536

Questions on the Order Paper

Ms. Vandenbeld 6536

Privilege

Alleged Misleading Comments by the Prime Minister

Mr. Fortin 6536

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act

Bill C-12. Second reading 6537

Ms. Pauzé 6537

Ms. Gladu 6539

Mr. MacGregor 6539

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 6539

Mr. Duguid 6540

Mr. Champoux 6541

Mr. MacGregor 6541

Ms. Gladu 6541

Ms. Gladu 6541

Mr. Gerretsen 6543

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 6543

Mr. Cannings 6543

Mr. Sarai 6544

Mrs. Jansen 6545

Ms. Gaudreau 6545

Mr. Cannings 6545

Mr. MacGregor 6546

Mrs. Jansen 6547

Mr. Gerretsen 6547

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 6547

Mr. Gerretsen 6548

Ms. Alleslev 6549

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 6549

Mr. Julian 6549

Mr. Cooper 6550

Ms. Gaudreau 6551

Mr. Davies 6551

Mrs. Jansen 6551

Mr. Manly 6551

Mr. Gerretsen 6553

Ms. Gaudreau 6553

Mr. Cannings 6554

Mr. Guilbeault 6554

Ms. Gaudreau 6555

Mr. Masse 6556

Mr. Melillo 6556

Mr. Gerretsen 6558

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 6558

Mr. MacGregor 6559

Division on motion deferred 6559

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Committees of the House

Finance

Motion for concurrence 6559

Mr. Lamoureux 6559

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 6561

Mr. Kmiec 6561

Mr. MacGregor 6562

Mr. Gerretsen 6562

Mr. Champoux 6562

Mr. Savard-Tremblay 6563

Mr. Kmiec 6565

Mr. MacGregor 6565

Ms. Gaudreau 6566

Mr. Champoux 6566

Mr. Julian 6566

Mr. Gerretsen 6569

Ms. Gaudreau 6569

Mr. Kurek 6569

Mr. MacGregor 6570

Mr. Gerretsen 6570

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 6572

Mr. Baldinelli 6573

Ms. Sahota (Brampton North) 6573

Ms. Gaudreau 6573

Mr. Kurek 6574

Ms. Sahota (Brampton North) 6575

Mr. Gerretsen 6575

Mr. Doherty 6576

Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River) 6577

Mr. Johns 6577

Mr. Lamoureux 6578

Mr. Kmiec 6578

Motion agreed to 6581

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Ethics

Mr. Barrett..... 6581

Mr. Lamoureux..... 6581

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