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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 7, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1000)
[English]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

The House resumed from March 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-19, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (COVID-19 response), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up debate on the motion, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton had six minutes remaining in her time for comments. There will be time for questions and comments after that.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here and to recap the brilliant first 13 minutes of my speech in the last six minutes that I have.

First of all, with respect to an election in a pandemic, the most important point is that Canadians do not want an election in a pandemic. The most recent Ipsos poll on April 21 said that Canadians, in the majority, thought that it would be unsafe and unfair. It is important to take their views into account.

The Prime Minister clearly wants an election, and this is why the Liberals are spending so much effort ramming these bills through, and talking about the stalling and the delaying. At the end of the day, we want to put the health and safety of Canadians over that partisan interest.

Ontario is in lockdown, and some of the other provinces are similarly struggling with COVID-19. We have hotel quarantines. It is not safe to fly. Certainly with all of those messages out there, it would be hypocritical to try to hold an election in a pandemic.

In terms of the bill and the changes that are proposed, let me just give a little tour through the things I like and the things that I do not like. We have a tried-and-true democratic process in Canada. Canadians have had confidence in this process. I think we should minimize the changes that are proposed. If we need to do something to

protect the health and safety of voters and workers, those are good changes. If the change does not support that, I am not sure we want to tamper with a process we all have confidence in.

The three-day election period is a very good idea. This would give more time for people to get to the polls and allow for COVID spacing protocols.

I like the idea of the ballot boxes for mail-in ballots at the polling stations. This was tried in the B.C. election and was very well received. With the expectation that there would be huge numbers of mail-in ballots, this would help address the capacity. If people leave it late, and they are worried that Canada Post would not deliver their ballot on time, they could drop it off at the polling station.

I like the electronic request for mail-in ballots; that is a great, progressive thing. As I understand it, the methodology is going to be that if people request a mail-in ballot, they would then not be eligible to show up and vote at the polling station. They would be taken off the polling station lists. That is a good way to prevent double voting. That is not specifically in the legislation and is something that should be detailed. That is the right protocol. I have spoken to many returning officers, and they have already been trained on these changes and that is their current understanding.

There are things I do not like in this bill. There are additional powers for the Chief Electoral Officer to make changes. I do not take issue with some of the specific ones that are cited. However, there is an overarching sense that he could basically do whatever he wants for health and safety; that is a bit broad. I would like to see some oversight from each of the parties that are participating in the election. That would be a great way to make sure that changes that are warranted are approved by the oversight, and that would keep us on track.

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I have difficulty with counting ballots after election day. We have always counted everything right up to election day. I think people have confidence in that. We do not want to do anything to open the door to even perceived influence in our elections. The interesting thing is that in the bill, it says it would only be done if the Monday of the election was a holiday. However, that is not the understanding of the many returning officers I have spoken to. They think they will count them if they show up by Tuesday. That is a clarification that needs to be made, both in the legislation and in the training.

The other thing, obviously, is to correct the English-French discrepancy. In the French it said that the ballots were going to be counted in the national capital, and in the English it said it would be done at the local returning office. My understanding is it is going to be done at the local returning office. I think that is the right place for it in order for them to be sure they have controlled who is requesting a mail-in ballot. They are sending out the kits, and they will then know who is not eligible to vote at the polling station. That is the way to go.

What is missing in the bill? There is a sunset clause in the preamble, but it did not make it into the bill. The government says these are temporary measures. How temporary? There is no description of what we are going to do about scrutineers and making sure that scrutineers are able to observe the process, especially with the COVID distancing.

• (1005)

The returning officers have been asked to prioritize vaccinations for the elderly or election workers. That is something that should be considered. It does not necessarily have to go in the bill.

A recommendation to change the hours of voting on Sunday will really limit the number of locations. We want those polling locations to have a lot of space so that they can do the COVID protocols, but if they start at 9 a.m. on Sunday, many churches will not participate. Putting that timing from 2 p.m. until 9 p.m. might allow more location flexibility.

There was a proposal for electronic voters lists so that at every polling station, somewhat like they do provincially, we would be able to see who is off the list. That would be good. What to do if what happened in Newfoundland occurs here? We definitely need to see that contingency plan and I did not see that in the bill.

It looks like that is the end of my whirlwind tour.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the Conservatives are engaged in making it easier and safer to vote as we go through uncharted territory. I am very concerned about the idea of political parties having direct oversight minute by minute during an election, although it begins to explain why the Conservative were so nervous when the Reform Party was created.

I keep hearing Atlanta Republicans talking every time Conservatives start talking about the election. On that point, the member opposite raised the concern that we would have an election right now. Could she explain why her party is so worried about having an election right now? Conservatives have yet to vote confidence in the government in one single opportunity. In fact, they are the ones

triggering the election every time they vote no in a confidence motion. I do not mind the debate disagreeing with the Liberals, that is their job, but if they are afraid of an election, I would think they would not vote to have one every time they put their hand up in the House of Commons.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify that we are not at all afraid of having an election, in fact, we look forward to the opportunity to get a strong Conservative majority in this country. However, Canadians need to be listened to and they have been clear that they do not want an election. The government tabled this bill in the House before the committee was even finished consideration of this, so it is clear Liberals are in a hurry and we all know why.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton for her speech. I would like to know what she thinks about election day.

One of the recommendations that was made was to extend the polling period to three days, by holding the election not just on Monday but on the previous Saturday and Sunday as well. That would make it easier to find people to work at the polls, particularly young people, who would not be in school. It would also make it easier to access more potential polling locations. In order to facilitate social distancing, we might need more polling stations.

Would it have been useful to incorporate that recommendation into the bill?

• (1010)

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

I think it is a good idea to have more polling stations. Since churches hold services on Sunday mornings, we might have to add some morning time slots, around 9 a.m., or afternoon time slots, around 2 p.m. Those are all things we need to think about in order to have a lot of choices regarding polling locations.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, indigenous communities face historical and structural barriers to voting. The pandemic has aggravated these challenges and obviously poses new ones. Does my colleague believe that Elections Canada should conduct special consultations with indigenous communities to ensure that voting is safe and accessible for them?

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Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, indeed, I sat on the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and listened to testimony from some of our indigenous folks who did raise these concerns and do need to be consulted. That would be a great idea. We know that especially rural and remote places and places where we have had extreme outbreaks have specific concerns and those concerns need to be heard and addressed so that they have the ability to vote.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-19 is giving the Chief Electoral Officer full rein to make any changes to the way the election is conducted as he sees fit to support the health and safety of Canadian voters.

Would the Chief Electoral Officer be able to incorporate the changes that do not pass in the House of Commons that we do not like, if he has full reins? What other types of things can he make decisions on, given there would be no oversight?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I share the member's concern. Because it is not defined what exactly the electoral officer could do, for health and safety reasons, theoretically they could have the power to do anything at all. That is not good because, definitely as has been pointed out, there are some changes that would need oversight, so I would like to see something happen on that.

The other thing that would be difficult is that if they changed polling stations at the last minute and there was not enough communication, people could be confused about where to go to vote. It is important to make sure that does not happen.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Sarnia—Lambton for really great insight into where she sees absences in the bill. I note, as she does, that most Canadians do not want an election in a pandemic, and that was the recommendation as well from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, PROC.

Elections Canada has focused on what it is like on voting day, but I do not think it has paid adequate attention to what it is like in a campaign, particularly for candidates collecting their 100 signatures on their nomination papers, which, we all know, have to be very carefully vetted. My colleague, the leader of the Green Party of Saskatchewan, had a terrible time with her volunteers and how to collect what are basically paper forms when they are keeping six-foot distances and are masked. Has my hon. colleague given any attention to that part of the elections process?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, that was one of the things that was written down on my paper that I did not quite get to. This is very important.

The signatures are supposed to indicate that there are enough people in the riding who want the person to present themselves as a candidate. That could be done electronically. Certainly these are the kinds of progressive moves that we would like to see to move into a digital age. I look forward to seeing that addressed, as well, when we take this to committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member had made reference to voting past Mondays. I just want to make

sure that we are clear. From the government's perspective, ballots would only be counted on Tuesdays if it is after a long weekend.

• (1015)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the clarification that is needed. However, my worry is that in discussion with several returning officers, who had already been trained on this legislation even before it had been discussed in the House or amended at committee, they are under the impression that they will be able to count any ballots that come in on Tuesday. Therefore, that retraining or clarification needs to go to them as well.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think that we all recognize the importance of scrutineers and, like the member mentioned, there is nothing in this about scrutineers. What would the member's suggestions be on how we should perhaps amend it, or what we should be doing to ensure that we have those additional volunteers available?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, certainly when it comes to scrutineering and we think about trying to keep six feet of distance, one of the difficulties would be to be able to see the ballot. Are we going to have to do something in terms of hooking up cameras on the process and having viewing screens? That is one possible solution. If they are going to have multiple scrutineers in the same spot, that makes it even more complicated. I do not have all the answers, but it is definitely something that is worth thinking about, because we want to make sure that people continue to have confidence in our tried-and-true democratic process.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that student federations have fought hard to have polling stations on campus, and this has increased voter turnout of students by 10% since 2010. Does the member support maintaining polling stations at campuses to provide students with safe and accessible voting?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, having those polling stations at colleges and universities improved student turnout. However, I was a bit alarmed when I talked to my own returning officer and heard that they had taken a decision that they were not going to do that in this election. I wonder whether that is common across the country or is just specific to my riding. That is an excellent question.

[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her presentation.

I did not hear her speak about voting in seniors' residences. I would like her to comment on that.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

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The committee heard witnesses speak on long-term care homes. They indicated they would like a shorter voting period, which Bill C-19 does not provide for. I therefore believe that we should make an amendment to provide for as short a voting period as possible in long-term care homes.

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to congratulate the members in this last round for having kept strictly to their speaking time.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-19, the government's legislation designed to make changes to the Canada Elections Act in the case of a potential pandemic election.

Over the past year, Canadians have changed much about what they are doing every day. They have changed how they do grocery shopping, how they do their work and how they socially interact with one another. In the same way, we have to start thinking about how we might change how we hold federal elections to reflect the realities of the pandemic. This is especially important in a minority Parliament, where things are not quite as stable as a majority and elections are a little more frequent.

Before I get into the government's legislation, it is important to note right off the bat that the government should not unnecessarily jeopardize the health of Canadians through an election. This pandemic continues to put a strain on all Canadians, and the last thing they need is the government putting their health on the line because the Liberals think it is good for them politically. Canadians are doing their best to keep their families safe and healthy, despite the challenges of COVID-19. Unfortunately, the government has already, on multiple occasions, threatened to send Canadians to the polls, risking their health and safety, instead of answering questions about the failed elements of its pandemic response or its ethical scandals. I was happy that, when this was discussed at the procedure and House affairs committee, the Liberal members actually agreed with this and included it in our final report.

Sadly, it seems as though the Liberal members of that committee do not hold much sway with the PMO. I only say this because, even though the government knew that PROC was working on a report that would help inform its legislation, the minister bypassed all the work of the committee and introduced Bill C-19 without taking any of the expert testimony into account. Some members of the procedure and House affairs committee are now talking about a prestudy of Bill C-19 that would rehash a lot of the same ground covered in the initial study. This suggestion could only make sense because all of the evidence was ignored the first time around.

However, with that discussion out of the way, I am happy to get into the meat of Bill C-19 and discuss the positives and negatives of it. I always try to look at things fairly, and I can honestly say that in my time as an MP I have not shied away from saying there are things in a bill that are not okay. Even if I do not like the whole thing, I like to try to find good in legislation from all sides. Members could even see that last night with the budget, and there are some good things here in Bill C-19.

For example, I am happy to see the inclusion of multiple voting days, which would be called a “polling period”. Having more than one voting day would help ensure that Canadians can come out to vote in as normal a fashion as possible, while still spacing out timing and physical distancing. Another flexible option we know already exists in Canada is the opportunity for mail-in ballots. However, in previous elections this method has not been used to the extent that we expect would happen in a pandemic election. The Chief Electoral Officer has said that we could see five million mail-in ballots if the government calls a pandemic election. We need to make sure we are prepared to receive and process these. We have spoken to Canada Post and it has assured us it is ready; we need to make sure we are ready as well.

The Chief Electoral Officer is responsible for making sure Canadians know that mail-in ballots are an option. However, Bill C-19 would offer a helpful way for Canadians to be able to apply for their mail-in ballot online. To be clear, Canadians would not be able to vote online, only to apply for their hard-copy mail-in ballot. As I am sure Canadians agree, a pandemic is certainly not the time to consider massive new sweeping changes to the electoral system, such as online voting. However, allowing Canadians to apply online for their special ballot would be a positive change to help enhance flexibility.

Another positive addition of Bill C-19 would be the installation of reception boxes—

● (1020)

The Deputy Speaker: I will interrupt the hon. member for a moment.

I see the hon. member for Niagara Falls on a point of order.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I apologize for the interruption, but I believe my colleague was going to indicate that she would be splitting her time with the member for Calgary Skyview.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary Skyview.

As I was saying, the boxes that would be at these stations would help folks like our seniors who may not feel safe going inside a polling station on election day but may be okay to go for a quick drive to drop off their ballot. This would also be a great thing for people who, like me, have last-minute things. If the ballot has not been mailed, they could still ensure that it gets counted in the election by just dropping it in that box.

The Chief Electoral Officer is working hard to make sure that Canadians remain safe in an election. However, I have some concerns about the suggested expansion of his powers in Bill C-19. While some of these suggestions are definitely reasonable, some of the more major shifts lack robust accountability. Unfortunately, some of the mechanisms in Bill C-19 would give the Chief Electoral Officer too much latitude to make significant changes without being accountable to Parliament.

Of course, during an election, Parliament is dissolved, so how can we make sure the Chief Electoral Officer remains accountable? At committee, we made the suggestion that the CEO should take certain actions only with the agreement of the Advisory Committee of Political Parties, which is struck under the Canada Elections Act. This is certainly not a perfect solution, and I would be happy to hear other solutions. There are definitely other ways in which the CEO could be more accountable instead of making certain decisions unilaterally, and this is just one.

Although I think very highly of Mr. Perrault and I trust that he will do his best in a very difficult situation, I am also sure that he shares my desire to ensure that there is absolutely no doubt when it comes to election results. In fact, there are a few parts of Bill C-19 that I feel would unnecessarily cause stress for Canadians regarding the outcome of an election.

The aspect of Bill C-19 that I have the most concern with is the willingness of the government to accept mail-in ballots after the polling stations are closed. This delay opens up a window of time when Canadians could feel uncertain of the results as mail-in ballots are counted. As we have seen in other elections around the world and even at home, confusion around election results is almost never helpful. These kinds of delays would cause Canadians anxiety and stress, and they would bring a sense of frustration around our democratic process.

We know that our election processes and procedures can never be absolutely perfect, but Canada's system is extremely reliable. However, we must do everything we can to ensure that Canadians have faith that the system is working well. If we introduce new delays that disrupt the system, I fear that it would create unnecessary frustration instead of promoting faith in our institutions. In my opinion, it would be better to ensure that all ballots are received and counted on the final day of polling. That way, Canadians can have an election night that feels normal, for the most part, one where the results are announced right away and Canadians can process that information, instead of waiting around for votes to be counted over a number of days.

Some of my colleagues will certainly say that allowing an extra day for mail-in ballots to be counted is necessary to make sure that we capture as many as possible. I agree with this idea in principle. However, we know that, unfortunately, there will always be late ballots, no matter how late we push the deadline, just like in a normal election there are always people who arrive at the polling station just a little too late. I have faith that the vast majority of Canadians are capable of completing their ballots and submitting them on time, to be counted by the end of the last polling day.

I also have a lot of questions for the government about how it created its plan for long-term care homes, and hopefully we will

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have more discussion on this. Bill C-19 would allow polling stations to be opened in long-term care homes 13 days prior to polling days, and these polling stations would be allowed to be open for a total of 12 hours in that 13-day period. This seems a bit of a strange solution to me.

Instead of expanding the level of access that Elections Canada workers have to long-term care homes, I believe that it is more important to make sure that Elections Canada workers are vaccinated and tested for COVID-19 and are actively limiting any potential transmission to long-term care residents. This likely means having fewer Elections Canada workers entering these homes. The government needs to make sure that these workers pose as small a risk as possible to our long-term care residents. To that end, the government must consult with long-term care experts to do right by our seniors at this time.

I will conclude, as I often do, by using the concrete example of my parents. My mom and dad are young at heart, especially my dad, but like many elderly Canadians, they need to take steps to make sure they stay healthy these days. I am happy that Bill C-19 offers people like my parents flexibility around voting through multiple voting days, mail-in options and other flexibilities.

● (1025)

In these uncertain times, it is more important than ever that people like mom and dad have clarity around these measures and have the confidence that they will be safe if they go to vote. It is our job as parliamentarians to make sure that Canadians can feel safe voting and that their vote counts. Some of the changes of Bill C-19 help that goal, and others hurt that goal. I hope we can really look into this bill at committee to make sure we can get it right. I look forward to this important work.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting to hear the Conservatives talk about this government bringing on an election. We are in a minority Parliament right now. The government does not control the agenda. As a matter of fact, the Conservatives have routinely been voting against confidence motions when it comes to the budget and other items. They are the ones who are dangling an election over Canadians' heads right now.

The member is on the PROC committee, and I was on that committee with her for quite a while. That is great. She knows the value of digging into the details of this at PROC and looking for solutions when talking to various stakeholders. Does she think that we are going to be able to get this to the PROC committee any time soon? Is she looking forward to a vote on this? Can she guess when that will be?

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• (1030)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, it is really interesting because our critic just had her first opportunity to speak on this bill this morning. As a member of the PROC committee, I am just getting my turn as well. Let us not tell people out there that we are working on this bill when this is the first time we have gotten to speak on it. Let us change the direction there.

Let us go back to the fall of 2020. I am sorry, but twice the government put forward opportunities for votes of confidence. People like me are being asked to vote against something that I clearly cannot support, such as supporting an overwhelming \$1.4-trillion debt to Canadians, to my family members and to my grandchildren. I cannot pass that legislation, so maybe, in turn, the government can put forward something that is worthy and perhaps work with all parties to ensure that we have good, healthy legislation that is good for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. She always has a positive attitude and a smile on her face.

I would like her thoughts on this. At present, the Canada Elections Act prohibits the transmission of surveys or any form of advertising on polling day. Given that this bill proposes a three-day polling period, does my colleague agree with our interpretation that the Canada Elections Act will have to be amended to reflect that?

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting with the three days of polling. I wonder if that is turning into the advertising. I am not sure which way the member is going on this, if this is the three days of polling when we close down advertising to ensure that people would not be advertising on election day. We know that fines were put out, just yesterday, even to the parliamentary secretary, who deals with Elections Canada. I am not sure if that is what the member is referring to, closing down advertising at the polling.

I am not sure specifically, but I think we should ensure that we are always going by Elections Canada's acts and rules, and if advertising is not allowed during that period of voting, we should not be going there.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the issues in my riding when it comes to elections is the mobile polls. This is particularly important for seniors and people with disabilities, who are less able to move around. Especially in the face of a pandemic, this becomes even more critical. I know that there could be reliance on the mail-in ballot, but for some that could be difficult as well. Language could become a barrier for them.

From that perspective, I wonder if the member has any comments about mobile polls. Should we strive to ensure that mobile polls are available for seniors and people with disabilities?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, these are the types of discussions that we must have. Even in my riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London, we have the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital and we have the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. There are a variety of places that need to have mobile polls. Although seniors homes are mobile polls, somewhat, we need to look into how we can ensure

that we get as many people voting as possible. That is what is really important, so we need to ensure that we have the safety. I believe it is important that if we are looking at mobile polls, the safety and security of our voters, as well as the people who will be working at those polling stations, are always taken into account.

I will make sure that is a question I ask at committee.

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the government's proposed legislation, Bill C-19, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act, the COVID-19 response.

I am disappointed that the government is so out of touch with Canadians that it wants to amend the Canada Elections Act so it can call an election during a pandemic. Canadians do not want an election, especially during this vicious third wave of the pandemic. While the members opposite claimed to also not want one, it was the Liberals who introduced this legislation in the middle of a pandemic.

Just the other day the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs was blaming the Conservatives for blocking the bill. However, as my colleague, the opposition House Leader, rightly pointed out, the Liberal government only has itself to blame for the slow pace of the bill.

The government sets the agenda, and it has only allowed the bill to be debated for three hours since its initial introduction almost five months ago. Now there seems to be a sense of great urgency by the Liberal government. While Canadians are suffering from the current COVID lockdowns and still being unable to return to work, the Liberal government is trying to push this legislation through, resulting in many Canadians wondering if the government cares more about its political fortunes rather than working for Canadians, prioritizing getting Canadians back to work and rebuilding our economy.

The mere idea that the government, a government that states it will be driven by science and facts to make decisions, wants to push this legislation through so quickly means it is completely ignoring the facts. Not only do Canadians not want an election, but in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador, where general elections were held, they saw a spike in the number of COVID-19 cases, particularly in Newfoundland and Labrador, where just days before the election, a whole section of the province saw such a spike in cases that the Chief Electoral Officer had to pause the election until the outbreak got under control. People's lives are more important than an election.

While the Liberal government's intention to ram this bill through Parliament are definitely questionable at best, the Conservatives have many concerns with the bill. For starters, it has not escaped us that this is a minority Parliament. We all know that minority parliaments are very volatile and do not necessarily last the full four years. This is why, at the beginning of this pandemic, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs conducted a study on how Elections Canada could safely conduct an election during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Something as fundamental as how Canadians elect their members of Parliament must have participation from all members of the House, which is exactly what PROC was doing. However, the government decided that it did not want to wait for the all-party committee report. Instead, it decided to completely ignore any potential recommendations from the committee, including the committee's majority report recommendations that the government not call a federal election during the pandemic unless it was defeated on a motion of non-confidence. Instead, the Liberal government expressed its contempt for Parliament and tabled this bill. Complaining that it has not moved fast enough has clearly indicated to Canadians its desire to recklessly send Canadians to the polls at whatever time it deems to be the most advantageous for the Prime Minister.

Just the other day, members opposite were accusing the Conservatives of not having a consistent message throughout this pandemic, however, we have been consistent. We have consistently said no to an election during this pandemic. It has been the members opposite who have been inconsistent in their messaging in their refusal to commit to not calling an election during this pandemic unless defeated in a non-confidence motion.

I was quite pleased with my colleagues on PROC for their hard work in standing up for Canadians and ensuring that if an election were to be called, they made some great recommendations on how to safely conduct a general election.

• (1035)

Some of the recommendations we made included: that Elections Canada develop a task force responsible for extensively consulting with long-term care homes to determine a safe and mutually agreeable way to conduct a vote in long-term care homes; that these consultations include both national and regional stakeholders and that these consultations include consideration of how rapid testing of Elections Canada employees may increase the safety of residents of long-term care homes; that the government commit to making rapid tests available to Elections Canada for the purpose of conducting an election during the COVID-19 pandemic; that Elections Canada provide a list of expected situations where it would require an expansion to the Chief Electoral Officer's adaptation power as well as a list of actions that would remain prohibited under the expanded adaptation power and that these lists be tabled before Parliament for review and approval; that any unanticipated adaptations require the approval of the advisory committee of political parties struck under section 21.1 (1) of the Canada Elections Act; that Elections Canada ensure all voting locations are accessible for those living with disabilities and that alternative methods of voting such as mail-in ballots are adequately accessible for all voters who do not wish to leave their homes; that Elections Canada stick with the tried and

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true mail-in ballot process, which sets a deadline for ballots to be mailed and does not count any after election day; that Elections Canada outline a plan to reconcile the number of special ballots received during the course of the election with the number of special ballots distributed and that up-to-date information on who has received mail-in ballots be made available to candidates and registered political parties throughout the election; and that the federal government commit to not calling a federal election during the pandemic unless it is defeated on a motion of non-confidence and that the government ensure the majority of Canadians at an elevated risk from the pandemic will have received the vaccine prior to calling an election.

All these recommendations are designed to protect Canadians and to put them first. It is disappointing to see a Canadian government more interested in getting itself re-elected and using a health crisis, a pandemic, as cover instead of pouring all its resources into getting Canadians back to normal.

I want my constituents to know that under a Conservative government we would be focused on securing mass shipments of vaccines to get Canadians vaccinated, but we would also be focused on getting Canadians back to work and securing stable, well-paying jobs and ensuring we start actually addressing mental health.

Under a Conservative government, we would take immediate action to help the hardest hit sectors, including helping women and young Canadians who have suffered the most. We would assist small businesses and provide incentives to invest in, build and start new businesses.

We would also focus on mental health. COVID-19 has certainly highlighted the shortcomings in our health care sector when it comes to mental health. We would increase the funding to the provinces for mental health care and provide incentives to employers to provide mental health coverage to employees as well as create a nationwide three-digit suicide prevention hotline.

While the Liberals continue to look toward advancing their own agenda and padding the pockets of their friends, Canadians can take solace in that Canada's Conservatives will have their backs and stand up for them, their pocketbooks, their health and their jobs.

• (1040)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for raising the issue of mental health, which is a critical issue, but she referenced the danger of holding elections, cited some provincial elections and identified Newfoundland and Labrador as a particular case study.

Government Orders

Is the member aware that the number of active COVID cases registered yesterday in Newfoundland and Labrador was six? In two provinces, say Alberta and Ontario, Alberta had 2,211 cases without an election, which have been going up, and in Ontario it was 3,424 cases, which have also been going up. Perhaps holding an election might actually change those results in those two provinces if Newfoundland and Labrador is the case study she wishes to look at.

That is a party that changed election law in its last term of government, had an MP convicted of cheating and lost at the Supreme Court. That is a party that, quite frankly, used Pierreoutine, a bigoted name, to cheat in London. It is outlandish.

The Republicans in Florida could take lessons from you lot. I mean, pick a lane, are you Giuliani or are you Trump, because you sound like both of them?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary is getting a little too carried away with the “you” references. I would remind him to direct his comments to the Chair in that respect.

The hon. member for Calgary Skyview.

• (1045)

Ms. Jag Sahota: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if there was a question or if it was more of an attack on myself—

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Giuliani or Trump? Pick a lane.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Are you going to speak or are you going to let me speak?

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. For debate in the House, we only have one member recognized at the time. I will remind hon. members to not activate their microphones to speak over top of a member who has been recognized.

We will go back to the hon. member for Calgary Skyview for the rest of her response. I ask all other hon. members to let her finish her remarks.

The hon. member for Calgary Skyview.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that the member opposite suggested that holding an election would reduce the numbers. He seems to be suggesting that holding an election did not cause the spread or contribute to those numbers.

Less than two days ago we had an emergency debate on how the numbers in Alberta were going up. The member is suggesting that by holding an election in Newfoundland and Labrador and using that as an example, the numbers could go down. I am not sure if the he had a point to make, but he seems to suggest the opposite of what the facts and science say right now.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP believes there should not be an election during a pandemic, like the other parties, but should it happen, all parties should be in agreement on the process to go forward.

The member talked about people with disabilities. Does she not agree that Elections Canada should consult with the Canadian disability organizations to come up with a list of accommodations for

people who live with disabilities so we know they are involved and will show us the best methods to use going forward?

Ms. Jag Sahota: Mr. Speaker, I agree that we should be having wide consultations and ensuring that if an election is called and we go to the polls, that all Canadians are safe. It is important to conduct consultations and it is even more important to follow those recommendations. That is where the government is lacking with respect to not following the recommendations brought forward by the PROC committee, for example, and by bringing the bill forward before that report was even tabled.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing that is of concern is the assertion on the part of the government that somehow the Conservatives are delaying this.

Could the member comment on that?

Ms. Jag Sahota: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her hard work on this bill. We have to understand the pulse of the country, and Canadians are saying there should be no election right now. I fail to understand what the urgency is to bring in this bill when the report from PROC committee has not even been tabled in Parliament. The focus needs to be on the safety of Canadians, not on calling an election just because the numbers look good for the Liberal government.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, leadership often requires making difficult decisions. A good leader makes decisions in the best interests of the people. A bad leader makes decisions in the best interests of him or herself, often to the detriment of the people.

Since the beginning of this pandemic, the government has used the phrase “unprecedented times” to justify many ludicrous actions, such as when it tried to get away with giving itself unlimited taxing and spending powers until 2022, or when it replaced Parliament with a special committee where only certain questions were permitted, or when Parliament was prorogued in order to cover up the Prime Minister's scandal: the unethical conduct he engaged in with the WE Charity Foundation. All of these actions were taken in the name of “unprecedented times”.

Canadians are watching and are catching on. They are beginning to see a pattern wherein the government is exploiting the pandemic in order to engineer scenarios that benefit it politically. This bill is another example of exactly that. While no one would suggest that we do not want to be prepared for an eventual election with a minority Parliament, we also need to be aware that the COVID-19 crisis continues to worsen. Canadians are losing their businesses. We have the highest unemployment rate in the G7 and we have a runaway deficit with zero plan for economic recovery.

Any reasonable person would understand that other priorities need to take precedence over calling an election. In fact, every single party has said it does not want an election, speaking on behalf of what they are hearing from Canadians. What are the Liberals thinking about? They are thinking about sending Canadians to the polls in the middle of a pandemic.

We have learned from the Prime Minister that talk is cheap. He has said his government cares about protecting Canadians, but when it comes down to it, all he seems to care about is protecting his own job. Why else would this bill be rushed through the House of Commons before receiving a report that is supposed to come forward from the Procedure and House Affairs Committee? This committee conducted a study specifically on having an election during the COVID-19 pandemic. Why is there a rush? Why act so quickly? Could it be that the Prime Minister is in fact trying to time things just right so that he can go to the polls when it is most politically advantageous for him to do so? Again, a good leader would govern in the interests of the people.

Many components of this bill are cause for serious concern. They grant the Chief Electoral Officer unprecedented powers to extend the vote time, to allow mail-in ballots to be counted past the deadline, to determine what is satisfactory proof of identity and residence and to accelerate the timeline for these changes to go into effect. I do not believe I need to inform the House of what happens when a large portion of the public questions the validity of election results. Let us just say that chaos ensues.

For democracy to work, it is imperative that the public have confidence in the electoral process. Given that there are so many uncertainties at this time, the government should ensure that the rules are definitive and clear. Instead, we see the opposite in this legislation. This bill gives significant discretionary powers to the Chief Electoral Officer and creates a ton of uncertainty for voters.

While I can appreciate that adjustments need to be made to accommodate safety precautions and various health measures, I believe we should come with concrete rules, not arbitrary guidelines that can be modified on the whim of an individual. This is a recipe for disaster.

What is needed? Any additional powers given to the Chief Electoral Officer should be subject to approval by each party represented in the House of Commons. After election day, no mail-in ballots should be counted. Straying from this norm could create an opportunity for all sorts of problems, and we see this in other countries. Perhaps most importantly, this bill, which will amend the Canada Elections Act in response to COVID-19, must have a sunset clause. We have seen the Liberals attempt to entrench pandemic policies post-pandemic. That cannot be the case with the amendments being made to this legislation. This bill must stop being in effect after the pandemic has subsided. It is so important that this bill have a sunset clause.

• (1050)

Another change to the Canada Elections Act the Liberals are proposing with this piece of legislation is to allow polling stations at long-term care homes to commence 13 days before the end of the election. This one makes zero sense. Sadly, the pandemic has illuminated very tragic realities in senior care homes across this country. Based on the statistics, the elderly are most vulnerable when it comes to suffering from COVID-19 and the loss of life. Instead of minimizing potential exposure, the government now thinks it would be a good idea to have polling stations open even longer, therefore maximizing the opportunity for exposure to COVID-19.

Government Orders

In what world does that make sense? There is zero evidence for this change to the act. It is putting our most vulnerable at risk, and it must not go through. It is ludicrous. It is silly. It is incomprehensible. Clearly the Liberals are in a hurry to hold an election in the middle of a pandemic, and they are putting their partisan interests above the health and well-being of people, the elderly and those with disabilities in particular.

Canadians do not want an election in the middle of a pandemic. We saw the spikes in COVID cases after the B.C. election and the Saskatchewan election. Just imagine what that would look like on a federal level. By not considering the testimony of the health officials appearing during the committee study, the Prime Minister has wasted the valuable time of public health officials and the valuable advice they have offered.

The Liberals have continued to scheme to push through this legislation as quickly as possible, when they should have been prioritizing Canadians and our economic recovery as well as our health. There are legitimate concerns about this new legislation's effect on the safety of seniors, those in long-term care and those with disabilities. I dare say there are concerns for all Canadians.

Canadians deserve clarity around their electoral process and any changes to it, especially if they are forced to go to the polls in the potentially high-risk environment of a worsening pandemic. This bill brings uncertainty and puts vulnerable Canadians at risk at a time when so many Canadians are just trying to keep their heads above water.

It would be nice to see the leader of this country divert some attention from himself and his political career toward the Canadian public and what is in their best interests. The pandemic has exposed the true colours of the Liberal government and where its focus lies. The crafting of this legislation, and the speed at which it is being pushed forward, are prime examples. It is undeniable that this bill was unilaterally constructed on behalf of the Liberals and for the benefit of the Liberal Party of Canada, not the Canadian people.

Our focus as parliamentarians should be on Canadians: on their health, safety, welfare and future. We need to see an economic recovery plan, not a Liberal election plan, as was provided in the 2021 budget. Democracy in Canada has taken some significant hits from the government currently in power. It would be my hope that for the remainder of the House, those on the side of opposition would band together and take a stand on behalf of the Canadian people, insisting on good legislation as we move forward.

It would be my hope, then, that we do not continue the trend of a declining democracy and that we vote against this legislation as it stands today.

Statements by Members

● (1055)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Lethbridge will have 11 minutes remaining in her time when the House next gets back to debate on the motion.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS*[English]***SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH TRIBUTE**

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 8, Sir David Attenborough celebrates 95 years on the blue planet, and I take the floor to wish him a very happy birthday.

David Attenborough has been a household name for decades for so many of us, and he continues to deliver nature's stories into living rooms, schools, hearts and minds around the world. His call for greater urgency in the fight against climate change and in the effort to restore biodiversity is one of the most relevant and important appeals today.

Sir David's work is so impactful that the collective response to the devastation caused by plastic pollution is known as the "Attenborough Effect". He believes that we are one single, human civilization and that the greatest threats we face should unite us rather than divide us.

I ask all members of Canada's House of Commons to join me in wishing Sir David Attenborough a very happy birthday, and in thanking him for a lifetime of dedication to the planet.

* * *

ALAN CHANT

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon recently lost a stalwart of the Conservative movement. As a long-time EDA board member and staff member, Al Chant was a dedicated and caring person who loved helping others. Whether to a constituent, a party member or even an MP, Al was not afraid to speak up, and he always said what was on his mind. I am sure even Prime Minister Harper got an earful or two from Al.

Honesty and truth in our beliefs are characteristics that separate Conservatives from the Liberals, and Al Chant was as separate from a Liberal as one could find. Al was a loyal staff member to former MPs Brad Trost and Maurice Vellacott. Al loved helping people through the MP office. He also served for many years on the Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar EDA board and on my Saskatoon West EDA board.

After he retired, Al became an avid fisherman, casting his line in the water and chatting with everyone who walked by.

To Al's wife Elizabeth, I offer my heartfelt condolences and sincere thanks for sharing Al with us for all these years.

May Al be at peace, and God bless him.

● (1100)

DEANNE TAYLOR

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Deanne Taylor, a loving partner in life and in art to Michael Hollingsworth, and one of the Hummer Sisters, has passed away.

Playwright, actress, singer, designer, multimedia wizard, journalist and director, Deanne Taylor was one of the most important artists ever to grace our beautiful city. Celebrated as the co-creator of *The Village of The Small Huts*, last mounted at the Stratford Festival and perhaps her most important work, Taylor and Hollingsworth created a gloriously, wickedly funny, smart series of plays that lampooned, revealed and explored Canada's history.

She also ran for mayor as part of a trio of feminists: the Hummer Sisters. They finished second to Art Eggleton in a campaign played out as *Art Vs. Art*.

Deanne lived her life in a studio atop Cameron House on Queen Street West in Toronto. She dispensed sage political advice and wrote speeches for many a candidate, including the MP who is speaking right now.

The queen of Queen Street's reign has ended. Long live the queen. Bless Deanne. Bless her.

* * *

19 WING COMOX COMMANDER

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, our wing commander, Colonel Poitras, moved on with his family to his next post. I attended the virtual event, but want to thank him for his service and wish him and his family all the best.

I also want to welcome the new wing commander, Colonel Elliott. I look forward to meeting and working with you. I know that you and your family will thrive in our region.

I also want to acknowledge a previous wing commander and a cornerstone in our riding, Mr. James Edwards, also known as "Stocky". When Stocky finished high school, he passed on an opportunity with the Chicago Blackhawks to enlist with the Royal Canadian Air Force, and all Canadians are glad he made that choice. He received his wings in 1941 and went on to make his family very proud with his service. On D-Day, a day after turning 23, he flew a Spitfire over the beaches of Normandy.

Statements by Members

Stocky's career in the military showcases the deep respect and love he has for his country. With his 100th birthday in June, I want to thank him for his service to his country and to his community.

I thank both Stocky and his wife, Toni.

* * *

[Translation]

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really want to draw everyone's attention to Mental Health Week, which is coming to a close.

We know that the pandemic has affected everyone's mental health and that our youth are among those who have been hit hardest. I know this because my community has lost several young people.

That is why it is more important than ever to make sure this message gets to the people of Outremont and everyone who needs to hear it. You are not alone. Do not hesitate to seek help, to talk about it with the people around you and to take care of yourself.

[English]

We will never say it enough: It is okay not to be okay. I have had my own ups and downs over the last year. We all have.

However, yesterday, I received my first dose of the vaccine and the light at the end of this long COVID tunnel shone brighter because I know that with each jab, with each vaccine administered in an arm, we are one step closer to this being over.

We will get through this, Canada, and we will do so together.

* * *

RCMP HERITAGE CENTRE

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 23, 2007, the RCMP Heritage Centre officially opened its doors in Regina. It brought to life the story, beginning in 1885, of the training of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Over the past 14 years, it has grown to be a premier tourist venue. However, my Conservative colleagues, board members, Chair Steve McLellan, countless volunteers and local MLAs could see the potential for growth.

Through everyone's tireless advocacy and letters of endorsement, the centre will now be turned into a Canadian RCMP national museum. With nine national museums across Canada, and only one in western Canada, this is of huge national significance for our city and province. Located in the heart of my riding of Regina—Lewvan, the new museum will serve as another piece of national pride. The timing of this designation is perfect, with the RCMP celebrating 150 years in 2023.

Let the salute begin to all those who wear the red serge. Let us commemorate and honour the work they do each and every day in the service of our country.

● (1105)

FARMERS' MARKETS IN NEWMARKET—AURORA

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to announce that summer is right around the corner. I know that because last weekend both the Newmarket Farmers Market and The Aurora Farmers Market opened for the season. Every weekend from May to October we can expect over 40 vendors to welcome us, from farmers and artisans to community groups. Every year, these markets provide our community with an opportunity to support local, eat fresh and catch up with friends and neighbours.

While we continue to fight this virus, I am proud of how both markets have adapted and implemented local public health guidelines to keep us all safe. I look forward to visiting both markets over the next few months and catching up with constituents, while masked and physically distanced, rain or shine.

* * *

JOHN MCCAIN PRIZE FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC SERVICE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as chair of the Canada-Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Group, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize the President of Taiwan. President Tsai is this year's winner of the John McCain Prize for Leadership in Public Service from the Halifax International Security Forum.

Taiwan has been a world leader in the fight against COVID-19. As the coronavirus has upended lives and economies around the world, Taiwan has been a model that other countries, including Canada, continue to learn from. Through President Tsai's leadership and hard work, Taiwan has had continued success in containing the ongoing pandemic, proving that a united population can be a force for good around the world.

I would like to congratulate President Tsai once again for the well-deserved recognition in receiving this prestigious award.

* * *

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is my last statement of this session and possibly before we go to the polls. I am grateful for the four years that the good people of Calgary Midnapore have allowed me to be their voice, so I cannot let this opportunity pass without expressing the following.

Statements by Members

Mr. Prime Minister, you have failed the people of Calgary Midnapore. You have taken away their right to make a living. You implemented Bill C-48 and Bill C-69. You delayed Trans Mountain. You did not stand up for Keystone XL and Line 5. You cancelled energy east and the northern gateway. You have called my small business owners “tax cheats” and attacked their retirements and succession plans. This was all before 2020.

You failed to protect them. You squashed their ingenuity of therapeutics, rapid tests and pilot projects. It is you who has delayed their freedom with your horrific procurement of vaccinations, delaying their lives and dreams.

You may want to forget what you have done to the people of Calgary Midnapore, but I will not let you.

* * *

[Translation]

ALAIN BAUDOT

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour today to pay tribute to Alain Baudot, who passed away this week.

Professor emeritus in the Department of French Studies at Glendon College, a faculty of York University located in Don Valley West, Alain Baudot created and ran departments, programs and a publishing house at Glendon over the years. He also tirelessly promoted the French language in Ontario. He loved French, but more than that, he enjoyed sharing his love of language and culture with his students.

A fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and a resident of Leaside, he actively celebrated International Day of La Francophonie every year in Toronto. Alain Baudot leaves a permanent legacy in the hearts of those who knew him.

I offer my deepest condolences to his colleagues at Glendon, but especially to his wife Carla and their daughters Laure and Érica.

May he rest in peace.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nearly one in two Canadians is expected to be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. That means half of our family, friends and colleagues will hear the words “you have cancer” at some point in their lives. We all know someone whose life has been changed by this disease. Our family has been negatively impacted by cancer, and we have lost far too many friends and family members to this terrible disease.

The Canadian Cancer Society's Relay for Life takes place June 12. I will once again be walking the full 24 hours. At the Relay for Life, we show those we love that life is bigger than their diagnosis, and—

• (1110)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the member for Cariboo—Prince George, but it would appear that we are having an issue with sound. Does the hon. member have a headset he can use?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, if you go to the next person, I will connect and then come back.

The Deputy Speaker: We will do that.

Let us go to the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC AT UNESCO

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 15 years ago, Quebec took a historic step that was celebrated this week by the National Assembly of Quebec, which voted to recognize the 15th anniversary of Quebec obtaining a seat at UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Led by Stephen Harper in 2006, this project was and continues to be a major victory for Quebec. That should come as no surprise, as Conservatives have always taken this approach of openness towards Quebec. It is a recognition of our history, our culture and our people.

We are a proud nation in a united Canada, and this accomplishment underscores our importance and our contributions not only in Canada, but also around the world.

I am proud to be a Quebecker, and I feel that pride in my riding of Chicoutimi—Le Fjord and throughout our beautiful province. The recognition given to Quebec 15 years ago is a historic milestone and another reminder of what makes our province and our country so great.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: We will go back to the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George, and I will ask him to just pick it up from where he left off, if he can, and we will finish his statement.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, at the Relay for Life, we show those we love that life is bigger than their diagnosis and that no matter where they live, they do not have to face cancer alone.

I relay for those we have lost. I relay for those who have fought cancer and won. I relay for those who are in the fight today. I relay for those left behind. I relay because I believe there will be a day when a cancer diagnosis is not a death sentence.

COVID-19 SUPPORT IN NEW WESTMINSTER— BURNABY

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the pandemic, as the third wave crashes on our shores, our hearts go out to the families of the more than 24,000 Canadians who have passed away. However, our hearts also go out to people making a difference in our communities.

In New Westminster and Burnaby we thank the nurses, doctors and health care workers at Royal Columbian Hospital and Burnaby Hospital. We thank the first responders: the New Westminster firefighters and Burnaby firefighters, who also organize events to help people struggling in our community; the Burnaby RCMP; the New Westminster police; and the B.C. Ambulance Service. We thank people in community organizations, like the New Westminster food bank, the Burnaby food bank, New West Helping Hands in New Westminster and Caring During Covid-19 Burnaby/New Westminster. We thank front-line workers, who are providing groceries, pharmaceutical products and essential services during the pandemic, and small business people.

We thank them all, and to thank them all, let us recommit to building back better and building a society where nobody is left behind.

* * *

[Translation]

LION ELECTRIC

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today at 4:00 p.m. sharp, the Lion Electric team will ring the closing bell on Wall Street to celebrate the listing of this jewel of our economy on the NYSE. We are going to be hearing a lot more about Lion Electric.

This great business, which manufactures zero-emission heavy vehicles, started out in Saint-Jérôme and has continued to grow. We are proud of its success and of the hundreds of high-quality jobs for the people living in the Laurentians and across Quebec, and we are proud of the company's reputation outside Canada.

Quebec is a leader in the electrification of transportation and the fight against climate change. The Bloc Québécois is and will remain a proud and reliable ally to all those who wish to help build a better and greener future focused on clean energy.

Congratulations and thank you to the entire Lion Electric team, its CEO, Marc Bédard, and its proud employees, suppliers and collaborators. Their outstanding success is a credit to the people of Rivière-du-Nord.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night the House had an emergency debate on the pending shutdown of Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline. From the tens of thousands of jobs immediately affected to the energy insecurity that could lead to dangerous fuel shortages to the stress on the already limited market availability for western crude, this is an emergency.

Oral Questions

The Liberals say a lot of the right things, but their actions show a different story, and I have observed a typical tactic that they employ when they have failed. They claim to need a team Canada approach, and to avoid questions they simply accuse the opposition of playing politics. We see through that charade. In this case, the evidence shows that they did not take it seriously, and they set a precedent with how they handled KXL. The result is that Canadians could be left in the dark.

This is not about Conservatives versus Liberals or left versus right. This is about standing up for Canadians, and the government, after six years, has shown it is not capable of that. Canadians deserve better.

* * *

• (1115)

MOTHER'S DAY

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Mother's Day is this Sunday, I want to highlight the contributions that mothers make every day. Although they often go without credit, mothers are the real heroes. A mother can take the place of all others, but nobody can take a mother's place.

I want to thank my own mother, who taught me the value of helping those in need. She is fighting a battle against cancer. Her strength inspires me. I know how much you are going through, mom. I am because of your values, resilience and strength, which only a mother could teach.

My message to all mothers is to take care of yourselves. We are often too busy taking care of our children, parents and families. We often forget about our own health, including mental health. You deserve to take care of yourselves.

Happy Mother's Day to all of you.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to Oral Questions, I want to make a brief comment.

One of today's statements by members made ample use of "you" and "your" references. This style of speech is not accepted in the House. I remind hon. members, as the Speaker has done routinely, to direct their comments and their speeches to the Chair. There is a reason for that. I ask members to oblige and follow that practice.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with Bill C-10, the fact is that the Prime Minister is taking away Canadians' freedoms. However, instead of admitting how bad the bill is and scrapping it, he would rather insult people and accuse those who oppose it of wearing tin foil hats.

Oral Questions

The Liberals' amendments to Bill C-10 do not even come close to their promise to protect free speech, and that is according to Canada's leading Internet law expert.

Why is the Prime Minister so fixated on trying to control online speech?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at committee, it was made clear that we want to focus on a few things. We want social media platforms to fairly financially contribute to our cultural industry, just like Canadian companies do, and make our Canadian artists discoverable like suggested playlists on YouTube.

We continue to stand with our artists and creators. It pains me to see the Conservatives work for the interests of foreign tech companies. I call on the Conservative Party of Canada to let the Canadian heritage committee pursue its work later today.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me let the minister know that two past commissioners of the CRTC have warned of significant problems with Bill C-10. They say that it is a threat to free speech. They say that it is actually going to suppress investment in the creative sector. It is going to stifle innovation by cultural entrepreneurs.

Free expression on the Internet is essential to Canadian free speech rights. Why do the Liberals want to control what Canadians say and hear online?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been saying this from the beginning, and confirmed it last night. Bill C-10 is about fairness, not about what we can or cannot post online. Bill C-10 does not remove anything from Canadians. What it would do is give them more opportunities to meet with their artists and creators. How are we going to do this? By making big streaming companies pay their fair share to our cultural institutions and ensure Canadian artists are discoverable on their platforms.

I invite the Conservative Party to join me in this important task and get Bill C-10 adopted. Our creators cannot afford to wait any longer.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the Liberals talk about how awful web giants are in their defence of Bill C-10. Guess who is promoting a big interview with the web giant YouTube? That is right; it is the Prime Minister. Apparently, YouTube is okay as long as it is giving the Prime Minister what he wants. We cannot help Canadians from being awfully cynical when it comes to the government.

Why does the Prime Minister think that speech should only be free if it agrees with and helps him?

• (1120)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservative Party members truly cared about freedom of speech, then it would let our democracy continue its work freely.

Again, this bill is not about what anyone can or cannot post online. Freedom of speech is not negotiable for our government. It is explicitly protected under this act and in our Charter of Rights and

Freedoms. If the member opposite actually read the bill, she would see article 2(3). We will continue to abide by these rules and we should let the committee pursue its work. If it means a charter review, then it will be done at the end of the process.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Quebec is getting impatient, and for good reason. Ottawa is dragging its feet on immigration files.

The QMI Agency reported this morning that Ottawa has a backlog of 51,446 immigration applications. This means that more than 51,000 people around the world are hoping and dreaming of living in Quebec, but Ottawa is dragging its feet.

Even though Quebec has more than 100,000 positions available, these people have to wait.

Why is Ottawa dragging its feet on applications for immigration to Quebec?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, immigration is essential to the economic recovery in Quebec and all of Canada.

This year, we welcomed more than 7,000 new skilled permanent residents in Quebec, which represents a 54% increase compared to the same period last year.

We are on track to meet the immigration targets set by Quebec, including getting caught up on the 2020 files. We will continue to work with the Government of Quebec to support its economic recovery.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some people really can make figures say anything.

Guillaume Cliche-Rivard, an immigration lawyer, stated this week to Radio-Canada, "In 2020, it was the federal government that was incapable of meeting Quebec's targets". That is the statement of an independent observer.

Chambers of commerce and business people want Ottawa to clear the backlog. We certainly do not want any conflict between Quebec and Ottawa, and we certainly do not want to fight over the numbers. We want results.

What will the government do to clear the backlog of 51,000 immigration applications from people who are ready to be welcomed to Quebec, but who are being kept waiting?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague knows very well that last year, we were in a global pandemic, but since then, we have added additional resources where they were needed the most and moved from paper-based applications to digital.

This has allowed us to admit over 7,000 skilled workers, an improvement of more than 56% compared to the same period last year. We will continue to work with our Quebec counterparts to support economic recovery in Quebec and across Canada.

* * *

PENSIONS

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, seniors are still angry about the federal government's decision to split them into two classes by increasing pensions only for seniors aged 75 and up.

The president of FADOQ, Gis le Tass -Goodman, pointed that out in an open letter this morning. She wrote that many people who are 65 have just as much trouble making ends meet as those who are 75, contrary to what the Prime Minister is claiming. She warned that this split would cause significant damage.

Will the government finally do the right thing as soon as possible and increase the pension for all seniors?

Mr. St phane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 2021 budget is great news and will make a real difference for our seniors.

We kept our promise to increase old age security for Canadians aged 75 and up. We will be giving seniors a one-time payment of \$500 in August 2021 and increasing old age security by 10% in July 2022, as we promised in our platform.

We are also creating a new age well at home initiative to fund services led by community groups that help seniors at home, and we will also invest \$3 billion to help the provinces and territories—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Shefford.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals clearly do not get it. The move to create two classes of seniors is not going over well in Quebec. All seniors need to be supported starting at age 65.

This morning, the president of FADOQ put pen to paper to stand up for all seniors in Quebec regardless of their age. In the meantime, the Liberals in Quebec also put pen to paper, but to defend their government. I was dumbfounded to read statements in our papers from the members for Brome—Missisquoi and Compton—Stanstead, defending the creation of two classes of seniors.

Why are they not standing up for seniors in the Eastern Townships and Quebec instead of defending the unfair choices of their government?

• (1125)

Mr. St phane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, seniors have different needs.

Oral Questions

They are more likely to outlive their savings, have disabilities, be unable to work, and be widowed, all while their health care costs are rising. Among seniors aged 75 and over, half have a disability, and half of those have severe disabilities. Fifty-seven percent are women, four in 10 are widowed, and 59% have incomes below \$30,000.

Our plan will help address these pressures by keeping our promise to increase old age security for Canadians aged 75 and up and to increase it by 10% in July 2022.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, to everyone's surprise, the government supported our motion requiring Netflix to also pay tax on its staggering revenues. Congratulations to the Liberals for this moment of clarity, but will they follow through?

Yesterday, together with my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby, I sent a letter to the Minister of Finance asking her to apply the digital tax to all web giants, including Netflix.

I am giving her another chance to do what is expected of her, and that is to pledge to apply the tax to all revenues of online services, including subscriptions, and to make public the 2017 secret agreement with Netflix.

Will she do it?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that there is no special exemption for Netflix or for any other digital company.

In fact, on July 1, for the first time in Canada's history, we will be imposing GST and HST on digital service providers such as Netflix. This amount is included in the budget implementation act and should result in \$1.2 billion in revenue over five years.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people still are not seeing the projects and jobs they were promised through the Canada Infrastructure Bank. Meanwhile the cost of operating the bank doubled last year. It is now costing Canadians \$50 million a year to prop up the Liberals' failed privatization experiment.

Over the past two years, the CIB spent nearly \$8 million on consultants. The bank is failing communities. Why did the minister need to pay consultants \$8 million to tell the government what Canadians already know?

Oral Questions

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the progress that the Canada Infrastructure Bank has made. We have brought in new leadership and it is making a real difference, from projects like the REM in Montreal, and I am happy to show the member, which is creating good jobs right now; to the Oneida battery project in Ontario, which is a partnership with the first nations of Grand River; to the Lake Erie connector.

We are working to get more infrastructure built, which is good for Canadians, it is good for jobs, it is good for tackling climate change and it is good for building more inclusive communities.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's failure on the vaccine front is killing Canadians and their jobs. In April, 200,000 Canadians lost their jobs and do not have any money coming in to pay the bills. Canada's unemployment rate is now the second-highest in the G7, and it is much higher than the average.

When will the Prime Minister come up with a plan to reopen the economy safely with vaccines to protect lives and jobs?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, local public health authorities have had to impose the necessary restrictions to fight the third wave, and those restrictions have had repercussions on Canadians' jobs.

That is why our budget extends the Canada emergency wage subsidy, the Canada emergency rent subsidy and the recovery benefits. This will help Canadians and Canadian businesses get through the pandemic.

I hope all members of the House—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Carleton.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, she is right. The governments were forced to put in those restrictions because of her and the Prime Minister's failure to provide vaccines.

While other economies in the world are reopening safely and vaccinated, our people are now locked down again because of the Prime Minister's third wave. That is why we have an unemployment rate that is 50% higher than the G7 average, higher than the U.K., the U.S., France and almost every other country in the G7. The reality is that this third wave is the responsibility of the government and its failure to safely reopen.

When will we have a safe reopening?

● (1130)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is puzzling to me why the Conservatives constantly try to talk down Canada and Canadians. The reality is that Canadians and Canadian businesses have been astonishingly resilient, notwithstanding COVID.

In the fourth quarter, our GDP grew by 10%. In the first quarter, it grew by 6.5%. In both cases, that is stronger growth than in the U.S. When it comes to jobs, notwithstanding today's very difficult numbers, 83% of COVID job losses have been recovered in Canada compared to just 63% in the United States.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is because Canada had far more lost jobs to recover. We had a far bigger drop in employment because of the government's failure to close the border early on. Now we have higher unemployment than the U.S., the U.K., France, Germany, Japan; in fact, much higher than the G7 average because of the Prime Minister's third wave. He left the borders open, but he kept vaccines out and now Canadians are losing their lives and their jobs.

When will the government present a real plan to safely reopen so Canadians can protect their lives and get their jobs back?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet again, let me urge our Conservative colleagues to pick a lane. Half of the time, the Conservatives complain about debt and deficits, and accuse our government of investing too much to help Canadians finish the fight against COVID and have a strong and robust recovery.

What we believe Canada needs is the support to get through this difficult wave, which our budget provides, and strong investment to come roaring back. That is what we are going to do.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's attitude towards the women who serve our country is, quite simply, shameful.

We saw it with the member for Vancouver Granville and the SNC-Lavalin scandal, and we can see it now with the cover-up over the allegations of sexual assault against General Vance. These are not isolated incidents. They show a pattern of behaviour and a culture that our so-called feminist Prime Minister allowed to fester.

What is his excuse for letting Canadian women down this time?

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian Armed Forces members make enormous sacrifices to protect Canadians, and they have an undeniable right to serve with safety.

It is clear that we have not lived up to our responsibilities to protect members from misconduct. That is why we announced that Louise Arbour will lead an independent external comprehensive review into harassment and sexual misconduct. Plus, we have named Lieutenant-General Jennie Carignan as chief of professional conduct and culture.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister clearly does not value the brave women who serve in our armed forces because he did not defend them. On the contrary, his government did nothing and allowed them to suffer.

These women make so many sacrifices for us, but he is not prepared to sacrifice his image to protect them. When will he apologize to them?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, eliminating all forms of misconduct and abuse of power and creating a safe work environment for everyone in the defence team have always been our top priority.

We know that the Canadian Armed Forces must work hard to eliminate the toxic masculinity that creates an unacceptable culture. We have announced that Louise Arbour will lead an independent external comprehensive review into harassment and sexual misconduct. We owe it to our members and to Canadians to get this right.

• (1135)

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is supposed to be responsible for his cabinet. It is up to him to oversee what happens in government, and it is the job of ministers and the Prime Minister's Office to keep him informed of major events.

I find it hard to understand how something as despicable as allegations of sexual assault could be ignored on his watch.

Are we really supposed to believe that the Prime Minister knew nothing about this, when everyone around him did?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the minister said in committee, he did not know the nature or specifics of the allegations.

Mr. Walbourne mentioned misconduct issues involving the former chief of the defence staff. He did not provide the minister with any details.

The minister has always ensured that all allegations brought to his attention are reported to the appropriate authorities for investigation.

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CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government needs to send a clear message to victims of CERB fraud.

In the House, the minister said that victims will not be held responsible for the fraud. We all agree on that. However, when vic-

tims call her department, they are being told to pay taxes on the fraudulent amounts and that they will eventually be reimbursed.

My question will be clear because we need a clear answer. Should victims keep their money, yes or no?

It is not complicated.

[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Revenue Agency takes the protection of taxpayer information very seriously. The CRA has robust safeguards in place to identify fraudulent emergency and recovery claims. Canadians who receive a T4A for CERB payments they did not claim should contact the CRA as soon as possible. Victims of fraud will not be held responsible for any money paid out to scammers using their identity.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is really difficult to get answers to simple questions.

The minister also needs to take action to prevent victims of CERB fraud from being deprived of assistance from her government because the fraudulent amounts are being added to the victims' actual income. Government assistance benefits are calculated based on people's income, particularly the Canada child benefit, the Canada workers benefit and the GST credit.

What is the minister doing to guarantee victims that they will not be deprived of the government assistance they need?

[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be crystal clear for my colleague. Canadians who received a T4A without having claimed benefits do not have to include it on their tax return. Those who received an incorrect T4A simply need to report the actual amounts received on their tax return. In either case, these individuals should contact the agency as soon as possible to request either a cancellation of, or an amendment to, the statement.

I would encourage my colleague to seek information from reliable sources rather than unnecessarily scare Canadians. His constituents deserve better.

*Oral Questions***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding has been severely impacted by COVID-19. Many people have lost their jobs, their homes and their livelihoods. More people are homeless, opioid abuse is skyrocketing and more and more families are struggling to make ends meet. The last thing constituents in my riding need is another blow to the oil and gas sector, which provides jobs and opportunities, and helps fund our vital social programs.

What is the government's strategy to ensure thousands more Canadians do not suffer the consequences of another cancelled pipeline?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night in this House we held an emergency debate. It was a debate in which all parties participated. It was a debate in which we made our intentions and the purpose of the mission of this government on pipelines very clear.

TMX, when we look back, is something that we approved and we are building. More than 7,000 jobs were created. We approved Line 3 and another 7,000 jobs were created. These are pipelines that will take us into the future.

When we look at existing pipelines that are essential to our energy security nationally, we will leave no stone unturned in making sure we are there for Canadian workers, that we are there for—

• (1140)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that just does not cut it. No stone unturned? The Prime Minister had six years to demonstrate his support for the natural resource sector and what do we have now? The cancellation of Keystone XL and the potential shutdown of Line 5. We are once again facing a last-minute crisis due to the government's lack of action.

When will the Prime Minister pick up the phone, show some leadership and receive assurances from the President that this vital pipeline will continue to operate and enforce the Transit Pipelines Treaty?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night in this House during the emergency debate, there was no daylight between the parties. Line 5 is a critical piece of energy infrastructure. It is vital to North American energy security. I will repeat what I said to the House last night. People will not be left out in the cold. The heating of Canadian homes, the flying of Canadian jets and the operation of Canadian refineries are non-negotiable.

Line 5 is not just vital to Canada, it is also vital to the United States and therefore it is vital to all of North America. That is the case we are making. Line 5 is essential to North American energy security.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the deadline to submit a brief of support to keep Enbridge's Line 5 open is in just four days. The Canada-U.S. committee unanimously recommended this action, and the Natural Resources Minister said last night that he would take every action diplomatically and legally

to keep Line 5 open. This is the most urgent action required and the Liberals have known about it for months.

Why did they leave it to the last minute and when will they submit the amicus brief?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her advocacy for her constituents. I can assure this House we are looking at all our options. We will leave no stone unturned in defending Canada's energy security.

We are working at the political level, we are working at the diplomatic level, we are working at the legal level and we are ready to intervene at precisely the right moment. We are standing up for energy workers, for energy consumers and for Canada's energy security. People will not be left out in the cold.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, usually it is a good thing when Canadians from west to east come together for a common cause, but it is not so good when that common cause is a common threat.

The Governor of Michigan is threatening to shut down the Enbridge Line 5 pipeline, in a clear violation of treaty obligations between the United States and Canada. This would put 25,000 Canadian jobs at risk.

When is the Prime Minister going to phone President Biden and insist that the Transit Pipelines Treaty be enforced?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said, Line 5 is the most efficient way to deliver the products that Michigan needs to heat its homes, to fly its jets and to power its economy. We do not need more trucks on the road jamming up the 401 or jamming up our already congested border crossings, and those idling trucks would be releasing emissions in Governor Whitmer's backyard, in Michigan, while they wait to cross the border. Line 5 is safe. It has been for 65 years. It will continue to be so. It is safer and better for the environment than the alternatives, and that is the case we are making in defending Canada's energy security.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General outlined how the government failed first nations on clean drinking water: an outdated funding formula and a non-existent regulatory regime. ISC now says 2024 is its target to end water advisories, but the AG made clear this will only happen if ISC makes changes. Following its damning testimonial, we finally saw action from the government not to fix the problem, but to defend its inaction.

The minister will not give a timeline, so when will the government end clean drinking water advisories on first nations?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, this government has made significant progress. In 2015, there were 105 long-term water advisories in effect. We have, in fact, lifted 106, and we will continue to do so. We will fix a failed funding formula, and we have invested now \$1.5 billion pursuant to the fall economic statement. We will continue to work with every community to ensure that long-term water advisories are lifted.

One long-term water advisory is one too many.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think indigenous people in Canada deserve a better, clearer plan and a much greater sense of urgency from this government when it comes to life-saving water, just as people the world over deserve a better answer and a greater sense of urgency when it comes to putting their need to get life-saving vaccine ahead of the profits of international pharmaceutical companies. Yet, this government continues to refuse to get behind a waiver at the WTO. The United States of America announced just this week that it is getting behind that waiver.

When will Canada be part of the solution and not the problem at the WTO?

• (1145)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has always been, and will continue to be, a strong advocate for equitable access to affordable and safe COVID-19 vaccines around the world. Canada has actively participated in the negotiations on waiving intellectual property protections to COVID-19 vaccines under the WTO, and we will continue to work with our international partners towards a speedy and just recovery.

This pandemic is not over anywhere until it is over everywhere.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reconciliation is a journey of many steps: closing the infrastructure gap, supporting indigenous economies through this pandemic and connecting indigenous economies with the world.

Oral Questions

Throughout the pandemic, indigenous communities in Atlantic Canada have received \$38 million in flexible funding through the indigenous communities support fund and more than \$9 million through the community business fund, supporting indigenous communities to build back better.

Could the minister update the House on the future of these programs?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, through budget 2021, our government is investing over \$18 billion to improve the quality of life, close socio-economic gaps and create new opportunities for indigenous communities and peoples. This includes an additional \$1.4 billion to fight COVID; over \$6 billion, with \$389 million ongoing to support indigenous infrastructure; \$100 million for indigenous entrepreneurship and economic development opportunities; and near and dear to the member's heart, there is an additional \$275 million for indigenous languages, including Mi'kmaq.

Wela'lin.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government promised \$5,000 grants to homeowners who make energy-efficient retrofits as of December 1, 2020, but it has not even established eligibility requirements. Homeowners and contractors are being told to hold on to their receipts to see if they will be paid back, as promised, for the investments they made at the direction of this government.

The Liberals have rolled out yet another half-baked program, and homeowners are left holding the bag. When will it actually be ready?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are so enthusiastic about home retrofits. I think that all members of this House will agree that supporting Canadians in making their homes more energy efficient is a great way for us to work together to fight climate change and create great jobs in Canada in putting these retrofits in place.

The program that the member mentioned is very important and, in the budget, we also committed to moving ahead with an additional program to provide credit for Canadians who want to have deep retrofits of their homes.

*Oral Questions***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently the Czech Republic concluded Russian intelligence agents attacked an ammunition depot on Czech soil in 2014, causing deaths. In response, the Czech Republic expelled 18 Russian diplomats, and four EU countries expelled Russian diplomats in solidarity with the Czech Republic for this violation of international law.

Three years ago, Canada expelled Russian diplomats in solidarity with the United Kingdom for violating international law in the Salisbury poisonings. Will the government do likewise in solidarity with the Czech Republic?

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our position on Russia remains unequivocal. Canada will continue to hold Russia accountable for all its actions. We have strong sanctions against Russian officials under the Magnitsky act and the Special Economic Measures Act. Our government takes foreign interference seriously. To safeguard our national interests at home and abroad, we will continue to work with our allies to put pressure on Russia to counter its foreign interference.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after an announced CEBA expansion on December 4, many Canadians applied for expanded business loans. Many were denied as records held by the CRA did not match their applications. However, there is no method for Canadians to update their submissions. In January, the government promised to fix this, yet here we are five months later in the midst of further lockdowns during the Liberal third wave without a solution, leaving businesses to wait for the government to take action.

Will the minister commit today to a date when this issue will be resolved? Small businesses cannot wait.

• (1150)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government's priority since the very beginning of the pandemic has been to support our Canadian businesses and our workers. We know that small businesses continue to have difficulty making ends meet because of the restrictions in place due to the pandemic. To date, over 860,000 businesses have been supported by CEBA, and I understand the member's concern.

Financial institutions will be reaching out directly to businesses that have applied for, but not yet received, the expansions that they have requested and we will be providing clarifying information through our banks.

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*[Translation]***CANADIAN HERITAGE**

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-10 has become a real mess because of one thing: the Liberal attack on freedom of expression.

They deleted the one section that protected social media users. They have been engaging in demagoguery for two weeks now by implying that Conservatives are against culture. Now, they are trying to fix their mistakes by proposing bad amendments.

When will the Minister of Justice find the courage to rein in the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who is directly attacking Canadians' freedom of expression?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is pathetic to see my hon. colleague deliberately misleading the House and Canadians, because he knows full well that subsection 2(3) of the Broadcasting Act reads as follows:

This Act shall be construed and applied in a manner that is consistent with the freedom of expression and journalistic, creative and programming independence enjoyed by broadcasting undertakings.

Why is the opposition member deliberately misleading the public and the House?

The Deputy Speaker: I remind the hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage that the expression “deliberately misleading” is deemed unparliamentary. I would therefore ask him to withdraw that comment.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, I should ask the following question: Is the hon. opposition member misleading the House and Canadians?

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: I will say it in English so that I make myself more clear. I appreciate the patience of the hon. members.

The minister, in his statement, indicated that a member was “deliberately misleading”. That is essentially equal to “lying”. Our precedents in the House are clear on that, so I would ask the hon. minister to withdraw his statement and we will carry on.

The hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I would correct my statement then, Mr. Speaker, by asking whether the member opposite is trying to induce the House and Canadians into error.

The Deputy Speaker: I will ask the hon. minister again. He really must withdraw or rephrase his comment with respect to any reference to a member of the House “deliberately misleading”. This is the infraction and I would ask him to withdraw that specific aspect of his remarks before we carry on.

The hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw that comment.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois hopes that Davie will build the polar icebreaker that the federal government announced yesterday. We have been waiting for it for years.

Of course, before we celebrate with a parade, we want details. All we have right now is a government press release, but no contract, no formal letter of intent, no start date.

The government is asking us to celebrate no questions asked, which makes it look like an election promise. When will we see a real contract for the construction of the icebreaker signed by Davie?

• (1155)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not asking the Bloc Québécois to celebrate, but at least to acknowledge that this is good news for Quebec. It is good news for Davie, it is good news for all Davie suppliers, it is good news for Quebec City, Lévis and all the regions.

The Bloc Québécois does not like it when things are going well. I have said more than once that in Davie's case, the Conservatives did not want to help, the Bloc cannot help and we kept our promise.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I said that we were pleased, and I just said that we are pleased. However, as long as Davie does not have a signed contract for the icebreaker, then this is all just good intentions.

This is not the first time that Davie has been the subject of the federal government's good intentions right before an election. For example, just before the 2019 election, the Prime Minister and his minister responsible for the Quebec City region made a big show of announcing that they wanted Davie to become a partner in the ship-building strategy. They announced real opportunities for Davie, just as they are doing now. Two years later, Davie is still not a partner.

Good intentions are not enough. When will we see something tangible? When will we have a signed contract?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always been there for the Davie shipyard. We have always believed in the Davie shipyard. We gave Davie over \$2 billion in contracts.

We invited Davie to qualify to become the third shipyard, and it is in the process of doing that. Things are going well. It should quickly achieve the status of third shipyard.

I do not understand why the Bloc Québécois is unable to recognize good news when it sees it. Perhaps they are refusing to see it because it is in fact good news.

Once again, the Conservatives did nothing for Davie and the Bloc Québécois cannot do anything for Davie, but we are doing the right thing for Davie.

*[English]***CANADIAN HERITAGE**

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Bill C-10 has outraged millions of Canadians. The minister responded by calling those Canadians “extremists.” Now we see him stooping to calling Conservatives “liars.”

Last night the Liberals confessed to this mistake with a new amendment to fix a flawed piece of legislation, but already experts have said the amendment does not work.

Why is the minister refusing to ask the justice minister if his bill is even constitutional?

The Deputy Speaker: I will go back to the hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka. In the same vein, that use of language in the House is considered unparliamentary. I am going to go back to him and ask him to rephrase his question, and then we will carry on from there.

The hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, my apologies.

The Liberal Bill C-10 has outraged millions of Canadians. The minister responded by calling those Canadians who are outraged “extremists.” Last night, the Liberals confessed to their mistake with an amendment to fix this flawed piece of legislation, yet experts are already saying the amendment does not work.

Why is the minister betraying Canadians and refusing to simply ask the justice minister if his bill, which he has changed, is even constitutional?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to read a note that I received on social media from Mark, an art enthusiast from Newfoundland. He said:

Regarding the battle with the web giants, I just want to thank you for carrying on with the most pressing concerns of our times. It cannot be overstated the need for action, and history will treat kindly those who step forward to support this.

This is how the artistic community feels about Bill C-10 throughout Canada.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' November version of Bill C-10 contained an exemption for user-generated content. That exemption has been removed, opening the door for the CRTC to regulate content uploaded to social media by any Canadian.

Last week, the Minister of Canadian Heritage said the exemption was “not necessary”, but experts warn the amended bill now violates the charter. Constituents in my riding are demanding to know why the Liberal government wants to take away their freedom of expression.

Can the minister explain why he removed the safeguard clause?

Oral Questions

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the hon. member opposite to actually read Bill C-10, where in section 2(3) it says, “This Act shall be construed and applied in a manner that is consistent with the freedom of expression and journalistic, creative and programming independence enjoyed by broadcasting undertakings.”

I expect the committee will be able to move forward on Bill C-10 without any further interference by the Conservative Party of Canada.

• (1200)

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-10 should be about helping Canadian artists and broadcasters succeed among web giants and foreign competitors. Liberals keep accusing Conservatives of not caring about Canadian content, but they keep jeopardizing the prosperity of artists to leverage their own political agenda and censor individual Canadians. As an artist myself, I am appalled. If the Liberals truly cared so much about artists, they would just fix the bill, and Canadians would not be so afraid of Bill C-10.

When will the minister stop flip-flopping and make it crystal clear to Canadians that democracy still has a place in Canada's government?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to read the list of supporting organizations throughout the country that have come out in support of Bill C-10: the Coalition for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the Professional Music Publishers' Association, the Canadian Media Producers Association, the Directors Guild of Canada, the Writers Guild of Canada, La Fédération nationale des communications et de la culture, SOCAN, la Fédération culturelle canadienne-française, the Canadian Federation of Musicians and APTN.

[Translation]

There is also the Union des artistes, the Association des professionnels des arts de la scène du Québec, the Association québécoise des auteurs dramatiques—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

* * *

STATISTICS CANADA

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, Canadians, including my constituents in Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, were delighted to open their mailboxes and find invitations to participate in the 2021 census. The government uses the census to shape the services it provides to Canadians, develop policies and build the public infrastructure that has a direct impact on Canadians' daily lives.

Could the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry tell the House how the census helps the government design and improve public policy?

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

Unlike Stephen Harper's Conservatives, our government understands that the important decisions that affect our families, neighbourhoods and businesses need to be based on world-class data and on major socio-economic trends.

The census is a unique opportunity to help our communities and our economy recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. I urge all Canadians to fill in their census forms as quickly as possible.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage claims Bill C-10 is only about regulating web giants and protecting the interests of Canadian artists and musicians. If that is not fake news, then the response Canadians are demanding from him is simple. He should apologize and restore the full clause protecting their right to freedom of expression in the public square of social media. Constituents in my riding see him, the Prime Minister and the Liberal government as extremists on this issue.

Is he ready to prove them otherwise?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question, as it will give me an opportunity to continue listing the organizations that have come out in support of Bill C-10 in the past few weeks. I will continue.

[Translation]

On that list are the Association des professionnels des arts de la scène du Québec, the Association québécoise des auteurs dramatiques, the Association des réalisateurs et réalisatrices du Québec, the Guilde des musiciens et des musiciennes du Québec, the Union des écrivaines et des écrivains québécois, the Société des auteurs de radio, télévision et cinéma, the Travailleuses et travailleurs regroupés des arts, de la culture et de l'événementiel, ADISQ, the Association des réalisateurs—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are a year in and many people are struggling with COVID. They rely on expert advice. I will quote just one person's frustration regarding vaccine messaging: “I am so tired. I was excited to get my first vaccine and suddenly I am told it is not the preferred dose. Now I'm questioning why I was told to take the first dose available. In the meantime, my 92-year-old father can't get his second shot as advised.”

When will the minister take responsibility for these failures in communication and delivery?

• (1205)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians can rest assured that the approval and authorization of vaccine use in this country is left up to the world-renowned regulators at Health Canada. All vaccines that are authorized go through a rigorous testing process for safety and effectiveness, and that review continues even as vaccines are distributed.

Vaccines are an important tool for getting through this virus, and we encourage all Canadians to get a vaccine as soon as it is their turn.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the middle of the largest global health crisis seen in over a century, seniors need more than a token benefits increase. What seniors really need are vaccinations so that they can enjoy the rest of their years secure from COVID-19.

Countries such as Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom and Singapore are beating Canada to vaccinate their people. When will the Minister of Health account for her failure to bring wide distribution of vaccines?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the supply of vaccines coming into this country is such that Canada ranks in the top three or four countries in the world for vaccine administration. We have had 18.4 million doses delivered to Canada. The provinces and territories have administered 15 million doses, and 36% of Canadians have had one dose. Those numbers are increasing rapidly because of the continuous supply of vaccines coming into this country, which are serving all demographic groups, including our seniors.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has never been more important to support Canadians in achieving home ownership. We know that many young families are ready to buy their first home but face financial challenges to doing so in cities like greater Vancouver.

Can the minister please update the House on the first-time home buyer incentive and explain how it is helping put home ownership in the reach of young Canadians?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know it is important to help Canadians who are looking to buy their first home. That is why yesterday we announced the expansion of the first-time home buyer incentive, improving the eligibility in Toronto, Vancouver and Victoria, and their regions, by raising the income threshold for eligible homebuyers. With this incentive, we are supporting more young Canadians and Canadian families buy their first home. However, we will also con-

Oral Questions

tinue to build on our historic investments in the national housing strategy.

We will ensure that Canadians have a choice; have access to a market that is safe, affordable and secure; and, most importantly, have a place to call home.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada has played a pivotal role in helping indigenous businesses survive the pandemic, yet budget 2021 fails to recognize its important contributions. The government is spending more money to promote the Formula 1 Grand Prix in Montreal than it is to support struggling indigenous businesses across the country. Without sector-specific support, indigenous-led tourism will disappear. This is another blow to preserving indigenous languages and cultures.

Why are indigenous business not a real priority for the Liberals, and when will specific investments for pandemic recovery be made for indigenous tourism operators?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this budget makes unprecedented investments in reconciliation and in supporting indigenous people across Canada, with \$18 billion over five years. That includes significant investments in supporting indigenous businesses and indigenous entrepreneurship. Moreover, this budget includes more than \$1 billion to support tourism across Canada.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, during the pandemic, many Canadians have been affected mentally and emotionally, and they deserve adequate support and treatment. However, the government has failed victims suffering from mental health issues.

Why is there neglect by the government at this crucial juncture of the COVID-19 crisis?

• (1210)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that mental health was a struggle for many Canadians even prior to COVID, and COVID has made the situation worse.

I could not disagree more with the member opposite's assertion that we have done nothing. In fact, we continue to invest in mental health supports, including wellnesstogether.ca. Over a million Canadians have accessed that support. It is crucially important that we encourage Canadians to use wellnesstogether.ca to access the support they need and that we support them, so that no Canadians suffer in silence.

Routine Proceedings

I encourage the member to help us help his constituents and Canadians across the country get the resources that are available.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: That concludes question period for today.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean on a point of order.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties, and I believe that, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That the House salute and support the decision of the President of the United States to support the resolution presented to the World Trade Organization to temporarily waive COVID-19 vaccine patents for developing countries; and that the House ask the Government of Canada to also support this initiative.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I am seeking further clarification on a comment that you made after members' statements to-day.

I have a great respect for you. I think you are an exceptional Speaker, as I have said in the House before. I am looking for clarification as to why the member for Calgary Midnapore was allowed to say the word “you”, as if speaking to somebody directly, 14 times within a 60-second period without being interrupted. Is it the practice that we allow the statement to end and then provide correction later? I am hoping to get some clarification from you on that.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands for raising the point.

As is customary, we do try, as we saw earlier today, to avoid interruptions during the course of Statements by Members and question period. It was clear to me when the member was speaking that the style of speaking was inappropriate and not within the usual standards of the House. The question was whether to interrupt at that point or at the end, and I elected to do the latter instead of the former. Quite honestly, it could have invited an immediate interruption as well.

That is why I remind hon. members that although a speaking style is not the same thing as using unparliamentary language per se, it is against the normal standard of speech in the House. Making personal comments toward any member of the House often elevates the kind of adversarial climate that does not support good, civil debate.

I appreciate the hon. member raising the point, and I think it is a good occasion to remind other hon. members of this.

Rising on a point of order, the hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, in his question, the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka claimed that I had said those who oppose Bill C-10 were extremists. I said no such thing. I did point out that the Conservative Party of Canada was leaning toward the

more extremist elements of its party when it comes to Bill C-10, but I did not say that those who oppose it are extremists.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. minister for his comments. I do not think this falls into the category of a point of order. It is, rather, in the area of debate. Perhaps there will be other occasions for him to comment on that subject.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1215)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to 24 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, entitled “The Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Financial Health of Veterans Organizations”.

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

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-294, An Act to amend the Telecommunications Act (suicide prevention).

He said: Mr. Speaker, 147 days ago, the House of Commons unanimously passed my motion supporting a new national three-digit suicide-prevention number. It has been 147 days, and every 24 hours, 11 Canadians take their own life and another 275 attempt to end their life. Using these stats, since passing the motion we have lost 1,617 Canadians to suicide, and over 40,000 Canadians have attempted to end their life. These are the attempts and deaths that we know of. So many more go unreported.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young Canadians. These statistics are staggering. What is even more worrisome is that the statistics are from before COVID.

My private member's bill is very simple. It would add one clause to the Telecommunications Act to ensure that a new three-digit suicide-prevention number is implemented and accessible to all Canadians within one year of passage.

We are facing a mental health crisis never before seen. We have the power to save lives, to leave a legacy of action and to show those who are suffering that we are fighting for them. Let us all bring 988 to Canada.

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

* * *

[Translation]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-295, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (recent graduates working in a designated region).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is with immense pride and great pleasure that I introduce in the House a bill to amend the Income Tax Act. I am convinced I will gain the support of all my colleagues for this legislative measure. This bill will make it possible to not only address the skilled labour shortage affecting the regions, but also promote continuing education in colleges and universities as well as professional and technical training for young people who will be needed to fill jobs in the regions because of population aging.

Mr. Speaker, I know you share my enthusiasm and I thank you.

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

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to petitions, I will remind hon. members of two things. First, I remind those who are presenting petitions by video conference to use the “Raise Hand” function so that we know they are there. Second, I remind hon. members to keep the descriptions of their petitions precise and short.

We will now go to the hon. member for St. John's East.

* * *

• (1220)

PETITIONS

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present a petition on behalf of a number of inmates of federal institutions, who are concerned about the fact that when a prisoner accuses medical staff of misconduct, it could have serious repercussions for the medical staff, and when the medical staff accuse prisoners of misconduct, there could be serious repercussions for the prisoner who is involved.

The petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to require the health care staff who interact with prisoners in federal custody to wear body cameras that record audio and video of interactions with prisoners, with the exception of medical examinations, which would be recorded in audio only, and for Correctional Service Canada to retain these recordings, so as to promote better accountability and professionalism in federal correctional facilities.

Routine Proceedings

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you will indulge me, I would like to wish my wife a happy 10-year anniversary.

The first petition I would like to table is in support of Bill S-204, a bill that has just passed the Senate. It would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ for which there has not been consent.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners and calls on the government to make use of the Magnitsky act to target officials who have been involved in the horrific persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, and to hold them and other abusers of human rights in China accountable.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition highlights the human rights situation in Ethiopia, in particular in the Tigray region, but emerging concerns respond to human rights issues happening throughout the country. Petitioners are seeking greater engagement by the government in response to these issues, including short-, medium- and long-term election monitoring in Ethiopia, as well as engagement with the Eritrean government about its involvement in Tigray.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth and final petition I am presenting today is about Bill C-6. Petitioners are looking for reasonable amendments to that bill that would fix the drafting problems with the definition of conversion therapy used in that bill. Petitioners do support efforts to ban conversion therapy once the definition has been corrected.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions this morning.

The first petition is in regard to Bill C-6 as well. There is great concern from the petitioners that the definition does need to be corrected. If it was, they would certainly support the bill. Their concern is around the way it basically overrides the choices of LGBTQ2 Canadians concerning sexuality and gender by prohibiting access to professional or spiritual support that is freely chosen in limiting their sexual behaviour or detransitioning.

Routine Proceedings

SEX SELECTION

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon the House of Commons to pass a Criminal Code prohibition of sex-selective abortion. It is in response to Bill C-233. This is legal in Canada. It is antithetical to our commitment to human rights and equality between men and women. Many polls show that the vast majority of Canadians want to see this in our laws, and Canadian health care professionals are recognizing as well that this is a problem in Canada.

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present two petitions today that were initiated by constituents in Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

In the first petition, the petitioners are concerned that the British Columbia government has not followed through on promises, on an expert panel to protect old-growth forests in British Columbia. They are calling upon the government 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 that 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 use for local jobs; and ban the use of whole trees for wood pellet biofuel production.

• (1225)

HEALTH

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, in the second petition, the petitioners note that natural time-tested immune system essentials and holistic health practices do not receive enough attention for their role in preventative health care. They are calling upon the government to educate and empower Canadians on holistic approaches to optimize and maintain their natural immunity and well-being; cover practices for health sustainability and wellness care under the Health Act, including chiropractor care, massage therapy, acupuncture and naturopathic medicines; and support, promote and enhance Canadians' access to holistic health services and natural products.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 566, 567, 569 and 571.

[Text]

Question No. 566—**Mr. Pat Kelly:**

With regard to the Western Economic Diversification's Regional Relief and Recovery Fund, since the program was launched: (a) how many applications have been received; (b) how many applications have been approved; (c) what is the total dollar value of disbursements to approved applicants; (d) what is the average dollar value per approved applicant; (e) what is the average processing time for applications; and (f) what is the target processing time for applications?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the regional relief and recovery fund, RRRF, provides critical support to businesses and organizations that are not eligible for other federal government COVID relief measures and was designed to be a backstop for businesses that may have fallen through the cracks, to help them continue to pay expenses and protect jobs. Demand for this program has been consistently high in western Canada and accounts for nearly half of all applications received to date. This is especially true in Alberta, which has been hit concurrently by the COVID-19 pandemic, a years-long decline in the oil and gas industry, and several natural disasters.

The statistics provided below reflect the portion of the RRRF delivered directly by Western Economic Diversification, WD, and do not include information on Community Futures and other third party delivery of this program in western Canada.

The statistics below cover the period from the launch of the RRRF in May 2020 to March 18, 2021.

In response to (a), WD has received 10,295 applications.

In response to (b), WD has approved 4,578 applications. Applicants may be declined support through the RRRF program for a number of reasons related to their eligibility, with slightly different criteria for applications below \$60,000 and above \$60,000. Eligibility criteria common to both types of applications include, but are not limited to, having fewer than 500 full-time employees, FTEs; operating in Canada; being operational as of March 1, 2020; being located in western Canada, defined as British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan or Manitoba; and having suffered financially because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Full details of the eligibility criteria for requests up to \$60,000 can be found at <https://www.wd-deo.gc.ca/eng/20060.asp>, under step 1. Applications over \$60,000 up to \$1 million are also subject to additional assessment on ongoing financial viability, as well as a competitive process that weighs their expected impacts on the western Canadian economy. Full details of the criteria for applications over \$60,000 can be found at <https://www.wd-deo.gc.ca/eng/20061.asp>.

In response to (c), \$299,950,204 has been disbursed to approved applicants, leading to the preservation of almost 23,000 jobs.

In response to (d), the average is \$65,519 per approved applicant.

In response to (e), the average is 41 business days to process applications, calculated from the date that the application is received in the portal to the date that a funding decision is finalized.

Routine Proceedings

In response to (f), WD has maintained and exceeded the service time standard for all WD-delivered programs, which is under 90 business days for a funding decision.

Question No. 567—Mr. Pat Kelly:

With regard to all pandemic relief programs and small businesses: (a) how many small businesses have opened since March 2020; (b) how many of the small businesses in (a) have successfully applied for any the pandemic relief program; (c) how many person hours of preparation and filing do the Canada Revenue Agency's new multiple T4 reporting periods require of small businesses; (d) how much has it cost small businesses to comply with the new multiple T4 reporting periods; and (e) what efforts were taken to align T4 reporting periods with calendar months?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), according to estimates data on business openings and closures collected by Statistics Canada, there were 134,730 new entrants, that is, opening businesses that were not active in a previous month, in the Canadian market between March 2020 and December 2020. This represents an average of 13,473 new firms per month. From January 2015 to December 2019, on average, about 15,000 businesses were created in the business sector on a monthly basis. The number of new entrants reached a low of 9,535 in May 2020, but more new businesses have steadily entered the business sector since, reaching an amount of 16,972 in December 2020, 13.1% higher than observed in February 2020.

It should be noted that these numbers are for all businesses, not only small businesses. However, entrants are overwhelmingly likely to be small businesses, with the vast majority of businesses having one to four employees when they begin operations.

In response to (b), through the COVID-19 economic response plan, the Government of Canada took immediate action to help Canadian businesses affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic, from helping keep employees on the job to increasing cash flow and providing support to help pay rent.

To date, several important measures remain in place to provide support that would help the hardest-hit businesses safely get through the spring and cover costs so they can continue to serve their communities and be positioned for a strong recovery, including the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which helps employers retain and quickly rehire workers previously laid off; the Canada emergency rent subsidy, which provides direct and easy-to-access rent and mortgage interest support to tenants and property owners; lockdown support, which provides additional rent relief to organizations that are subject to a lockdown and must shut their doors or significantly restrict their activities under a public health order issued under the laws of Canada, or a province or a territory.

It is not possible to determine how many of the 134,730 new entrants since March 2020 have accessed pandemic relief, as program data does not identify the year eligible businesses receiving aid were opened, only the total number of businesses receiving aid and their sectors. As a result, the two databases are not comparable.

The Government of Canada is unable to quantify the information requested in (c), (d) and (e). Producing and validating a comprehensive response to this question is not possible in the time allotted and could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

Question No. 569—Mr. Scot Davidson:

With regard to environment impact assessments conducted by the Department of Environment and Climate Change and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, since January 1, 2019: (a) how many requests for assessments have been (i) received, (ii) accepted, (iii) turned down; (b) who requested each assessment in (a) (for example the public, the federal government, the municipal government, etc.), broken down by (a)(i), (a)(ii), (a)(iii); and (c) what are the details of each impact assessment conducted or concluded since January 1, 2019, including the (i) requestor, (ii) summary of the project assessed, including the location, (iii) date the assessment was completed, (iv) findings?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members can refer to the following website for information related to Q-569: <https://iaac-aec.gc.ca/050/evaluations>.

Question No. 571—Mr. Michael Kram:

With regard to the decision by the government to remove the international designation from the Regina International Airport and the Saskatoon International Airport: (a) on what date did the government make the decision posted in Transport Canada's Advisory Circular No. 302-032 to remove the international designation from the airports in Regina and Saskatoon; (b) on what date did the Minister of Transport become aware that the airports in Regina and Saskatoon were being stripped of their international designation; (c) will the Minister of Transport reverse this decision, and, if not, why not; (d) did the government conduct any studies or assessments on the financial harm such a decision may bring to Saskatchewan, and, if so, what were the findings; (e) what impact does the government project that removing the international designation from these airports will have on the number of international flights arriving in or departing from these airports; (f) what other Canadian airports are losing or potentially losing their international designation; and (g) for each airport in (f), what is the specific reason why the government is considering removing its international designation?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to parts (a) and (b), advisory circulars, ACs, issued by Transport Canada, help the civil aviation community understand how to comply with current regulations and standards in aviation. The advisory circular No. 302-032 outlines the minimum requirements needed per the International Civil Aviation Organization, ICAO, convention to be designated as international and published as such in aeronautical publications. Transport Canada did not remove the international designation from the Regina and Saskatoon airports. In fact, the department has no information to confirm that these airports were ever formally designated as stated in the International Civil Aviation Organization, ICAO, convention. Advisory circulars issued by Transport can be found at the following link: <https://tc.canada.ca/en/aviation/reference-centre/advisory-circulars>.

In response to part (c), Transport Canada did not remove the international designation from the Regina and Saskatoon airports. If these airports submit the necessary information to confirm that they meet all the relevant specifications for designation as stated in the ICAO convention, they will be provided the designation.

Government Orders

The response to part (d) is no, because the Regina and Saskatoon airports have not been denied access to the designation, nor have they been denied from operating international flights from their airports. The advisory circular outlines the minimum requirements needed per the international ICAO convention to be designated as international and published as such in aeronautical publications.

The response to part (e) is none, as those airports, regardless of their designation, can support international flights, provided that they make specific arrangements with the agencies required to support flights: customs, immigration, security, etc.

In response to parts (f) and (g), Transport Canada did not remove the international designation from any airports. The advisory circular has a list of airports for which the department has information to confirm that these airports are already formally designated as stated in the ICAO convention. Those airports that wish to be designated international are invited to make an application as outlined in the advisory circular, and those that meet the requirements will be designated international.

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[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 568, 570 and 572-574 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 568—**Mr. Pat Kelly:**

With regard to sole-sourced COVID-19 spending between November 25, 2020, and March 18, 2021: (a) how many contracts have been sole-sourced; and (b) what are the details of each such sole-sourced contract, including the (i) date of award, (ii) description of the goods or services, including the volume, (iii) final amount, (iv) vendor, (v) country of the vendor?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 570—**Mr. Kerry Diotte:**

With regard to expenditures on communications professional services (codes 035, 0351, and 0352) since December 1, 2020, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: what are the details of each expenditure, including the (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) vendor, (iv) description of goods or services, (v) whether the contract was sole-sourced or competitively bid?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 572—**Mrs. Tracy Gray:**

With regard to federal grants and contributions to Respon International Group, since January 1, 2018, broken down by department, agency or other government entity: (a) how many grants or contributions have been allocated; (b) what are the details of each grant or contribution, including the (i) amount or value of the federal contribution, (ii) program under which the grant was provided, (iii) summary of purpose or project description; and (c) do the terms and conditions of these grants or contributions specifically prohibit the advocacy of the recipient on behalf of a foreign government, and, if not, why not?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 573—**Mrs. Tracy Gray:**

With regard to federal grants and contributions to the Council of Newcomer Organizations, since January 1, 2018, broken down by department, agency or other government entity: (a) how many grants or contributions have been allocated; (b) what are the details of each grant or contribution, including the (i) amount or value of the federal contribution, (ii) program under which the grant was provided, (iii) summary of purpose or project description; and (c) do the terms and conditions of these grants or contributions specifically prohibit the advocacy of the recipient on behalf of a foreign government, and, if not, why not?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 574—**Mrs. Marilène Gill:**

With regard to the port facilities owned by Transport Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, since January 1, 1996: (a) what was the total amount invested in the rehabilitation, maintenance and improvement of wharves and port facilities, broken down by (i) province, (ii) year, (iii) port facility, further broken down by year; (b) of the port facilities in (a)(iii), how many detailed infrastructure inspections were conducted to ensure compliance with safety standards, broken down by (i) year, (ii) port facility, further broken down by year; (c) of the port facilities in (a)(iii) located in Quebec and included in the Ports Asset Transfer Program, what are the investments planned for the next five years, broken down by port facility; (d) since 1996, which facilities were transferred under the Ports Asset Transfer Program and to which firm or individual were they transferred; and (e) of the port facilities in (d), what pre-transfer amounts were provided to individuals or firms for the rehabilitation of the facilities?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2021, NO. 1

The House resumed from May 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-30, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 19, 2021 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to rise and speak to budget 2021, the maiden budget from the first woman to hold the title of finance minister. In fact, as many parliamentarians know, we usually get a hard copy of the budget handed to us as the finance minister would rise in the House to speak, but due to COVID, we had to make do with getting the online version. I hear there are hard copies available, and I am hoping to get my hands on one, because I definitely want the finance minister to autograph it because it is so historic.

Given how hard the pandemic has impacted Canadian women, I do feel it is appropriate that someone familiar with the challenges women face, both at home and on the job, is leading the course forward, but let me be perfectly clear: This is a budget that is good for all Canadians. It is forward-thinking, and the changes announced in the budget are what Canada needs as we navigate a new path through COVID and after we wrestle this pandemic to the ground.

I believe it is important for a government to always strive to do better, to make changes for the better. This means exploring and implementing new ideas, evaluating how things have been done and whether they can be improved, and adapting decades-old social support systems to meet the needs of today's families. This budget positions Canada for the future on all fronts and includes new ideas, but it also contains some that are not particularly new at all.

As we all know, we are currently facing the gravest global crisis since the Second World War. Over 75 years ago, many women, including many mothers, had to go to work in essential war industries to provide for their families and fill the labour shortage left by those, mostly men, who were in the services. From 1942 to 1946, the Dominion-Provincial Wartime Agreement allowed for subsidized day nursery care for mothers working in essential war industries. Costs were shared fifty-fifty between the federal government and participating provinces, and each province had its own standards and regulations.

Of course, at war's end, the centres closed as most women returned to working in the home, seemingly not needed to keep our economy humming. Also, many women were forced to leave their jobs when they got pregnant, which is exactly what happened to my mother when she became pregnant with my brother back in 1952.

Despite the changes in society, the debate for returning to subsidized day care did not disappear. In fact, it grew louder in the following decades as more and more women joined the workforce, so much so that it was included in the report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1970. I was a teenager at the time and was encouraged to expect my life to be different from my mother's. I was determined to have a career and a family, but it was not going to be easy. The Status of Women report dealt explicitly with making child care affordable and accessible, including making sure that fees would be affixed to a sliding scale based on the means of the parents.

Having been a working mother, I know very well that having one parent stay home to look after children or relying on family is not always an option. Our government has increased the Canada child benefit, which parents could choose to put toward day care, but in a city like London, where I am from, monthly child care fees average out to around \$1,200 a child. Maybe that is doable for some families, if they have only one child, but as soon as they decide to have another, it becomes almost impossible to cover the costs.

Let us face it, although times have started to change, caring for children still primarily falls to female partners or mothers. We hear about how this pandemic will go down in history as the "she-cession". Someone recently commented that maybe it would be better to call it the "mom-cession", and I think they are right.

Government Orders

The economic impact of this pandemic has been felt most keenly by women, including marginalized women, not only because some have had to stay home from work to care for children, but also because industries dominated by female and marginalized workers have been among the hardest hit by measures introduced to keep our communities safe. This is in direct contrast to the recession of 2008, when it was male-dominated industries that were the hardest hit.

As we look to rebuild from this crisis and build back better, we must make sure we do so in a way that helps those who need it most. We need to make sure that women and marginalized communities can be fully engaged in the economy. TD Economics and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce are just two of the institutions that have separately stated that a national child care program will help facilitate this.

● (1230)

In fact, they say it is critical to do so. They say a child care program will add between \$100 billion to \$155 billion to Canada's GDP, because it will allow more engagement in the economy for women and marginalized communities. This is a sound investment based on recommendations made by reliable economic experts. Child care is no longer a social "nice to have"; it is now an economic "must have".

Our government is also moving forward with strong investments in the charitable and not-for-profit sectors to continue supporting them during this difficult time.

The importance of this sector to Canada and the lives of everyday Canadians is incalculable. While our government made sure to expand emergency supports to the organizations in this sector, they still need help. Employing millions of Canadians, many of them women, these organizations provide critical services, from child care to fitness to education and community supports, to communities of all sizes.

We have all heard stories from our ridings about not-for-profits and charitable organizations that are hanging on by a thread through this pandemic. We have seen local branches of the YMCA close their doors. We have seen legions struggling. It is imperative that we step in to provide more support and strengthen this critical pillar of Canadian society.

Government Orders

Over the past year, I have worked with my colleagues in the government caucus and parliamentarians from the other place to draw attention to the critical plight charities and non-profits are facing. Budget 2021 delivered on our calls for support with \$400 million to help these organizations adapt and modernize through the economic recovery.

It also proposes \$755 million to establish a social finance fund, which could attract \$1.5 billion in private sector capital to support the development of the social finance market, and that would be creating thousands of new jobs in the sector.

We are also proposing to launch public consultations with charities on potentially increasing the disbursement quota and updating the tools at the CRA's disposal regarding charities, which could increase support for the sector by \$1 billion to \$2 billion annually.

I am particularly focused on that last point as it responds to some of the recommendations made in a report released by the other place in 2019, called "Catalyst for Change: A Roadmap to a Stronger Charitable Sector". The Senate report made 42 recommendations to modernize and strengthen this sector in Canada, and I am very pleased to see the government begin taking these recommendations under consideration.

Budget 2021 proposes to provide additional support to students and young Canadians who are facing an uncertain future due to the pandemic, and the increasing devastation due to climate change. We must do better for our younger generations. Too many are struggling with crippling student debt and face daunting challenges right now in finding work.

Western University and Fanshawe College are both located in London, and many of my constituents are students and graduates of both post-secondary institutions. This has given me an opportunity to see first-hand the direct impacts COVID-19 has had on this generation. Along with the mental health impacts, young Canadians have been particularly hard hit by layoffs and workplace closures.

While we introduced measures to help the students over the past year who needed support through programs like the Canada emergency student benefit, doubling the Canada summer grant and waiving the interest on the federal portion of Canada student loans for the next year, more needs to be done. We listened to young Canadians from coast to coast to coast on what steps we could take to help them.

Budget 2021 takes those steps. We propose to extend the waiver on interest and maintain the doubling of Canada student grants until 2023. Waiving the interest allows graduates already in repayment to save money. Students and young Canadians will also benefit from the new Canada recovery hiring program, which will allow small businesses to hire new workers faster and at less cost to the businesses as they reopen.

Let us not forget the Canada summer jobs program that is helping over 100 young people just in my riding secure summer jobs this year.

Younger generations are the future of our country, and this budget is investing in them. We must move forward from this crisis, not backward. We must make our world better, not maintain the sta-

tus quo. This budget moves us forward, and I am proud to support it.

• (1235)

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the PBO has said that the provinces are not in any position to take on new permanent spending. Since they do not have the required 50% of the funds, it looks like this will be yet another failed Liberal program. How exactly does the member think the provinces will come up with the money?

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, the thing I am worried about is what would happen if we do not make these investments. It is very clear to see that if we decided not to invest in Canada, in Canadians, we would be far worse off.

It is important we all remember that we each need to do our part, and that everyone needs to be a part of the solution to build Canada back better.

[Translation]

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

It was interesting to hear her talk about women's participation in the war effort. Many women are on the front lines in the fight against COVID-19, given they work in health care. What is lacking in the health sector is resources, not standards.

Would the member agree that, rather than standards, what is needed is an increase in health transfers, which would benefit not only patients, but also workers, since it would improve their working conditions?

[English]

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for talking about health care. It is the most important thing right now because of COVID.

We are offering provinces more money all the time. They are getting essentially what they need, but it is how they are spending it. In the past, we had been very concerned that the provinces had not been spending the money on mental health issues in the way we had hoped they would, and now on long-term care. We need to focus on these areas as a federal government.

Government Orders

• (1240)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member said that child care was an economic must have, and I agree with that. I have talked to many folks in my riding, especially women, who have sacrificed their career because they simply cannot afford to pay their mortgage or their rent plus the high cost of child care.

However, another issue the government keeps neglecting is pharmacare. I have talked to so many people who say they cannot go to work because they cannot afford their medication and they or their loved ones are getting sick.

Recently, a woman who was just diagnosed with diabetes called me and said that she could not afford her rent or medication. She did not know what to do or how to make that decision.

When will the government commit to actually implementing something that will take a while to do? We need to start now. Why will the government not commit to that?

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, pharmacare is very important, and we are making steps toward pharmacare. We have started. We have the advisory council on the implementation of national pharmacare, which is starting to take us down this road. However, it does not happen overnight, and we need to do it along with the provinces.

There is no question that we are on the right track as far as pharmacare is concerned, and we will get there, because it is important for all Canadians.

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was just sitting here listening to the member's speech and all of a sudden I jumped out of my chair when she said that there was something in the budget for everyone. I have been bombarded by calls from seniors who are 65 to 74 years old who are not getting anything. We call them "junior seniors". In addition, it has been over a year since the pandemic, and I have new businesses that have absolutely zero support. Their stress level is at a peak. Why were they not part of the budget?

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, we are all very concerned about seniors. We are helping the seniors who need it most, those over 75, who maybe have come to the point where their savings are running out and they need extra money. People who are 65 and over will eventually get to that point and will probably need more assistance. We are doing what we can to ensure seniors are supported.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful to have the opportunity to speak to the budget implementation act and the impact, or lack thereof, that it will have on my constituents in Souris—Moose Mountain.

After two long years without a federal budget, the longest period without a budget in Canadian history, the Liberals have put forward this massive 700-page document that does very little to benefit those living in rural Saskatchewan. To say that I was appalled at the amount of unnecessary spending contained in the budget would be a gross understatement.

Under the government, Canada's deficit in 2020-21 has reached an astounding \$354 billion, and just this week, the parliamentary budget officer announced that his analysis actually showed a deficit

of \$370.8 billion. Furthermore, the budget proposes over \$101 billion in new spending over the next three years, over and above the usual amount needed to run the country. This is being done under the guise of helping Canada recover from the pandemic, yet the fact that there is no plan to pay this money back and return to balance shows just how short-sighted this budget truly is.

Another huge area of concern is the fact that both the Prime Minister in his most recent mandate letter to the Minister of Finance as well as a report from the parliamentary budget officer indicated last fall that they expected the minister to come up with a new fiscal anchor. This was not done, and there is nothing in the budget indicating that such an anchor has been established. This sets Canada up for further long-term debt.

When it comes to our national debt, the situation is just as bleak. In two years, the Prime Minister will have added half a trillion dollars to our national debt. In six years, he will have almost doubled the \$612 billion debt that was in place when he came into power. In fact, by next year, the Prime Minister will have added more to Canada's debt than all previous prime ministers combined. I wish I were exaggerating, but unfortunately the numbers do not lie.

The question that I and many other Canadians have is, who will be paying this back? In her budget speech, the Minister of Finance often spoke about families and their need for support in the short term, but what about the long term? At this rate, my great grandchildren will be paying the price for the government's financial mismanagement, and yet the Liberals continue to spend, spend, spend with no regard for future generations. Not my generation, not my problem seems to be the government's mantra when it comes to fiscal planning.

Speaking of rates, what happens when the interest rates go up? Let us think about that. What the government has presented is an election budget, yet other countries around the world have focused their pandemic budgets on job creation. The United Kingdom has tailored its budget toward funding for infrastructure as well as a super-investor tax credit which creates good jobs and actually gets some boots on the ground. France and Germany are both cutting taxes. These are G7 nations that have lower unemployment rates than we do, yet they create real jobs while we spend money on empty promises.

Government Orders

When I look at this budget through a local lens, it becomes obvious that this election budget was not intended to benefit southeast Saskatchewan. I do recognize that with the pandemic, we need to help those who have been affected by these new challenges, and there are some ways the budget does that. Measures like the suite of emergency financial support programs are essential since the downturn of the oil and gas market over the past seven years coupled with the pandemic has resulted in thousands of lost jobs in the energy industry and to small businesses. However, the non-existent support from the government for our natural resources industry further compounds our challenges.

One area that I was expecting greater support for was the agriculture industry and our Canadian farmers and ranchers. These hard-working people work tirelessly to provide Canada and the world with some of the highest quality produce available. Farmers are essential to our food security, yet the Liberal government has continued to make their lives more difficult and more expensive, especially through the measures like the carbon tax. As of April 1, it was increased to \$40 per tonne and will go up to \$170 per tonne by 2030.

In the budget, support for our farmers is as usual too little too late. One promise is that the government will provide \$50 million for the purchase of more efficient grain dryers. Many will know that a large part of the issue with the Liberal carbon tax is that farmers are being charged huge sums just to dry their grain to get it ready for market. This is a necessary part for farming, and wet weather conditions are not something within a farmer's control. This is not a new issue. As soon as the carbon tax came into effect, and certainly following the harvest from hell, farmers were vocal about their need for greater government support. It has taken two years for anything to be done on this.

At any point during this time, the Liberals could have rectified this issue behind closed doors, but they let farmers suffer while waiting for a long overdue budget to make a flashy announcement in advance of an election. In fact, the Prime Minister's cabinet appointed Prairies representative, the member for Winnipeg South Centre, recently stated that the added energy costs for farmers, notably for grain drying, had been a serious irritant in the farming community for a number of years. If he knew this, why has it taken so long and not fixed?

• (1245)

It is obvious that the Liberals are simply trying to placate Canadian farmers in advance of an election, but as I said, it is too little, too late.

When I ask Canadians where their food comes from, they unfortunately say the grocery store. I would like people to understand and appreciate the great land stewardship of the farmers who are actually producing that food. Prairie grain farmers adopted zero-till farming techniques decades ago and do not get any recognition for the great work they do in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. According to data released by the Western Canadian Wheat Growers, grain farmers in Canada are already a net-zero industry.

I have heard from many of my farmers who are seeding right now, and we look forward to seeing the crop in the ground, and also during past harvests about the big challenges they have using their

energy efficient, carbon-reducing technology and equipment because they do not have proper access to broadband Internet.

Following the presentation of the budget, Ms. Jolly-Nagel, the Saskatchewan director and past president of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers stated: "I have trouble downloading software for my equipment now and cannot wait for Earth observation satellites to be designed and sent into space. The federal government has stated it wants a 30% reduction in GHG by limiting nitrogen fertilizer use but has never consulted industry or farmers if this is even achievable." If the government wants farmers to do more to reduce GHGs, they need to listen to them and understand what rural Canada and rural Saskatchewan really means.

Another area that is important to my riding and to me personally is the use of carbon capture, utilization and storage, or CCUS, to reduce emissions in Canada. Since I became an MP, I have spent much time championing the incredible work that has been done in my riding at the Boundary Dam Power Station, the world's first large-scale CCUS project. While I am pleased that there is some recognition of CCUS in the budget, the devil is always in the details, or in this case, a lack of detail.

The budget announces \$319 million to support research, development and demonstrations that would improve the commercial viability of CCUS technology, but this is already being done. The Shand CCS feasibility study by the International CCS Knowledge Centre indicated that retrofitting their facility with CCUS could be done at 60% of the cost of Boundary Dam Unit 3 CCS and would make the Shand energy source carbon neutral, and some people say carbon negative with the fly ash that they ship to cement companies. Once again, the Liberals prefer to waste time and money on studies that have already been done rather than getting boots on the ground.

There is no indication as to when this money will be available, how it will be available and who will be eligible to receive it. We have seen this with Liberal programs before, such as the clean coal transition initiative, where communities are still struggling today to secure funds under ever-changing rules years after its inception.

The other measure regarding CCUS is an investment tax credit. This is another case of the devil being in the details, as further reading shows that this tax credit will not apply to enhanced oil recovery. By excluding EOR from this tax credit, the Liberal government is creating hurdles for new projects that might have otherwise qualified. The American version of this tax credit, the 45Q, includes enhanced oil recovery, and because of this, Canada will now be at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to incentivizing private corporate investment in the energy sector.

In closing, I think that most Canadians can see that this budget is an election budget that is big on idealistic spending without any promise of follow through. It spends taxpayer dollars at an alarming rate while using the pandemic as an excuse to do so. This indiscriminate spending needs to end so that we can work to create a secure Canada for future generations.

The finance minister listed in a number of her “sunny ways” things that were coming. Here is what is not coming: a balanced budget is not coming; lower interest rates are not coming; a reasonable debt and deficit are not coming. What is coming is a future where our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are paying off the debt.

• (1250)

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for focusing on the state of public finances and the need to monitor spending.

I would like to hear my colleague comment on another matter, specifically Ottawa's disturbing habit of interfering in Quebec's jurisdictions. One example of the link between finances and interference is the creation of the Canadian securities transition office. This constitutes a major intrusion into Quebec's jurisdictions. We really see this as an affront as well as proof that Ottawa wants to strip Quebec of its financial sector.

[English]

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, the member for Shefford speaks from a party that is looking to separate this country, whereas I speak from a party that wants to keep this country together. The more we can work on those steps to keeping this country together the better, but in order for that to happen, we need to have a government that stands up for all of Canada. We need a government that recognizes the great participation factor from Quebec as well as from the western provinces and the great work the western provinces have done year after year in providing energy and natural resources to all of this country.

• (1255)

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the StatsCan 2019 income survey reported that 349,000 people over the age of 65 live in poverty. In the budget, the Liberals have proposed to increase the OAS by 10% for seniors over 75 and that this would lift nearly 61,000 seniors out of poverty. This leaves a total of 288,000. Does he not agree that all seniors should be included in the 10%, so the other 288,000 seniors can get out of poverty?

Government Orders

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to a time when we can get together again to talk about these issues, like our days when we were working together on veterans affairs.

The member's comment is very true. The reality is that in its budget the government has chosen who it thinks should be getting benefits. The member is right. We have seniors who are not getting access to these benefits. This is alarming. Ultimately, when we look at things, we also have to look at aspects such as the OAS and the impact the huge increase is going to have. Recent reports have indicated it will actually skyrocket. Those are things that need to be addressed. Those things were addressed in the previous Harper government, but the Liberal government took that out and is paying no attention to it.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to go in a bit of a different direction. I really appreciate everything my colleague has mentioned regarding the shortfalls.

The Prime Minister's mandate letter to the Minister of Finance instructed her to not create any additional structural debt, and yet the flagship of this budget is a national day care program that would do just that. From the minister's speech, it seemed to me she was indicating this was going to be a major catalyst to restoring our economy coming out of COVID. That cannot happen, as the PBO officer said, with the provinces not having the funds they would need.

Does he see this as just another election announcement timed when Canada's moms, who really need to get back to work, will actually not have the support they need?

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I thank my northern neighbour for the great work she does for all Saskatchewanians and especially for the people of Yorkton—Melville.

She brought up a very good point. Yes, the government has put forward things in this budget that are strictly election issues in order to try to attract people and buy their votes. That is unfortunate. I think back to 40-some years ago to a gentleman by the name of Gord McNabb, who was a great friend of the family. I remember him talking way back then about child care and child care benefits. He probably would roll over in his grave today with what is going on.

Even back then, in the days of previous Liberal governments, Liberals were making these promises for things to happen but they never transpired. That is going to continue with the current government, as it says things but does not live up to what it talks about.

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, *kwe, kwe. Tansi.*

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Today I am participating in the debate from my office in the riding of Saint Boniface—Saint Vital in Winnipeg, the homeland of the Métis nation and Treaty 1 territory.

I am proud to support Bill C-30. There are many important reasons to proceed with passing this essential budget implementation bill. Although all those reasons are important to our collective future, the most important, in my view, has to do with how this bill will benefit indigenous peoples and those living in Canada's north.

Our recovery plan for jobs, growth and resilience will improve the lives of people in the north in a significant and measurable way through investments in the fight against climate change, education, health, well-being and young people.

Bill C-30 creates economic opportunities for northerners while responding to the many socioeconomic challenges that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

● (1300)

[English]

This bill addresses the need to fight climate change, and nobody is more aware of the need for urgent action on the climate crisis than those living in the north and in the Arctic. Canada's north is warming at three times the global rate, which has massive repercussions on the lives and livelihoods of northerners. The territories are experiencing increased wildfires, loss of sea ice, shoreline erosion, melting permafrost and adverse impacts on roads and infrastructure due to a change in climate. Indigenous peoples are experiencing its impact on their way of life, which is closely tied to land and water.

The good news is that those experiencing this would benefit from our plans to build back better. This is already apparent in places like Yukon, where the government is funding 100 climate change and clean-energy projects totalling over \$50 million. This funding has supported northern and indigenous climate leadership to prepare for climate impacts and introduce innovative renewable energy projects that are locally led.

I recently had the opportunity to meet virtually with three first nations in Yukon and northern British Columbia who were able to install microgrid systems to reduce reliance on diesel with funding from our northern reach program. It was so very impressive to see how this is helping to improve food security by installing solar panels on a teaching and working farm and providing power to fish and culture camps so people connecting with the land through traditional activities now have access to sustainable power. To continue supporting locally led solutions, budget 2021 commits a further \$25 million this year to the Government of Yukon to support its climate change priorities.

To help more northern communities transition to clean energy, budget 2021 proposes to invest \$40.4 million over three years, effective this fiscal year, to support the feasibility and planning of hydroelectricity and grid interconnection projects in the north, providing clean power to northern communities and helping reduce emissions from mining projects. This could advance projects such as the Atlin hydro expansion project in Yukon and the Kivalliq hydro-fibre link project in Nunavut. Just this week, I joined Kivalliq Inuit

Association in announcing an additional \$3 million to support progress on this very important project.

Budget 2021 also proposes to invest \$36 million over three years through the strategic partnership initiative. These funds would be used to build capacity for local economically sustainable clean-energy projects in indigenous communities.

The pandemic has hurt many, many small and medium-sized businesses, indigenous partners and particularly the tourism and hospitality sector in the north and we are responding with historic investments to help. Five hundred million dollars would be earmarked for a tourism relief fund which would be administered by the regional development agencies, supporting local tourism businesses in adapting their products and services to public health measures.

Budget 2021 also proposes to provide \$2.4 million to the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada to help the indigenous tourism industry rebuild and recover from the impacts of COVID. To help indigenous entrepreneurs start and grow businesses, and to create jobs to generate prosperity in their communities, the budget pledges to invest \$42 million over three years, starting this year, to expand the aboriginal entrepreneurship program. This would directly support indigenous-led businesses and help indigenous communities generate wealth by improving access to capital and business opportunities.

Our government is determined to ensure that northerners, and particularly young people, will be able to fully capitalize on increasing business opportunities and contribute their skills and talents to their communities. A reflection of this commitment is budget 2021's proposal to provide \$8 million over two years, starting this year, to the Government of Northwest Territories to facilitate the transformation of Aurora College to a polytechnic university. This would help create new opportunities in the Northwest Territories and prepare northerners for good jobs.

To further boost employment, budget 2021 would expand access to the travel component of the northern residents deduction. Northerners without employer-provided travel benefits would be able to claim up to \$1,200 in eligible travel expenses. This measure would take effect as of the 2020-21 tax year. We have also proposed \$117 million to renew the indigenous business community fund. This proposed funding would bring the total of indigenous community business fund support to \$234 million to ensure indigenous communities can continue to provide services and support jobs for their members through collectively owned businesses and micro-businesses affected by this pandemic.

Another way budget 2021 is designed to meet the needs of northerners is by increasing access to housing, which is integral to people's health and welfare. If approved by Parliament, this budget would provide immediate support of \$25 million this year to the governments of NWT and Nunavut as a down payment on the construction of 30 new housing units across the territories.

Indigenous peoples across the north would also have access to a wide range of enhanced programs and supports strengthened by budget 2021's proposed \$18-billion investment to close the gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. This would include \$4.3 billion over four years, starting in 2021-22, for the indigenous community infrastructure fund, a distinctions-based fund, to support immediate demands prioritized by indigenous partners, such as housing or other infrastructure.

● (1305)

[Translation]

The price of food in northern Canada is considerably higher than in the rest of the country. That is why budget 2021 proposes to provide \$163 million over three years to expand the nutrition north Canada program and enable me, as the Minister of Northern Affairs, to work directly with indigenous partners, including those in Inuit Nunangat, to combat food insecurity.

Last year, our government launched the harvesters support grant, which provides funding to help reduce the high costs associated with hunting and provide better access to traditional food. That is an essential component of food sovereignty.

Northerners will benefit from ongoing investments in the development of infrastructure and fast-track initiatives to end the national tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

The goals and objectives of Canada's Arctic and northern policy framework were developed jointly with Arctic and northern partners.

[English]

This budget reflects what I have heard from northerners since I became minister. It recognizes the important roles that northerners play in our country. It is a critical step forward to reconciliation with indigenous peoples. I encourage everyone to support this legislation.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to question the minister from Saint Boniface—Saint Vital on the budget. He talked a lot about support for

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indigenous communities and so on. I recently met with a number of the first nations bands in my riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap. They pointed out the difficulty in receiving funding for infrastructure projects. Some of the freshwater programs have been completed. They are looking at expanding their economy and the local economy through collaborative working relationships with local governments, and there are so many complications in trying to put that together.

The shortfall we see in this budget is that there is very little focus on long-term objectives for infrastructure development and so on. Would the member support abandoning the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which has been put in place and has failed dramatically at delivering infrastructure projects in Canada, and repurposing that funding toward collaborative infrastructure projects between first nations and local governments?

● (1310)

Hon. Dan Vandal: Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with the premise of the question. We are investing \$18 billion into indigenous communities over the next five years in partnership with Inuit nations, first nations and the Métis nation.

All indigenous nations will have access to the indigenous-based infrastructure funding, which is \$4.3 billion over four years. That is certainly over \$1 billion a year. It is a substantial infrastructure announcement. It is distinctions-based and its priorities will be determined by the indigenous nations themselves, which can include housing.

Our commitment to infrastructure is second to none and I am very proud of the progress we are making.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad my hon. colleague, the Minister of Northern Affairs, talked about the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry. The government has not taken action when it comes to the calls for justice. It does not have a plan. It does not have a framework.

We have lost three people from the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation in my riding who are currently under independent investigations by police that are not indigenous-led: Chantel Moore in New Brunswick; and Julian Jones, who died at the hands of the RCMP in Tla-o-qui-aht just a couple of months ago.

When is the government going to come back with a plan and reforms for the RCMP? These people cannot get a meeting with the Minister of Public Safety. I hope this minister will meet with them and listen to their concerns.

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Hon. Dan Vandal: Mr. Speaker, I agree that we all have much more work to do to meet the needs of indigenous women and girls. However, our government has invested over \$30 billion since 2015 in new funding over and above the base funding of the departments for health care, education, justice and infrastructure. In northern Manitoba alone, we have invested over \$1.5 billion for all of those preventative issues. We have introduced co-developed bills on child and family services and language.

We have made progress. However, there is so much more work to do. We need to keep working in collaboration.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

As my party's critic for status of women, I want to point out that we have been waiting a very long time for the government to implement the recommendations in the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I hope this will not turn into an election promise, which is what many of the measures in the budget seem to be. I hope we will see concrete action as soon as possible in honour of missing and murdered indigenous women.

My colleague had a lot to say about the environment and investment. It is good for the environment, and the government recently committed to some demanding targets. The problem with Bill C-12 is that its targets are not associated with actual objectives or an independent entity to monitor whether those targets are being met. The government is also pumping more and more money into pipelines and offshore drilling. We had a debate about Enbridge's Line 5 just yesterday, in fact. I would like my colleague to comment on the concrete environmental actions that the government must take as quickly as possible.

• (1315)

Hon. Dan Vandal: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for this important question. Her intervention included a number of questions.

Our government has invested over \$30 billion since 2015 through partnerships with indigenous nations in the areas of education, public health, justice, and child and family services. I believe that we have made excellent investments, but we still have a lot of work to do.

The highlights of this budget are children's services and education, in which we will invest \$31 billion over five years. In addition, we will invest \$20 billion over five years in the environment. In these times of environmental crisis, such investments are essential. In partnership with indigenous nations, we will also invest \$18 billion to address their needs.

[English]

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen nineteen and six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery." That is a quote from the great Charles Dickens in his novel *David Copperfield*. It was published way back in 1850, but is just as prescient as ever 171 years later. It is this basic principle of the

need to live within one's means that has stood the test of time, keeping people and countries out of the poorhouse century after century. However, with the pandemic, we have seen common sense flung out the window, baby, bathwater and all.

Under the guise of the unprecedented nature of COVID-19, we have seen the government wield the heavy hand of opportunistic change in this budget, adding 16 billion dollars' worth of new permanent spending while Canadians are too busy trying to keep food on their tables and clothes on their backs to fight back. In a finance committee dissenting report, the Conservative members stated:

Now is no time for risky experiments or fantastical utopias. Instead, we must do what has always worked: free enterprise. Only voluntary exchange of work for wages, investment for interest and product for payment allows free people "to do well by doing good"....

Unfortunately, the Minister of Finance has ignored the true value and dignity that work affords a person, and has thrown the dice on a plan to print as much money as she wants to spend, hoping that her assumptions of low interest rates and low inflation last forever. What about the assumption that interest rates will remain low for the long term? Has the finance minister run some what-if scenarios with her team to see how much could change if any one of her hunches fail? The Parliamentary Budget Officer has intimated that there is no wiggle room in the current budget for inflation or interest rates to rise without serious consequences. It looks like we got a budget full of unicorn dreams that is long on hope and short on reality.

What is the reality we are currently living in? I can say with full confidence that inflation has reared its ugly head at every hardware and grocery store across the country, hitting those who can least afford it the hardest. Not only has damage to the global supply chain kicked low inflation in the teeth, but Canadians find themselves short on cash for necessities every month. In the latest consumer debt index survey from MNP LTD, just over half of Canadians surveyed said they are, at most, \$200 per month away from being unable to pay all of their monthly bills and debt obligations. That is an incredibly scary statistic when we know that the cost of meat and dairy is rising, along with that of gas and rent, at a very steady pace.

With the continued implementation of quantitative easing, the Bank of Canada, in concert with the government, has decided to print money as fast as the government spends it. It has been proven by our own finance department that we do not need the huge sums of dollars the Bank of Canada is pumping off its printing presses. Our economy has been functioning well, with mortgage business increasing by 20% over the previous year. No one has been hoarding their dollars, which can be seen by the 20% increase in cash available on the market. The suggestion that these measures were necessary because of the risk of deflation has also been proven to be completely false.

As the government continues to spend, supported by the complicit printing presses at the Bank of Canada, our dollar is being seriously devalued, and the hardest hit are those who can least afford it. For those who rent, the rent is going up. For those going to the grocery store, the grocery bill is going up. For those getting gas at the gas pump, the gas bill is going up.

At the finance committee, the Governor of the Bank of Canada was adamant that he is completely independent from the government and the finance minister's policy decisions. However, let us take a deeper dive into what that independence actually looks like.

Last year our deficit was \$352 billion, and last year the Bank of Canada bought \$302 billion of that debt. This year our deficit will be \$154 billion, and lo and behold, the Bank of Canada will buy \$156 billion of that debt. Is it a mere coincidence that these numbers look so eerily similar, or can we all just admit that the governor has no choice but to respond to the policy decisions of the finance minister?

At committee, the Conservatives put forward the following recommendation: "Restore the independence of the Bank of Canada to ensure it focuses solely on its mandate of targeting inflation to 2 per cent a year." It is very deep within the report, but it is there, because we believe this is imperative for a strong economy.

● (1320)

As we see, inflation has risen above the 2% target, and the lock-step of government deficits and Bank of Canada debt purchases continues. It is clear that independence is not functioning as it should.

The business of creating dollars out of thin air that has been happening in our country simply debases the money that already exists. That is the money people have in their savings accounts. It is the money they got in last month's paycheques. It is the money they have been saving for down payments on their first homes. It now buys less than it did a year ago. The monetary policy this government is utilizing to cover its unhinged spending is costing Canadians big time. It is nothing but a tax by another name, and the poor middle class end up bearing the brunt of it.

The Liberal budget has been widely criticized by many economists for being more concerned with redistribution than with economic growth. The focus is not so much on earning the money, but on borrowing it, so much so that we will borrow more in the next six years than in the last 152 combined.

No new taxes were another recommendation that the Conservatives included in our dissenting report. The Financial Post recently reported that our finance minister has indicated her support for joining President Biden's plan for a global minimum corporate tax, urging all countries to do the same. As a matter of fact, she called the idea "a breakthrough moment". She made it clear that global interests are a priority over the best economic and financial interests of Canada, our workers and our young people, who will inherit our debt and our social programs.

What about \$10-a-day day care? It is the centrepiece of this budget. The path to getting every Canadian back to work, we hear, is making sure every woman can put her children in a government-run

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institution for a mere 10 bucks a day. The finance minister would have us believe that all the mothers out there have been dying for this one-size-fits-all solution.

As a matter of fact, what I hear from constituents is that they want choice. Some prefer to leave their preschool children with close family, perhaps with grandparents where they are able to share their cultural and moral values. Others might want to share child care responsibilities with their neighbours, giving them flexibility around their very complex schedules. A one-size-fits-all program just does not fit the needs of Canadian parents for flexibility and alternatives. Does this government really think that it knows better than a mother what sort of care would be in her child's interests?

Add to that the challenge of getting the provinces on board. The finance minister has made this promise with some big strings attached. Since she will only foot 50% of the bill, the provinces will have to cough up the rest. Right now they cannot afford it, according to our Parliamentary Budget Officer. From where I stand, it looks like a very empty promise meant only as part of an upcoming election platform. The Liberals have been pledging this for years, and reneging on it just as often.

When Liberals stand up in the House and talk about their record, I would urge Canadians to stop and think about how much their grocery bills have risen since the Liberals came to power, about how much it costs to fill their gas tanks at the pumps or how far away their dreams of owning their own homes have become. Under the Liberals' watch, everything has gone up in price.

As Conservatives, we know that there is nothing better for our country than having its young people aspire to new heights, develop new ideas, and work with their hands and their hearts to create new wealth and prosperity free from government overreach. It is our commitment to all Canadians to create opportunities for them to be the solution and the economic drivers of our recovery. It is Canadians' hard work and ingenuity that makes this country great, not the Liberal government. I am thankful for all that Canadians do for their communities.

● (1325)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her remarks, although I was particularly put out by the aspersions she cast upon the independent Governor of the Bank of Canada. She has made wild allegations, which I can only describe as a conspiracy theory, that somehow the Governor of the Bank of Canada has lost his independence from the Government of Canada. I attended the same finance committee meetings as the hon. member did, where the Governor of the Bank of Canada affirmed his independence. It demonstrates to me that the Conservatives are not serious about trying to form government when they ignore the independence of this important institution, which potentially has never been more important.

Private Members' Business

I will give the hon. member an opportunity to correct the words she put out on the floor of the House of Commons in her speech. Does she seriously believe that the government and the Governor of the Bank of Canada are working with one another in a way that runs contrary to the essential independence of the governor, or is she peddling a conspiracy theory for purely partisan, political reasons?

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the hon. member look at the numbers again that I mentioned in my speech. Our deficit last year was \$352 billion, and \$302 billion of debt was bought. This year, our deficit will be \$154 billion and lo and behold, as I mentioned, the Bank of Canada will buy \$156 billion of debt. It cannot be mere coincidence. These numbers look eerily similar and this is a massive problem. We need to get back to having the focus of the Bank of Canada be on the 2% inflation rate target that it had set for itself.

[Translation]

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

At the beginning, she seemed to be expressing disapproval of the government's extravagant spending.

Where would she like to make cuts? What does she think of my suggestion that we start by cutting subsidies to the oil industry?

[English]

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, I did not quite hear the end of the question, but what we have mentioned as Conservatives over and over is the fact that obviously programs were absolutely necessary during the pandemic, but they needed to be targeted programs that actually helped those in need. We still do not have well-targeted programs, and many people are falling between the cracks. Look at the HASCAP: Very few people have taken that up and they are the most impacted in this pandemic. Again, it is about doing programs that actually work and are targeted.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member on one hand is saying that the government should not spend so much on programs, that we need to be mindful of the debt and that we cannot spend in these difficult times. On the other, she is saying that we should assist Canadians who need help during the pandemic.

We really cannot suck and blow at the same time. The truth of the matter is that Canadians need help during this difficult time. Would the member support the call for the government to ensure that seniors and people with disabilities also get the support they need? That is not in the budget at the level at which it is needed.

• (1330)

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate my answer from the previous question. It is very important that the programs instituted actually work, and that we are not spending more than we should be spending. We have seen many, many programs not work well, but I agree that we need to ensure that those with disabilities and seniors are well supported. Absolutely. As the member mentioned, they are not well targeted either.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate and support early childhood education and

day care programs for those who want them, especially those who are most vulnerable as single or low-income parents who need or want to work and deserve to have quality day care spaces designed and available for them. However, choice in child care is a high priority for mothers and fathers in my riding, including the options of using family or friends, or participating in a co-operative. There is an amazing co-operative in my riding of Yorkton—Melville.

Under the government's national child care plan, will all working parents be required to use a national, government-run child care system as their only option to receive financial support while participating in the workforce?

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more that choice is what parents are looking for in their day care. If we want to keep mothers working, it would be important to ensure they have choice and have day cares that are flexible, rather than very set, stringent nationally run government day care systems. We need to look at how we can ensure that women will be given choices that fit their complex schedules.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY ACT

The House resumed from April 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-210, An Act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act (organ and tissue donors), be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-210 at third reading. I have already spoken to this bill in the past, last November.

This bill seeks to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act to allow the CRA to enter into agreements with the provinces and territories to collect, via income tax returns, any information that Quebec and the provinces require to establish or maintain an organ donor registry. The second part of the bill would allow the CRA to disclose this information to the provinces and territories with which it has entered into an agreement.

I will discuss three different aspects of this bill. First, I will lay out our party's position on this matter. Then I will describe the state of organ donation in Quebec, Canada and the world, and share some examples of cases. Finally, I will talk a little about the ongoing difficulties caused by the pandemic for organ donation.

I will start by stating the Bloc Québécois's position even though this bill will not affect Quebec at all. Let me explain. We still want Quebec to administer its own single tax return. That is no secret. Even though we have not yet made that happen, Quebec can get all the information it needs to have its own income tax return. The Bloc Québécois therefore has no problem with this bill, but Quebec is unlikely to want to enter into an agreement with the Canada Revenue Agency because Quebec, as I said, already has its own tax return.

Let me reiterate that what the Bloc Québécois wants is to implement a single tax return—I am giving a shout-out to my colleague from Joliette—that is administered by Quebec, which means that this bill would not affect Quebec at all. Even if Quebec wanted to enter into an agreement, we would have no problem with the idea of sharing this information. Quebec is free to enter into an agreement or not. This bill does not commit Quebec to anything or limit it in any way. Allowing the Canada Revenue Agency to collect information as part of an agreement with a participating province and sharing that information with the provinces is not a problem. It actually makes sense because the CRA handles all the tax returns outside Quebec.

I will give a few examples where that has already been put in place in Canada. Nova Scotia recently passed a law to reverse consent for organ donation. Nova Scotians are now deemed to be consenting unless they state otherwise. Nova Scotia's decision to adopt this policy of presumed consent to organ donation has pushed some provinces to consider whether that is the best solution to increase the number of donors. Survivors and loved ones think that it is, but the answer is not that simple for some experts.

Nova Scotia adopting legislation that assumes all citizens are organ donors has given the rest of the country something to think about. The Premier of Nova Scotia, Stephen McNeil, hopes that his initiative will snowball, but for now, nothing is certain. While New Brunswick is looking at the idea closely, the governments of Quebec and British Columbia will be closely monitoring what happens in Nova Scotia, and Ontario says it is happy with its system.

Some European countries like France and Spain adopted presumed consent several years ago. At this time, the data do not show a clear correlation between presumed consent and an increase in the number of donors. Marie-Chantal Fortin, a nephrologist and bioethicist at CHUM, said that it is a simple solution to a complex problem. She pointed out that countries with presumed consent like Spain have excellent organ donation rates, yet the United States, which does not have presumed consent, also has a similarly high organ donation rate.

What experts do agree on is that better training is needed for medical teams and, above all, people need to talk about organ donation with their friends and family. This is yet another argument for improving funding for the health care system.

This debate is gaining momentum in Quebec. I once had the opportunity to witness a heated debate on this topic at a policy convention. Quebecers are supposed to indicate on their health card whether they consent to organ donation in the event of death. Quebec has all the information it needs to improve the situation.

Private Members' Business

According to experts, increasing the supply of organs would be very helpful, but we need more doctors who specialize in organ and tissue retrieval and transplants. This brings us back to the subject that the Bloc Québécois is still advocating for, which is the importance of increasing health transfers to Quebec and the provinces. It is only logical. Without additional funding, it would be difficult for Quebec and the provinces to have these medical specialists. The federal government had a chance to increase these transfers in the latest budget, but all we heard was radio silence.

In addition, the number of potential donors is relatively limited, which further complicates things. Statistics drawn from current events speak for themselves. There is not enough supply to meet the demand. Even though the number of transplants has increased by 33% over the past 10 years, there is still a shortage of organs in Canada, according to the latest data published by the Canadian Institute for Health Information, or CIHI.

● (1335)

In 2008, 4,351 Canadians were on a transplant waiting list according to CIHI figures. In the same year, 2,782 organ transplants were performed in Canada, and 223 people died while waiting for transplants.

The increased need for organ transplantation is in part being driven by the rising number of Canadians diagnosed with end-stage kidney disease, which went up 32% over the 10 years studied. One of the reasons for the increased number of transplants is that many countries have expanded deceased organ donation practices beyond brain death cases to include donation after cardiac death, meaning the heart has permanently stopped beating.

This has led to an increase of almost 430% in the number of donation-after-cardiac-death organs used for transplantation, from 42 in 2009 to 222 in 2018. The number of donors after brain death also increased by 21% between 2009 and 2018. That is an encouraging trend, given that a deceased donor can provide up to eight organs.

Data published by CIHI also reveal that there were 555 living donors in Canada in 2018. These are people who donated a kidney or a lobe of liver. There were also 762 deceased donors in Canada. The number of deceased donors increased by 56% between 2009 and 2018, whereas the number of living donors remained stable.

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I will now talk about a few cases. I was recently very touched by the testimony of a mother who spoke about her son, Justin Lefebvre, who drowned at a party. He unfortunately died far too young. As we can read on the website, Justin, who was eight years old, became a superhero because, by donating his organs, he saved the lives of four children and helped them regain their health. One of his friends and his family had the idea of creating a foundation to honour his memory, but especially to promote organ donation, increase awareness and raise money for research. I therefore invite members to visit the Fondation Justin Lefebvre website to find out more about this touching story. His mother also wrote a book about his story, which I recommend reading.

I also already talked about Sammy, a young boy from Montreal who was diagnosed four years ago with Kawasaki syndrome, a childhood illness that leads to heart complications. He has been living with a new heart for three years now. He is in good health and obviously believes in mandatory organ donation.

Linda Paradis's life was turned upside down at age 60, more than two years ago, when her lungs started to deteriorate. This active businesswoman from Quebec suddenly learned she had a few weeks to live. She ended up getting a double lung transplant. She believes in presumed consent, but knows that no doctor can remove organs without the family's consent.

I would like to add that the pandemic has exacerbated problems with organ donation. According to an article published in July 2020, the organ donation rate is the lowest it has been in five years because of COVID-19. The provincial organization responsible for organ management counted only two people who donated organs to save five patients in April 2020, while the number of donors was already low. Despite the resumption of activities in April, Transplant Québec noticed a 50% drop in the number of organ donors and a 60% drop in transplants for the second quarter of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019.

In closing, I hope that we can come up with better solutions in this debate so that we can save lives without feeling uncomfortable talking about the signature on the back of the card. I invite people to visit the Facebook page "Le Don d'organes parlons-en, parlez-en". Beyond just talking about it, however, I would suggest that we do something about it.

• (1340)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a huge honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-210.

I want to start by sharing a story with my colleagues in the House of a fellow Vancouver Islander, Paul Underhill. Paul lives with cystic fibrosis. This past April he completed a five kilometre run and a five kilometre walk to commemorate the double lung transplant he received 10 years ago.

Paul was raising awareness for BC Transplant who say that there are more than 700 people currently on a wait-list for an organ transplant in British Columbia. Around 5,500 British Columbians are alive today because of organ donation. In the past year alone, 451 lives were saved because of organ donors.

Paul stated:

I want people to realize how much of an impact it can have. Just two minutes out of your life to register and you can literally save a life.

Inspired by Paul and the stories of others, some not so fortunate, I am honoured to rise today to speak to this bill. The bill was tabled by my good friend from Calgary Confederation, who has been determined on this bill. In the last Parliament, he tabled Bill C-316, which I was honoured to be a seconder of, and also worked with my Liberal colleague from Oakville North—Burlington on this bill. This bill should not be a partisan issue. When it comes to saving lives, lives that could be saved through the help of others, we should be working collectively together. Again, I want to thank my good friend from Calgary Confederation for his determination to see this through.

Bill C-210 allows the federal government to coordinate with provinces and territories to allow Canadians to register as an organ and tissue donor through their federal tax filing. We know Canadians are currently dying, as I stated, on wait-lists because our organ donation rate is unacceptably low. At present, only 20% of Canadians have joined their province's organ and tissue registry. This is unacceptable.

At the end of 2018, the most recent year of available data, there were 4,351 people across Canada on a waiting list for an organ transplant, including 2,890 who were active on that list. In total, 223 people died while waiting for a transplant. In order to meet this demand, improved coordination across provinces and territories is critically needed.

As New Democrats, we believe that we must make every possible effort to ensure that every Canadian who needs an organ or tissue transplant receives it. One donor could save up to eight lives and benefit more than 75 people, and yet at 18 donors per million people, Canada's current donation rate puts us in the lower third of developed countries.

Allowing Canadians to register as an organ and tissue donor through their tax returns would help increase registration rates, improve consent rates and help build a donation culture in Canada.

As New Democrats, we support the adoption of presumed consent or an opt-out system for organ and tissue donation. We understand that such an approach would make a huge difference in the number of organs available to save lives.

One potential concern that has been raised in association with the bill is the unauthorized sharing of personal information. However, individuals would still be required to consent to the sharing of that information before the agency would share that information with other levels of government for the purpose of being added to an organ and tissue donor registry. That is covered.

In the previous Parliament, the Standing Committee on Health undertook a study on organ donation in Canada. It met with key stakeholders. This bill aligns with long-standing advocacy and legislative work of New Democrats around organ donation. In February 2016, the MP for Edmonton Manning, whose own son has been the recipient of three donated livers, reintroduced a private member's bill calling for a national registry. Similar bills had previously been introduced seven times, by a Liberal and two New Democrats. Lou Sekora tabled it. New Democrat Judy Wasylycia-Leis tabled it. Another New Democrat, Malcolm Allen, in 2009 and again in 2013 tabled it.

Unfortunately, in the last Parliament, the Liberal caucus voted to defeat the member for Edmonton Manning's bill. This bill aligns with long-standing advocacy and legislative work, as I have cited, of New Democrats around organ donation. The bill is essentially a critical piece to creating a pan-Canadian organ donor registry, and it needs to be pushed forward.

● (1345)

The previous bill, Bill C-316, which passed in the House of Commons, went to the upper house where it stalled and died in the past Parliament. It is shameful that people's lives are being lost because of politics.

The Liberals, again, previously killed the pan-Canadian registry without studying it. The push for a rapid implementation of a pan-Canadian data and performance system for organ donation needs to be moved quickly, and we are offering our non-partisan support for this sensible proposal.

The Liberals saw this pass, it went to the Senate and they had ample time to implement the contents of the bill that could have saved lives. I urge the government for quick passage and for all members of Parliament to support the bill and get it to the upper house. I urge the upper house to pass this and give it royal assent quickly, because people's lives are at stake and the sense of urgency could not be greater.

I want to talk, more important, about some stories, but I will get to that in a second.

As New Democrats, we have consistently advocated for the adoption of a presumed consent or opt-out system for organ donation. It is an approach that would make a huge difference in the number of organs available to save lives. Unlike our current opt-in system, an opt-out approach would automatically register all citizens for organ donation unless they chose to indicate otherwise.

I will speak a bit about countries with opt-out systems that consistently record higher donation rates than opt-in countries like ours. Indeed, this approach has helped to make Spain a world leader in organ donation, which the previous speaker just spoke about, over the last 25 years. In Austria, the donor rate quadrupled after instituting opt-out legislation, and similar regulations in Belgium doubled kidney donations. The most important success of this system has been that it has led to organ donation being routinely considered when a patient dies, regardless of the circumstances of death.

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I have heard from many people, stories of Canadians who have donated organs, and they inspire me.

Meghan Walker, a good friend of mine from Parksville, reached out to me last night to share her story. She donated her liver to her best friend, Michelle, saving her life. Michelle has two young children. She had one before the transplant and one since the transplant. She has a loving family, and that organ donation kept her alive. It saved her life.

Lorelie Rozzano from Nanaimo recently shared a story with me through my childhood friend, Bonnie Bartlett. It is about her daughter, Shannon McIntosh, who received a transplant. She told me this story, which I will share. She said, "I'll never forget hearing my daughter needed a liver transplant and that she only had a few months to live. I watched my daughter waste away as she fought to hold on. Then came the call. It was bittersweet. What brought us hope brought sorrow to another family." This is too often the case.

She went on to say, "On February 1, 2021, Shannon got her new liver. One day later, she was standing. A week later, she was walking around the hospital floor. Four weeks later, she was walking around the block. Eight weeks later, she was walking ten thousand steps at a time. Now I can barely keep up with her. Through the process, Shannon learned her donor was a young person. She cried when she heard that. There are no words big enough to describe our gratitude to the donor's family. I hope to meet them one day and to say thank you in person. Their decision to be an organ donor gave our family the most precious gift of all, the gift of life."

Shannon, Michelle and Paul would not be here without donors, without the people who had the goodwill to put their names on these lists. Many others overlook that, but would like to be donors. We need to fast-track this legislation, because we know thousands of people are not as lucky as Shannon, Michelle and Paul. This is an opportunity for us to stand united.

Again, I want to thank my friend from Calgary Confederation for using his slot in the draw, he was first this time for parliamentarians, and for his determination to see this through. Let us get behind him, let us get behind all those people on those waiting lists and let us save some lives and work together.

* * *

● (1350)

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

BILL C-19—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-19, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act, COVID-19 response.

Private Members' Business

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a great pleasure to rise today in this chamber to speak to Bill C-210, An Act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act, organ and tissue donors.

This is a common-sense, non-partisan piece of legislation that should be supported by every single member of this House. I want to congratulate my friend, the hon. member for Calgary Confederation, for this great initiative.

Most Canadians would agree that donating their organs is an important thing to do. We all know that it can save lives. In fact, it is estimated that organ donation by one person can save up to eight lives. A single tissue donor can improve the lives of up to 75 people. Something that many people do not know is that there are three ways that they can donate here in Canada. The first is after neurological determination of death, what is commonly called brain-dead. The second is after circulatory death, or when someone's heart stops. Let us not forget the third one, which is living organ donors where someone can give away certain organs or parts of their organs while still alive. Living donors often give part of their liver, pancreas, intestine or a lobe of their lung to a family member in need, but it does not have to be a family member; living donors can donate to anyone in need.

While we often use the term organ donation, I want to make it clear that we are also including tissues and that tissues are also critical to improve the lives of others. In fact, tissue donation is often more commonplace. People may be surprised to learn that skin can be donated as well; so can tendons and even eyes. A donated heart valve can save a life. One can also be a living donor and donate tissues. Bone marrow is a common procedure that many of us are aware of and so is the most common tissue that we all donate, which would be blood.

To give everyone a sense of what impact the donation of one person's organs can make, let us look at the tragic case of Logan Boulet. Logan, who died on April 7, 2018, in the aftermath of the tragic Humboldt Broncos bus crash, was an organ donor. Six other people were able to have their lives saved through his organs. Our annual Green Shirt Day was created to honour, remember and recognize all the victims and families of that fatal crash and to continue Logan's legacy by inspiring Canadians to talk to their families and register as organ donors.

I have always figured that, if we ask them, most people would indicate an interest in donating an organ, but I also figured that the majority of them would not, for various different reasons. When preparing to give this speech, I learned the actual numbers. The difference between those who support organ donation and those who are organ donors is even more stark than I expected. Ninety per cent of Canadians approve of organ and tissue donation, but only

20% are actually registered as organ donors. That is an astounding 70% gap, which needs to be addressed. Only about 21 in a million Canadians actually become an organ donor. Spain has the highest organ donation rate. It is twice that of Canada, at 43.4 people per million. That still seems like a low number, but those extra numbers do save lives.

Every day in this country, close to 5,000 of our fellow Canadians desperately need an organ transplant. Hundreds of them die waiting for that transplant. What is the problem? Why are so many people who indicate an interest not registered to donate their organs? There are a number of factors, each of which is addressed by this excellent bill.

The organ donation network in this country is managed by each province and territory. Each one has a different system to encourage people to sign up as an organ donor. Some are more successful than others, but all are based on the opt-in premise and usually related to their driver's licence or their health care card. For those of us who have signed up as organ donors, it would appear to be a successful system, but that certainly would not be accurate. As I outlined earlier, using the existing opt-in method has given Canada one of the poorest organ donor rates in the industrialized world. In fact, compared to our peers, Canada comes in at number 19 globally. I know we can all do better.

When we talk to people in the field, they say it is always education that matters. Simply put, there is not enough awareness about how to become an organ donor. We need more people to know about it, but we also need to make it easier. It is not simple and it sure is not straightforward.

• (1355)

People have to sort through a lot of paperwork, and it is often the last thing people think of when getting their health care card or driver's licence. In today's busy click-based world, we need to make it as easy and straightforward as possible for everyone to do. We need to make sure it is right there in people's faces so that saying yes to saving a life is just as easy as checking a box.

Also problematic, especially for those needing organ donations, is the declining rate of young people who have actually passed their driving test and received their driver's licence in provinces where being an organ donor is linked to driver's licences. Members may be surprised to learn that only 69% of 19-year-olds have a driver's licence today. This is a 20% drop from the previous generation and a full 31% of our youth who could not agree to become organ donors even if they wanted to in some of those provinces.

Even more surprising is when we look at today's 16-year-olds. We see an incredible 47% decline in licensed 16-year-old drivers today versus a generation ago. I would argue that if we broke these numbers down further, the numbers would be even lower for youth living in our major cities, where urban transit, biking and more walkable neighbourhoods further depress the need for a driver's licence. That is a very low number of potential organ donors for the future, especially in major cities.

In short, if we are relying on driver's licences to recruit the youth of today to be tomorrow's organ donors, we are already facing an uphill battle. Using health cards may be more effective, but neither is as effective as it could be. We know that we can do better.

The member for Calgary Confederation has proposed a way to make organ donations easier for everyone. It is a way that will ensure that our youth are more likely to be included. It also makes doing something that we all find painful, which is taxes, a little more worthwhile. Bill C-210 would allow people to sign up to be an organ donor while completing their tax return. Put another way, doing taxes may help someone save a life. It takes a little sting out of doing taxes, does it not?

I think we can all agree that most Canadians know that they can register to be on the voters list when doing their taxes. In fact, I would estimate that is how most of us do it already. If passed, Bill C-210 would have a section added right there on page one of the tax form alongside the section from Elections Canada. If a Canadian agrees to be an organ donor, then their information will be provided to their respective province or territory. It is that simple. Even members of the House of Commons would be able to help promote it, as our staff would be able to highlight this section whenever our offices are put on clinics to help our constituents with their taxes.

For whatever reason, there will never be a 100% organ donation rate. I know that this simple and straightforward change would increase our dismal number and that it would save lives. The most surprising thing about the bill is that it actually needs to be done at all. It is such a practical solution that one would assume this is the way it always has been done, even though it is not.

My colleague from Calgary Confederation came close in the last Parliament to making it reality. This bill could be passed quickly and unanimously through all stages in the House. It is my hope that in this same spirit, it continues to move quickly through this Parliament again. There are thousands of Canadians and their families counting on us to do the right thing. I want to thank the member for Calgary Confederation for introducing this excellent piece of legislation.

My father passed away during the election process. I had to drive to see him with my sister. He was 80 years old. He unfortunately had not filled that out. He had a brain aneurysm. They asked whether he would want to donate his organs and my sister and I knew my father would want to do that if given the opportunity. We did sign off on that, but I think if it was simpler, my father would have made that decision ahead of time and it would not have been something that we had to do.

Private Members' Business

I thank my friend, the member for Calgary Confederation, for this bill. I urge all members to push this through as quickly as possible.

• (1400)

[Translation]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am also very pleased to speak to the importance of creating and maintaining an organ and tissue donor registry for every province and territory in Canada.

There are currently far too few Canadians on the list of organ and tissue donors, and that needs to be remedied. The Government of Canada is firmly committed to improving the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system in Canada for Canadians to have quicker and more efficient access to this care.

I have to thank the member for Calgary Confederation for bringing attention back to the issue of organ and tissue donation by introducing Bill C-210, an act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act with regard to organ and tissue donors. Making this change to the Canada Revenue Agency Act will certainly benefit Canadians by considerably increasing the number of potential donors in Canada.

The Government of Canada will support Bill C-210.

[English]

The Government of Canada recognizes the value of organ and tissue donation and transplantation. It also recognizes the important role it has to play in protecting the health and safety of Canadians, and has made several investments to date to support this goal. For example, since 2018 Health Canada has been leading the organ donation and transplantation collaborative. In addition to Health Canada's professionals, this collaborative engages with the provinces and territories, patient and family groups, representatives, researchers, clinical organ and tissue donation organizations and Canadian Blood Services.

I want to note that Canadian Blood Services, a not-for-profit charitable organization funded by the Government of Canada, manages the national waiting list and interprovincial organ-sharing registry. Part of the collaborative's mission is to improve the efficiency of the donation and transplant system in Canada. I can assure members that, in partnership with the Government of Canada, it is working hard to establish leading practices, strengthen professional education and raise public awareness to improve organ tissue donations in Canada.

Private Members' Business

● (1405)

[Translation]

Second, as a reminder of the Government of Canada's commitment to organ and tissue donation and transplantation, I would like to mention the investments made in budget 2019.

Our government allocated \$36.5 million over five years starting in 2019-20 and \$5 million a year after that to Health Canada. This money is earmarked to develop a pan-Canadian data and performance system for organ donation and transplantation. Improving consistency and quality in data and allowing more donors and recipients to be effectively matched are priority objectives of this investment.

The Government of Canada is investing these significant amounts to help Canadians move to a more coordinated and effective approach to organ and tissue donation and transplantation. Bill C-210 would do this through the addition of subsections 63.1(1) and (2). I firmly believe that we will be taking another step towards increasing the number of donors on the waiting list in Canada.

[English]

Currently, each province and territory in Canada is responsible for creating and maintaining its own organ and tissue donor registry. Each province and territory is also responsible for obtaining informed consent from every enrolled donor. The legal requirements for donor suitability and informed consent, which fall under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, are complex and vary widely across Canada.

For this reason, the amendment to Bill C-210 would allow the CRA to work in partnership with each jurisdiction to reach an agreement under the modification of paragraphs 63.1(1) and (2). In implementing some of the amendments in Bill C-210, the CRA would continue to respect the important role of the provinces and territories in organ and tissue donation, as well as to ensure the personal information of Canadians is handled in a secure manner.

The Government of Canada has full confidence in the CRA's ability to negotiate these agreements and to prioritize the safekeeping of Canadians' personal information. Ultimately, this initiative would advance the partnerships with provinces and territories that are essential to making real, positive changes for Canadians in organ and tissue donation.

[Translation]

That said, I should point out that the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge proposed a much simpler, faster and more direct method that would have achieved the same result.

Rather than having the Canada Revenue Agency directly collect donor consent on behalf of the provinces and territories, which would involve long negotiations because each province and territory has different eligibility criteria, the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge proposed asking Canadian taxpayers whether they would like to receive information about organ and tissue donation in their province or territory so they could decide whether to register to be added to the donor list.

The CRA would then confidentially provide the names of these potential donors to the provinces and territories in question, which would then send documentation to these potential donors and get the appropriate registration process started.

● (1410)

[English]

For this reason, the amendment proposed by the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge would have deleted the reference of proposed subsections 63.1(1) and 63.1(2) in the current bill, which refer to the income tax returns filed under paragraph 150(1)(d) of the Income Tax Act.

This method was inspired by the approach taken by the Government of Ontario, which includes a separate page in the Ontario taxpayers' income tax return for provincial benefits. Once the CRA has processed an Ontario tax return, this benefit information is forwarded to the Ontario government, which processes the benefit using its own system and methodology.

While I regret that the amendments proposed by my colleague from Vaughan—Woodbridge were not adopted, the government and I will nevertheless continue to support this bill.

[Translation]

In conclusion, there are far too few organ and tissue donors on waiting lists in Canada. However, by working together at the national level, we can improve the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system to ensure that Canadians have timely and effective access to care. Furthermore, if this bill is passed, which we hope it is, the government sincerely believes that the Canada Revenue Agency can play a significant role in this process.

[English]

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be here today with my colleagues to speak to Bill C-210, an act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act (organ and tissue donors), which was tabled by my colleague and friend from Calgary Confederation. It is important to note that this critical legislation was tabled in the House in the previous session, passing the House, but dying on the Order Paper in the Senate when Parliament dissolved for the last election. When the hon. member for Calgary Confederation tabled the bill, it was seconded by members from all parties and supported by numerous transplant organizations and doctors.

Private Members' Business

Currently, 4,600 Canadian are awaiting a life-saving organ transplant. Polls have shown that 90% of Canadians approve of organ and tissue donation, but the reality is about only 25% of Canadians have registered their consent with the province or territorial registry where they live. This creates numerous issues that I will address shortly, but Bill C-210 is simple. The legislation asks Canadians when filing their taxes if they consent to having the provincial or territorial government informed of their desire to be added to the organ and tissue donor registry in the province or territory.

One hurdle to this is that currently the Canada Revenue Agency forbids the use of the income tax form for any purpose other than tax administration. For this simple change to be implemented, asking a simple question regarding organ and tissue donation, a legal exemption needs to be created. This has been done before to allow Elections Canada to ask Canadians for updated contact information, so it is not out of context.

Making a simple line addition to the tax form would have little to no cost implications and it would not infringe on any provincial jurisdictional concerns or create any privacy concerns. The legislation would allow for the use of established protocols for information sharing between the federal government and provinces as they currently use an encrypted method to share sensitive information. Another reason that this simple addition to the tax form makes sense is that we see the current voluntary method of registering is not proactive or effective.

Another unfortunate complicating factor with donation, particularly when someone passes away, is a grey area that exists for hospitals and families. Sometimes there is confusion between family and what exactly the wishes of the deceased are with respect to organ and tissue donation.

In the Standing Committee on Health report on organ donation in Canada, Dr. Levy, vice-president of Medical Affairs and Innovation at Canadian Blood Services, says, "it behooves us not to miss the opportunity...to use that donation of an organ or set of organs."

In 2016, 260 Canadians died while waiting for a transplant. While Canada has seen an uptake in living and deceased organ donations, Canada ranks among the top 20% of countries in the world when it comes to deceased donor rates. It was also noted that those rates were half the rate of some other high-performing countries in the world, for example, Spain.

Dr. Levy noted to the committee "Our living donation rate, on the other hand, compares quite favourably internationally...Canada ranked 14th internationally for living donors in 2016", even with the rates declining or staying stagnant. We can do better; we need to do better. If we do not make changes now, the issue is only going to get worse.

Currently, donation rates are not meeting the needs of patients' needs. There is a fragmented approach across the country with respect to donation programs and some areas are considered the gold standard while others are facing challenges. It is incumbent upon us in the House to ensure that provinces have the tools to deliver for those in need. Supporting the private member's bill of my colleague from Calgary Confederation is the smartest and most effective way of doing that right now.

Several issues with respect to organ donation in Canada were highlighted to the committee in testimony. Some gaps in the systems and reporting and classification of the need and type of donation needed are a couple.

A couple of things jumped out to me as I was researching for this topic. The total annual costs of dialysis range from \$56,000 to \$107,000 per patient, where the cost of a transplant is about \$65,000 in year one and \$23,000 in subsequent years. It is estimated the health care system would save up to \$84,000 per patient per transplant annually.

The National Transplant Research Program explained to the committee that organ transplantation was not only a treatment option for people facing organ failure, it was becoming the preferred treatment for ailments such as type I diabetes, kidney disease, cystic fibrosis, heart failure and congenital heart disease, lymphoma, myeloma and leukemia.

• (1415)

Giving the provinces the ability to obtain accurate and up-to-date information on donation intentions allows them to ensure their wait-lists are accurate. Knowing who intends to donate through a legally binding declaration would further address consistency for provinces when it comes to measuring and reporting those willing to donate so that they can better prepare. The member for Calgary Confederation's private member's bill would address all of these. This is not a political issue. As my colleague said in his original speech in the previous session, this is a human issue.

Anyone in this House, family or friends, could need donor organs or tissue at any time. Adding a simple line item to the tax form could save hundreds of lives. If we couple that with increased public education and awareness, we could see even more registrations. We saw in the fall of 2018, in the tragic accident with the Humboldt hockey team, that one of the victims, young Logan Boulet, had registered for a donation. That donation saved six lives, as Ms. Ronnie Gavsie, President and Chief Executive Officer, Trillium Gift of Life Network noted at committee when testifying.

The time has come for this legislation to pass this House and the Senate. My colleague from Calgary Confederation has spoken eloquently and dedicated his efforts to his friend, Robert Sallows. The legislation has received support from all parties in this House and stakeholders have been universally supportive of the bill. Families who have loved ones awaiting this are welcoming this legislation. It is now up to everyone in this House to make sure that we do not delay this much-needed legislation any further. We owe it to the hundreds of people who pass away every year on the wait-list. We owe it to the organizations on the front lines and we owe it to the provinces to give them the tools they need to adequately support and deliver their donation programs.

Private Members' Business

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. Hearing none and seeing none, we will now invite the hon. member for Calgary Confederation for his right of reply. The hon. member has up to five minutes.

The hon. member for Calgary Confederation.

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you know very well because it was mentioned numerous times today, this bill got its second chance in this Parliament when my name was drawn first in the private member's bill lottery. It was you, Mr. Speaker, who drew my name out of a hat, so I owe you big time. I thank you sincerely.

This was first introduced in the last Parliament as Bill C-316 and it passed unanimously at all stages. Unfortunately, it died in the Senate when the 2019 election was called. Here we are today with Bill C-210. It also enjoyed the same unanimous support at all stages. Hopefully an election will not be called before the Senate has the opportunity to pass this into law, assuming it passes in the House next week.

There are so many people I need to thank, I do not even know where to begin. First and foremost is my assistant, Terence Scheltema. His help throughout this whole process has been immense and I cannot thank him enough. Of course, I also thank the member for Oakville North—Burlington, the member for Vancouver Kingsway and the member for Courtenay—Alberni, who kindly helped on my behalf to ensure unanimity and a quick passage.

I thank my colleagues on the health committee, who went above and beyond to ensure that the organ donation question would be on the front page of the income tax form. It was clearly identified at committee that they wanted this question on the front page of the income tax form, along with the Elections Canada question. I thank them sincerely for that. I thank the 20 members from all parties who seconded my bill and the ones who spoke on this bill throughout the entire process.

There are also some people behind the scenes who made this bill a reality and did some of the heavy lifting and careful navigation through this process. I need to thank procedural clerks Marie-France Renaud, Caroline Massicotte and Isabelle Dumas, and leg-

islative counsel Nathalie Caron and Sylvie Bednar. As well, I want to thank three government staff, in particular, for their non-partisan assistance and co-operation: ministerial assistants Janick Cormier and Christina Lazarova, as well as parliamentary assistant Christopher Lalande.

As I have mentioned before in the House, my inspirations for this bill were Karen Korchinski and my late friend Robert Sallows. I pray the day will never come when Karen will need that liver transplant, but if it does, then perhaps the chances of her getting one will be that much better. Robert Sallows is a double lung transplant recipient who sadly passed away just before my Bill C-316 passed in the House in 2018. We need to get this bill passed so that we can finally tell Robert we finished the job for him. He fought so hard to help others also get a second chance at life. We need to finish this for him.

Finally, I want to thank the many Canadians who shared their personal stories with me along this journey. Some were tragic and some were remarkable, but all of them came from the heart. Let us not delay this any longer. Everything that needs to be said has been said. It is time to get Canada's organ and tissue procurement system on track and give hope to the thousands of Canadians awaiting transplants.

● (1420)

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

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

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to an order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 12, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

It being 2:25 p.m., the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:24 p.m.)

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