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House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Tuesday, September 29, 2020

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, September 29, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

BILLS OF EXCHANGE ACT

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation).

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

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PESCHISOLIDO REPORT

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC) moved:

That the House:

(a) concur in the report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner entitled “Peschosolido Report”, tabled on Wednesday, February 5, 2020, and thank him for his work;

(b) resolve that Joe Peschosolido's 10 breaches of the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons cast unacceptable reflections upon the House and its members, amount to an offence against the dignity and authority of the House, and warrant sanction; and

(c) order Joe Peschosolido, former member of the House of Commons, to provide, no later than the 15th sitting day following the adoption of this order, a written apology to the House, in respect of his breaches of the Code by way of a letter addressed to the Speaker, provided that the Speaker shall, at the conclusion of Oral Questions next following its receipt, read it to the House and lay it upon the table.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that I find myself having to move this motion today. Over the last almost six years, we have seen a slow and steady degradation of the confidence Canadians can have in this democratic institution.

• (1010)

The issue of Mr. Peschosolido's conduct and the 10 breaches of the Conflict of Interest Code causes me great concern. They certainly were found to have contravened the rules of this place.

This is a problem that has been caused by a trickle-down effect in the Liberal government. We have a Prime Minister, the head of the Liberal Party, who started out his tenure as leader, as Prime Minister, as head of the government, with an act that broke the law. That is contained in “The Trudeau Report”. This is that famed and unfortunate event, the trip to billionaire island. We know that that first breach of the act, which is the first time a prime minister in Canadian history has been found guilty of breaking ethics laws, had a ripple effect across Parliament and, really, across this country.

However, what followed afterwards was a domino effect that led to Mr. Peschosolido's conduct and the finding of guilt against him. It included multiple investigations and multiple findings by the Ethics Commissioner that members of the Liberal Party, members of the Liberal government, had broken ethics laws.

Bill Morneau, the former finance minister, found himself embroiled in scandal on a number of occasions. The first, of course, was the forgotten corporation and forgotten French villa, which was a disingenuous explanation at best.

We have in this case with Mr. Peschosolido, just as we have in the case of the WE scandal, just as we have in the case of clam scam, and just as we have in the case of so many of the breaches of the ethics, regulations, rules and laws of this place, claims from the Liberal members that it is not true. We heard that from the Prime Minister when he infamously claimed that the story in the Globe and Mail was false, but which later led to the “Trudeau II Report” finding that the Prime Minister had interfered in the criminal prosecution of his friends at SNC-Lavalin.

When we have, rooted at the head of the cabinet table, at the head of the governing Liberal Party, a member who has repeatedly breached ethics laws and is under investigation again, it is no wonder that we see members of his party flout the rules. It is serious when a backbencher does it, and it is serious when the Prime Minister does it.

These behaviours are unchecked, as we have seen when members of the Liberal caucus are given the opportunity to walk out the back door when they are facing serious questions about their conduct, including conduct that has led to criminal charges. There was one for a member who was elected in 2019 alongside the Prime Minister and these Liberals, and one for a member who did not re-offer, but who was elected with these Liberals in 2015 and is now under investigation for breaking the Criminal Code of Canada.

Routine Proceedings

We have seen members of that same caucus ejected for trying to uphold the rules. We saw that with the former president of the Treasury Board, Dr. Jane Philpott. We saw that with the former attorney general, the member for Vancouver Granville, who was booted from caucus and unceremoniously kicked out of cabinet.

• (1015)

Canadians need to know that the integrity of the House and its members is second to none. We have a case here where we do not have one breach, or two, or five. We have 10 breaches of the code that governs members. Ten breaches by this now former member and no consequence will be brought to bear on him. That cannot stand. That cannot be what Canadians see from the House.

In this place we use the term “honourable member”. We refer to each member as “hon. member”, and our honour is not something that is to be called into question by another member. However, when we have the Ethics Commissioner make a finding like this, when we have the Ethics Commissioner continue to identify events that are breaches of the code and where ethics laws have been broken, then it is incumbent on those who took on the responsibility, who swore the oath, to protect the reputation of this democratic institution and all its members. That is why the motion calling for this apology is eminently reasonable and very necessary.

Members need to know that there will be a reckoning if there is a breach of the code, even if they did not re-offer in an election or were not successful in their bid for re-election. This place goes on. It was here long before any of us arrived, and it will be here long after, God willing. While we temporarily occupy the seats for our 338 constituencies, we need to defend this place, so that whoever comes next, whatever party they represent, can be called an hon. member as well. That is not to be called into question by Canadians who wonder was there not that case of this prime minister, or that finance minister, or this individual who broke the code. There was no consequence for them, and members of the House did not see fit to ask for an apology from them.

I am asking all members of the House, across party lines, to do as they would do if they looked across the aisle and saw a member of the opposing party breach the code 10 times. Would we want that member to deliver an apology to the House? We absolutely would. That is what we are looking for here today. It is important that we all take our role seriously and that we take these breaches seriously, because they are. It is important that we do what little we can in terms of seeking restitution, of seeking some repair to the damage to the reputation of this place and its members by soliciting and tabling an apology from Mr. Peschisolido.

We are bound by the code. We must follow the code, and when we fail to follow the code, there must be a reckoning. That is what we are calling for here today.

• (1020)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if we take a look at what is happening around us today, Canadians from all regions of our country are very much concerned with the second wave of a very serious pandemic. We were supposed to be debating legislation and having a discussion about the

many things we could be doing as parliamentarians to assist, both directly and indirectly, literally millions of Canadians. That is what we were supposed to be debating here today.

The member has a choice. He can continue to have this debate, which he has chosen to advocate for today, or he could gain an appreciation of what it is that is on top of mind for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. He had a choice. It is something that he did have to raise today.

My question for the member is this: Why did he specifically choose today? Why not wait until after we deal with the legislation that is so critically important in providing the resources that Canadians need now?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I will take no lessons from that member or from these Liberals on what can be done by the House. The Liberals shut down Parliament six weeks ago. They shut down committees, just like they did last night at PROC. To be clear, the hon. member knows very well we are not debating the benefits that Canadians could receive. We are going to be debating closure of the motion.

Again, the Liberals are shutting down debate in the House. It is ridiculous to hear from the member that we are delaying the work of government. The Liberals shut down the House for six weeks. They shut down committees for six weeks. It was again to avoid accountability.

Instead of addressing the issue that has been raised, and my motion is in order, the member is looking to deflect. We are talking about protecting the integrity of the House, the House which the member and his party shut down for six weeks. We are going to continue to do our job to hold the government to account, and I am going to continue to do my job to make sure that the integrity of democratic institutions is protected and preserved.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is hard to disagree with the member's motion, especially since the only thing a member has is their integrity.

The parliamentary secretary pointed out earlier that this is a time when we should be focused on helping Canadians. The government is not helping Canadians by using the special powers it was given only to wind up in a situation like the WE Charity scandal.

I would also like to tell my colleague that another conflict of interest may have slipped under the radar for some. I am talking about the use of the wage subsidy. I do not understand how a political party managed to double dip, taking money from a program designed to help struggling businesses and using it to fund the party.

I do not know whether my colleague agrees.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Jonquière is absolutely right. The government did use the goodwill of the House, and powers that were given to it during extraordinary times, to attempt a power grab. Then it took the extraordinary benefit of the doubt that was given by all members of the House, the team Canada approach that we all engaged in, to look to give half a billion dollars to an organization that had given half a million dollars to members of the Prime Minister's family. Again, when the current government looks to avoid accountability, and to avoid proper use of the resources and the powers given to it, it must be held to account by all members in this place.

• (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with some disappointment that I rise to address the motion that my colleague from across the way has decided to bring in on what I believe is a very important day for all Canadians.

We have gone through a great deal over the last eight months. We have seen a great sense of co-operation in our society. We have a Prime Minister and cabinet who virtually work seven days a week, trying to be there in a very real and tangible way. We have very strong national leadership that is supported by provinces and territories across the country. There is a strong sense of co-operation and teamwork among Canadians, not only among provincial, territorial and national governments, but also in our cities, municipalities and non-profits. It is a very long list of people who came together, recognizing the importance of what Canadians are rightfully concerned about: the pandemic. It has killed thousands of people and will continue, unfortunately, to kill others.

As a government, we have been aggressively pursuing the best interests of Canadians, and we have made it very clear that we will be there for Canada every day. We will have the backs of the people of Canada, and we have seen a wide spectrum of programs that have been brought forward to support Canadians in this time of need.

Today, we are supposed to be debating the pandemic and how we can continue to support Canadians, and this is why it is so disappointing. Of virtually all the different stakeholders, the only stakeholder group I can think of that consistently puts up a roadblock is the Conservative Party of Canada. We see that, at every opportunity those members get, they are more than happy to try to change the topic and lose the focus of what Canadians want us to be concerned about and debating.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members they will have an opportunity to ask questions and comment. I would ask that they hold on to their thoughts at this point and allow the member to be able to deliver his speech without interruption.

The hon. Parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, whether the Conservatives want to hear that or not, it is the truth.

I spend a great deal of time inside the chamber, whether during summer sittings, fall or spring. I can tell members that, with my years of experience in opposition and more than 20 years as a parliamentarian, never have I seen as much waste of parliamentary time as with the measures taken by the Conservative opposition members since virtually 2015, and their focus is very simple. All they have focused on, since day one, is how they can be critical of the Prime Minister of Canada. That is their only concern, and they try to expand that to other ethical questions. From day one, that has been their focus. One would think that it would be the pandemic and issues surrounding the pandemic. The bill that was introduced earlier today was seconded by the leader of the New Democratic Party. MPs of all political stripes, and I suspect there might even be some quiet ones within the Conservative Party, understand that we all have a role to play in this matter. All of us have a role to play.

As I have said in the past, I and other Liberal members of Parliament appreciate having our deputy House leader provide the opportunity for daily contact and for sharing the experiences we were hearing from our constituents. From the Prime Minister's perspective, it was important that, as members of Parliament, we listen to how the pandemic was affecting our constituents, and then get that information back to the government. The deputy House leader, working with some fantastic colleagues and support staff, was able to gather many different ideas, and that facilitated the modifications necessary for a wide spectrum of programs that this government brought forward. It has not been just Liberal MPs doing this, but MPs of all political stripes. Why is this? It is because we are listening to what Canadians are talking about, and we can appreciate their anxiety and worry.

We need to be there for our seniors. There is a great deal of concern regarding their accommodations. Many people are looking to Ottawa to continue demonstrating the leadership needed to get us through this pandemic. That is why it is so important that we continue what we have started since the throne speech. When we prorogued the session, we turned the page and got even more focused on what would be taking place in the coming months and years. Based on what we were hearing from Canadians from coast to coast to coast, that is what Canadians want, and that is what Canadians are going to get from this government and from all those individuals who want to deal with this proactively.

The motion brought forward today is an attempt to change the channel. However, it is interesting that Rob Anders, a former Conservative MP, is facing allegations of tax evasion with Canada Revenue. Members can check the news.

Do the Conservatives want to deal with that? No, of course not. Instead, they want to bring up an issue where they can expand upon their hopes of being able to talk about nothing but the Prime Minister, other ministers, Liberal members and ethics.

Routine Proceedings

• (1030)

I have listened to many of their arguments. No one is perfect, but throughout this pandemic our Prime Minister has been very clearly demonstrating the importance of all of us working together to be there in a very real and tangible way for Canadians at a time when we need to be there for Canadians.

The legislation we are talking about is an extension of programs that were very effective at putting hundreds of millions of dollars into the pockets of Canadians so that they would have disposable income to buy the basics of life. That is what we should be talking about. Instead, the opposition wants to have endless votes, they want to change the topic of the debate in the chamber and then they want to cry that they do not get enough time to talk about what they really do not want to talk about. Really? I have seen that show before. I have seen all the filibustering and wasting of time.

As the official opposition they can spend the time on whatever they want, but as the government we are going to continue to cover the backs of Canadians in all regions of our great nation.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1035)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I again want to remind the members that when somebody has the floor to please be respectful and allow that person to finish their speech or thought.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about covering people's backs. We know who the government is trying to cover for. It is for the insiders; it is for their Liberal friends, just as in the case of "The Trudeau Report", just as in the case of the "Trudeau II Report" and just as in the case here. They do not want to address the issue of the rules of this place being broken.

For six weeks, and in fact even before that, the Conservatives called for the doors of this place to be opened and for us to continue to meet like this. We could have had the new program in place that they want to talk about today.

If the measures the Liberals wants to present today are so important, why are we debating closure of the motion instead of having passed this motion six weeks ago, when they shut down the House to further a cover-up of the corruption in the government?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we are not debating that. We are not debating it because the member has brought forward a motion that could have just as easily been a topic of discussion at the procedure and House affairs committee.

There are many different ways the member could have dealt with the issue. This is the first time I have heard this particular member say that the opposition would like to have a discussion about this particular issue. If he had approached me with regard to this, I would have entertained having a discussion and maybe looked at ways we could have addressed it along with other concerns.

Let us realize that what we should be talking about today is how the House of Commons of Canada can continue to assist Canadians in all regions of our country.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing is really hypocritical. I was in this chamber with Stephen Harper, and during his regime the Conservatives closed debate over 300 times. They did it on the environment. They did it on unemployment insurance. They did it on defence. They did it on veterans. They did it on a whole series of different issues that we dealt with over a number of years.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Brian Masse: I am getting heckled, but members can check Stephen Harper's record to find that. It is totally hypocritical.

However, there is a problem with the Liberals. We do not need to put a black light on them to see all the scandal and hypocrisy they have had as well. That is a distraction.

Do you not think you have brought a lot of this on yourself by the behaviour of some of your government people over this tenure? This problem and distraction could have been avoided had you not gotten into this yourself. That is the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind the member, and all members in the House, to be very careful with the language being used. Members can talk about the parties, but when it comes to individual members it is not acceptable. Also, all comments and questions should be put to the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I want to give credit where credit is due in a situation witnessed here this morning. A minister moved forward a very progressive piece of legislation that would assist many Canadians in all regions of this country, and what is worth noting is that the seconder was the leader of the New Democratic Party. In certain ways on certain pieces of legislation, the NDP recognizes the value of Canadians by supporting legislation and is prepared to assist the government in getting important legislation through. I recognize that and thank the NDP for it.

• (1040)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague opposite spoke about turning the page, but on what?

Is he talking about turning the page on WE? Turning the page on an important report that was to be tabled at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, or on a report that was to be submitted to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women regarding the impacts on women? Turn the page on what?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is not necessarily an issue of turning the page as much as it is one of remaining focused on what Canadians in all regions of our country want us to be focused on: fighting the pandemic and working to ensure that we minimize the negative impacts on our society and economy as a direct result of the things taking place during the pandemic. That is really what the expectation is.

Routine Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, that was a nice try by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government. He was very eloquent as usual.

However, as my colleague pointed out earlier, this is not the first time that this government has been caught in a conflict of interest or apparent conflict of interest. The standard that we should set for ourselves as parliamentarians, and we have a code to keep us on the right track, is that an apparent conflict of interest is just as serious as a real conflict of interest.

That is because it undermines people's trust in the institution of Parliament and in us as elected officials. We must fulfill the mandate they gave us with honour and dignity. When we put ourselves in a position of conflict of interest, it tarnishes the reputation of the entire political class.

When I say that this was a nice try by the parliamentary secretary, it is because his main argument, if I understood correctly, was that we were and are in the midst of an important debate, the debate on the throne speech. However, it seems to me that the prorogation of Parliament was part of that sequence of events. I do not believe that it was necessary to prorogue Parliament to come up with solutions and put everything in place to get through this health crisis.

I would like to remind the parliamentary secretary that, for the past six months, Parliament was forced to discuss only this crisis. However, it seems to me that voters deserve a Parliament that can deal with all governance matters. Obviously, the Ethics Commissioner's decision is final. If it was so urgent to work together to get out of the crisis, why prorogue the session and come back with a throne speech that, quite frankly, provides very few solutions?

That said, I remember WE Charity and the finance minister's resignation, and he is not just anyone. Earlier I was talking about how this is not the first time the Liberals have perhaps not been as forthcoming about conflicts of interest as they should be and about the conflict of interest rules we are supposed to follow. Maybe they were careless? Maybe it was not a priority for them? People who are just a bit nastier or more spiteful than me might say it is in that party's DNA. I would not go that far. I cannot prove it, but I can come up with a list of conflict of interest issues that the Liberal Party itself brought to light. It got itself in trouble.

I remember rising in the House during the previous Parliament to ask the Prime Minister about wealthy Chinese investors in British Columbia making \$1,500 contributions to his campaign fund in the riding of Papineau and the fact that he raised \$70,000 in just 24 hours. What a coincidence. As it turned out, the real coincidence was that those investors were given a charter for a new bank they wanted to set up.

That is an apparent conflict of interest. Since when has the riding of Papineau or any other Quebec riding raised funds through events purported to have taken place—though this event was never listed—miles and miles away?

We also saw this Prime Minister get himself in trouble for a trip to visit the Aga Khan. This is not the first time.

• (1045)

A Conservative colleague says that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner recommends imposing sanctions on parliamentarians.

I note that in his report, the Ethics Commissioner found that Mr. Peschisolido contravened subsections 20(1) and 21(3) of the Code with regard to the private interests he no longer had in Peschisolido Law Corporation after its administrative dissolution on November 26, 2018. He failed to file an accurate statement of his personal interests during his annual review on December 11, 2018. He also failed to file a notice of material change within 60 days of the change.

The following four issues were raised: his marital status, his shareholder's loan, his corporation's debt to the bank and the change in status of his law corporation. He had ample time to account for all this. The Ethics Commissioner recommends to the House that a sanction be imposed on the former member. However, today my colleague is moving a motion that asks only for an apology from this former member, surely out of respect for us and the institution we represent.

We have to be thorough and very careful about any apparent or potential conflict of interest. There is a guide. If I were the government parliamentary secretary I think it would be worth calling all members of the House to order.

I do think that an apology is needed, but I did not hear the parliamentary secretary say that he agrees with the motion. Instead, he is questioning the motives of the mover. The substance of the issue is important. Does the parliamentary secretary agree, yes or no, that the former member in question must apologize in writing by way of a letter addressed to the Speaker?

That is what we are debating. It seems that we could have agreed on that quickly and moved on to other things. I am rather disappointed by this approach of saying, "let's work together" except when it comes to respecting our institutions and the codes of conduct that we all supported. No one has risen in the House to say that they are opposed to the conflict of interest guide or to challenge the rule that we must comply with every year.

However, when a problem arises and someone breaks those rules, some members look for red herrings to try to minimize the impact.

The Ethics Commissioner already has a lot on his plate, and his job is not easy. Codes of ethics exist so that people take responsibility prospectively. That means being responsible and anticipating what could happen before it happens. Given that we are representatives of the people, it is not just about recognizing our responsibility after the fact. That is not it at all. Ethics are intended to be prospective. We have a prospective responsibility toward our constituents and this institution.

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In this debate, I would expect the speakers on the other side of the House to agree with me and the other parliamentarians who are saying that when someone puts himself in a conflict of interest, that person should recognize it and apologize before we move on to something else.

However, it is unacceptable to say that we are discussing something that is not all that important. That is why I support my Conservative colleague's motion.

• (1050)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his excellent speech and salute his remarkable parliamentary experience. He has been here for nearly five years and was also a member of the National Assembly, which is what I wanted to ask him about.

In his vast parliamentary political experience, has the member ever seen a government display such arrogance towards one of the fundamental principles of any parliament, in other words, the opportunity to debate?

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, to be honest, I have to say yes. That is why parliamentarians often find themselves in a tough situation. People look at us and would prefer democracy to happen in the street. That is why no one can say that what we are talking about this morning is not important. It is very important.

What is at stake this morning is the absolute confidence of those watching us in relation to how we conduct ourselves. We must set an example. In that regard, of course governments often use parliamentary sparring to try to put off those questions. I think some soul-searching is needed, and this morning presents a great opportunity to avoid doing what others would do in the Liberals' position. Some folks like to say that the Liberals and Conservatives are Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

I am absolutely in favour of this motion, but it is terrible that we are always attacking one another. These problems are a result of the weakness of our ethics rules, especially with regard to pressure from lobbyists.

Does my colleague believe that we should improve our rules?

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I am open to improving the rules. Still, we can write all the rules we want, but the important thing is to adopt them and rigorously apply them with dignity and with respect for the voters who elected us. We must represent them with honour and dignity.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are hundreds of people in the province of Quebec today who will find out that they have COVID-19. The Government of Canada and MPs on all sides of the House are gravely concerned about what we could be doing collectively as a House in this time of crisis.

Would my colleague across the way not agree that the crisis should be the issue we are dealing with? There are other opportunities through which the motion before us could be dealt with. Would he not agree that the priority for Canadians is the pandemic?

• (1055)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, when there is a conflict of interest, I think it is important to point it out and debate it openly, not behind closed doors. We must have a debate here, in this place, the people's Parliament. I believe that this matter deserved to be debated this morning.

That does not prevent us from discussing other issues. I am pleased that we are getting back to having a Parliament as it should be. I will repeat to my colleague that I expect this government to implement sustainable and meaningful measures to get through this crisis. If I have the honour of speaking to the House, I could make several proposals. Yesterday, we introduced a recovery plan with sustainable solutions that will help us get through this crisis.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very proud to take part in this virtual debate. I am here, at home, in the small town of Cobalt in northern Ontario.

[English]

It is a historic moment for me in my 16 years of Parliament to participate virtually, and we are doing this because we are in an unprecedented economic and medical crisis. It is the biggest crisis our country has faced in nearly a century. The pandemic has upended everything and it is actually inspiring to see how Parliament is attempting to find ways, including virtually, to maintain the integrity of voting and debate. I am very proud to speak for the people of Timmins—James Bay this morning on the concurrence motion on the ethics report on Mr. Peschisolido.

I have spent many years taking on corruption in Parliament and pushing on the issues of ethics. I have to admit, there was a moment this morning when I was saying, "What report was that? Oh yes, the 'Peschisolido Report'," because we have had so many ethics violations against the Liberals that they stack up. We have to keep track of them. This was about his role with his law firm and his failure to disclose his clear conflicts of interest.

Why does that matter? It matters because I was doing an interview recently with American journalists about the WE scandal. They said, compared with the scandals they have in the United States, how do we think our scandals are serious? I said to them that it is because we have the Conflict of Interest Act, the Lobbying Act, Elections Canada and the elections financing rules, and we expect politicians to maintain them, that we are not in a situation like the United States right now. The rule of law and the obligation of Parliamentarians to follow the rule of law has to be maintained as a primary principle.

We have had a number of scandals under the Liberal government, including the Mr. Grewal scandal. I wrote to the Ethics Commissioner about that scandal and that has gone on to the RCMP. The initial issue with the Grewal scandal was his using his position as a member of Parliament to further the financial interests of friends, and that was in the notorious India scandal.

Mr. Morneau, the former finance minister, quit in the midst of an unprecedented economic crisis because of his complete failure to even read the Conflict of Interest Act and to know he had been put in a position of conflict in his dealings with WE Charity. It is absolutely unacceptable.

The Prime Minister is now under his third investigation. The question at the heart of the WE scandal is how it is possible that a group who has built such close ties with all the key Liberals in power, in the midst of their own financial crisis, were able to get upwards of \$500 million because of who they knew. We should not be running government like this. In the midst of an unprecedented pandemic, Canadians need to be assured that the government is not putting the needs of their friends before the needs of Canadians.

In my riding, the people of Kashechewan have been waiting for years for the government to sign off on basic things like a road so that they can begin to move to a new community. In April of this year, the community had to live in tents on the land because of COVID. They could not be evacuated and they had no safe place to go. When they heard about the WE scandal they asked me how it was possible that these guys could get \$500 million so easily, when they have to fight and beg to get the government to recognize even the most basic changes in their communities.

That is the principle we have to keep front and centre when we are talking about conflicts of interest. It is about the role of powerful insiders who should not have that access. I am certainly looking forward to the return of our committees. The finance committee was doing excellent work on the WE scandal. We need answers. The official languages committee will be looking at the WE scandal because of the fact that this was a group completely unprepared to present their program in Quebec, let alone the rest of the country.

• (1100)

The ethics committee has certainly raised a number of questions about the relationships between key government ministers and the Kielburger brothers. We also have just had a finding of guilt against Liberal insider David MacNaughton, after I raised a question to the Ethics Commissioner about the former ambassador's work on behalf of Palantir Technologies.

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This is a huge issue. Palantir is a deeply problematic surveillance company. This is a company run by billionaire tech giant Peter Thiel, who has some very extreme right views and some very questionable views on democracy. This technology has been used to target migrant families, and we know about the horrific abuses that are taking place in the detention centres. We know that Palantir honed its technologies in Iraq. It has been tied to the CIA and the FBI. I do not think people can say that this company has Canadian values, yet, because it hired a top Liberal insider, it got an all-access pass to everybody, such as Rick Theis, the Prime Minister's confidant; the Deputy Prime Minister; the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry; and the chief of the defence staff.

How is it possible that people at a company like Palantir could get this kind of inside access just because they hired a top Liberal? I am certainly looking forward to having that discussion at the ethics committee, and I am hoping my colleagues in the Bloc, the Liberals and the Conservatives will support me in ensuring that Mr. MacNaughton comes to explain how he got this kind of access.

These issues of ethics and accountability are vitally important. However, we also need to remember that the discussion this morning is happening in the midst of a massive crisis that is facing us right now. The fact that the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament to escape accountability on the WE scandal is something we need to investigate. The reason we have an urgency this morning is that the Prime Minister did not let Parliament sit when it should have sat. The CERB benefits are ending and people are facing deep financial crisis right now. Our obligation at the end of the day is to ensure that we are there, rising up to meet the issues of the pandemic, because this second wave looks like it might be even outpacing the first wave very quickly.

In terms of what the CERB and its cut-off means, we know the Prime Minister and the Liberal government were looking to jail people who were not eligible for CERB but were getting it. The Liberals promised money for disabilities and they never delivered it. In their last trial balloon, when they modified CERB into its new form, they were going to cut it from \$2,000 to \$1,600 a month.

What would that mean for people who have lost work or who have no work to go back to? Just the other day, I spoke with a woman who just moved from Alberta to Ontario. She set herself up in a practice as a naturopath. She had taken on huge amounts of student debt. She set up the practice. She was going to be a self-employed businesswoman and then COVID-19 hit. She has had no ability to practise her work. Sixteen hundred dollars a month will be economically devastating. Two thousand dollars a month through the winter will get her through to the other side. That is the focus right now.

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I was speaking with a woman who spent years as a self-employed broker, helping with tourism and tour plans for people. Well, there is no tourism going on and without this money, she is economically destitute.

Therefore, our priority right now has to be getting things fixed and being able to answer for the crisis we are in. As much as I enjoy and think it is really important that we get to talk about Liberal conflicts of interest, our priority this morning is to get back on the issue of dealing with the crisis and the pandemic, to start showing Canadians that we can work together in this Parliament to deal with issues for people who have to take time off work because they are sick, without being economically devastated, and ensure that the CERB gets through. It is about getting people through to the other side of this winter. This is going to be a hard winter and we have to be there for them.

As for the ethics violations, I think our committee is going to be very busy in the coming months, but we still have other issues as well.

I am very pleased to participate in this. I thank my colleagues in the Conservative Party for bringing this motion forward. It is a good motion; it is worthy of study. However, we need to get these measures passed today, so people can get some economic security at this time. They are looking to us to do this.

● (1105)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, could the hon. member share his thoughts on prorogation? The timing seemed interesting, as was the fact that it was for six weeks. If the Liberals were so adamant about a new throne speech, they essentially could have prorogued overnight. What are his thoughts on that?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, the issue with the prorogation was it happened just as the government did its massive document dump on the WE scandal, of which it had blacked out many of the pages. However, the pages that were not blacked out raised some seriously troubling issues, for example, the secret meeting between the youth minister and Craig Kielburger on April 17. That meeting really set the tone for giving the Kielburger group the inside track.

What we also saw in those documents, which is staggeringly unacceptable, was that in their promotion to key ministers and key departments, the Kielburgers included photos of the Prime Minister's family, his mother and his wife, to show how close they were. This put the Prime Minister in a serious conflict of interest. The Prime Minister has an obligation under the Conflict of Interest Act to have his personal affairs in order so he is not in a conflict. The fact that the documents were using pictures of his family for promotion is very troubling.

We were not able to ask those questions when we should have. That prorogation has actually affected people economically. It was not right.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question.

We spent part of the summer trying to shed light on WE Charity. We also found that people no longer trust the government. Since the hon. member has 16 years of experience and I am a new MP, I would like to ask him what can be done to increase Canadians' trust and stop the torrent of conflicts of interest and ethics violations coming out of this government.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, that is a good question.

It is essential that the Parliament of Canada take measures to ensure compliance with the law. The government and all hon. members must abide by the conflict of interest code. Clearly, the Prime Minister and the Liberals have a history of ignoring their obligations. In my opinion, Parliament needs to start a new conflict of interest investigation and impose penalties to ensure that the Prime Minister and cabinet comply with the law.

● (1110)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, could my colleague comment on why it is so important that not only the national government but governments across the board look at ways to support Canadians?

The legislation, which his leader has seconded, reinforces just how important the role is for government to be there in that real, tangible way for Canadians, because of a loss of income and the need to survive.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, it is essential. COVID-19 upended so many myths about our national economy.

Within two weeks of the shutdown, people did not have enough money to pay their rent. To get through what will be a very hard winter, the federal government has the tools and the power to play a huge role, working with the provinces. We need to say to Canadians that we will get them through to the other side.

That other side has to be a better Canada. We are going to spend unprecedented amounts of money. It needs scrutiny. We need to ensure it is going to the right places. We need to be there and show that we can work together at this time. This crisis has been unlike anything we have ever seen since the Second World War or the Great Depression.

I am encouraging my colleagues to work together so we can do this.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was a little late getting to the House this morning and have now reviewed the motion. Why now? Why today?

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I remember making a speech in the session just past, the one that was prorogued. I know there is opposition to that and that is fine. That can happen in a democracy. However, I remember saying that Canadians had put in place a minority Parliament and we should take the opportunity as parliamentarians to show we could make this Parliament work. Errors happen, and I am not saying the government is errorless because it is not. However, if Canadians are watching Parliament right now, are they proud of us? I do not think they are.

I have had the opportunity, as the Canada-U.S. chair, to go to the U.S. many times. I have seen how partisan the situation is there. The Democrats are here, the Republicans are there and never shall the two meet. I have always said that I am so proud of us as Canadians that we have not let that happen. However, this motion tells me that it is happening. Yes, this issue needs to be debated. There is nothing wrong with the motion, but today is not the day. Canadians are concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses are concerned about where they sit.

I spent a half an hour this morning on the phone with one of the food processors in the country. It believes the government is still continuing to move ahead with new regulations. I personally would oppose on front of pack labelling. Now is not the time for that either. Companies have suggested that other countries have brought in some tax measures that make them non-competitive here. That is one of our main industries. We should be debating issues like that, not this one today. There will be a time and place. That is why we have separate committees. These issues should be at least before a committee first, the ethics committee or some other. There is limited time to have debate on Bill C-2/Bill C-4. We have seen a slice of where this Parliament can work.

The government side came together with the leader of the NDP and made changes to improve the assistance to individuals and for improved sick leave. That is fine. We should debate that issue. Several people in the House were on the finance committee, during which we held hearings in late May, after Parliament shut down due to COVID-19. We heard some 300 witnesses who had a lot of concerns, such as where they would be as we go through this pandemic. We should be talking about those issues.

I am suggesting that for the next couple of months we concentrate on the issues about which Canadians are concerned. This is political theatre in terms of this motion. I have been in opposition and I played these kinds of games. I admit that. However, we are in a pandemic and we need to deal with the issue that is before us.

My request is that we deal with the issue Canadians want us to deal with, specifically for the next six weeks or so. Let us let our committees deal with some of the other issues such as the WE scandal, which needs more work on. We have had hearings at the finance committee. We went through the documents. I know issues will continue to come up, but today in the House is not the place for that to occur.

• (1115)

The tourism industry in my area is gravely concerned about where it finds itself. The airline and transportation industries are gravely concerned about where they find themselves. The airports in my region are down 94% in business. What are we, as parlia-

mentarians, going to propose to those industries so they can survive until next season? Hospitality and tourism industry members are telling me now that while they figured 2021 would be the rebound year, they are now looking at it as the transition year and that hopefully 2022 will be the rebound year. We need to look at what we can do to strengthen the economy.

The debate on Bill C-2 and Bill C-4 is going to be about assistance to individuals, and yes that assistance has to be there, but what are we going to do beyond that to strengthen businesses so they can be there and be the backbone of our economy in the future? Those are some of the things we need to be talking about.

The other thing I heard, more over the summer and not so much at the finance committee, is about whether the chartered banks are pulling their weight. Right now, the bank deferrals are starting to come due. I have been talking to some in the business industry who are saying that they are having a rough ride with the banks in rolling over their operating capital and loans.

The government and Canadian taxpayers have basically backed the big banks such as the Business Development Bank, the Export Development Corporation and Farm Credit Canada with additional liquidity to basically give them a guarantee as they provide monies during this pandemic. I do not believe this place and the banks are pulling their full weight in getting us out of this pandemic. Those are some of the issues we need to be talking about.

Over the summer, we heard a lot of talk from a lot of people on a guaranteed annual income. That is an issue we should be discussing. Personally, I do not think we can go holus-bolus, but I would not mind seeing a few pilot projects across the country to see how it goes. Would those be able to replace some of the other programs we had to quickly bring in as a result of the pandemic? We need to be discussing those issues.

I want to turn to where I come from, the farm community. I am hearing a lot of concern from members of the farm community about the safety nets in place for them at the moment. I strongly believe the business risk management program must be improved. I could go through a litany of things and blame the previous government on that because it cut back the business risk management from 85% to 70%, but let us get it back up there again and work together to do that.

An hon. member: You just did it.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, the member said that I just did. Yes, I guess I did, but I could go through a heck of a lot more issues that the previous government did that really are not helpful to us today but will not bother doing that because I really believe we need to find a way to work together, especially in the short term.

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Let me sum up my thoughts, which will be hard to do in the 25 seconds I have left.

• (1120)

When we all stand in this place in this kind of debate, what do Canadians think of their Parliament and do they think we are doing what they see as a priority? This motion is not what I believe they see as a priority. Let us get on with putting in place the programs and then we can have these kinds of debates in the House, at committee, wherever.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a joy to rise and take part in this debate. I have a quote from December 31, 2009, that I would like to read and get the member's feedback on. It is a CBC article, which states:

...it's an affront to the citizens of Canada and their purpose in electing members to Parliament in the last election.

"We have men and women fighting abroad for democracy and we have our own prime minister shutting democracy down," he said.

"People have to understand when you prorogue Parliament you lose everything that was there. Committees can no longer function now — they're gone. How do we raise questions with the prime minister on the biggest deficit in Canadian history? How do we question and propose things to them in terms of what are they going to cut? What programs are they going to take away?"

This was talking about the prorogation of Parliament in 2009.

What is the difference between the member for Malpeque in 2009 and the member standing here today?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, there is really no difference in the member then and the member now. I have made it clear that I am not in favour of prorogation, I stand by that, but I do believe that the prorogation then was a little worse than it is now in that it was to prevent a vote that could have brought down the government, and it was a much longer prorogation. I underline this clearly. If a government is going to prorogue to open another session, it should be for a very short number of days. I am not one who is in favour of prorogation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, on the one hand, I note that our colleague across the way did not indicate whether or not he was in favour of the motion. It would be interesting to find out.

On the other hand, in my opinion, the argument that we have more important things to discuss is a waste of time, and that is truly unfortunate. Prorogation delayed things by almost a month. It could have been much shorter.

What purpose did the prorogation serve? It was used as a diversionary tactic, because the government was in a conflict of interest with WE Charity.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about the following: If there was truly a need to prorogue Parliament, why not just prorogue for a few days? That would have saved us a tremendous amount of time. Now we are under pressure. We are being asked to rush the bill through when it would have been better to have time to debate it. The Liberals are trying to find red herrings to avoid talking about ethics issues. They have a problem with ethics.

• (1125)

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, the member's main argument was that it would be good to have more time to debate the bills before us. The motion right now is absolutely taking away from that time. As I said in my remarks, why today, why now? That is political gamesmanship and I do not believe the people in the member's riding think this is the issue that we should be dealing with in this House.

Time is important in this House and we need to take time to get all the ideas from everyone, because there are good ideas. I saw that at the finance committee. There are good ideas from all parties. That is what we need to be doing: getting those good ideas to strengthen our economy and look after individuals and businesses. That is what we ought to be doing.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I agree with a number of the points the member raised in his speech. When we think about whether Canadians are proud of the Liberal government, the answer is no. The Liberal government threatened to put people who were applying for the CERB in jail or giving them exorbitant fines when its own members were telling Canadians that if they are not sure they are eligible, they should apply anyway. Now they are seeing their government, consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments, mired in scandals. What does the member think Canadians think of the Liberal government right now?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, I think Canadians are very proud of what this government has done in terms of the pandemic. I think they are very proud of how quickly we acted. There were 10,000 applications a minute going through in order to get the CERB, which kept food on the table and gave people the confidence to stay home and help fight the pandemic. I talked to a lot of my constituents, a lot of Canadians, and I think that they are really proud of how the government acted with the pandemic. What the member is talking about are other side issues, which are not the issue of the moment.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, as I enter into this debate, it is unfortunate that, once again, parliamentarians are seized with having to discuss a Liberal ethical failure.

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I would like to respond a little to some of the members opposite who seemed to be so concerned that we in this House have to deal with the long list, the big pile, of ethical failures when, in their words, we should be debating the things that matter to Canadians. It is unfortunate that these Liberals seem so concerned about their own political aims that they would do something like prorogue Parliament when we could have been debating the very issues that they say are so important. We could have been debating them weeks ago. We offered, as the Conservatives, to come in on Sunday to debate the very legislation that they are saying we need to spend more time on. We offered that, and they said no, and so I find it tragic, but this is typical in true Liberal fashion.

The Liberals will be so quick to say that there is an emergency, that we need to be part of a team Canada approach, whatever the case is, when, really, they have no interest in listening to anyone other than those narrow perspectives that they decide are important. It is unfortunate that, in the process over the past eight months, so often this House and the perspectives of many in it have been silenced. If they were interested in a team Canada approach, I truly believe that we could have looked at many of the programs that have helped Canadians and they would have been made better. We see something like the emergency wage subsidy. The Liberals started at a 10% subsidy, which, after significant pressure from members of my party, the Conservative Party, and many Canadians and business groups, it was raised to 75%. That is called a team Canada approach, and I am glad that there are instances of that, but we could have done so much more had they not sidelined Parliament.

If we look at the prorogation, it is unprecedented in using a legitimate parliamentary tool to shut down the investigations into the actions of the Prime Minister and his senior cohorts. It is unprecedented that a prime minister would abuse executive authority in such a flagrant manner. It is unbelievable.

One of my colleagues across the way used the word “disappointment”. Now, in his context, he said that he was disappointed that we are debating Liberal ethical failures, and I am sure he is. He would rather be talking about anything else, I am sure. I will tell members what I hear each and every day from my constituents: disappointment in this Liberal government, disappointment in the laundry list of ethical failures, disappointment in the fact that there is a Prime Minister across the way who is saying that the idea of a national unity crisis is crazy. It is unbelievable, and a true shame for the honour that needs to be represented in the House from coast to coast.

I find it tragic that we have government members who are so embroiled in their own scandal, so embroiled in their own political aims that they would refuse to acknowledge the crisis. It is not for lack of trying from every western MP, and not just Conservative western MPs, although we do make up the vast majority of them. Western MPs have been making it clear that there is a unity crisis, yet the government refuses to acknowledge that it even exists; for shame.

We have before us today another Liberal ethical failure of a former member of Parliament breaching the ethics code 10 times. This is a code that was put in place to ensure that members of this place had a framework to ensure that their ethical conduct fit within the expectations of Canadians. One of my fellow Conservative col-

leagues was reflecting upon his many years in this place and said that, back when it was first introduced, the idea of naming and shaming was enough, that the members of this place were concerned about how they conducted themselves, and they were concerned about the fact that they wanted to do what was best for Canadians.

● (1130)

However, when we look at the conduct of the top of the current government over close to the last five years, let alone the conduct of many others, we see time and time again the absolute disregard they show toward ethics and the conduct that Canadians expect us to uphold. There is real disappointment in the actions of the Liberal government. It is so consumed by its own scandals, waste and mismanagement that it is truly distracting from its ability to do the things that Canadians expect it to do.

It is important for us to continue to debate the other items that are before the House, but if we do not ensure that the trust and integrity of this institution is upheld, we are in an incredibly difficult place. When the trust in this institution is eroded, we see significant challenges. We see that there is a lack of trust in anything the government says, not just its political leaders, but anything that the Liberals say. Canadians cannot trust their Prime Minister when he has truly misrepresented himself in this place, and it has been found to be the case, whether regarding his Aga Khan vacation or the SNC-Lavalin scandal.

I sat on the ethics committee this summer and every day there was a new development about the government's unbelievable conduct. It was an absolute embarrassment to the institutions and places that each one of us represents, all 338 of us and the seats that we are temporary custodians of. The erosion of trust that has been taking place is unbelievable.

Therefore, it is important that we debate issues like this, for we have to ensure that when somebody makes a mistake there is a full accounting of that. The motion that my colleague from Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes has brought forward is a step to ensure that there is an accounting and that responsibility is taken, because Canadians demand nothing less. There is a need to ensure that responsibility is taken for the actions of the government.

Canadians cannot trust the words of the current government, and it is causing a breakdown of the trust in our society. It is truly a societal issue: when we cannot trust the words of our leaders, it causes a societal breakdown that is concerning beyond all belief. We need to take this issue very seriously, just as we all need to take ethics and our conduct very seriously. We need to work diligently to ensure that trust is brought back to the institutions of Parliament and that we demonstrate that this place matters. There is one place in this country where every square kilometre of this beautiful nation is represented, and that is on the green carpet within the walls of this chamber. We need to demonstrate to Canadians that we are all worthy of that.

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I represent a large rural riding with many communities. I had a conversation with constituents the other day and asked them to give me a brief report on how things were going in their communities and how they feel the government is doing. I listened on Zoom calls with person after person, about 20 of them in all. Time and time again, what I heard most was that they were tired of the scandal, the waste and the mismanagement of the government, and that they were looking forward to a day when good governance was brought back to this country: governance that Canadians could trust.

I am proud to support the motion brought forward by my colleague and look forward to answering questions in that regard, so that we can bring trust back to the hallowed halls of this Parliament.

• (1135)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering, given that we have burned up this much time instead of talking about the things that are truly right there in front of Canadians and important to them, if the member would be willing to expand upon his colleague's motion and deal with a very long list, that I could go into great lengths of time to describe to him, as compiled by The Tyee five years ago, entitled "Harper, Serial Abuser of Power: The Evidence Compiled", and the 70 occasions on which that Conservative crew offended democracy and Canadians.

Shall we ask for apologies from them, too?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, that can be answered quite simply. There is one prime minister in this country's history who has been found guilty of the Conflict of Interest Act, and I can assure members it is not a Conservative prime minister. It is the Liberal Prime Minister who sits across the way, who self-aggrandizes every day, and who is eroding the trust Canadians have in this place. Accordingly, it is a shame there have not been appropriate consequences.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question. We all want to help people and try to find a way out of this crisis.

What happens when human beings go through a crisis? When everything is fine, we do not try to change things, but when things go wrong, we grab the bull by the horns and get to the bottom of things.

What is stopping us from scrutinizing the government's conflicts of interest and ethical lapses while at the same time making changes that will help our fellow citizens during this pandemic?

• (1140)

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely right. We should be dealing with both. That is exactly what we are doing.

It would have been great if we had been doing this for the last number of weeks. The Liberals, in typical fashion, shut everything down, say there is an emergency and, because they have shut every-

thing down, at the last minute come up with some miraculous solution that they then have to ram through with no regard for the process, no regard for constructive feedback that could be given. They just ram it through. They manufacture these circumstances so they can use urgency for their own political ends.

Canadians deserve better. In this place today we are seized with a number of very important issues, including the help that Canadians need, but also the fact that we need to stop the erosion of trust that is taking place within our institution of Parliament. That is what this motion is about.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, for the last couple of hours we have watched the Liberals and Conservatives point fingers at each other. Before I sound like Mercutio and call for a pox on both their houses, let me say this. I believe the member should be careful, for those who live in glass houses should not throw stones. He did evade the question from my Liberal colleague previously. This motion does not have anything to do with the Prime Minister. It has to do with a former Liberal MP.

In that vein, would my hon. colleague accept that this motion be expanded to look into former Conservative MPs Dean Del Mastro and Rob Anders, if he is found guilty of evading taxes?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, every member of the House is subject to the Conflict of Interest Act and every member of the House should be expected to be held to those high standards. Therefore, absolutely any violation needs to be held to the same standards so that we can do exactly what I referred to in my speech, which is repair the erosion of trust in the institution of Parliament and ensure Canadians can trust their members of Parliament, from coast to coast to coast, to do what is best and act in a way that Canadians expect.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is my first opportunity to speak in the virtual Parliament, and I have to say I am disappointed that I am speaking to this motion. Like my colleagues across the way and in my own party, I have been meeting with constituents daily, hearing that their businesses are struggling, that they do not know if they are going to make their mortgage payments or pay rent or put food on their tables. I am hearing from people at local charities that things are tough, that donations are not coming in anymore and they are trying to find a way to make that up. I hear that affordable housing is not getting better in our riding or in Niagara. Despite the fact that people are struggling, housing prices are still going up but we are not seeing the jobs associated with that. I hear that the opioid crisis continues to rage on. I am worried.

The previous member, the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot, pounded his hands on the desk, saying that we need to help Canadians and we need to deal with the issues. However, he made one point that I was concerned about. I am worried it reflects the views of his party, because I believe I heard another member say in this debate that the Liberals will stand up and say that there is an emergency.

It is truly unfortunate that the Conservatives do not believe that there is an emergency. This motion reflects the lack of seriousness they feel for the crisis that Canadians are facing. It is a crisis that has seen 9,000 Canadians die. It has affected members of the House. It has affected the leader of the Conservative Party and the leader of the Bloc Québécois, and other politicians across the way are in confinement. I know colleagues, and their families and their friends, have suffered through this illness. We all know someone who has been affected or has lost a loved one. We have seen the army go into long-term care facilities in this country because of this devastating crisis. To make the allegation in this place that we are only saying that there is a crisis, and that we are inventing this as some reason to ram legislation through, is unconscionable.

Canadians expect us to work together. Canadians have a lot to be proud of. They have seen the Prime Minister working with Conservative, Liberal and NDP premiers, as well as with the Premier of Quebec, in this crisis. We are not always going to agree and we should not always agree. That is not what this place is about. This is a place for debate. As the hon. member for Malpeque stated, there are good ideas on all sides, but let us debate that.

I have been hearing from members of the Conservative Party that we need to be debating issues like unemployment. We need to be getting people back to work, looking after their businesses and helping out.

What have the Conservatives deemed the priority issue for today when the government is bringing forward legislation to help Canadians? It is this motion. I think my constituents would be embarrassed that this is the priority. This is what we are debating and not how we can help them, how we can bring relief to them and continue to ensure they are able to pay the rent and put food on their tables.

I know the Leader of the Opposition tweeted that the Liberals were going to cancel CERB. However, it is being replaced and that is what we are talking about today. At least we should be, but the Conservatives wish to discuss a former Liberal member of Parliament and ethics violations. That is their priority, even though committees will meet again and there will be plenty of opportunity for the ethics committee to deal with this if it deems this to be its priority.

I saw another hon. member bring up this fact. If we are talking about former members of Parliament, I have not heard the Conservatives bring up Rob Anders and what we have learned today about tax evasion. He was a member who for years railed against the CRA and the work it was doing. We do not see that level of priority.

• (1145)

We see a lack of seriousness. They see an opportunity to play some political games to delay this debate. I do not know what the end goal is. It is truly unfortunate.

My constituents, our constituents, the people of Canada, want us working toward solutions. Do they want the opposition to hold the government to account? They absolutely do. However, bringing forward a motion on a former member of Parliament to delay debate on a serious discussion about bringing immediate relief to

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Canadians should shock their consciences. It should shock the conscience of members of the Conservative Party that they are picking up where they left off during the pandemic.

I keep coming back to this because it really impacted me when the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot suggested that there was no crisis. The motion shows that. The motion shows the lack of seriousness among the federal Conservatives. We see in Ontario and across the country that provincial Conservatives and their governments understand that there is a crisis and that there is a need for assistance. There is a time to put these types of partisan games aside, and this is that moment. However, here we are.

We really do need to get back to this crisis. It is true that this is the greatest crisis we have faced as a nation since the Second World War. The economy has been dramatically impacted. Over 9,000 Canadians have died. We are in the midst of a second wave of this pandemic. I want to be there in the House, but I am home because of agreements between the parties. It is too dangerous for us to all gather together.

There is a crisis. Parliament has not seen anything like this. In their lifetimes, Canadians have not seen anything like this. They want us to be debating help for them, not some Conservative talking points that take cheap political shots to try to get something, though I do not know what it is. I am at a loss.

Members of the Liberal Party are anxious to debate the legislation that has been proposed to help Canadians. As another member mentioned, there are changes that need to be made. I will give credit. I have mentioned a few times that the member for Battle River—Crowfoot said there are opportunities for changes to be made. He mentioned the Canada emergency wage subsidy and how it was changed. We heard from businesses and the opposition, and changes needed to be made. This is the place to do that and debate those ideas.

There will be time for partisan fights. There will be a time for committees to meet. They will be ramping up again. However, what Canadians want to hear from their elected representatives is how we are going to help them, how we are going to get a vaccine, how we are going to get businesses through this and how they are going to pay their rent. However, what we are stuck debating again is a former member of Parliament.

I am at a loss, and I hope the Conservatives are not playing on the cynicism of Canadians and that Canadians will not be paying too much attention to this. The Conservatives can post a few angry rage videos on Facebook that show they have stood up, but they have not stood up for Canadians.

• (1150)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for St. Catharines talked about a lack of seriousness. I will tell members what the official opposition finds serious. It is the work that the House should have been doing for the last six weeks. The Liberal Prime Minister slammed the door on Parliament, slammed the door on democracy and locked committee rooms. That is what is unconscionable.

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We wanted to do work over the last six weeks, not when this benefit was set to end. We wanted to have debate and discussions about it, not wait until the eleventh hour and call it an emergency. We obviously recognize the seriousness of the pandemic, but the business of holding the government to account goes on and so do Liberal scandals, which happen regularly.

It is unfortunate that the member wants to conflate different sets of rules. The conflict of interest code and the Conflict of Interest Act are what we are discussing here today, not other issues.

Was the six-week cover-up prorogation the best that your government could do for Canadians?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind the member that he is to address questions and comments to the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member is referring to the two days of time for debate that was lost during the prorogation. It is interesting to hear the Conservatives complain that we have lost two days of debate and that they are going to make up for that by wasting a lot more time in not talking about the issues.

There is a lack of seriousness from the members of the opposition, because if they were truly serious about making up for lost time, we would not be debating this. We would be talking about the issues that matter most to Canadians, which are not about a former member of Parliament.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague's words left a bad taste in my mouth because I feel like I have to defend my Conservative colleagues.

I find it a bit hypocritical to say that the motion we are debating today lacks seriousness and is a political game. Throughout his speech, my colleague talked about debates. What does the word "debate" mean? I get the impression he has not grasped all the subtleties of debate. Debate takes place between two parties. Sometimes that means letting go of some concerns in order to achieve a certain degree of consensus. That is why I wonder why the Liberals did not immediately agree to the motion and prove, for once, that ethics matter to them. They would have saved us all that time.

Why did my colleague not immediately support the motion and allow us to move on to another debate? That is what I want to ask him.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, we are locked into two hours of debate. Perhaps something was lost in translation, but I did not quite understand the question from the hon. member about this not being debate.

Again, Canadians want us to debate. We are talking about issues that matter, and to be locked into this debate for two hours takes away from the discussion that could be had. I do not think the

members on the other side of the House are going to put these speeches in this debate into their householders.

Canadians want us to talk about the issues that matter to them: putting food on their tables, helping them out and getting them through a crisis, even though members of the Conservative Party will say that there is no crisis. This entire debate is truly unfortunate.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House of Commons. It is great to return to Ottawa to represent the constituents of the great area of southwestern Saskatchewan.

I want to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, who serves as our shadow minister for ethics, for bringing forward this very important motion. It is a shame that it did not come from leaders or members of the Liberal caucus. We have heard from several senior Liberal members who believe, quite frankly, that ethics really matter. They had a great opportunity to show they take it seriously.

I am disappointed that we have to consider and discuss the misconduct of one of our former colleagues, the member for Steveston—Richmond East from the last Parliament. It is something we have to address if we are to maintain any integrity as an institution and show respect to all the people who sent us here.

As it says in the text of the motion, the actions of the member have "cast unacceptable reflections upon the House and its members, amount to an offence against the dignity and authority of the House, and warrant sanction." It is especially disappointing for me to consider this, as I am a member of Parliament in my first term. I believe we have the ability and opportunity to make a difference for our fellow citizens, which is why I am here.

I want to touch briefly on that very point. I am a new member of Parliament. We have several senior members trying to skirt debate about ethics and about the importance that it has in our role as parliamentarians. A question for one of my colleagues, the member for Battle River—Crowfoot, was about whether we take this emergency seriously. Ultimately, proroguing Parliament proved that the government does not take it seriously, because we had the time to debate the help that Canadians need and deserve to get through this emergency, but instead six weeks was completely lost to political games. So much for the team Canada approach that we keep hearing about from the government.

Being a newly elected member of Parliament, I am looking at members from all parties to see the example that is being set. There is a long list from the government. Canadians are looking to the government to set the tone and the example for what the standards should be for citizens in our great country.

We have different reports. We have "The Trudeau Report"—

• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the hon. member not to mention the first or last name of anybody who sits in the House. I would ask him to refer to titles instead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, with all due respect to the Chair, I disagree. Since this is the title of the document, it can be quoted in the House of Commons, whether it is the “Trudeau Report” or the “Trudeau II Report”. It is not our fault if that is the same name as the Prime Minister.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will follow up and get back to the House. Normally members cannot do indirectly what they cannot do directly.

[*English*]

I will allow the member to continue. The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I will take the liberty to apologize right now for that. We will refer to it as the Prime Minister's report going forward here.

The Prime Minister's report number one, on the Aga Khan, states:

No minister of the Crown, minister of state or parliamentary secretary, no member of his or her family and no ministerial adviser or ministerial staff shall accept travel on non-commercial chartered or private aircraft for any purpose unless required in his or her capacity as a public office holder or in exceptional circumstances or with the prior approval of the Commissioner.

It is very easily laid out. The Prime Minister chose to ignore that and was found guilty.

We move on to the Prime Minister's report number two, which involves SNC-Lavalin. The report concluded that the Prime Minister violated section 9 of the Conflict of Interest Act. The report was simply entitled “[Prime Minister] II Report” as it was his second violation, setting quite the tone for the people of Canada.

Then we keep moving on through other members of his cabinet. We have the clam scam report, for lack of a better term, where the Liberal government violated Conflict of Interest laws when it awarded a contract to a company where the wife's cousin had significant influence. Again, that was setting the tone for Canadians.

Next up is the former finance minister. We have the “Morneau Report” number one, with the French villa. He only had to pay a \$200 fine. Recently we had Morneau report number two. When he was campaigning he was found in contravention of the Elections Act. What were the consequences of that? It was merely a \$300 fine. That is \$500 so far in total.

He is implicated in a third scandal, which is ongoing and which many of us here in the House suspect is the reason why Parliament was prorogued by the government. We are also waiting on the Prime Minister's report number three, which we are certain will be coming from this very same scandal.

Once again, why was Parliament prorogued? It was to avoid further scrutiny. That is the way it seems. That is the way Canadians are perceiving this as well.

When we talk about hearing from our constituents, yes, they are all absolutely concerned about the emergency situation that we find ourselves in. However, when we talk about the national unity issue that we face in this country, one of the main objectives that western Canadians see the government undertaking, which undermine the

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institutions we have, is the ethics breaches, the ethics violations that continue to happen.

Again, it starts at the very top. It did not take very long in the Prime Minister's mandate to be convicted and charged with his very first ethics violation. Then we had number two and we are waiting for report number three. This is a systemic issue within the government, starting from the top and filtering its way down. We are talking here today about a motion on a former member who was not in the cabinet, so it made its way from the top all the way down through all different levels of the government.

What are we going to do as parliamentarians to uphold ethics? The whole notion of the system that we have as hon. members is that we would do the right and honourable thing when we are found guilty of these types of breaches and violations. In particular, the noble thing would be for members to step down. We are serving in public. The public demands and expects the utmost from us as members. We should be held to a higher standard than people who are not in public life.

There is one other point I would like to make to emphasize that. When we look at the Elections Act, if a financial agent makes a simple mistake on a campaign return, they are threatened with jail time, yet when we look at the Morneau report number two, he had only a \$300 fine. We need to make sure we have actual teeth in our ethics laws that will dissuade people. Merely being named and shamed, as we talked about earlier, obviously is not doing enough. It is a \$300 fine for a second breach. What is going to happen if there is a third or fourth that ever comes out? Will it be \$400? I do not know. When we look at the history of its going from \$200 to \$300, one could assume that is the direction that it is going to go.

● (1205)

In talking about the motion before us, I want to bring up another point from the commissioner's report:

Where I conclude that a Member has contravened the Code and I find no mitigating circumstances, as was the case in this inquiry, I may recommend a sanction for the House to impose on the contravening Member. However, in the present case, given that Mr. Peschisolido is no longer a Member and therefore not subject to the rules governing Members of the House of Commons, issuing such a recommendation would serve no purpose.

As members of the House of Commons, we must take it upon ourselves to ensure that ethics standards are upheld to the highest degree. Whether one is in Parliament or not, we need to make sure that we are doing something. That is what we are striving to do here today. Our constituents, especially in western Canada, are bringing this issue up. This is an issue that pertains to national unity. We need to ensure that all members of government are holding ethics to the highest centre that they possibly can, because that is what our constituents demand from us.

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Going back to the issues that we have from the top down, again, the finance minister held a pretty high portfolio. He was one of the top government cabinet ministers. I have to wonder right now if the most recent cases with the former finance minister will turn out to be similar to the case in front of us here today. Are we going to be discussing this further on down the road? I do not know. Are we going to continue to see what happens with the WE Charity scandal? I do not know.

Again, the government prorogued Parliament to get rid of the scrutiny and the digging that we were doing on the government. I am just wondering where that is ever going to take us.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the debate on the motion to concur in the report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner entitled “Peschisolido Report” having expired, it is my duty to put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion.

[*English*]

The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

• (1210)

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: As this voting process is new, I ask members to be patient. I heard a few “yeas” and “nays”.

Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, September 23, we will proceed with a voice vote.

[*English*]

I see the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would like to defer the vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday September 23, the division stands deferred until later this day at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[*Translation*]

Thank you once again for your patience. Since this is a new process, I need to make sure that it is done correctly.

[*English*]

PETITIONS

MATERNITY AND PARENTAL LEAVE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this House, on the traditional territory of the Algonquin nation, to present a petition to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development from many petitioners across Canada.

This relates to something that touches all of our constituencies, and that is, of course, parents dealing with COVID who are trying to take care of their kids, particularly parents who are on maternity or parental leave and who have had to be in lockdown, missing important social and bonding opportunities for their children that are crucial for early childhood development. It also touches those who are currently on leave and have missed out on having support from family, friends and grandparents, also due to COVID.

The petitioners ask that the minister extend paid maternity or parental leave by three months in response to COVID and the consequent lockdown.

CARDING

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the electronic petition, e-2663, which has 5,654 signatures on it, on behalf of my constituents. It calls on the Government of Canada to ban the practice of carding in Canada. The practice of carding, which is random street checks to obtain identifying information by police, has had a disproportionate impact on Black, racialized and indigenous communities and it has not led to a reduction in crime.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a petition that recognizes an article by the Associated Press that revealed an ongoing campaign of Uighur birth suppression by the Chinese Communist Party.

The petitioners state that they would like to recognize that Uighurs in China have been and are being subjected to genocide, and ask that the government use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, the Magnitsky act, to sanction those who are responsible for the heinous crimes being committed against the Uighur people.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I as well am very proud to stand in the House to present petition 432.

In addition to my hon. colleague's reference to recent news of coordinated Uighur birth suppression, there is also a body of mounting evidence showing that Uighurs are being subjected to political and religious indoctrination, arbitrary detention, separation of children from families, invasive surveillance, destruction of cultural sites, forced labour and even forced organ harvesting. Moreover, it is estimated that up to three million Uighurs and other Muslim minorities have been detained in what have been described as concentration camps.

• (1215)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today.

The first one is on the treatment of the Uighur population in China. They are being subjected to what amounts to genocide, and the petitioners call for the justice minister to use Magnitsky sanctions to end these horrific atrocities.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second one that I would like to table is a petition from Canadians who are calling on the government to protect the conscience rights of physicians in this country, particularly as we do a review of the euthanasia laws.

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Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have petition 432, which is calling on the undersigned, with the House of Commons, to take the following actions to address the situation: formally recognize that Uighurs in China have been and are being subjected to genocide, and use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act to sanction those responsible for the heinous crimes being committed against the Uighur people.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I remind hon. members who wish to present a petition to lay their documents on the table as soon as possible in the next few minutes.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Considering we are in a hybrid sitting, are there any members dissenting with that request?

There being none, I declare it so ordered.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PROCEEDINGS ON THE BILL ENTITLED AN ACT
RELATING TO CERTAIN MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO
COVID-19

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker in relation to the consideration of Government Business No. 1, I move:

That the debate be not further adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places the usual way or to

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use the “raise hand” function so the Chair has some idea of the number of hon. members who wish to participate in this 30-minute question period. I ask members to rise now.

[Translation]

We need to count the number of members who used the “raise hand” function, which is a new function in this hybrid system.

[English]

We will now proceed with the 30-minute question period.

The hon. opposition House leader.

• (1220)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (House Leader of the Official Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cat has been let out of the bag. Are we surprised? Unfortunately, no because for months now it has been clear that the government does not like parliamentary debates.

The government is doing everything it can to stifle the work of MPs, who are here to hold it accountable. At a time when the Prime Minister was caught up in the WE scandal and parliamentarians were doing thorough and serious work in parliamentary committee, the Prime Minister decided to prorogue the House for six weeks, shutting down parliamentary work. That happened in the middle of summer.

Knowing full well that there were sunset clauses on financial commitments that are due to expire on September 30, the government was in a position to continue on if it wanted, while showing respect for democratic debate and parliamentarians. But no, the government decided to deliver an inaugural speech last week, barely a week before the deadline. It informed us that the plan to deal with these commitments would be debated over two days.

We were prepared to meet last Sunday to sit in committee of the whole. Four ministers would have had a great opportunity to testify and explain themselves. The government refused. Worse yet, it wants to put a four-hour limit on the debate on spending, which could reach \$50 billion.

Why is the government limiting members' speaking time during extremely important debates?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we told Canadians over a month ago of our plan to transition from the CERB to EI.

We talked about the changes made to the system that would allow more people to transition to EI. We said we were going to create three new benefits, namely, the Canada recovery benefit, the Canada recovery sickness benefit and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit. We also explained the details of those three benefits.

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We worked very closely with public servants to make sure that the transition to EI would happen without any interruption to Canadians' benefits. It was very important to us that we continue our work behind the scenes, in co-operation with officials from the Department of National Revenue and Employment and Social Development Canada, who are working very hard for Canadians.

Quite frankly, there should be no big surprises here. We shared all the details of our plan over a month ago. I hope everyone will be happy with this. It is very important that these benefits get paid out so that workers—

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: For the purposes of getting to all members who wish to speak during this 30-minute question period, I ask members to keep their interventions at around one minute, both for the questions posed and the responses. I am sure that will work out well.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Jonquière.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, some may find it puzzling that debate needs to be limited because of the urgency of the situation, especially since Parliament was prorogued for six weeks. Before then, the Liberals did not believe the situation to be urgent.

During a pandemic, we must apply a rather simple principle, the precautionary principle. We must act in the initial stages to prevent problems from occurring later on. Clearly, the government did not do that. The leader of my party stated some time ago that the government perhaps did not have the focus to manage the current crisis. The Prime Minister was mired in the WE scandal. We suggested that the Deputy Prime Minister take the reins. That might have prevented a six-week prorogation. Today, we might be at a different point and we might be discussing the recovery plan.

I am struck by the fact that when my Liberal colleagues speak about collaboration, I sometimes think that they are confusing their own interests with those of the general public. Collaboration means working with the other parties, and not putting one's interests before the interests of Canadians. I would like to hear what one of my Liberal colleagues has to say about that.

● (1225)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, we have been working together for a long time to help Canadians during this pandemic. It truly is an emergency. We all agree on that.

My government colleagues and I are listening to the opposition parties. We are aware of their concerns about the CERB and we understand what they wanted in this bill. When we created the new benefits, we tried to include what all the opposition parties wanted to see in there.

We do not want to discourage people from working. We want to be sure that there are integrity measures in place. We want to be sure that people are looking for work and that they accept employment when it is offered to them.

The three benefits really reflect that.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the minister mentioned fraud. Before prorogation, the industry committee had a motion from the NDP, which was supported by all parties, including hers. It is a really good report on fraud and I hope we get that released in the House of Commons. We will need unanimous consent and I hope that happens.

Specifically on supplementary employment benefits, the minister and her colleague know that many people might have their CERB clawed back or be punished by employer incentive programs that were negotiated, which might increase their benefits over that amount.

I would like to hear from the minister what she is doing about that to ensure the sub benefits, as she has been made aware of several times, do not affect workers. Their benefits should not be clawed back and they should be made ineligible for some of the benefit programs that have been rolled out. Could she please update the House?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, I certainly can. In fact, I can advise the House that we are working with every employer that has a sub plan to ensure that it is as seamless as possible, working with individual employees, and that nobody is put in a situation that is untenable, given their individual circumstances. This is an excellent example of the changes that one will see in the new benefits.

In transitioning so many people to EI, we are back to a system where sub plans are in place. We are back to a system where people can seamlessly be on both EI and earn an income. It is an excellent example of why we and officials have been working so hard to transition people back to EI.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to hold the minister accountable, because in March we gave her incredible powers to assist people, like parents who were seeking parental benefits, and to deal with sub-plans. The minister sat by and did absolutely nothing until the EI system resumed. Retroactive or not, she let people down and she is letting Parliament down by having a press conference with the Deputy Prime Minister, now finance minister, saying that somehow this is sharing the plan without offering any specifics. She has let this place down.

Is this the way she wants to be remembered, as a minister who let people down, including the House?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, we made a lot of effort and took a lot of time in the past six weeks telling Canadians what the plan was to transition from the CERB to EI, what the new benefits would look like, and I would say “retroactive or not”. A lot of women out there, because of the credit of EI hours, will be able to get retroactive maternity leave and parental leave. That is not just a thing one says, it is an important aspect of this transition.

We all know that the EI system was clunky and unable to serve us well when the pandemic hit. People have been working flat out to make changes and fix the system so we can now offer these better situations for Canadians. It is incredibly unfair to the people who have worked so hard to get us here to say that somehow they were not working hard enough.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous member, I would like to thank the minister for the tremendous work she and her officials have done over the past months. They have really moved mountains to help Canadians.

With the devastating impacts of the global pandemic, we have seen the many tragedies families have had to go through. We have seen families experiencing budget shortfalls. Also, about 50% of Canadians are saying their household income has been impacted by this global pandemic. Would the minister not agree that Canadians are anxious about wanting to see what services and future programs we are going to be able to offer Canadians as we face a possible second wave?

• (1230)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, we have been dealing with this in real time, course correcting and working very hard for Canadians. One of the benefits of the plan we have put forth is it is a longer-term plan. The world changes every two to four to six to eight weeks. We have given Canadians a year-long runway so they know they will have access to these benefits for 26 of the next 52 weeks. They will have continuity, certainty and a little breathing space, because we do not know what is going to happen. Absolutely, Canadians are anxious and this recognizes that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief.

I think there is some confusion. The government is extolling the virtues of the new measures, the new benefits and the transition from the CERB to a more flexible EI system. The government said that it informed us of all that and that Canadians have known about this for a month. The problem is that the government announced all of this to us in a press release two days before proroguing Parliament. Three of these measures really need to be examined by parliamentarians, by elected members. As parliamentarians, our role is to vote. What we take issue with is the process that we are dealing with today. Yes, the measures were announced, but we have to hastily vote on them on the pretext that they are good for us. However, the government is not giving us the right, as legislators, to take the time to examine those measures.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, I understand. I am here today, we will be here tonight, and I will be before the Senate in a few days. Frankly, this is an urgent matter. We decided to include

these benefits in legislation that will help Canadians much more than the CERB did. It is far better to make the transition to employment insurance. The changes to EI are not legislative, they are regulatory. They do not involve legislation, but rather the regulations. Everything has been done. Over three million people are now making the transition to EI. The goal is to help Canadians and all workers.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously, in its desperate rush to get NDP support, the government did not consult with the provinces, which have jurisdiction over most workers in Canada. Does the minister realize that Ontario workers who take two weeks of federally paid sick leave could lose their jobs? Provincially regulated workers with three job-protected unpaid sick days could be dismissed if they take two weeks of federally paid leave without the permission of their employer.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, let me correct the record. I recently had a meeting of all employment ministers in provincial and territorial governments and spoke with them directly about the three new benefits we intended to create. I respectfully requested that they amend their labour codes so they would parallel the changes we would like to make to the federal labour code to offer worker protection in both provincial and federal jurisdictions.

This happened during the CERB and I expect it to happen again. I have every confidence that the ongoing constructive relationships we have with provincial jurisdictions will result in worker protection in job to job to job, whether provincial, territorial or federal, it will not matter.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, so many people are left out. As I mentioned the other day, many people are unable to work or should not work, including seniors, for example. Because of the pandemic, students were unable to work. We know that with the WE scandal, any sort of support that was supposed to be provided for students is not there. I still wonder where those monies are.

There are many people in our society who fall through the cracks. Not addressing this is also a public health and safety issue. I think of the many people in my riding who are dealing with very complex trauma and mental health issues and who cannot hold a full-time job. We need to beef up our guaranteed income programs in this country. They are not livable. OAS is not livable. Motion No. 46 certainly offers a path forward for guaranteed livable income programs so that all human beings can live with human rights and dignity in this country.

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• (1235)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, if one thing this pandemic has certainly laid bare, it is the massive gaps in our social safety net and how many of our systems do not respond to the needs of our citizens, workers and most vulnerable. It has also given us an opportunity to, as a legacy, do better by Canadians.

One of those systems that is dear to my heart is the employment insurance system, but we only need to look at our systems of delivering, or lack thereof, directly for our citizens with disabilities. There is a lot we need to fix. There is a lot we need to do working with provinces, as many of these programs are in other jurisdictions, but we have a mutual interest to support.

The benefits we are talking about today are for workers, for people who have lost employment income, but in no way does that diminish the importance of addressing the poverty and isolation felt by so many of our citizens who are vulnerable, at risk and for whom the pandemic has taken an incredible toll.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are grateful for the programs the government has been able to roll out, whether it was the CERB or the wage subsidy, and now we are here to talk about the CRB. Can the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion add one important piece that is missing? How are we going to get people back to work safely? What is the plan? The throne speech did not outline a plan. I am wondering if the minister has a plan, seeing as she is the minister for employment and workforce development. Can she elaborate on what that plan might be for Canadians when they elect to transition off CRB and EI?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, we are trying as much as possible to parallel these new benefits to the EI system, because that system has many benefits, such as providing the incentive to work and transitioning workers back into the workforce, as well as the ideas of working while on claim and accessing training. We announced last week a \$1.5-billion investment in training to be delivered through our workforce development agreements with the provinces and territories.

The plan was laid out last week in the Speech from the Throne. We have an ambitious goal of creating a million new jobs. That will be done in a number of ways, whether it is by shoring up and fortifying jobs, or filling the jobs we have in this country that are available. A lot of that is due to a skills mismatch. We want to create strategies to develop new jobs with appropriately skilled workers. One thing we hear time and time again, both nationally and internationally from employment ministers, is that training has got to be at the heart of any economic—

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Shefford.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, we cannot oppose this legislation because we need it. Our local businesses are asking that the CERB be changed to include an incentive to work, something the Bloc has been requesting for weeks, even months.

Once again, there is the issue of cynicism. The Liberals are putting parliamentarians back to work and then taking their work

away as we return from a period of prorogation that took its toll on our economy and democracy. Upon our return, the government introduces major legislation but limits the time for debate. Do the Liberals like this culture of cynicism? Do they enjoy limiting our role as parliamentarians?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, we have put a lot of effort into ensuring that there are no disincentives to work. These new benefits really work like employment insurance: People must be looking for work, be available for work, accept a reasonable job offer and be present in the country. They really need to be actively looking for work.

It is always more beneficial to work than to not work and receive benefits.

• (1240)

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as an opposition member of Parliament, I want to begin by thanking the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion. I am absolutely confident that she has been working diligently and very hard. She was one of the few ministers to actually say out loud that she would have perhaps handled the WE Charity scandal a little differently.

I would still like to say that I regret we have such a short amount of time to debate this critical legislation. I would like to ask the minister if, instead of constantly trying to fill the gaps, cover the holes and rescue people who are left behind, she thinks it is time to bring in a guaranteed livable income.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, as I said, this pandemic has really revealed the gaps in our social safety net. We have taken a more targeted approach than perhaps a basic income approach would have been. We are trying to give more to the people we thought needed it the most, particularly workers and their families, and the most vulnerable.

However, I think there is an important conversation to be had in this country about income support, about how we can seamlessly incentivize transitioning to work instead of putting barriers in place that prevent people from actually working because they so desperately need the services, programs and supports they get when they are on social assistance. There are really important conversations that need to be had.

However, today we are talking about employment income and replacement support for workers who are impacted by COVID-19. Let us not in any way take that as me saying those other conversations are not important.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a quick question for the minister across the way.

She talked about creating jobs. The Liberals talked about creating a million new jobs in the throne speech, which was very vague on details. Then the minister said it was going to be done through training. There would be training, and the jobs that are vacant right now would be filled.

My question for the minister is as follows. We are at 10% unemployment. We have the highest unemployment rate of the G7 countries across the world. If there are jobs that are going to be filled, why are they not being filled right now? If people are going to be trained, what are they going to be trained for? The Liberals say they are going to create a million new jobs in the new green energy industry.

What I would ask is for the government to clear the path for energy workers to go back to work now. There is 20 billion dollars' worth of private investment ready to go in Alberta and Saskatchewan. If the private sector could be harnessed, that would do a lot more good than training people for jobs that are not available anywhere in the country.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, even though we have an incredibly high rate of unemployment, there are also jobs out there. There are businesses that require appropriately skilled workers, and those are the jobs I was talking about when I was talking about filling jobs.

We know there is a skills mismatch in this country. We know that we need to have a targeted, incredibly sophisticated training strategy coming out of this pandemic to make sure that workers have the skills of the future that will get them the jobs of the future.

We also know that workers want to be properly skilled. They want to get the jobs that will provide for their families. They want to avail themselves of the opportunities to earn a good living. They can do that, and we can help by investing in skills training.

Again, these programs are delivered through the provinces and territories, and we provide the funding. It is very successful. Many of the training programs we have in this country are delivered by the provinces. I look forward to seeing what they can do with even more resources.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her speech.

I think steps in the right direction have been taken. Access to employment insurance has been a big problem for years. The NDP has been calling for it, and we welcome it.

I have three quick questions. Since these are temporary programs, when can we expect permanent EI reform? Will self-employed and freelance workers be included? Will there be 50 weeks of sick leave for people who are sick and on employment insurance?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, in answer to those three questions, we have already started working on EI reform. We have set the stage for some very important conversations with Canadians about a new iteration of the EI system that will be more generous, more accessible and more inclusive.

S. O. 57

These are issues we will be looking at over the coming months. We need to act fast though, because we know we need a better system. We want to include self-employed workers, but we have to figure out how to do that. It is very hard. No other country does it particularly well. However, there are some examples out there that show it can be done creatively.

Regarding EI sickness benefits, our government committed to increasing them from 15 to 26 weeks. We remain in favour of that. We will do it as soon as possible.

• (1245)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been cramming this debate through at the last minute when we should have brought it up over the summer, discussing it among ourselves and the members in the House.

The members opposite have talked about how they want to be part of a team, yet they do not want to hear any aspect of what is going on from the other side of the House.

I think the minister should be very familiar with the fact that Service Canada is now asking employees for records of employment. Records of employment, which are normally handed out to people once they have been released, gone on leave or are no longer working, are now sitting somewhere.

The reality is that the Phoenix organization, which the member is very familiar with, has said that if it gives out records of employment now, while people are still employed at a minimum amount, they will not be recognized after the fact for finances. These are discussions that should have gone on beforehand.

Where does the minister stand on Phoenix as it deals with people transitioning into that aspect of employment insurance?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, after still having a bit of PTSD from my time with Phoenix, one of our number one priorities was to make sure that we could deliver for Canadians. We need systems that are reliable, efficient and can deliver quickly.

We have learned a lot from our experiences with the Phoenix system. I can assure colleagues that, if we are asking for records of employment from some employees, those records of employment will not, in any way, be impacted by the workers' application for benefits.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for several days now, our Liberal friends have been emphasizing co-operation and accusing us of wanting to pick a fight. In my view, a good way to co-operate is to admit to being wrong or making mistakes.

Why will the Liberal government not simply admit that it was wrong to prorogue Parliament and make Quebeckers and Canadians wait for six weeks? If it would acknowledge that mistake, perhaps we could start with a clean slate and work together once again.

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We managed to work together for the aluminum sector. The Liberals acknowledged the mistakes they had made during the CUS-MA negotiations. We worked together and came up with a solution. We can do it again.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, we were flexible when we were developing the details of our plan six weeks ago.

[*English*]

We understood that school was going to reopen. We did not know what that was going to look like. We did not know the August job numbers. We did not know what state the pandemic would be in when we put forward this legislation, so we signalled very clearly that there would be flexibility in our approach to these benefits.

Certainly, I have tried my best to work collaboratively with my colleagues and with my critics. I have felt, time and again, that our laws have been bettered during this pandemic because of that collaboration. I think that is what is in the best interests of Canadians.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made Wednesday, September 23, we will not proceed to a voice vote. I see a member rising.

And one or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1415)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 2)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| Alghabra | Amos |
| Anandasangaree | Angus |
| Arseneault | Arya |
| Ashton | Atwin |
| Bachrach | Badawey |
| Bagnell | Bains |
| Baker | Battiste |
| Beech | Bendayan |
| Bennett | Bessette |
| Bibeau | Bittle |
| Blaikie | Blair |
| Blaney (North Island—Powell River) | Blois |
| Boulerice | Bratina |
| Brière | Cannings |
| Casey | Chagger |
| Champagne | Chen |
| Collins | Cormier |
| Dabrusin | Damoff |

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Davies | Dhaliwal |
| Dhillon | Dong |
| Drouin | Dubourg |
| Duclos | Duguid |
| Duncan (Etobicoke North) | Duvall |
| Dzerowicz | Easter |
| Ehsassi | El-Khoury |
| Ellis | Erskine-Smith |
| Fergus | Fillmore |
| Finnigan | Fisher |
| Fonseca | Fortier |
| Fragiskatos | Fraser |
| Freeland | Fry |
| Garneau | Garrison |
| Gazan | Gerretsen |
| Gould | Green |
| Guilbeault | Hajdu |
| Hardie | Harris |
| Holland | Housefather |
| Hughes | Hussen |
| Hutchings | Iacono |
| Jaczek | Johns |
| Joly | Jones |
| Jordan | Jowhari |
| Julian | Kelloway |
| Khalid | Khera |
| Koutrakis | Kusmierczyk |
| Kwan | Lalonde |
| Lambropoulos | Lametti |
| Lamoureux | Lattanzio |
| Lauzon | LeBlanc |
| Lebouthillier | Lefebvre |
| Lightbound | Longfield |
| Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) | MacGregor |
| MacKinnon (Gatineau) | Maloney |
| Manly | Martinez Ferrada |
| Masse | Mathysen |
| May (Cambridge) | May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) |
| McCrimmon | McDonald |
| McGuinty | McKay |
| McKenna | McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) |
| McLeod (Northwest Territories) | McPherson |
| Mendès | Mendicino |
| Monsef | Morrissey |
| Murray | Ng |
| O'Connell | Oliphant |
| Petitpas Taylor | Powlowski |
| Qaqqaq | Qualtrough |
| Ratansi | Regan |
| Robillard | Rodriguez |
| Rogers | Romanado |
| Sahota (Brampton North) | Saini |
| Sajjan | Samson |
| Sangha | Sarai |
| Scarpaleggia | Schiefke |
| Schulte | Serré |
| Sgro | Shanahan |
| Sheehan | Sidhu (Brampton East) |
| Sidhu (Brampton South) | Simms |
| Singh | Sorbara |
| Spengemann | Tabbara |
| Tassi | Turnbull |
| Van Bynen | van Koeverden |
| Vandal | Vandenbeld |
| Vaughan | Virani |
| Weiler | Wilkinson |
| Wilson-Raybould | Young |
| Zahid | Zann |
| Zuberi— 173 | |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Aboultaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Alleslev |
| Allison | Arnold |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Barsalou-Duval | Beaulieu |
| Benzen | Bergeron |
| Berthold | Bérubé |
| Bezan | Blanchette-Joncas |
| Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis) | Block |
| Boudrias | Bragdon |
| Brassard | Brunelle-Duceppe |
| Calkins | Carrie |
| Chabot | Champoux |
| Charbonneau | Chiu |
| Chong | Cooper |
| Cumming | Dalton |
| Dancho | Davidson |
| DeBellefeuille | Deltell |
| d'Entremont | Desbiens |
| Desilets | Doherty |
| Dowdall | Dreeshen |
| Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Epp |
| Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) | Falk (Provencher) |
| Fast | Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock) |
| Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Fortin |
| Gallant | Gaudreau |
| Généreux | Genuis |
| Gill | Gladu |
| Godin | Gourde |
| Gray | Hallan |
| Harder | Hoback |
| Jansen | Jeneroux |
| Kelly | Kent |
| Kitchen | Kurek |
| Kusie | Lake |
| Larouche | Lawrence |
| Lehoux | Lemire |
| Lewis (Essex) | Liepert |
| Lloyd | Lobb |
| Lukiwski | MacKenzie |
| Maguire | Martel |
| Mazier | McCaulley (Edmonton West) |
| McColeman | McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo) |
| Melillo | Michaud |
| Moore | Morantz |
| Morrison | Motz |
| Nater | Normandin |
| O'Toole | Patzner |
| Pauzé | Perron |
| Plamondon | Poilievre |
| Rayes | Redekopp |
| Richards | Rood |
| Ruff | Sahota (Calgary Skyview) |
| Saroya | Savard-Tremblay |
| Scheer | Schmale |
| Seeback | Shields |
| Shin | Shipley |
| Simard | Sloan |
| Soroka | Stanton |
| Steinley | Ste-Marie |
| Strahl | Stubbs |
| Sweet | Thériault |
| Therrien | Tochor |
| Trudel | Uppal |
| Van Popta | Vecchio |
| Vidal | Viersen |
| Vignola | Vis |
| Wagantall | Warkentin |
| Waugh | Webber |
| Wong | Yurdiga |

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Zimmer— 141

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Last night at the vote, I clarified that members need to have their video on from the time the vote begins and the question is read until the end. I have a list of 25 individuals who shut their video off or were not here. While I will not read out their names nor send you the screenshots, I would remind you to remind members that in the future, as the government can rise or fall on these votes, it is critical that their video be on from start to finish.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton for that reminder.

I want to remind all members that the video must remain on from the beginning to the end.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I have a comment in that regard.

I saw the member for Calgary Nose Hill leave and come back in during the vote. I do not know whether that is allowed, so this should be clarified. I also saw the deputy leader of the Conservative Party come in and then leave.

I am not blaming anyone. We are in a situation where we are all learning together. Is this allowed or not? I can more readily overlook this than some who refused to return to the original vote as requested yesterday by the Bloc Québécois member. We have more class than that.

• (1420)

[*English*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar would like to respond.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I did step out after the votes were completed, but before you announced the results. I defer to your decision regarding the validity of my vote.

The Speaker: We will adjust the numbers accordingly.

Mr. Han Dong: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I heard the rule yesterday about not taking pictures of the screen or of other members. What is the rule on taking screenshots during the voting proceeding? Could you clarify the rule on that?

The Speaker: For taking screenshots, it is the same as being in the House. If a member takes a picture, they are taking a picture, and posting it just adds to that. Members are not permitted to take photos in the House.

I wish to inform the House that because of the time required to complete the recorded division, it will not be possible to proceed to Statements by Members. Accordingly, the House will now proceed to Oral Questions pursuant to Standing Order 35.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby has a point of order. It came up just before I started.

Oral Questions

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent, notwithstanding the usual practice, for proceeding to members' statements prior to proceeding to Oral Questions today.

The Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity I will only ask those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

[Translation]

The question is on the motion. All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's disinterest and disdain for small businesses have left many small businesses behind during the pandemic. In fact, billions of dollars have been announced, but still the commercial rent relief program has been massively not used. Why? The Liberals got it wrong because the Prime Minister's top-down "I know best" way is not the right way and does not work.

When will the Prime Minister and the Liberals start listening to the needs of small businesses and adjust this program so that it helps them today?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we moved forward quickly to support Canadians with the Canada emergency response benefit. Then we moved forward with the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which helped hundreds of thousands of businesses across the country. We also moved forward with the Canada emergency business account to help small businesses and, yes, we moved forward with the commercial rent subsidy. The commercial rent subsidy program, not being within federal jurisdiction, was delivered in partnership with the provinces. It has not worked as well as any of us would have liked, which is why we continue to work on ensuring we can support businesses even better.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the heart of the problem is that the Liberals keep ramming through bills without proper consultation and without letting members of Parliament, who represent these small businesses, be part of the debate. In fact, they rammed through six pieces of legislation, many of which the Prime Minister just talked about, without adequate consultation or debate. Today debate is being shut down again on another piece of legislation that could help Canadians but will probably be very flawed.

Why will the Prime Minister not let us do our job? Why will the Prime Minister not listen to Canadians and do a little consultation before ramming through these pieces of legislation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the spring we were facing an unprecedented challenge that caused all parties to come together. Yes, we passed historic legisla-

tion to support Canadians during this time of crisis, and it helped millions upon millions of Canadians. I was pleased to see the collaboration of all parties working to get it right as quickly as possible.

We are in a second wave right now. While the opposition is playing politics, we continue to focus on delivering for Canadians the help they need because we will have their backs.

• (1425)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we could have debated this legislation for six weeks, but the back the Prime Minister had was his own when he shut down Parliament to cover up for the WE scandal. We will take no lessons from him on playing political games.

The Prime Minister refuses to listen to small businesses, farmers, energy workers, fishers, everyday Canadians and the members of Parliament they have elected. He is acting in a dictatorial way and is doing this primarily to avoid accountability and to cover up his own scandal.

Why does the Prime Minister put his own interests ahead of the interests of Canadians and democracy?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are facing a second wave of the pandemic right across the country and the Conservatives continue to want to talk about the WE Charity. We on this side of the House are focused on the pandemic. We are focused on delivering for Canadians.

While I am up here, allow me to take this opportunity to express to Canadians my encouragement to download the COVID Alert app. It is safe and free and an easy way to keep themselves and their loved ones safe. I encourage everyone across the country to download COVID Alert and do their part to keep us all safe.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for nearly two months now, the Prime Minister has been doing everything he can to prevent parliamentarians from doing their job.

Last night I saw something interesting on Twitter. The tweet said: "I wonder what the great Prime Ministers (PMs) of the past might think. During the entirety of the Second World War, neither the British [PM Churchill] nor the Canadian [PM Mackenzie King] ever sought to limit debate, especially on matters involving financial appropriations". That tweet was by the Hon. Andrew Leslie, retired general and former member of Parliament and Liberal Party whip.

What does the Prime Minister think of this keen observation about letting all parliamentarians do their job?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with an unprecedented pandemic, a crisis that requires everyone to work together. That is exactly what we have been doing since the spring. As parliamentarians, we worked with all the parties to implement ambitious programs to help Canadians, such as the CERB, the wage subsidy, and measures to help seniors and youth.

We will continue to address Canadians' needs and work with members of the House, because we know that this is what Canadians need.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the work we did in the spring was all well and good, but what has been happening in the past two months is exactly the opposite.

The Prime Minister unilaterally decided to shut down Parliament for six weeks. Then he refused to allow proper debate in committee of the whole. Now he is limiting a very important debate on more than \$50 billion in spending to barely four and a half hours.

Why not draw inspiration from Churchill, who held proper debates even in the middle of World War II?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during this time of crisis, we must all work together. That is what we are doing to address Canadians' needs. It is a shame to see the Conservatives playing politics while Canadians are in need.

In the meantime, I want to take this opportunity to encourage all Canadians to download the COVID Alert app. We know there is a chance it will be available in Quebec soon. We want everyone to do their part by downloading this great app, which is free, to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, most Quebecers learned that they are now in the red zone. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would first like to express my solidarity with the people of Quebec who just received this terrible news.

Today, a survey revealed that 81% of Quebecers want the federal government to increase health transfers. That is only natural, since we are in the midst of a health crisis. Yesterday evening, the Bloc Québécois introduced an amendment to that effect. We want more health transfers. The Liberals voted against it, the Conservatives voted against it, the NDP voted against it, and the Green Party voted against it.

Why is the federal government turning its back on Quebecers when we are in the midst of a second wave?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Bloc Québécois is complaining, we are taking action. This week, we will be sending \$19 billion to the provinces to help them fight the second wave. These are agreements that we signed with all of the provincial premiers because we have been there, from the beginning, to support the provinces in the important work that they are doing with us to control this pandemic.

Oral Questions

I spoke with Premier Legault yesterday evening to once again express our solidarity. We will be there to help the provinces and to send money where it is needed.

• (1430)

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals put \$500 million into health care. Quebec and the provinces want \$28 billion. Honestly, can the Prime Minister count?

Eighty-one per cent of Quebecers and 73% of Canadians want health transfers to increase. In Quebec, the National Assembly is unanimous: They want health transfers to increase. All provincial premiers want health transfers to increase.

What is it going to take for the Prime Minister to understand?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bloc Québécois members are very good at shouting, but they do not always listen.

Since day one, we have transferred billions of dollars into health care systems to counter this health crisis in Quebec and across the country. We also made a formal commitment to work with the provinces on increasing health transfers; there will be a first ministers meeting this fall on the matter. We have had 18 first ministers meetings since the pandemic began. We are going to have more and we are going to talk about health transfers. We have promised to do that.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the report we received today, the deficit is now \$300 billion.

I am afraid of what the government might do in this situation. It will do one of two things: it will either cut help to Canadians or shift the entire burden onto ordinary people. That is exactly what it must not do.

I urge the government to shift the burden onto those who have turned a profit. Is the government ready to make sure that the very wealthy pay their fair share?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first thing we did when we took office in 2015 was raise taxes on the wealthiest 1% so we could lower them for the middle class. That was a very good idea. Unfortunately, the New Democrats voted against that initiative.

We will continue to help the most vulnerable people all across the country by creating economic growth for everyone and ensuring long-term fiscal responsibility. That is what Canadians expect, and that is what we will deliver.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has announced that the deficit is now over \$300 billion. I am worried because, in that case, governments often do two things: either they cut the help to Canadians in the midst of a pandemic or they put the pressure of paying for the pandemic on the shoulders of working-class families. Both of those are the wrong things to do.

So far, the Liberal government has talked about taxing extreme wealth inequality, but no one knows what the Liberal government means when it says that. Will the Prime Minister commit today to something direct, making sure that those who have profited off the pandemic pay the price?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the very first thing we did when we took office in 2015 was raise taxes on the wealthiest 1% and lower them for the middle class. Unfortunately, the New Democrats voted against that initiative.

Every step of the way, we have had Canadians' backs, supporting the most vulnerable, ensuring that our businesses can come back strong through this pandemic and ensuring, every step of the way, that we do so in a fiscally responsible way. That is what Canadians expect of us, and that is what we will keep doing.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just talked about wanting Canadians to do their part with contact tracing very enthusiastically, but that is really easy for him to do given his privilege. The reality is that somebody wanting a test has to wait in line for hours right now and then might have to isolate for days, taking time away from work and family members. It is not that easy. People around the world have access to at-home testing or rapid testing, but nobody in Canada does. That is his fault.

If the Prime Minister is asking Canadians to do their part, when is he going to do his job?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the enthusiasm of the member opposite for more testing opportunities and technology across the country.

No matter where a Canadian lives, they should have access to testing when they need it. That is why we have been working so diligently with all of our partners to ensure that we have access to rapid, point-of-care testing, of which we have approved two. Of course, testing at home is more complex and it is a challenge for countries all around the world. We will continue, we will stop at nothing, to make sure that we have the most current technology that is accurate and that helps contribute to defeating COVID-19.

• (1435)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are people in Montreal today who are being faced with another economic lockdown. It has been seven months. Standing up here and saying that is not going to fix the problem. We do

not have these tests, yet other countries around the world do. That is because of incompetence.

Canadians need to know, without any pretty words, when we are going to have access to those tests. When are they going to be in the hands of Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the pandemic we have worked closely with provinces and territories to make sure they have the resources, both financial and technological, to manage COVID-19. We will continue to be there for Canadians, no matter which province they live in, because no matter where Canadians live they should have access to rapid testing regardless of their circumstances.

On our side, at the federal government, we are working with our industry partners and regulators to make sure that, as soon as new technology is available that is accurate and will help contribute to a reduction in COVID-19, we have those tools on the market.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister likes to say that he is focused on the pandemic. He should tell that to his Minister of Health. Today we found out that we just bought millions of saliva tests. The only problem is that they are not approved in Canada. The same tests were approved months ago in the United States, and people are using them.

When is the Minister of Health going to fast-track the process so we can get the tests quickly?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite has noted, we are not waiting to procure emerging technology. We are working in combination, across government, to make sure that as soon as new technology is available and approved for safe and accurate use, we will have access to those tests.

I thank the Minister of Public Services and Procurement for her incredible hard work on this file and on all the files to ensure that Canadians are safe and have access to the technology they need in their jurisdictions.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the provinces need saliva tests, rapid tests, very quickly, not months from now.

The government's sluggishness has resulted in red zones in Quebec. Montreal and Quebec City are designated red zones. Individuals and families have to get tested and wait several days. Mario Dumont, the television host who is famous across Quebec, is stuck hosting his show from home because he has to wait for his results. This is ridiculous.

When will these tests be approved?

Can Health Canada do it faster?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in addition to the \$3 billion that Quebec has received to improve its testing capacity, to ensure that it has the contact tracing capacity it needs, to ensure that it has the data it needs to accurately contact trace and to ensure that they have the people in place to do that work, we have also accelerated our processes at Health Canada to make sure that as new technology arrives we are well placed to approve it. We have doubled our regulatory capacity. We have people standing by, working day and night with corporations and technology developers, to ensure that we have the tools necessary to approve those tests when they are safe and accurate.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a million missing jobs. That is how many more people are without work today than in February. Now, we have the highest unemployment rate in the G7. It is higher than the U.S., the U.K., France, Italy, Japan and Germany. They all have COVID as well, but their people are getting back to work. Our unemployment is three percentage points higher than in the OECD.

When will the government table a real jobs plan so that Canadians can get back into the jobs they love, to put food on their tables and to provide the funds for our cherished social safety net?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, contrary to the Conservatives' partisan spin, our economic policy is working. In fact, just last week, DBRS Morningstar reaffirmed Canada's AAA credit rating, saying:

[We view] the overall fiscal response positively, as the stimulus has been timely in delivery, temporary in design, and sufficient in size given the scale of the shock.

That is an independent ratings agency reaffirming our AAA. That is who to trust.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every time I stand up and ask about the plight of working people who desperately want their jobs back, the minister stands up and quotes some banker or some high-paid consultant at one of the major consultancies in town saying how much they love the policy. Maybe they do. They have had all kinds of benefits showered upon them, but everyday working-class people want their jobs back. They want the chance to earn a living. They want a paycheque, and they know that we have a million missing paycheques and the highest unemployment in the G7.

When will the government get out of the way and let people get back to the jobs they love?

• (1440)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is simply absurd to suggest that a credit ratings agency is somehow financially benefiting from our government's policies. I mean come on.

If the member for Carleton does not like hearing quotes from external experts, let me quote someone the member may prefer listen-

Oral Questions

ing to: himself. I would like to remind people that in March, he said, "You might want to address [COVID-19] with big, fat government programs. We're Conservatives, so we don't believe in that." Let me say to the nine million Canadians who benefited from the CERB, that is what—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is talk of going back into lockdown as of tomorrow evening. I stand in solidarity with my constituents and all the businesses facing this nightmare once again. Because of the pandemic, families, business people, individuals, seniors and everyone else are having to make huge sacrifices.

That is why 81% of us are demanding that the federal government increase health transfers. Quebeckers understand that the solution to a health crisis lies first and foremost in stable federal investments in health care.

When will the federal government deliver?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is there to support Quebec. Here are some examples: \$675 million to increase testing; \$270 million to support the health care system, including \$112 million for mental health; \$166 million for vulnerable populations; and \$675 million to purchase PPE. We are introducing sick leave for Quebeckers who do not already have it and must self-isolate.

What Quebeckers need is co-operation, not partisanship. Let's work together.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Quebec wants ongoing funding for orderlies, not just for a few months, but for years to come.

Also, 81% of Quebeckers want the federal government to increase health transfers. Quebec's priority is to support its care staff that is battling COVID-19 as well as burnout. By being better protected, people can better care for others. Everyone in Quebec is on the same side. Everyone is working together to get through this crisis as quickly as possible. Only the federal government refuses to do its utmost.

When will it provide ongoing funding for health care?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is talking about personal protective equipment.

Oral Questions

I will repeat what I said earlier. We have spent \$675 million to purchase personal protective equipment. We are giving more money for tests, more money for this type of equipment and more money for mental health. We are there for Quebeckers, we have been there from the very beginning.

However, the Bloc Québécois does not like that. It is happiest when there are squabbles. When we do our job, when we collaborate—and that is what we are doing—the Bloc does not like that. That is too bad, but we will continue to collaborate.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are still looking for the truth when it comes to the WE scandal. Just last night the Liberal committee chair of the procedure and House affairs committee violated the rules by adjourning the debate. The chair then cancelled the morning meeting as well.

This has the PMO written all over it. We looked at this during the prorogation of Parliament, but this time it is happening at the PROC.

My question is for the chair of the procedure and House affairs committee. When will the committee get back to work to study the WE scandal?

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the motion that was brought to committee is quite complex. I am looking into this motion to see if it is in order. I am conferring with the procedural clerks and the table officers in order to do so.

I will be getting back to the members of the committee about when the next meeting is as soon as I have completed this task.

• (1445)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am just very concerned because last night as we were sitting at the procedures and House affairs committee, the meeting was adjourned.

There was supposed to be a meeting at 11 a.m. today. Why was it cancelled? Once again, it should not have been cancelled. The meeting should have been suspended. It is part of our procedural rules, and that was not done.

I am just wondering why the government is going outside of procedural rules to cover its butt when it comes to WE. When is it going to answer the question on the WE motion?

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, because this motion was fairly complicated, I still have not had enough time to complete the analysis of the motion. As soon as I have done so, after conferring with the procedural clerks, I will get back to the members.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, cover-ups have been the name of the game under the Prime Minister. Time and time again, he has broken ethics laws, been caught and then tried to cover it up. We saw it again last night at the procedure and House affairs com-

mittee, when Liberals scrambled to shut it down to prevent WE documents from coming to light. Canadians have had enough and they deserve answers.

What exactly are the Prime Minister and his Liberals trying so desperately to hide?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are here to work on behalf of Canadians. We are here to serve Canadians. That is why we are working so hard in the middle of a pandemic.

We are in the middle of this pandemic. This is an emergency, and the best thing the Conservatives found to do this morning was to bring a motion to lose two hours, debating on a former MP who has not been here for the last year. That is what they did.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is coming from the government that just shut down Parliament for six weeks and locked the doors on committee rooms. We will certainly take no lessons from the Liberals on how we will spend our time.

They say they are working in good faith with committees. They shut them down and they block investigations at every turn. They went so far as to shut down the entire House and all its business for six full weeks. Actions speak louder than words.

It is simple: Will they unlock the doors and answer questions at PROC as to why they really shut down Parliament?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have this bill in front of us. It is a very important, crucial bill. It is there to help Canadians, those who have lost their jobs and who have to stay home to take care of family members. It would also provide sick leave for people who need it. We are here to debate that.

What is the problem with the Conservatives? They prefer to debate a motion on an MP who left a year ago. We know our priority. They know theirs.

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[Translation]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second wave of COVID-19 is hitting Quebec hard. Times are tough. The Government of Quebec is making difficult decisions that could have consequences on thousands of SMEs, their owners, their workers, and their communities. Some entrepreneurs narrowly avoided bankruptcy last spring, but they are worried about how the next few weeks will unfold.

Do the Liberals understand the challenge? Will they support the restaurants, bars and the entire cultural sector, such as movie theatres and performance halls that are just starting to get their heads above water?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question because it is important. We want the business community and the cultural sector and all employees and entrepreneurs who are affected by this new lockdown to know that we are with them.

We will be there. We have been there for them over the past few months. We are there for them and will continue to be there in the days ahead whether through the Canada emergency wage subsidy, direct assistance for businesses, loans for small businesses and help through the EI system.

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[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, York Factory, an isolated first nation in northern Manitoba, has seven confirmed cases of COVID-19 and other people are symptomatic. The community desperately needs tests, medical personnel, PPE and mental health supports. The rapid testing team could not land, but there are other ways of getting it there. This first case is someone who had to go to Winnipeg for medical treatment.

I have been in touch with the parliamentary secretary, but will the government treat this as a wake-up call? York Factory and northern and indigenous communities need help now.

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are deeply concerned by the recent cluster of cases in York Factory First Nation and are monitoring the situation closely.

Since the outset of COVID-19, we have in fact shipped five shipments of personal protective equipment to the community. Additional nurses have been deployed to the community, with two arriving just yesterday.

My department does remain in close communication with the community leadership, the first nations pandemic response and coordination team as well as all the health services that are available. We will continue monitoring the situation quite closely.

* * *

● (1450)

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented new challenges for all students, but has particularly affected youth in vulnerable and low-income communities. That is why organizations like Pathways to Education are an important resource for thousands of students during this difficult time.

Pathways to Education has helped thousands of students living in low-income communities across Canada by providing a combination of supports that remove barriers to graduation and promote positive development.

Oral Questions

Could the minister please update the House as to the work our government is doing to support this important organization and our efforts to assist students in vulnerable communities facing new challenges from COVID-19.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Whitby for his continued advocacy on this issue. Students in vulnerable communities have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is why I am proud to share that our government has invested \$5 million in Pathways to Education Canada. This funding will ensure that young people in low-income communities will continue to have access to the critical supports they need and ensure they have access to safe and accessible online resources to remain engaged and support their education.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the federal government refuses to fund the Yonge subway extension without a formal business case, yet York region today is the fastest-growing region in Canada, with over 52,000 businesses, 636,000 jobs and home to over 1.2 million people. Demanding a business case is just another excuse so the Liberals never have to actually deliver.

If infrastructure is so critical, why is the federal government against the Yonge subway extension?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we certainly support public transit in Ontario. We have a bilateral agreement with Ontario that will see the federal government invest over \$11.8 billion in Ontario over the next decade, including \$8.3 billion for public transit.

The reason that we need a business case is that we owe it to taxpayers to ensure that every dollar we invest gets outcomes. We are certainly willing to move ahead and we encourage the Government of Ontario to put forward a business case to our office so we can move forward and also to prioritize this project. I know people want that project to be built.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Yonge subway business case has been obvious since it was built in 1954. It is even more obvious today.

Oral Questions

The Yonge subway extension would create over 60,000 jobs and enable housing for over 88,000 residents. That is in addition to providing much-needed public transit for thousands of York region residents. The Ontario government has committed to the project, but the Liberals refuse.

When will the government stop hiding behind a smoke screen and fund the Yonge subway extension?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are certainly not hiding behind any smoke screen. We just expect that we have to be mindful of taxpayer dollars. I would have thought the Conservative Party would support that.

We have approved more than 1,000 projects across Canada in the last few months. We are moving forward. We are doing it because we need to create jobs. We need to reduce emissions. We need to ensure a more inclusive future.

The Yonge subway line is an example of that. We certainly encourage the Government of Ontario to move forward and hand a business case over to us.

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FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals failed to negotiate a new softwood lumber agreement with the United States or to negotiate softwood into CUSMA. Yesterday, the U.S. announced its decision to appeal the World Trade Organization's report on U.S. countervailing measures in softwood lumber.

The Liberals have once again let down forestry workers and families. Six thousand people lost their jobs in the second quarter this year alone, adding to the thousands from last year.

When will the minister stand up for forestry workers in regions like Skeena, the Okanagan and Vancouver Island?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are expanding and extending the wage subsidy program through until next summer. Our sector was already hit and facing significant challenges before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

The wage subsidy is going to help more forestry companies in regions that have been hit hardest by these conditions. It keeps Canadians working. All levels of government are working together to ensure that Canadian workers and companies have the vital supports they need, when and where they need it.

• (1455)

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the United States has appealed the World Trade Organization's decision in favour of Canada on Canadian softwood lumber. We are talking about \$3 billion unfairly being held at the border. American protectionism is and will continue to be an issue, regardless of whether the Democrats or the Republicans are in charge.

When will the government implement policies that support the interests of forestry workers in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, the Lower St. Lawrence, Mauricie, Abitibi and Baie-Comeau?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is disappointed that the United States decided to appeal the WTO report from last month. The WTO found that the countervailing measures that the United States had imposed on Canada were inconsistent with the United States' obligations. The American countervailing measures on Canadian softwood lumber were deemed to be unfair and unfounded, and they are undermining the economic recovery on both sides of the border.

We will continue to work—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Montcalm.

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HEALTH

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the pandemic, the government has let its deficit, the deficit of all taxpayers, balloon to more than \$328 billion.

The pandemic is a public health crisis. The people we are relying on most are our nurses, orderlies and doctors. How much money did the federal government transfer to Quebec for health care? At the very beginning of March, Quebec received just \$100 million of the \$328 billion that has been spent. How can this government be so indifferent to the challenges our health care professionals are facing?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been with Quebec since day one, both through even more regular discussions between the first ministers as part of bilateral collaborations between ministers and, most importantly, through direct assistance. As I said earlier, we allocated \$675 million for additional testing, \$270 million for health care in general, \$112 million for mental health, and \$675 million for new equipment to protect our guardian angels.

The Government of Canada has been with Quebec since day one, and we will continue to face this challenge with Quebec.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the government says no to increasing health transfers, it is not saying no to the National Assembly, the Government of Quebec or provincial governments. It is not saying no to Quebec's Premier Legault or to the 81% of Quebecers who are in favour of transfers. When it refuses to increase transfers, the Liberal government is saying no to exhausted nurses, orderlies and doctors. It is saying no to sick people waiting for care.

Why is this government saying no to increasing health transfers on a recurring basis?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the government says no to the Bloc Québécois, it is not saying no to Quebecers.

The problem is that the Bloc Québécois often gets a little confused. There is the Bloc Québécois and there are Quebecers. We often disagree with the Bloc Québécois, but we will always stand alongside Quebecers. We will always be there to support health care, our seniors, our families and our businesses, and we will always stand alongside Quebecers.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned about Service Canada's inability to respond quickly to the demand for services. The situation will only be exacerbated by the new terms and conditions of the EI program. Unfortunately, the Liberal government is always slow to act and likes to use band-aid solutions instead of fixing the problem.

What is the Liberal government's plan and when will it be implemented in order to deal with the huge flood of requests at Service Canada as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have hired an additional 1,500 agents to monitor phone calls coming in through the dedicated phone lines that have been set up for Canadians to answer questions. We have also produced new avenues for citizens to access services.

We are working hard to make sure we support Canadians through this difficult period.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, can the government please confirm that it has a reliable plan to handle the forecasted increased service demands at all Service Canada offices once these new benefits pass in order to prevent the current multi-hour wait times? As well, will the government commit to making that plan public within the next couple of weeks to include exact dates on which Service Canada offices will open and when?

I will note that I first asked this question on April 11. I am still waiting for a response.

• (1500)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first and foremost priority for us is the safety and health of the staff at Service Canada. However, we have been safely reopening a number of centres right across the country. We have redeployed over 3,000 additional staff to make sure that people have access to the benefits that they rely on. In addition to that, we have introduced online options, as well as options through the telephone. A 1,500-agent call centre has been set up to help people with the Canada emergency response benefit, which will now move to the employment insurance system.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many businesses rely heavily on skilled foreign workers who have already been recruited to keep them afloat.

My riding is on the U.S. border. The small businesses in my riding have said that, if they do not go out of business, they are going to transfer their operations to the United States.

When will this government realize that these workers are essential to the survival of these businesses? When does the minister plan to again accept these skilled workers into the country to help with our economic recovery?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand how important our foreign workers are and their contribution to our efforts to combat COVID-19.

Our businesses just cannot operate without our foreign workers. We have invested \$60 million to keep them safe. We cannot maintain Canada's food security without them.

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[English]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, cities have been at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic. In my riding, the City of Guelph's budget has been hit with unexpected extra costs and transit revenue losses. I am proud of our government's safe restart agreement, which has provided \$11 million in additional support to Guelph through this emergency funding.

Could the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs please share with this House the importance of the federal government directly supporting municipalities and our communities across Canada when they need it the most?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think all members thank the member for Guelph for his very important question.

Municipalities, as we know, are facing increased costs due to COVID-19. Through the \$19-billion safe restart agreement, we are providing \$4.4 billion to support municipalities in the delivery of key services, which are so important to Canadians. This means, for example, \$2 billion for municipal COVID-19 response and \$2.3 billion dedicated to support public transit.

Canadians expect us to work as all governments to protect them from COVID-19, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Oral Questions

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Province of Ontario has announced \$20 million to support northern Ontario businesses impacted by COVID-19, but FedNor is nowhere to be found. I have joined the calls of business owners in my riding, in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie and across the north, who have been pleading for support for months.

With all of the programs created, all of the money spent and all of the Liberal MPs across the region, how has the government completely forgotten about northern Ontario?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would agree to disagree with my colleague, because we have been there for people in northern Ontario throughout the pandemic. That is why we nearly doubled the budget of FedNor, and that is why we have been there for tourism operators and for many small business owners. We will continue to be there. Northern Ontario is important to us and it always will be. That is why we will be moving ahead with new investments shortly.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for five years the Liberals have promised to accelerate Internet access for rural Canadians and last week in the throne speech we heard the same accelerated promises. Rural Canadians from Inverness to Ignace, Fort Nelson to Gaspé, and Magnetawan to Have-lock know now more than ever that Internet access is not a luxury.

If an accelerated Liberal promise is worth more than a regular Liberal promise, for the thousands of Canadians still waiting, does an accelerated promise actually include action?

• (1505)

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these are definitely difficult times for every Canadian, but for rural communities without broadband, COVID has been particularly hard. We knew this before the pandemic. Over a million households are well under way to getting that access, and our work will continue. I want to take this opportunity to thank the essential workers who have been working and digging to put wires into the ground, even during COVID, to make sure this essential service continues to be provided to every Canadian.

There is more work to be done and I look forward to support from all my colleagues in the House to make that happen.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the owners, workers and customers of small businesses are our friends and neighbours. They are the backbone of the Canadian economy and the government has left many of them behind. The government has not fixed the problems with its existing programs, problems like accessing loans, rent relief and being denied the CEBA benefit because the applicant has the wrong kind of bank account.

For months Conservatives have been asking the government to fix these problems. When is it going to do it?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on being my new critic. I look forward to working with him.

I would disagree. Over 760,000 businesses have benefited from the small business loan. Businesses have benefited from getting fixed support to deal with their fixed costs, such as rent. We are listening to business owners and we will continue to listen to them. It is why we committed in our throne speech to ensure that the hardest-hit businesses will get support to deal with their fixed costs. We are going to continue to do whatever it takes to help businesses across this country weather this difficult time.

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HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in my urban community of Surrey Centre, we have seen the impacts of COVID-19 that have reached some of the most vulnerable Canadians, those living without a place to call home. Our government took quick action at the beginning of the pandemic to ensure that cities and non-profits had the resources they needed to keep homeless Canadians safe during this challenging time. I have heard that more support is needed.

Could the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development please update the House on measures being taken to protect those living in homelessness from a potential second wave of COVID-19?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member for Surrey Centre for his tireless advocacy on housing and homelessness issues. We recently announced an additional investment of \$236.7 million going directly to front-line organizations that are serving Canadians experiencing homelessness. This is in addition to the \$157.5 million that we announced early on in the pandemic. Canadians have told us that this funding has been critical to keeping the most vulnerable members of our communities safe.

Simply put, we will do everything we can to have the backs of Canadians who are vulnerable at this difficult time.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, since this pandemic began, I have been hearing from people across Northwest B.C. who cannot go to school, cannot go to work remotely and cannot access services because they lack reliable Internet. People like Keiran, a veteran who cannot access the support services he needs because they are online, or Autumn, who could not complete her college exam because her Internet cut out. On Haida Gwaii, rural residents are about to lose their Internet altogether.

The government has promised high speed Internet for all people in Canada, but with so little progress to date, how can rural residents trust that it is serious?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the stories such as those shared by my colleague just now are top of mind for us as we work to connect every Canadian household to high speed Internet.

I will tell him though that one million households on their way to getting connected or already connected is progress. I look forward to his support and his party's support to make sure that we get that connection to every household across this great country.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, in Atlantic Canada, October 1 is Treaty Day. Celebrations this year will be centred around the Saulnierville wharf, where livelihood fishers have gathered as they exercise their collective inherent rights. The conflict that has ensued is a direct result of the failure of DFO and successive governments to articulate treaty rights to Canadians, rights that are enshrined in our Constitution and by the rulings of our highest court. The conflicts will continue as long as the government ignores its responsibilities.

Does the Minister of Fisheries agree that the path forward was unquestionably established 21 years ago by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Marshall decision?

• (1510)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since day one, our government has been focused on the safety of people in that area who are right now facing extremely challenging times. We have been working collaboratively and respectfully with both the first nations community as well as industry. We know that the path forward is to make sure that we do everything we can to implement the rights that were granted to the Mi'kmaq under the Marshall decision.

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POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-4—PROPOSAL TO APPLY STANDING ORDER 69.1

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr.

Routine Proceedings

Speaker, I am rising to respond to a point of order raised yesterday respecting the splitting of Bill C-4, an act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19. My colleague has suggested that this is an omnibus bill with unrelated parts.

I suggest that my hon. colleague is unclear about what constitutes an omnibus bill. It is, in short, a bill with many constituent and unrelated parts. Nothing could be further from the truth with respect to Bill C-4.

Bill C-4, an act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19, contains related measures to address the health and economic consequences of the pandemic. It includes the three new recovery benefits that replace the Canadian emergency response benefit, as well as extending the funding for existing supports for businesses and Canadians that will expire tomorrow, September 30.

The scope and principle of the bill are measures to address the pandemic. There is nothing in the bill that is unrelated to supporting Canadians through the pandemic. It would be quite another situation if the bill included some COVID-related measures and measures to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act. It does not.

I therefore submit that these measures all fall within the common element or theme of supporting Canadians through this pandemic and should not be divided for the purposes of voting.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his submission and I will take it under advisement.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PESCHISOLIDO REPORT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:12, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner entitled "Peschisolido Report".

Call in the members.

• (1550)

During the taking of the vote:

Ms. Nelly Shin: Mr. Speaker, I lost my connection toward the end of QP and, unfortunately, I logged in a little too late when the vote started happening. If it is all right for me to cast my vote, I would vote in favour, but if not, I will abstain.

The Speaker: Did you hear the question, Ms. Shin?

Ms. Nelly Shin: No, I could not, because I was fully disconnected. I lost my connection.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: Thank you. I appreciate your honesty.

We will resume with the vote.

• (1555)

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

*(Division No. 3)***YEAS**

Members

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| Aboultaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Alleslev |
| Allison | Angus |
| Arnold | Ashton |
| Atwin | Bachrach |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Barsalou-Duval | Beaulieu |
| Benzen | Bergen |
| Berthold | Bérubé |
| Bezan | Blaikie |
| Blanchette-Joncas | Blaney (North Island—Powell River) |
| Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis) | Block |
| Boudrias | Boulerice |
| Bragdon | Brassard |
| Brunelle-Duceppe | Calkins |
| Cannings | Carrie |
| Chabot | Champoux |
| Charbonneau | Chiu |
| Chong | Collins |
| Cumming | Dalton |
| Dancho | Davidson |
| DeBellefeuille | Deltell |
| d'Entremont | Desbiens |
| Desilets | Diotte |
| Doherty | Dowdall |
| Dreeshen | Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) |
| Duvall | Epp |
| Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) | Falk (Provencher) |
| Fast | Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock) |
| Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Fortin |
| Gallant | Garrison |
| Gaudreau | Gazan |
| Généreux | Genius |
| Gill | Gladu |
| Godin | Gourde |
| Gray | Green |
| Hallan | Harder |
| Harris | Hoback |
| Hughes | Jansen |
| Jeneroux | Johns |
| Julian | Kelly |
| Kent | Kitchen |
| Kram | Kurek |
| Kusie | Kwan |
| Lake | Larouche |
| Lawrence | Lehoux |
| Lemire | Lewis (Essex) |
| Liepert | Lloyd |
| Lobb | Lukiwski |
| MacGregor | MacKenzie |
| Maguire | Manly |
| Martel | Mathysen |
| May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) | Mazier |
| McCauley (Edmonton West) | McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo) |
| McPherson | Melillo |
| Michaud | Moore |
| Morantz | Morrison |
| Motz | Nater |
| Normandin | O'Toole |
| Patzer | Paul-Hus |

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| Plamondon |
| Qaqqaq |
| Redekopp |
| Rempel Garner |
| Rood |
| Sahota (Calgary Skyview) |
| Savard-Tremblay |
| Schmale |
| Shields |
| Simard |
| Sloan |
| Steinley |
| Strahl |
| Sweet |
| Therrien |
| Trudel |
| Van Popta |
| Vidal |
| Vignola |
| Wagantall |
| Waugh |
| Wilson-Raybould |
| Yurdiga |
| Perron |
| Poilievre |
| Rayes |
| Reid |
| Richards |
| Ruff |
| Saroya |
| Scheer |
| Seeback |
| Shiple |
| Singh |
| Soroka |
| Ste-Marie |
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| Thériault |
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NAYS

Members

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| Lauson |
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| Longfield |
| MacKinnon (Gatineau) |
| Martinez Ferrada |
| McCrimmon |
| Amos |
| Arseneault |
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| Bains |
| Battiste |
| Bendayan |
| Bessette |
| Bittle |
| Blois |
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| Chagger |
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| Dabrusin |
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| Maloney |
| May (Cambridge) |
| McDonald |

McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Monsef
Murray
O'Connell
O'Regan
Powlowski
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota (Brampton North)
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
Tabbara
Turnbull
van Koevorden
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Young
Zann

McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Miller
Morrissey
Ng
Oliphant
Petitpas Taylor
Qualtrough
Regan
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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF CONTENTS OF BILL C-7

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to respond to a question of privilege raised on Friday, September 25, respecting the premature disclosure of Bill C-7, on medical assistance in dying, from the previous session. As members well know, the bill in question died with prorogation, as did the reference of the question of privilege to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, 2017, states at page 145:

The matter of privilege to be raised in the House must have recently occurred and must call for the immediate action of the House. Therefore, the Member must satisfy the Speaker that he or she is bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the situation. When a Member has not fulfilled this important requirement, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is not a prima facie question of privilege.

I would also refer members to the footnote that is attached to the text that I just quoted. Footnote 369 states:

Any matter found to be prima facie and referred to committee in one session but not reported on would not survive a prorogation. However, if a Member wished to raise the question of privilege again in the following session, the Speaker could reconsider the matter provided that the rules of timeliness were respected.

The facts are clear. The former Bill C-7 died on the Order Paper with prorogation. The procedure and House affairs committee did not report to the House on the question of privilege. The member

Government Orders

who raised the question of privilege on September 25 did not do so at the earliest opportunity.

I would draw to the attention of the House that the earliest opportunity to raise a question of privilege stemming from the previous session was Thursday, September 24. I would note that on Thursday, September 24, the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes raised two questions of privilege. That is a clear demonstration that this matter should have been raised on Thursday given that the House had adopted a motion on Wednesday, September 23, to allow all members to participate in the proceedings of the House whether in person or virtually. There is no excuse for not having raised this matter on Thursday.

I would conclude that since the matter was not raised at the first opportunity, the former Bill C-7 was discharged from the Order Paper with prorogation and there was no report from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on this matter. This does not meet the well-established rule for raising a question of privilege.

● (1600)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his submission. I will take it under advisement.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PROCEEDINGS ON THE BILL ENTITLED AN ACT RELATING TO CERTAIN MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

The Speaker: We are resuming questions and comments for the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has been a very strong advocate for her community. One of the things that is important for us to recognize is that a lot of hard work is done in our constituencies with an expectation that, especially during a pandemic, members of Parliament get the type of feedback that is important and they, as much as possible, bring that information back to the House, if not directly then indirectly through meetings and other discussions.

I just want to get my colleague and friend's thoughts. As a member of Parliament, I know she advocates for her constituents and continuously listens to what her constituents have to say. How important is it that the member is able to do that and share her thoughts, in particular with members of Parliament and ministers, so that she can convey some of the improvements that she thinks could be made through this pandemic?

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Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is very important for us, as members of Parliament, to speak to the ministers about issues in our ridings and also to write emails about our concerns. The people voted for us for a reason, and it is our job to represent their concerns to the best of our ability. That is what I do as the member for Cumberland—Colchester. I also did that for 10 years as a member of the Legislative Assembly in Nova Scotia for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the member, in particular, about the programming motion we are dealing with today and the undemocratic way in which the government is proceeding. What we have seen in the course of this pandemic is that the government has put forward programs that have had technical problems with them. The Liberals have announced one thing that has contradicted what is actually in the legislation, which speaks to the importance of effective parliamentary debate and legislative oversight.

We have a Prime Minister who prorogued Parliament and then a couple of days later announced a new program which, because of prorogation, could not be legislated on for six weeks. If he had not prorogued, we could have spent weeks debating these issues, studying them at committee and working out problems. Conservatives were prepared to work through the weekend on this, and now we are going to have less than five hours of debate.

Is this remotely reasonable, in the member's view, in terms of a way to proceed and ensure that legislation actually achieves the objectives it claims to achieve?

• (1605)

Ms. Lenore Zann: Madam Speaker, we were on two committees during this past COVID time—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola has a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, the interpretation is not working.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It seems that the interpretation is not working.

The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I have noticed that when the member speaks in English, I can understand. It is very garbled, but if we go to the French channel, the translator is saying they cannot translate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): They cannot translate. There is a break in the connection.

We are going to let the member try again.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Madam Speaker, as I said before, I am so sorry about the audio quality. Something has happened just in the last half hour. I am having terrible trouble hearing people, and I guess being heard as well.

I was trying to say that throughout COVID-19, I was on two committees that did meet. The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan was on one of them, the Canada-China relations committee, and also the northern and indigenous affairs committee. We did a lot of work through the COVID-19 period. I think the government is doing an extremely good job of representing Canadians, looking after as many people as possible in a very dangerous and unprecedented time. I tip my hat to the cabinet members and to the Prime Minister.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the member. I know there is still some issue with the sound. However, the time is up now. I would just ask that we double-check on the problems, because there seem to have been some with the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. There was a little glitch there as well. I do not know if it is at our end or if it is at the other end, but I think that will have to be looked into further.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my friend and dear colleague, the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

I want to start by wishing you well, Madam Speaker, as you return to the Bar of the House for a second parliamentary session that I hope will be filled with less uncertainty than the last one.

This Parliament will no doubt mark a special time in Quebec and Canada's shared history. In the coming months, you, Madam Speaker, will moderate debates that will guide us as legislators and citizens, if the government and the NDP will actually allow us to debate. I will come back to that a little later.

The choices we make here in the House about this pandemic, or rather, how to get through this pandemic, will shape our future, for better or for worse. My greatest wish, at the end of the day, is to serve my constituents and represent their aspirations to the best of my abilities with the sincere belief that there is no gain too small for Quebec.

Bill C-2 sets out some of these gains. That is why I was happy to see that the bill contains something that my party and my constituents have been calling for since the CERB was implemented, and that is employment incentives. It is also clear to me that the fact that the government is finally making changes to employment insurance is a good thing. Those are the two main points that I want to talk about today and obviously, as usual, I will not hold back in expressing my views.

At the height of the pandemic, parliamentarians approved a benefit that would help Quebecers and Canadians get through the difficult but necessary lockdown. The Canada emergency response benefit was last-minute and imperfect, much like those who designed it.

Since we expected the economy to re-open in the short term, on the advice of business owners who help sustain the communities that elected us, the Bloc Québécois quickly called on the government to apply a similar, just as imperfect logic to the CERB as it does to employment insurance. More specifically, we asked the Liberals to introduce a concept that makes a good deal of sense, that of 50¢ per dollar earned rather than the \$1,000 maximum.

The government's answer was quite surprising. We made that request in April and we were told that it was impossible. The former finance minister, who is no longer in the House, told us that it was impossible. All of my Bloc Québécois colleagues were told the same thing.

Make no mistake, I am glad it is in Bill C-2. I now know that no one will lose money going back to work, as a matter of principle, and that no one will refuse to work full time just because people can count. However, we have to acknowledge that the government is responsible for putting people in a tough spot and businesses in a precarious situation.

Will the Liberals take responsibility for that? I would tend to doubt it, now that they are implicitly admitting that our request was legitimate. I hope so, but beyond the Liberal's responsibility for the inefficient use of public funds—that is pretty well their trademark—I feel it is very important that we reassure Quebecers and Canadians that the benefits are being properly administered. Many are wondering why that would work this time if it did not work in the past. That is important. We cannot fail under any circumstances. I am not going to predict failure. I think it will work well.

The government of the day and its Prime Minister were quick to declare that public servants are incapable of administering government programs. The WE Charity affair may have been forgotten because Parliament was shut down for six weeks, but that is in essence what the Prime Minister said about public servants. However, we do have a competent public service.

As we have seen throughout the crisis, every member of this illustrious House has been supported by public servants despite programs that are hard to explain and often hard to implement. I, for one, trust public servants. If any of them are listening to us now, I want them to know we will be here to support them in the months to come.

I think it will work well, but only if the government listens to opposition members, primarily Bloc Québécois members, and trusts them.

Ever since the beginning of this Parliament, we have never stopped suggesting legitimate changes to Canadian laws. We have never stopped advocating for common sense in Canadian politics. We have never stopped speaking up for Quebec, and the provinces too, as well as for the division of powers as set out in our precious Canadian Constitution.

● (1610)

When 32 separatists try to improve federal government programs, it is obviously not because they are trying to steal jobs from people across the aisle. It is because we want what is best for our people. Whenever the Liberals listen to the Bloc Québécois, things

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work. I have said this before in the House, and I will say it a third time with utter sincerity. Yes, we want a country for Quebecers. We want the country of Quebec. However, in the meantime, we also want what is best for people who have lost their jobs. If there is one group of people the feds should listen to, it is the people we work for.

For decades, workers have been telling us that the EI system is no longer functional. In 1996, the Liberal government made so many cuts to the program that most workers who lose their jobs no longer have access to it. The proof is that an entire multi-billion dollar program had to be hastily created in two weeks because EI could not deliver. Worse yet, the Liberals, who pride themselves on being champions for the rights of youth and women, let the program create unacceptable disparities, which overwhelmingly affected youth and women. Leading statisticians have even calculated that two-thirds of women and youth under 30 who have lost their jobs are no longer eligible.

In addition, just for good measure, the Liberals and the Conservatives have dipped into the EI fund to balance the budget. Experts have even estimated that \$59 billion has been taken from the EI fund. Some Canadians will say that \$59 billion is not enough to cover the deficit accumulated by the Liberals, and they are right.

It is sad to put it like this, but Canada's tax policy is fundamentally based on oil and gas, cutting transfers to the provinces, and limiting eligibility for assistance programs. It is as simple as that. One of my fondest wishes for this bill is that it does not repeat past mistakes. It is imperative that the government reassure parliamentarians and workers that EI will be protected from political games. I would love to hear a minister confirm that the government will not do as it has in the past, that it will leave financial control in the hands of EI officials and ensure stable funding. Would anyone on the other side of the House have the guts to say that?

By hitting the reset button on democracy, the Liberal government evaded a multitude of scandals while waiting for the second wave to hit, and unfortunately, it is almost here. I will therefore keep cooperating to ensure that the response is appropriate and the focus is on this issue.

Now more than ever, opposition members come to Parliament knowing how important the federal government's response will be in the lives of those who are counting on their elected representatives to get us out of this. I would like to remind everyone that counting on their elected representative is not an absolute. In this chamber, we have been given a seat that comes with certain clear, limited powers. All members are intelligent people capable of forming their own opinion of how this crisis is being managed, but it is not up to us to supplant our provincial and municipal counterparts. Humility is very important to me, and it is a quality often lacking on the other side of the House. We need to have the humility to look after our own affairs and do it well. That is the only thing we were elected to do.

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Yes, there needs to be generous, appropriate programs, but not if that means interfering in the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. Millions of people expect us to do our utmost for them. They want us to do our job better than ever, and they do not expect us to give lessons to anyone. Doing our job means reforming EI to fix the flaws we have been criticizing for so long. Doing our job means encouraging people to go back to work while reassuring them about their financial future, giving seniors what they need to make ends meet, providing the promised aid to farmers, and giving Quebec and the provinces the health care money that is rightfully theirs. Doing our job means respecting the democracy that has brought us here and providing enough time to do our work.

There is no denying that the Bloc Québécois is against these types of procedures designed to circumvent democratic principles and limit the rights and privileges of parliamentarians. The government is using this bill to make itself look good to the public while putting the opposition parties under the gun. The Bloc Québécois has always been accommodating because the government's proposed measures provided help to Quebecers and Canadians. Why does the government believe this motion is necessary? Because it is in a rush, since time is running out on the CERB and the pandemic is getting worse. There is no other reason.

• (1615)

Nevertheless, I want to thank them. I hope that the coming weeks will rekindle the spirit of co-operation that emerged at the start of the crisis, when partisanship and political manoeuvring were set aside.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate some of the comments the member across the way put on the record with regard to his wanting to assist and contribute to the debate.

One major issue we have seen over the last number of months is long-term care. People from across the country, including in the province of Quebec, have raised a concern about what should be happening in long-term care. Many have suggested that we need to see Ottawa play a stronger leadership role to ensure that there is some form of standards. It seems to me that it would be in our best interest for the federal government to have a role in that area, because that is what Canadians in all regions want to see.

I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on the people who are in long-term care facilities. Would he not agree that from a national perspective, there is a role that goes beyond just giving money to a province?

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I completely disagree with my hon. colleague.

This is a provincial jurisdiction, as stated in Canada's Constitution. A poll released today found that when it comes to health care, 81% of Quebecers only want one thing from the federal government. They want the health transfer from the government.

The National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion calling for an increase in health transfers. The four parties in the National Assembly are calling for this. Moreover, all the premiers of the other provinces want an increase in health transfers.

The government made a mistake when it cut health transfers. The least it can do is admit that it made a mistake, apologize and fix the problem.

I realize that the government is very good at apologizing. Unfortunately, it always apologizes 50 or 100 years too late. The time to apologize and increase health transfers is now.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the time that all of us are taking to talk about the serious issues that really matter to the people in our ridings.

One thing I heard really clearly was the discussion around insufficient EI. When we came to the period of time with the COVID crisis, the first step the government proposed was to use EI. I think my colleague would agree with me that of course there is a huge gap in that. As a member who represents a rural and remote riding with a lot of tourism, I know it can be an ongoing struggle for people to get enough hours.

Looking through the lens of COVID and into the future of where EI should go, could the member share his ideas?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

I agree that we must debate these kinds of things, but if we are to do so, members cannot go along with gag orders, which is unfortunately what the NDP did. The employment insurance system is in need of major reform. We have been wanting to address the EI spring gap for years.

As for the CERB, the Bloc Québécois brought up the need for incentives to work at the beginning of April, but we were told that this was impossible. Now, the government is saying it is possible. Our Liberal friends need to get their stories straight. EI cannot be reformed without debate and committee meetings. The government's plan to prorogue Parliament and issue a gag order was certainly not the way to get it done.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my colleague for his thoughts on the fact that the government's tracing app does not apply to certain provinces when it comes to entering a diagnosis. A person cannot enter a diagnosis in Alberta or Quebec.

It is interesting that he spoke about health care and jurisdiction. The federal government is talking about intruding into provincial jurisdiction, but it has failed to discharge its own responsibilities in its areas of jurisdiction, including by having a tracing app apply such that people can enter a diagnosis in any part of the country.

I would appreciate his thoughts on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I will be brief.

This government has no clue about the jurisdictional boundaries between the federal government, the provinces and Quebec. It is not complicated, but the government does not understand how it works. The Liberals should reread the Constitution and stop interfering in matters under our jurisdiction.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. House leader of the official opposition on a point of order.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF CONTENTS OF BILL C-7

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to briefly respond to the comments made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in response to the question of privilege I raised some time ago.

[*English*]

The parliamentary secretary argued that because the question of privilege was raised when the House opened on the second sitting day after the throne speech, the requirement to raise the question of privilege in a timely manner was not met.

One of the precedents I stated concerning past Speakers who reviewed findings of prima facie cases of privilege was the ruling given by Speaker Milliken on February 6, 2004, at page 243 of the Debates. That ruling was given in immediate response to a question of privilege raised that morning on the fourth sitting day following the opening of that session.

● (1625)

[*Translation*]

With all due respect to my colleague, if Speaker Milliken ruled that four days were enough, then we believe two days are also enough.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the hon. member for this additional information. The Chair will take it under advisement and make a decision later after reviewing everything that has been presented.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

* * *

PROCEEDINGS ON THE BILL ENTITLED AN ACT RELATING TO ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

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Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, for the past several months, we have been living through an unprecedented crisis, the likes of which we have never seen at any time in our history.

In the throne speech, the government announced the implementation of three new benefits to replace the Canada emergency response benefit or CERB. They are the Canada recovery benefit or CRB, the Canada recovery sickness benefit or CRSB and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit or CRCB. I am going to speak about these three benefits.

With the historic changes that have been made to make employment insurance more flexible, most of the people who until just recently were receiving the CERB will now be able to receive EI benefits. However, even with the more flexible criteria, some 900,000 people will be left without an income once the CERB comes to an end. The CRB is made for those people and that is good news.

This spring and summer, I toured my riding of Beauport—Limoilou. Organizations and businesses alike feared that the CERB would stop all of a sudden. I met with representatives of the Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Québec, the Jeune chambre de commerce de Québec, the Regroupement des gens d'affaires de Beauport and the Société de développement commercial 3^e Avenue de Limoilou.

Business people all lamented that the CERB and the benefit for students, the CESB, were not flexible from the outset, like EI. In their initial form, the CERB and the CESB put businesses—dozens, if not hundreds of them in my riding, and likely in most ridings—in the position of having to single-handedly prop themselves up by replacing employees who did not show up for work.

That was one negative impact we called out from the start. Those businesses are winded, exhausted and at their wits' end. If they do not make it, our entire economic recovery is at stake. We do not talk about it enough, or say it loudly enough, often enough.

Two questions remain for these business people. Why was the CERB not flexible from the outset? Also, what was keeping the CERB from being flexible and having the same rules that have been applied to EI for years?

Despite these legitimate questions, both business people and organizations are pleased to see that the CERB will not end suddenly. Quebecers are happy, too. Many of them came to me and asked what they would do if their sector did not resume and the CERB ended. How were they going to put food on the table? How were they going to keep a roof over their heads. They are relieved.

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I would, however, give a word of warning to my constituents. In 2021, they will have to pay a lot of taxes, an arm and a leg. Not only is CERB taxable, but the taxman will charge them 50¢ for every dollar they earn over \$38,000. As a result, they will have to plan ahead. They will have to do some calculations to ensure that they will be able to afford to pay what they owe the government when they file their income tax returns.

I do not know many people who can afford to wake up one morning and write the government a cheque for thousands of dollars. People need to plan ahead. In Quebec, a person earning the average wage and receiving the maximum amount allowed under the CERB will have to write a cheque for roughly \$5,000 to \$6,000 next April. People need to mark my words and plan ahead.

• (1630)

I often think out loud, so here are my reflections. I am not interested in nitpicking; I want solutions. Could claimants have declared their income every week, every two weeks or once a month, and could the infamous 50¢ over a certain amount be taken directly off their cheque, instead of pushing the deadline back to April of next year?

To what extent will today's assistance become tomorrow's economic and financial nightmare?

The Canada recovery sickness benefit will provide real relief to anyone who has to self-isolate for 14 days either as a preventive measure or if they test positive. This benefit responds to concerns I have heard from many people. People have asked me what would happen if they had to self-isolate again since they cannot afford to be without any income or lose their job. This benefit responds to their concerns, and it is a good measure.

I have another question. If people have to self-isolate twice over the next few months, can they receive this benefit twice or are they eligible only once? Are people eligible every time they have to self-isolate, or is it a one-time measure?

The third CERB replacement measure responds to the concerns of parents, whose child might be sent home from school at any time. I will speak for a mother I spoke with over the phone a couple of weeks ago. Her 15-year old daughter was suddenly sent home to self-isolate because the entire class was in isolation after someone tested positive. She told me that according to the government, she had to leave her sick daughters home alone for two weeks because they are teenagers. She added that this was not about a cold, and if one of her daughters' condition started quickly deteriorating while she was gone, the government would put her between a rock and a hard place because her daughters are over 11. She would have to choose between taking care of her sick daughters and working to put food on the table and a roof over their heads.

That woman, that mother, is right to ask questions. Every child is different and every person reacts differently to the illness. It is not for the government to decide whether a child is able to stay home alone to take care of themselves. It is up to the parents. Let's expand the measure to youth 16 and under and give the parents the right to assume their responsibilities and make their own decisions.

To summarize, the amounts proposed will benefit many Quebeckers and Canadians. However, I would like to make two suggestions. First, we have to come up with measures that will not put people in a financial stranglehold come next April. I will give an example to explain my second recommendation.

Imagine a parent whose 14-year-old tests positive. In the morning, the parent goes out and leaves their child with some acetaminophen, a glass of water, some soup and an emergency phone number. Everything is there. At noon, the parent calls, no one picks up, and they decide to call later as their child might still be sleeping. When they call again, there is still no answer. Concerned, the parent rushes home and finds that their child is in respiratory distress.

No one wants that to happen, but if parents cannot stay home with their teenager, this could happen. Let us extend the benefit to adolescents as well. That is the least we can do.

• (1635)

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have had the privilege of serving alongside the hon. member in government operations. I have known her to be a very caring and compassionate member of that committee.

In her speech, she outlined ways in which people, in the long term, continue to get left out of this particular bill. Would the hon. member not agree with extending supports to people who are currently left out? In the long term, not knowing the effects of COVID and the potential for long-term disabilities associated with it, does it not make sense to potentially look at deeper ways in which we can provide critical supports for people living with disabilities or disabled people?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

People with disabilities are, indeed, too often forgotten. We can help them, and temporary measures may not be enough. We will have to take time to think and dig into these questions so that we can meet these people's needs, instead of simply doing what we think is best.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member spoke about entrepreneurs and how they were tired. We could really hear the passion in her speech about that.

A family farm, a local flatbed truck operator and a mechanic in my riding of Essex do not qualify for the CEBA because they operate their businesses through a personal bank account. However, these same businesses, using these same accounts, pay their taxes and collect HST.

Would the member agree that proroguing government for six weeks was perhaps even more detrimental for these small businesses of which she so graciously spoke?

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[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Was it a bad idea to prorogue Parliament during a crisis like the one we are experiencing? Indeed, it was. It was a bad idea not only for our farmers, who need our support, but also for the public and for democracy as a whole.

We have the right and the duty to speak on behalf of our constituents, not for ourselves or our party, but for everyone.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague's wonderful speech, in which she spoke about all kinds of important amendments that should be made to the bill. In my opinion, these are worthwhile amendments.

However, we barely have enough time to study the bill. The government wants to rush it through, which means that we will not have time to examine these very important issues. What does my colleague think about the fact that we do not have time to make these amendments?

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Earlier, I was saying that the prorogation was a bad idea for democracy. Closure is also a bad idea for democracy.

This is not about going on and on about a bill for 25, 30 or 40 weeks. It is simply a matter of making proposals so that the government and the opposition parties can come to a consensus.

I have been here for two days and for two days I have been hearing the government say that we should work together. We want to do that, but the Liberals are imposing a gag order. That is not democratic, period.

• (1640)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to touch on a number of areas.

The first thing I will do is pick up on the last question and answer and on some of the comments made by the members, particularly the Conservatives, about prorogation. It is interesting that the last questioner said that we shut down the House for six weeks. On the surface, one might think that is a terrible thing to do. However, when we understand what really took place, most Canadians would support what the government has done.

When we talk about the prorogation, it meant that instead of coming back on the Monday, we came back on the Wednesday, so we lost those two days. We also lost one day in August. However, keep in mind that this is the first government in the last 30-plus years to have the House sit in July and August. We sat more days in July and August than we lost in the prorogation.

A member across the way has said that this is not true, but it is true.

Members have to stop listening to the Conservative spin and see the reality of what we face today. Instead of listening to their constituents, they are listening to the Conservative spin and that is a serious problem. It is one of the reasons we are doing what we are today.

I give credit to the NDP and the Green Party members, who can be pretty brutal with some of their comments on the floor of the House. They are not necessarily friendly in all matters toward the government of the day, but they recognize that this is important. They recognize what the motion is trying to accomplish. They understand it and they appreciate it. They might have some issues with it, but they are supporting it. Unlike the Conservatives and the Bloc, they believe it is in the best interest of all Canadians that we remain focused on their needs and ultimately see legislation pass. We should not look at it as a possible option; it is absolutely critical that it pass.

I take exception to many of the comments from members who are saying it is undemocratic. I was in opposition in the far corner for a number of years when Stephen Harper was the prime minister. If members want to talk about assaults on democracy, they just need to go back to the Harper era.

Let us look at what has taken place with the pandemic. Virtually from day one, the Prime Minister has been very clear. He wants the House to focus on the pandemic and do what we can to protect the interests, health and well-being of Canadians. From day one, that has been the issue with this government. In the last number of weeks, we have talked a great deal about the economy and restarting it.

When we talk about accountability, I challenge any one of the members of the Bloc or the Conservatives to stand in his or her place when it comes time to ask a question. I would like those members to tell me when was the last time they met on the floor of the chamber and were afforded the opportunity to ask not just hundreds, but probably thousands of questions of the government of the day.

• (1645)

Opposition members had a wonderful opportunity to convey their thoughts and ideas with respect to the pandemic, share their concerns with the government and press the government on those issues in the months of July and August, which, at least in my 30 years as a parliamentarian, I do not ever recall being provided to opposition members.

Going back to my days in opposition, we would get a question and might get a supplementary one. What was provided here for opposition members was they could go five minutes steady, have three quick questions, a long question, a preamble and then go back-and-forth and the minister was obligated to respond in that same time frame.

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At the end of the day, opposition members were afforded the opportunity to hold the government accountable. I did not try to tell them that they should not ask questions about this or about that. We all know where they focused a lot of their attention. I do not think it was with respect to, at least not for the most part, the health and well-being of Canadians even though we were into a pandemic.

Now those members are upset, saying that they want more time to debate Bill C-4, which is why they oppose this. However, they had no reservations at all this morning to bring in a motion for concurrence on a report, which literally killed two hours of potential debate.

They have a great deal of experience and have no reservations at all in using what parliamentarians often refer to as a “filibuster”, and they are good at it. I give them full credit for that. In the last five years, I do not know how many times I have seen two members of the Conservative Party stand. After one speaks, the other one moves that another Conservative be heard to precipitate the bells to ring in order to waste more time. Another example is that they argue for debate and then move a motion to adjourn for the day.

It is not that they want to see more debate, the focus of the Conservatives is more on wanting to show Canadians that the House of Commons is dysfunctional and cannot work. It does not matter who sits in the prime minister's chair, unless it is a Conservative. The House of Commons cannot do its work. I have seen that time and time again over the last five years, with Conservatives as the official opposition.

There was a budget where one member consumed virtually 98% of the whole debate time allocated. I remember that well, and it was not me. It is not that I was jealous or anything of that nature, but having said that, again, those members have no reservations. When they stand now and say that they want more time to debate, based on what I have witnessed, that is just not true.

If the members had 10 hours, they would want 15 hours. If they had 15 hours, they would want 20 hours. They want to frustrate the government. The Conservatives consistently try to prevent the government from passing legislation or any other measures. I believe that is the reason, at least in part, why the NDP and the Green Party are having to support the type of motion we have before us. They realize that if we do not bring in motions of this nature, they would never pass. We cannot please the Conservatives.

• (1650)

It is not because Conservatives want more debate. I do not believe that for a moment. It seems that this is their sole purpose for existing, at least the Conservative leadership's. It is not meant as a reflection on any individual member of Parliament, but the Conservative driving force, the leadership team, if I can put it that way, its focus is not what is happening in terms of the pandemic. When I say “Conservatives”, I mean the Conservatives here in Ottawa. I believe their focus is to be as critical as they can about the Prime Minister and other ministers. They will zero in on any Liberal and point out every blemish they believe is there.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: There's a lot to point out.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind members who are virtual to make sure they keep their microphones off. Otherwise, we will have to look at other measures if they wish to continue heckling that way. It is not acceptable. I know it is an effort to do that, and it is being purposely done. I would ask that members refrain from doing that.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has a little over eight minutes and then there will be 10 minutes for questions and comments, so I would ask people to hold onto their thoughts.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would love the opportunity to see members from within that leadership change their attitudes, especially at the time in which we find ourselves today. People are experiencing, in all regions of our country, a wide variety of different types of hardships stemming from the pandemic. At a time in which communities throughout our country want us to be focusing on how we can improve the conditions, the Conservatives continue to be focused on their original objectives after losing the election back in 2015. They often suggest I should move on and maybe not even mention Stephen Harper. I would suggest that they need to move on. They need to realize that it is the Conservative Party, in part, that needs to change the channel and start getting on with what is taking place in our communities. Those hardships are very real.

One member across the way heckled that we caused it. I think it is a stretch to try to tell the world it was the Government of Canada that caused the pandemic. It kind of shows the silliness of the Conservative Party. We, from virtually nothing, created programs that literally put hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars in the pockets of Canadians at a time when they needed it.

Members can imagine, through the pandemic, finding oneself unemployed as a direct result of having to stay safe, as companies had to shut down or close doors temporarily and in some cases, unfortunately, permanently. The CERB program has assisted well over eight million, and I believe it is close to nine million, Canadians. The wage subsidy program has saved tens of thousands of jobs in all regions of our country. These are programs that have had a huge positive impact on our communities. Without them, our communities and our society would have been damaged in a more significant fashion, which would have ultimately caused our economy and our way of life to suffer a whole lot more.

The government needed to step up, and not only did the government step up but so did other governments. We came up with the safe restart agreement with the different provinces. Manitoba is one of those provinces. Its premier, Brian Pallister, has written a letter providing thoughts in regard to the restart program. I would like to quote a couple of items from the letter, because I think it emphasizes the important role that Ottawa and our provinces play, and we need to work together.

This is a direct quote from the Premier of Manitoba, making reference to the safe restart agreement: “This federal funding will help support work already undertaken by the Government of Manitoba to increase daily testing capacity from a baseline of 1,000 tests to more than 3,000 tests per day.”

It goes on to say:

The Government of Canada will provide \$700 million to support health care system capacity to respond to a potential future wave of COVID-19. A further \$500 million will address immediate needs and gaps in the support and protection of people experiencing challenges related to mental health, substance use, or homelessness. This investment will help to keep Canadians safe and healthy with the health care supports they need.

• (1655)

Through the co-operation and the recognition of the seriousness of the pandemic, we have cities, provinces, our national government and so many others that have come to the table, recognizing how important it is that we collectively remain focused on this second wave. That is what the bill actually deals with: how we can carry forward the types of supports that are critical to Canadians. That is why a number of my colleagues got fairly upset today when the Conservatives tried unsuccessfully to change the debate this morning to something that had nothing to do with the second wave of COVID-19.

While the members across the way continue to talk about the process for dealing with the legislation to ultimately see it pass so that we can continue that support, I would encourage them to leave the Conservative spin to the side and focus on what they believe their constituents would want them to say in the House in terms of the programs that are absolutely critical in order to be able to get Canada as a nation through this second wave. We can accomplish so much more if we do what the Prime Minister is asking us to do, which is to work together at protecting the health and well-being of Canadians while, at the same time, supporting our economy where we can.

A lot more needs to be done. The message that I want to leave those who are following the debate or Canadians as a whole is that the Government of Canada will continue to be there for Canadians until we have permanently resolved the issue of this pandemic.

• (1700)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his lengthy speech. I recognize the member is very passionate about this, but so are we, and so are the NDP, the Green Party and the Bloc. We are all passionate, because we are all working for our constituents.

We all know that these programs that were announced needed to be announced, because September 30 was the deadline. When prorogation was set, the Liberals already knew there was going to be a problem.

I am wondering, and perhaps the member could share with me, whether prorogation was to cover the butts of the government, or did the government actually think it reset the agenda? If that was the case, I am confused as to why we are having to go through this debate today, pushing through this thing. If we had done this last week, we would have been in better care. I am also having to share with my constituents that with this time frame, they will already have to wait because the government prorogued.

I am wondering if the member thought that was a good idea or not. How were Canadians going to get their benefits if the government was not working?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it was important for the Government of Canada to prorogue the session, turn the page

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and put its sole focus on the recovery and the pandemic. That was an important thing to do.

The member asked if we were trying to cover something up. She is probably referencing WE, as an example. I am wondering how many times the premier of the province of Manitoba has been questioned, because the Manitoba government has contracts with WE, so I am wondering if there is some corruption over there. Is that what the member opposite might imply? I would suggest that the Government of Manitoba should continue to focus its attention, as it has been, on the recovery and the pandemic. Maybe at some point in time, and I could be wrong, the opposition in Manitoba might look at what took place in the province of Manitoba with respect to WE and the Progressive Conservative government.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his speech. I listened to it carefully. He said that help for Canadians was vital, that it was important to pass bills and that we should have done more.

I want to tell him that we could have done all of this earlier, well before the prorogation.

At the end of April, and in May and June, when we had a token version of Parliament where we could not move motions or debate or pass bills, other places in the world and even not too far away, in Quebec, were holding parliamentary committees where members could move motions and vote on bills. We could not do that here.

I do not understand why the government is now blaming the Bloc Québécois by saying that our party does not want to help Canadians quickly, when that could have been done in the spring.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, a number of members of Parliament were hoping that we could have some sort of voting mechanism in place that would have enabled the House to participate by following health experts' advice and providing that physical distancing and so forth, but because we could not get the Conservatives to agree to having virtual votes, it limited what we could do. The Bloc and the Conservatives have a lot of things in common; that is not one of them.

Maybe the Bloc members should be talking to some of their friends in the Conservative Party, for example, and looking at ways we can improve upon this. We have already passed through the summer, and it would have been nice had the Conservatives agreed to some mechanism that would have enabled MPs to be more empowered, but it was the Conservatives who chose not to do that.

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Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the NDP has been very clear about our desire to get 10 paid days of sick leave for Canadians from coast to coast on a permanent basis. We believe that the federal government could show leadership by providing those 10 paid sick days to workers in the federal jurisdiction, by amending the Canada Labour Code. The provisions we are debating today do not include those, because the government is adamantly opposed to granting those 10 days of paid sick leave within the federal jurisdiction. Why is it that the government does not believe Canadians should be entitled to 10 paid sick days on a permanent basis?

• (1705)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I would just recognize that it is encouraging to see that at least there are some political entities, such as the New Democrats and the Greens, that have actually seen the value of the legislation and are supporting us as we go through. Obviously, in a minority situation we need to have the support of more than just the government. Therefore, I do appreciate that and want to extend my thanks in particular to the leader of the New Democratic Party.

When we talk about those 10 paid days, it is in fact incorporated, in good part. Lobbying occurs. It is important to recognize that a lot of the changes that we see today come from efforts of individuals from all political parties. Many of my caucus colleagues have been lobbying in their constituencies and in Ottawa, lobbying with ministers, in particular on this file, to try to effect some changes. I am glad to say that we have seen many changes as a direct result of the fine work of members of Parliament sharing their concerns.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is my first time putting a question forward in this format.

I would agree with the member for Malpeque, in earlier debate today, that this was not a prorogation of the kind that challenges our constitutionality and our Westminster traditions, but it did not need to be weeks long.

I have asked the parliamentary secretary if it is not the case that stopping the work of committees is the key question that has offended us in the opposition ranks. It is not that we lost days of debates in July and August, when, I agree with him, they were not typical, but we did have all the work on committees stopped. How does he justify that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the former leader of the Green Party seems to imply that she would have been okay with the prorogation if the committees had been able to continue. The tradition of the House of Commons is that when a prorogation takes place, committees stop. Maybe that is something that could be talked about going forward as we look at changing the rules.

At this point in time, I believe it was appropriate, given the nature of the pandemic, that we prorogue. It allowed us to bring in a new throne speech and to set a path for the next months, and possibly years. That was essential.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary raised a very interesting point a few minutes ago when he thanked the New Democratic Party for

at least, in addressing him, asking an actual question of substance in respect to policy.

We have Bloc and Conservative members who, during what they are characterizing as extremely limited time to speak, are still continuing to talk about this apparent limited time that they have to speak. That is coupled with the fact that this morning a concurrence motion was brought in that had absolutely nothing to do with this agenda, let alone this session of Parliament. What are the parliamentary secretary's thoughts on the games that are being played within the House right now?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I was not surprised. I somewhat anticipated that the Conservatives might try something of that nature, primarily because I do not believe, at my core, that they are really arguing for additional debate. Their ultimate goal is to make Parliament, the House of Commons, and the debate look as dysfunctional as possible.

I believe that is their real objective, even at a time when Canadians need the Conservative Party to be more responsible and to cooperate, as other political parties are doing, in order to deal with this pandemic and protect our economy. However, it is never too late. Maybe we will see some more encouraging signs from the Conservatives in the coming weeks and months.

• (1710)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I very much enjoy the member for Winnipeg North's spin on how he thinks the proceedings in the House of Commons are going. He lives here quite often and does quite a lot of work. He carries a lot of water for the current Liberal government. I know he takes pride in that.

There are some things that I will probably take issue with, but I understand how much work the member does, and that he carries the water for the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's Office, all while taking on some of the slings and arrows that no one else on that side of the bench wants. I remember another Liberal from western Canada who did that. That Liberal had been elected for 25 years, and he was Mr. Ralph Goodale.

The member across said that he had been elected for 20 years. There is only so long someone can carry the water for Ottawa before going back out to western Canada and western Canadians asking, "When are you going to start being a voice for us again?" Mr. Goodale went through that in the 2019 election. I would like to give some advice to my learned colleague across the way: There is only so much water a person can carry before that bucket spills over, leaving their constituents to think that they are not being supported any more.

This process to go through \$57 billion of spending over the last four and a half hours is very interesting. The member stated that we as the opposition always want to create chaos to make it appear that the House is not functioning properly. I say that there is nothing further from the truth. I think we are working as team Canada. We want to contribute.

We contributed with the CEWS, the emergency wage subsidy, when the government first brought it in. We talked to our constituents across the country. They told us it was not going to work for businesses. We also went to members of the opposition. I believe that is one of the reasons why the benefit increased from 10% to 75%.

Members on this side have helped with the team Canada approach and have added some constructive criticism. That in turn has helped Canadian businesses to keep employees longer. It has helped people get through the pandemic, but more often than not, when we put ideas forward, there is a feeling that we are left without teammates.

When it comes to us working as part of team Canada, the Liberal member suggests that we be constructive and bring forward ideas. We continue to do that. I remember asking questions of the minister responsible for economic development and employment in July.

The member has said there was a full Parliament, but there was not. It was a COVID-19 committee. Once again the spin and the rhetoric does not match the words coming out of the member for Winnipeg North's mouth because there was no full Parliament. We know that. When he says that, the member is trying to mislead Canadians.

He has also said that this has been the most open and transparent government in history, which could not be further from the truth. I remember during the start of the pandemic, when we were having our COVID-19 committee meetings, the Prime Minister was in his cottage hiding under his bed because he did not want to make a decision for Canadians. He would pop out every day like a cuckoo clock when the media was there to give his two-minute statement, take three softball questions and then go back into Rideau cottage. I do not think that was showing leadership when Canadians needed it the most.

The member of Parliament for Winnipeg North sits there and says that there has been great leadership and the government has shown Canadians that it has been there every step of the way. I know that constituents in Regina—Lewvan do not feel that way.

I know the hon. member also said, “When standing in this House you should say and speak of what your constituents would want you to say”. I am sorry to say, Madam Speaker, that if I did that you would ask me to leave because sometimes my constituents use colourful language to describe how they feel the Liberal government has left them behind time and time again.

The member said that we are talking too much about prorogation. I think that over the 10 or 15 years he was on these benches, in the corner, he talked about former prime minister Harper and his government proroguing Parliament. The opposition at that time could not scream it loud enough from the rooftops, but this is a different situation. This is a Liberal government. This is just another case of “Do as we say, not as we do. It is respectful for us to prorogue Parliament because we are going to do a reset”.

The member keeps saying that we are going to turn the page, but he does not finish his sentence. What did the hon. member want to turn the page from? Why do we have to turn the page? The election was not very long ago. The government is only a year into its man-

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date. What does the page need to be turned from? There was a throne speech. Why did we have to have another one?

• (1715)

Both throne speeches are the same. The Liberals have the same recycled promises they will never follow through on. They have been promising child care and day care probably since I was in day care, so they have never really followed through on that one. The problem we see on this side is there will be 50 billion to 60 billion dollars' worth of spending, so forgive us if we do not think we should just write blank cheques to the Liberals.

I should have said this earlier, but this will be a shorter speech because I will be splitting my time with the member for Perth—Wellington.

Forgive us if we do not feel the Liberals deserve a blank cheque. I have another sports analogy about this and it concerns teammates. Lots of time on a sports team there are unforced errors. We feel it is the unforced errors of the Liberals that have caused the slow response to COVID-19. They all knew that on September 30 we were going to need new programming in place because CERB was ending.

However, we see unforced error after unforced error, including the WE scandal, the Prime Minister's chief of staff's husband getting a contract for \$84 million, the Prime Minister's friends and family benefiting from the WE scandal, and Frank Baylis getting the contract for ventilators that were never certified. All these scandals backed up their agenda. They had to prorogue Parliament because, as the member for Winnipeg North said, we had to turn the page.

It is not the Conservatives' fault we are sitting here debating 50 billion to 60 billion dollars' worth of spending in four and a half hours because the Liberals did not have a plan for Canadians. They have continued to leave Canadians behind throughout the whole pandemic.

As the new shadow minister for economic development, I see the one thing missing from the throne speech, in which they said they are going to turn the page, is that the words “private enterprise” were only mentioned once, because the Liberals think private enterprise should help develop the COVID-19 app. There was no mention of releasing private enterprises' ability to spend money, to ensure they are able to hire more people and to help regain our economic advantage in the natural resources sector.

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The member for Winnipeg should know that across western Canada there are 20 billion dollars' worth of private investment ready to go. The Liberals are building a pipeline that a private company was going to build. If the Liberals would have got out of the way, they would not have had to spend \$4.5 billion on a pipeline and another \$10 billion to help build it. The private sector would have done that, and we would not have had to waste public dollars.

The private sector gives money to help all these programs they want to run. When we have a throne speech that mentions private enterprise and private business once, that is not a plan for an economy of the future. That is not a plan for Canadians.

What Canadians wanted from the government in the throne speech during a pandemic was some hope and stability. They wanted to know, after COVID-19, what does Canada look like next? They did not want a bunch of ideologies. The problem right now with the Liberal government is there are no public servants on the front benches. There are a bunch of radical ideologies who want to change what Canada looks like to fit their picture of Canada.

That is not what Canadians want. Canadians want to go back to work. Canadians want to help their families get ahead. Canadians want to know that after we get through this COVID-19 pandemic together, there is a future for their children.

I have three young children. After I leave Ottawa and go home, they are going to ask me what I did at work. I want to say that we tried to make sure we had time to talk about our future, and that our future has hope and optimism for our children. I do not want our children to think that what they have seen over the last six months is what Canada is going to look like for the next six years. It is our job to ensure that the next generation has the same chance to succeed that we had.

As we go through this bill, we hear from the other side of the aisle that the Conservatives do not care, that Conservatives do not want to put forward ideas and that Conservatives do not want to make Canada better. It is all just untrue. It makes us feel pretty upset that the Liberals talk about wanting to have a team Canada approach, but our teammates continue to make unforced errors. They make sure they do not take advice from this side of the House that would make sure Canadians can get back to work and ensure we have success going forward.

● (1720)

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question relates very much to only part of the member's speech. I have been listening all day to people on all sides of the House criticizing the government for taking time to prorogue Parliament to write an appropriate throne speech for a crisis that we are facing.

I was here in 2008 when Mr. Harper prorogued Parliament. It was prorogued for months and months, not to change, not to reset, not to do anything different, but simply to save his own butt. That is what he was doing. I would like to know what this member did during prorogation to add to that. We held meetings, we held round tables and we held town halls to contribute. What did the hon. member do during that very brief prorogation?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I was here too in 2008 during prorogation, as a staffer, and I know Prime Minister Harper actually spoke to the other leaders when he was talking about prorogation. I know finance minister Jim Flaherty talked to other members across the House to know what they would like to see in the budget to ensure they were going to work on behalf of Canadians. You guys should be half as good as those guys were in 2008.

When I was going around in my constituency talking to Canadians and my constituents, they said they wanted the private sector to get back to work. They wanted to know that there were jobs. They do not want a handout; they want a hand up. They want a government that would put Canadians first, instead of putting its friends, business people and wealthy lobbyists before everyone else across the country.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that he is to address his questions and comments directly to the Speaker and not to individual members.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech. I picked up on his desire to explain to the government members that we are here to work constructively and that we want time to study bills. That is the reason we are here.

Yesterday evening, we voted on a Bloc Québécois motion calling for collaboration with the intent of helping everyone, a motion that was in keeping with the hon. opposition leader's statements. In front of the media, the opposition leader claims he wants to respect Quebec's jurisdiction and help people. Yesterday, we moved a motion calling for just that: respecting Quebec's jurisdiction, increasing health transfers because that is what the provinces and Quebec need, and helping seniors starting at age 65.

I must have missed something. Can you explain to me why the Conservative Party voted against that motion?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind hon. members to direct their comments to the Chair.

The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, there are times when we will be able to work together as parliamentarians across aisles and across party differences, and there will be times when we disagree. I think we should respectfully disagree when we have those opportunities, and when we can, we should work together to ensure that Canadians have a better future going forward.

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Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am confounded by hearing Conservatives talk about workers and the working class. In fact, one of their hon. members talked about how, at the beginning of COVID, they did not believe in big fat government programs, so my question is this. The Conservatives have been very critical about the government's income support programs during the pandemic. Would Conservatives have offered an income support program to Canadians during the pandemic, and if so, how would it have differed from the program that was offered by the government?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, we have very similar ridings, so I think the best work program we could ever create is to unleash the private sector. The member has pipeline workers in his riding and I have pipeline workers in mine. We should get pipelines built. We should work together. We should release the private sector so we are able to make sure everyone is working together building pipes and everyone is working together to make sure we have jobs going forward for all Canadians, unionized and non-unionized alike.

• (1725)

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to address the House of Commons. This time, for the first time this session, I am doing so virtually, from my home riding of Perth—Wellington.

Before I begin my remarks this afternoon, I do feel it is important to note a historic event that happened 35 years ago today. I was reminded of this event by Art Milnes of Kingston. It was on this date in 1985 that Prime Minister Brian Mulroney appointed the first Black lieutenant governor of Ontario, the Hon. Lincoln Alexander.

Lincoln Alexander was certainly a Canadian who broke barriers at the time of his life as the first Black member of Parliament for the Conservatives and the first Black cabinet minister in Canada. Certainly his appointment 35 years ago today is equally of historic note.

We join the debate today on Motion No. 1. It is somewhat unfortunate that my first speech at length in this chamber during this session is one that is a motion of a guillotine. This motion provides exactly four hours and 30 minutes of debate on this matter, on Bill C-4. It provides for no committee study, no clause-by-clause consideration, no questions to ministers, and no opportunities for clarification on the implementation or the ramifications that this bill may have on Canadians. It provides for no witnesses, no comments from Canadians, from organizations and groups, from experts or from academics. In short, it provides for very little in terms of formal input from Canadians.

Of course, the government has noted, quite rightly, that many of the benefits that have been introduced for Canadians ended this week, but that does not excuse the opportunity that the Liberals wasted when they could have introduced legislation prior to this date. Certainly, before they prorogued on August 18, they could have tabled legislation on one of the Wednesday committee of the whole sittings that were scheduled for the weeks after they prorogued Parliament. They did not.

Even as recently as this past Friday, our new opposition House leader provided the government with the opportunity to have a Sun-

day sitting. We, as opposition parliamentarians, were ready, willing and able to be here on Sunday to debate this piece of legislation. We were ready to hear from the ministers and to question ministers on the implementation of this bill. We were ready, but the government was not. Rather, the government saw fit to introduce the guillotine motion and to cut off debate.

This brings me back to the importance of the opposition. My colleague from Regina—Lewvan talked about the team Canada approach. Certainly, early in this pandemic we often heard the Liberals talking about the team Canada approach, but for whatever reason, we do not hear them talking about team Canada anymore. Perhaps that is because half of team Canada is being left on the bench.

I would note that if it were not for the opposition and our pressure, there likely would not have been changes to the wage subsidy, which saw the government move it from 10% to 75%. It was good to see that the Liberals finally endorsed the back-to-work bonus that was introduced by our former leader, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, which actually provided an incentive for Canadians to transition back into the workforce.

Could one only have imagined if the government had implemented some of our ideas earlier in the pandemic, when we called for more strict quarantine measures for Canadians returning to Canada from international hot spots? We cannot improve legislation when we are being muted. It is unfortunate that the government has failed to see the important role the opposition plays in the governing of our country.

I am often reminded of a speech that was given in 1949 on the role of what was then His Majesty's Loyal Opposition. It was delivered by a then little-known member of Parliament from the riding of Lake Centre in Saskatchewan. This member, of course, went on to become better associated with the next riding he represented, that of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

John Diefenbaker said this in that important speech:

The critical question is often asked as to why the need of two sides in Parliament, one to propose and the other to oppose. The simple answer is that the experience of history has been that only a strong and fearless Opposition can assure preservation of our fundamental freedoms and of the rights of the individual against executive and bureaucratic invasions of those rights.

• (1730)

We are here to protect those rights of all Canadians and to speak up on their behalf.

There is no question that this pandemic has had an impact on Canadians across this country. I would dare say there is not a single Canadian who has not been affected in one way or another by the COVID-19 pandemic, whether it is families, farmers, small business owners or children.

One point that is important to highlight again and again is the fact that the government has failed on rapid testing and at-home testing. We see our international colleagues implementing these programs for quick testing so that they do not see the massive line-ups or the wait times for single parents waiting with their children to get tested. The government has failed on this matter.

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The government has also failed on reunifying families. I have raised the case in this House on a number of occasions, and so have my colleagues, of my constituent Sarah Campbell. Sarah has been separated from her British fiancé Jacob since February. It was bad enough for a young couple in love to have to cancel their June wedding, and I am sure many Canadians can associate with the disappointment that this would have caused, but what was truly heart-breaking was that within days of their scheduled wedding date, she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer, and throughout her surgery and treatment, she has been separated from her fiancé.

Sarah has written over 100 letters to the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, as well as to the Prime Minister, with very little response. In fact, only yesterday, Sarah's case was raised by my colleague, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, and the Minister of Immigration did not even get my constituent's name right, despite it being in the question.

No one is calling for the borders to be reopened, but what we are calling for is some compassion, some compassion for committed long-term relationships and for adult children to be reunited. Unfortunately, Sarah and so many others like her continue to wait and are met with apathy from the Liberals across the way.

My riding, like many ridings across the country, is heavily agriculture-related, and the challenges that our farmers and farm families face are astronomical. I have talked to local farmers, farm businesses and agriculture processors about how this COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their businesses. I hear about the challenges they face in accessing programs such as CEBA loans in redressing COVID-19 through the existing business risk management programs. Farmers and families feel that they are not being heard by the Liberal government, and it is truly unfortunate. Now is the time that the government needs to come to the table with farmers and farm families and address the challenges that they have faced with the business risk management suite of programs.

As well, Perth—Wellington is home to many cultural and artistic attractions, including the Stratford Festival, Drayton Entertainment and Stratford Summer Music. These, in the tourism industry, have been hit the hardest. They are among the first to have been cancelled as a result of the pandemic and they will be among the last to emerge from the pandemic.

Arts and culture affect the whole tourism and hospitality sector as well. From speaking with local business owners who own restaurants, bed and breakfasts, motels and hotels, I know that businesses that have been around for sometimes multiple generations are now concerned about how they are going to get through not just the next six months but the next 18 months, and they are just not seeing the hope, the reassurance that we will come out of this pandemic better than they were before.

I want to end by saying how unfortunate it is that we are debating a guillotine motion here in the House rather than addressing the concerns of so many Canadians, like the restaurant owner in Stratford, the farmer just outside of Drayton, the family from Mount Forest that is not quite sure whether their job will still be there in a few weeks. Now is the time to really address the concerns of Canadians, but instead of having the opportunity to have a full discus-

sion on the bill, a multi-billion-dollar spending bill, we are instead limited to four hours and 30 minutes.

• (1735)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also regret that we have to be put in this situation, but the reality is that the only thing the Conservatives seem to want to talk about is how they have been impacted by their inability to discuss and debate the motion we are going to be talking about shortly. They do not actually have anything to contribute to the debate.

My question to my colleague is very simple. Given his concern over the fact that we are debating this right now instead of Bill C-4, did the member share the same concern when it came to a motion of concurrence that was debated this morning? It had absolutely nothing to do with this session of Parliament. It may be a very worthy cause for the Conservative Party to take up, but the timing was absolutely ludicrous given that there was no relevance to the need to do it today. The member must share the same view when it comes to that motion.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I can certainly see why the member for Kingston and the Islands would not want to talk about the ethical lapses that are all too apparent on the other side of the House. The 10 ethical lapses from the former Liberal member would be relevant to holding the government to account. We have a Prime Minister, a Liberal Party leader, who has been found on four separate occasions, and likely will be again, to have broken the ethics rules of the House of Commons. I can see why the member would be leery to talk about these things.

However, the fact remains that this concurrence motion had to be moved within the next few sitting days. This does not take away the fact that the Liberal government has still provided only four hours and 30 minutes for discussion on Bill C-4. The fact that the opposition had a concurrence motion does not change the fact that the Liberals have left four hours and 30 minutes for Bill C-4.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his speech.

I am going to repeat the question I asked the previous member, because I did not get an answer. In the speech, I can clearly see the intention to work to improve conditions, and so on.

Yesterday, we voted on a Bloc Québécois motion calling for respect for the jurisdictions of the provinces and Quebec, which is what the new Conservative Party leader claims to want to do. This motion also called for an increase in health transfers, which would truly meet the needs of the provinces and Quebec, respect their jurisdiction and ensure that we keep moving in the same direction. Lastly, this motion also called for help for seniors starting at age 65.

I would like to understand why members are making speeches today saying that we are going to work together and improve the lot of Canadians, when last night they voted against such a motion.

I must be missing something.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé for his question.

Our leader, the hon. member for Durham, said very clearly that he wanted to work with the provinces and that he would respect provincial jurisdictions.

Our opposition party, the Conservative Party, also made it very clear after the throne speech that we would like to see increased funds allocated to the provinces for health. We recognize that health care is a provincial responsibility, and everyone in our party would like to work with the premier—

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: We have time for one more short question.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very familiar with my hon. colleague's riding. It is close to mine. It certainly has a great impact on mine because of incredible things, such as what he spoke about regarding the Stratford Festival. A lot of jobs go into my riding because of his community and I am quite grateful for that.

The member talked about small businesses and restaurants. So many of them rely upon those incredible arts communities. I am sure the member has heard from many small business owners about the failures of the government's CECRA plan for commercial rent. The Liberals were supposed to provide \$3 billion and have only provided about half that.

Could the member comment on that and how that has impacted the incredible small businesses in places like Stratford and St. Marys?

• (1740)

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right about the challenges for local businesses in Stratford, St. Marys, Mitchell, Listowel, Mount Forest, Arthur and Drayton. They have all experienced challenges with the commercial rent program. The uptake just was not there. The fact that we see so much of that \$3 billion left on the table has been a real failure for small businesses in my riding, in the member's riding of London—Fanshawe and across this country. It has been a real failure on the part of the government.

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POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-4—PROPOSAL TO APPLY STANDING ORDER 69.1—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Before we continue, I am prepared to rule on the point of order raised on September 28, by the hon. member for Banff—Airdrie concerning the applicability of Standing Order 69.1 to Bill C-4, an act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19. I would like to thank the hon. member for having raised this question, as well as the hon. parliamentary secretary to the Government House leader for his intervention.

Speaker's Ruling

The hon. member for Banff—Airdrie asked that the Chair use the authority granted under Standing Order 69.1 to divide the question on the motions for second and, if necessary, third reading of Bill C-4. He argued that the bill is an omnibus bill that contains an element that should be voted on separately. In particular, the member asked that part 3 of the bill, dealing with the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act, be the subject of a separate vote, as he contends that it is a distinct initiative unrelated to the rest of the bill.

[*Translation*]

The hon. parliamentary secretary argued that all elements of the bill are part of the government's response to the health and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and that this constitutes its unifying theme.

[*English*]

As members will recall, Standing Order 69.1 allows the Speaker to divide the question on a bill where there is not a common element connecting the various provisions or where unrelated matters are linked. The critical question for the Chair, then, is to determine to what extent the various elements of a bill are indeed linked.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-4 does contain different initiatives. Part 1 enacts the Canada recovery benefits act to authorize the payment of the Canada recovery benefit, the Canada recovery sickness benefit and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit in response to COVID-19.

Part 2 amends the Canada Labour Code to, among other things, amend leave provisions related to COVID-19.

Finally, Part 3 amends the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act to limit, as of October 1, 2020, the payments that may be made out of the consolidated revenue fund under that act to those in respect of specified measures related to COVID-19, up to specified amounts. It also postpones the repeal of that act until December 31, 2020.

[*English*]

One could make the case, as the parliamentary secretary did, that there is indeed a common thread between these various initiatives in that they are all related in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In presenting his argument, the hon. member for Banff—Airdrie referred to the two rulings by my predecessor on Bill C-69 and Bill C-59, where he decided that the standing order could be applied to a bill that dealt with the same policy field as long as the initiatives were sufficiently distinct as to warrant a separate question. Each of those bills contained changes in the fields of environmental protection and national security, respectively.

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The Chair is not convinced, however, that Bill C-4 is of the same nature. While each part of the bill is a distinct initiative, all three measures are in response to a specific public health situation, namely the COVID-19 pandemic. A close examination of the bill also shows that each part is designed to replace, supplement or extend measures enacted early this year that are expiring.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

As my predecessor stated in his very first ruling relating to this Standing Order, on November 7, 2017, found at page 15095 of the Debates, and I quote:

Members will know that many bills contain a number of initiatives on a number of policy areas, some of which members support and some of which they might oppose.

The amending process affords members an opportunity to propose changes, including the opportunity to remove portions of a bill to which they object. The question for the Chair, in applying Standing Order 69.1, is whether the matters are so unrelated as to warrant a separate vote at second and third reading.

[*English*]

In this particular case, there is a government motion before the House that would limit the opportunity to amend the bill. Though the amendment proposed by the opposition House leader would provide such opportunities, the Chair cannot prejudge what the House may decide in this regard. The Speaker's duty is to determine whether the criteria in Standing Order 69.1 have been met.

In my view, all of the measures contained in Bill C-4 relate to the COVID-19 pandemic, and this constitutes a common element linking them together. Accordingly, there will be only one vote at second reading for this bill.

I thank the hon. members for their attention.

* * *

**PROCEEDINGS ON THE BILL ENTITLED AN ACT
RELATING TO CERTAIN MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO
COVID-19**

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to address the House for the first time from my riding of Mount Royal. I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Malpeque.

I am very pleased to speak today in support of the legislation before us, which would help Canadians and businesses as they face challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic has evolved, it has become clear that while everyone is affected by the crisis, not everyone is affected equally. While millions of Canadians have returned to work, we are aware that individuals in certain sectors continue to need the government's support because they do not have a job to go back to. While we know that Canada will make it through this crisis, we also know that the months ahead will continue to be challenging.

Simply put, this bill proposes to create three new temporary recovery benefits to help Canadians who are still unable to work for reasons related to COVID-19. It also proposes to change the

Canada Labour Code to ensure that workers can access these benefits. As our government outlined in the throne speech, our plan is to follow a steady course and continue to support Canadians through this pandemic for as long as it is necessary.

I would like to use my time today to outline what the Government of Canada has been doing to support Canadians during this unprecedented situation and how that has led us to the legislation that is before us today.

[*Translation*]

Last March, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Canada took a number of extraordinary but necessary measures to protect and support Canadian workers and businesses during the crisis. To help them get through this extremely difficult period, the government created the Canada emergency response benefit and the Canada emergency wage subsidy.

[*English*]

These measures, among many others, were introduced to help workers who were impacted by COVID-19 to provide for themselves and their families, as well as to help businesses keep their employees on the payroll. Additionally, they made sure that employees in federally regulated workplaces would be able to take time off work to deal with situations related to COVID-19, such as school closures and the need to self-isolate.

The government introduced a new leave under the Canada Labour Code. The leave, related to COVID-19, came into effect in March and was designed to complement the CERB. The CERB provided income support and the leave provided federally regulated employees with access to job-protected time away from work.

We also took steps to make it easier to access certain existing types of leave by waiving medical certificate requirements, easing the burden on health care systems and helping to ensure that every employee who was sick or needed to provide care for a loved one was able to stay home. Also, we took action to protect the jobs of employees in the federally regulated private sector. We provided employers with more time to recall employees who had been temporarily laid off due to the pandemic. These measures have helped protect the jobs of employees who would have otherwise been automatically terminated due to the length of the layoff.

We also temporarily extended the eligible wages period of the wage earner protection program by up to six months. This extension will ensure that any delays in insolvency proceedings as a result of the pandemic do not negatively impact workers' eligibility for the program.

As our Prime Minister has said, this government will continue to take a whole-of-government approach to respond to COVID-19. In other words, it is a team Canada effort. To protect the health and safety of Canadians, and to support workers and businesses, communication with the provinces, territories and our stakeholders has been essential.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

Throughout this pandemic, we have heard from union representatives and employers in many sectors, including aviation, trucking, rail transportation, banking, telecommunications, broadcasting and courier services, to name just a few. These representatives collectively represent almost one million federally regulated workers and thousands of other employers across the country.

We also met many times with our provincial and territorial counterparts to share information, best practices and available resources with them. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Quebec's minister of labour, employment and social solidarity, as I had the pleasure of speaking with him several times in March.

[*English*]

One thing is certain: We all have a common objective, and that is to ensure that workplaces are safe, that workers are protected and that businesses and the Canadian economy are as strong as they can be.

[*Translation*]

As Canada's economy continues to adapt to the COVID-19 era, the health and safety of workers remains our government's top priority. That is why we are implementing measures to ensure that employers and employees have the resources they need to return to work safely and responsibly.

[*English*]

All employees in Canada have the same three fundamental rights: the right to know about the hazards present in their workplaces, the right to participate in decisions regarding their health and safety at work, and the right to refuse work that they have a reasonable cause to believe is dangerous to themselves. These rights, the responsibilities of employers and the structures created to support them, such as workplace health and safety committees, form the basis of internal responsibility systems in workplaces.

Today, I would like to reiterate the importance of employers taking the necessary steps to ensure that their health and safety committees or representatives are actively developing plans for a safe return to the workplace, and that these plans are widely shared with employees. Employers are also responsible for providing any training that may be required to ensure a safe return to the workplace. Strong and clear communication is crucial to ensuring that all employees have the information they need to work safely.

[*Translation*]

During the pandemic, we worked with stakeholders. We reminded them that an adaptable plan for preventing risk, ensuring full participation of health and safety committees or representatives in

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all decisions relating to health and safety, and using technology to communicate effectively with employees is crucial.

For federally regulated workplaces, these rights and requirements are set out in part II of the Canada Labour Code and its regulations.

[*English*]

We understand how important it is to ensure workplaces have the support and guidance they need during this challenging time. That is why I was so pleased that our Minister of Labour announced the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, or CCOHS, would receive \$2.5 million over two years to continue its extraordinary work. This funding is part of a coordinated effort by federal, provincial and territorial governments, public health authorities and the CCOHS to make sure businesses have all the necessary tools and resources to protect their employees.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have put Canadians first. We provided the support they needed to make ends meet while staying safe and healthy, and that is exactly what we are going to keep on doing through the next phase of the recovery. The CERB was an important and necessary temporary response to support Canadians who had to stop working due to the pandemic.

To safely restart the economy, Canada must continue to ensure that workers do not return to work if they have COVID-19 or are showing symptoms. That is why, to encourage workers to comply with public health measures when they are sick or need to self-isolate due to COVID-19, our government is proposing the Canada recovery sickness benefit.

With this bill, Canadians would continue to get the support they need through a proposed suite of three new benefits: the Canada recovery benefit, the Canada recovery sickness benefit and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit. The legislation also proposes amendments to the Canada Labour Code so that federally regulated employees can access both the CRSB and the CRCB without fear of losing their jobs.

The proposed changes to the code would modify the existing leave related to COVID-19 to extend its availability beyond the previously set repeal date of October 1, 2020 and align it with the two new benefits. These temporary measures would help Canadians overcome the many challenges they are facing while encouraging people to safely return to work.

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• (1755)

[*Translation*]

We are not out of the woods yet. We need to be ready. We need to make sure Canadians are protected for as long as this pandemic lasts. We also have to protect our economy and keep it strong. A strong economy depends on the safety and security of our workers.

[*English*]

In my view, in the same way as the CEWS, the CERB and programs like CECRA released during the beginning of the pandemic helped to protect so many businesses and people in my riding, the legislation before us will help us all get through the next phase of the crisis while we protect the economy. That is why I encourage all hon. members to support this legislation.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, simply put, the CERB, the Canada emergency response benefit, offered \$500 per week claimed. That was money paid without source deductions, so it was \$500 in full with the expectation that it would be paid back in the following year's taxes. The Canada recovery benefit is the opposite: Deductions would be taken off at the source.

Does the member believe it is better to give people less money right now, and does he support the government's move to do that?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on his new critic appointments. At the beginning of the pandemic, people were quite desperate. People were losing jobs and were not used to all that was going on, and the importance was getting out a benefit that put as much money as possible into people's pockets. It meant it would be taxed at the end of the fiscal year, in 2021.

At this point, the overview of this new benefit is that it would be taxable at the source. That is reasonable under the circumstances, where we are now further on into the pandemic. It is not to say that people do not have a need, but it is now a reasonable proposal to tax the benefit at source.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is my first time speaking virtually to the House. It is a bit strange.

I thank my hon. colleague from Quebec for his speech. The 125 members of the Quebec National Assembly have unanimously called on the federal government to transfer funding for health care to Quebec. Federal transfers currently cover 20% of health spending in the provinces, and the Premier of Quebec is calling for that amount to be increased to 35%.

What does my colleague think about the fact that all members of the Quebec National Assembly are calling on the federal government to transfer money to Quebec for health care, when it is a provincial jurisdiction?

• (1800)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. It is always a pleasure to speak with him.

I am proud to say that 84% of the money given to support Quebec taxpayers and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic came from the federal government. During the pandemic, we worked hard with our counterparts in Quebec and the rest of Canada. Now is the time for working together. It is not the time to incite squabbles between the federal and provincial governments.

I hope to be able to work with my colleague and the Bloc Québécois team to find better ways to support Quebecers and Canadians during this pandemic.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is important to place the context of this debate under the looming end of the Canada emergency response benefit. We are having this debate, and its urgency can be linked to the fact that the Liberals prorogued Parliament on August 18. We could have used the six weeks between that time and the scheduled return of Parliament to deal with this.

Would the member agree with me that the Liberals' action of proroguing Parliament on August 18 left many Canadian families with a deep sense of uncertainty and, as a result, we are now having to do all of this at the eleventh hour in an incredibly rushed fashion?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to work with my hon. colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. I have to disagree with him. I think the government has been outstanding in its response to the pandemic thus far. Over the last several weeks, the government has planned a new agenda from the Speech from the Throne. We worked together as best we could with opposition parties to craft the modalities that are in Bill C-4. I know that we share the same objective, which is that Canadians who are out of work at this time or who need to stay home because of COVID-19 get these benefits and are protected within federally regulated workforces. I very much hope my hon. colleague will be supporting this bill.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-4, an act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19.

Although I did start out to speak to Bill C-2, which has the same name, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-4. I certainly agree with the ruling the Speaker just made. It is an improved bill and better addresses the needs of citizens affected by COVID-19 either directly or indirectly.

The bill, or at least some of the issues and policy flowing out of the bill, shows that this place, the Parliament of Canada, can work well for Canadians through discussions, compromise and a willingness to accept the fact that not any one party has a lock on good ideas or good policy approaches.

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While this bill looks forward, I do believe it is important to take a moment to recognize how far we have come since this place basically closed down in March, when we were sent home to try to operate Parliament in a different way. A lot of programs have come out to help people and businesses weather as best they can the financial and health difficulties caused by the pandemic.

Regardless of political stripe, I believe we have to say the government acted quickly. It introduced programs that made a huge difference for the economy, for families and for businesses. It did so quickly. In terms of CERB, I do not think we would have thought it possible that the public service and the government could actually come up with a program that could handle 10,000 applications a minute. That is a pretty phenomenal feat, and I think we should be proud of that.

I went through them today and by my count there are slightly over 100 programs that have been introduced. Liquidity has been provided to the lending institutions, coordinated planning has been established with the provinces and territories, and programs have been flowing out of the Government of Canada based on discussions with the premiers, and in fact with all parties in this House. Roughly \$19 of every \$20 have come from the federal coffers. Some of my colleagues on the former finance committee will talk a lot about the deficit. However, it is a fact that the federal government is better positioned to carry some of that debt rather than transferring it to individuals, businesses or indeed the provinces, because our rates are preferred, and we certainly hope they stay that way.

Programs were introduced, subject to change, which is unusual. They were not introduced with a hard line that they were going to be the bottom line come hell or high water. They were introduced subject to change, recognizing there were going to be problems and changes that needed to be made. They were improved with the input of members from all parties. I doubt the public knows, but all of us in this House know that members had the opportunity to participate in daily conference calls with senior members from several departments across the Government of Canada.

Through those calls, we had the opportunity to question and discuss, and programs were improved with input accepted from all members. Members could give their input based on how they saw the programs working on the ground, whether it was CERB or any other program. They could give that input from whatever region of the country they reside in.

• (1805)

We must acknowledge members of the public service for participating in program development, in working long hours and participating in those conference calls night after night after night. They would explain programs and answer questions. They would sometimes take criticism. They would accept changes and make recommendations to the various ministries as a result.

We were not always successful in the issues we put forward. I know both the member for Edmonton Centre and I put forward in those nightly calls that CEBA needed to be changed to allow personal bank accounts to be considered. That still has not changed. I am still demanding that the government change that so the people

with personal bank accounts and not business accounts can qualify for the CEBA or the RRRF. That needs to be done.

Members from all parties have raised that point. It should not be a program where the banks get the benefit. It has to be a program where people get the benefit. I am disappointed in how I see the banks living up to their obligations in the pandemic at the moment, because they have been provided billions of dollars of liquidity. Many of us in this House agree that change needs to be made.

I sincerely want to thank all members of the public service for their efforts under trying circumstances. They are under the pressure of a health crisis, working from home and working under completely different circumstances than they are used to.

All the programs made a difference. I can certainly say in my riding and across the country the big ones were CERB, the wage subsidies and CEBA. However, now it is time for future extensions and future improvements. That is what we have in Bill C-4. As my colleague before me mentioned, there are three main areas in this bill, three new benefits.

The first is the Canada recovery benefit, which will provide \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks for workers who meet the eligible criteria. In other words, they do not qualify for employment insurance, are not employed or have a reduction of at least 50% in employment or self-employment earnings and are available and looking for work. That is important. I do not mind admitting that one of the concerns I have with CERB is I hear from too many businesses that they cannot find workers. There has to be balance here. We need to be there for people who cannot find work, but people also have to be willing to work if work is available. The changes made under employment insurance make it necessary for people to be going out there and striving to gain work.

The second major area in this bill is the Canada recovery sickness benefit. That will provide the same amount of money I mentioned in the first program. This is for workers who are unable to work at least 50% of their normal work because they contracted COVID-19, have underlying conditions, are undergoing treatment or have contracted another sickness that would make them more susceptible to COVID-19.

The third area is the Canada recovery caregiving benefit which will also provide \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks per household for eligible workers who are unable to work at least 50% of their normal work and need to take unpaid leave to care for a child under the age of 12 due to school or day care closure, or a family member who requires supervised care and is unable to attend a day program.

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There are changes. What I tried to outline is that a lot has happened since the COVID-19 pandemic hit this country. All parties can take some credit for those programs.

• (1810)

The government moved rapidly and with this bill today we see how we are recognizing some of the lessons learned from the programs we have put out there and that there needs to be other changes made. I do not have time to go into the employment insurance changes, but they are good as well. We need to debate them further and continue on improving them until we see the end of this pandemic.

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague across the way for the hard work he did on chairing the finance committee.

In that committee, we did a lot of good work. It is a real disappointment that work got shut down when Parliament was prorogued. One of the great things we did at committee was we would study. We would study the effectiveness of programs, government programs and some of the packages that were put out.

We now have a new bill in front of us in which, given what we have seen before, we have the highest spending per capita in the G7 and the highest unemployment. The two do not coincide very well. We now are going to approve another bill in effectively two days. Is the member not concerned that we are not doing further analysis on what is within this bill like we would normally do at committee?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I certainly have enjoyed working with the member for Edmonton Centre on the finance committee as well. In fact, between early April and probably early June the committee heard between 300 and 400 witnesses provide their views on COVID-19.

We are in an urgent situation at the moment. The pandemic continues to evolve. We are in the second wave. We know the CERB is running out. We have an obligation as a government to move as rapidly as we can and have a fairly reasonable debate in the House. It is always better to take more time, but we just do not have the time. The need is there at the moment. The government is showing it is willing to change and adapt programs, and I am sure it would be willing to do the same with this one as we go down the road and the needs arise.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. I found it interesting, especially when he said that his government had learned some lessons from what happened in the spring.

If we remember what happened in the spring, we had a government that was pushing all kinds of measures and programs through quickly, saying time was of the essence. Often we would give it the benefit of the doubt and let things slide. Then we would ask for corrections, but the government would refuse them. For example, the work incentives that we proposed implementing in CERB would not have prevented people from receiving the benefit; they would have simply resulted in a better economic recovery.

A new bill is under consideration, and we barely had time to read it. It is going to have to be passed when it could have as many flaws, if not more, than the existing programs. I am trying to understand what they learned from the spring, because I feel like we are going through exactly the same thing.

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the government has shown us throughout this that it was willing to listen to members. Look at how some of the original programs were designed and how they have changed.

The member opposite said that with CERB there needs to be employment incentives, and there are. There is the encouragement to go back to work. There is other programming that is not directly related to COVID-19. We can look at how the government expanded the funding for the regional development agencies across the country to be able to assist businesses to create jobs. It used the RRRF in place of the CEBA for those businesses in the rural areas that were not really dealing with the big chartered banks. The government has shown that—

The Deputy Speaker: We are going to try to get in one more short question.

The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that has always been a concern in my riding, which is one of the many rural and remote ridings in this country, is Internet access. If anything has been very clear during this time it has been what that means when everybody has had to move to a more virtual reality. I think of all the small businesses in my riding that are trying to be innovative, but the lack of accessible Internet is the biggest concern.

That is something I do not think the government has taken into consideration in a way that means action. I wonder if the member could talk about his government and the lack of action it has taken.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the member raises a very legitimate concern about broadband Internet across the country. One thing we have learned from the pandemic with people working from home, etc., is that they need good Internet access. The minister, in response to a question in question period today, answered some of what the member just asked about.

There has been greater funding put into obtaining better broadband across the country, which is starting to roll out. I will admit it may be a little too slow, but at least the government has taken the initiative to get it out there so that Canada can be more connected and rural Canadians can have the same service as urban Canadians across this country.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to say right at the beginning that I am sharing my time with the really effective and remarkably hard-working member of Parliament for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

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There is no secret that we will be supporting the bill because of the NDP amendments. Historically, for the first time since Confederation, we now have provisions for most Canadian workers to have sick leave. The NDP amendments also force the government back on what it was trying to do, which was to cut back on the amount of money that will go to families who are desperately trying to keep food on their tables and a roof over their heads.

For those reasons we will be supportive, but we deplore how the government took it to the precipice, the very edge of the cliff. At a time when so many Canadian families are struggling, they left over a million Canadian families not knowing on Sunday night, as the emergency benefits expired, whether they would actually have the wherewithal to feed their families. That is what I deplore, that the government did not think about what the impacts of its actions and its lack of action would be for the many, many families across the country impacted by its decisions over the last few weeks. The Prime Minister wanted to avoid the controversy of the many scandals that we have seen erupt around COVID funding, but the government did not think about the impact on regular Canadian families. We deplore that.

I would like to devote most of my brief few minutes today to another deplorable fact, which is the government's treatment of people with disabilities.

We will recall that, as the pandemic hit, the government took about four days to put in place an aid package, not for people with disabilities or seniors, or anyone else, but for Canada's big banks. It was for \$750 billion, an unbelievable amount. Three-quarters of a trillion dollars in liquidity supports was provided to Canada's immensely profitable banking sector. There were no conditions attached to that. It was just a massive handout of largesse and support for the banking sector. Since then, of course, we have seen banks in Canada racking up, during a pandemic when people are struggling and businesses closing, over \$50 billion in profits so far. That is just in the last six months.

We see how the government can act with alacrity when it wants to. When banking lobbyists come, there are no holds barred. It just provides the hundreds of billions of dollars in liquidity supports that the banking sector asks for. We have seen the massive increase in inequality across the length and breadth of this country because of that alacrity to always respond to the rich and the well-connected.

There are 20 billionaires in Canada who have increased their wealth over the course of this pandemic in the last six months. While so many families are struggling and so many small businesses in my riding and ridings across the country are struggling to avoid that tragic moment when they close the door, turn the key for the last time and walk away from what is often a lifetime's investment, 20 billionaires have increased their wealth by \$37 billion.

Let us contrast that with the situation of people with disabilities in this country. As colleagues may be aware, I worked with people with disabilities in British Columbia. I helped to found the disability employment network. What we found was that there are so many obstacles put into place for Canadians with disabilities across this country. If we could prioritize accessibility in this country, we

would be seeing a country that is vastly different from what it is now.

Right now, half of the people who have to go to food banks to make ends meet are people with disabilities. More than half of the homeless, the people who are sleeping in street corners and parks across this country, are people with disabilities. That should be a source of shame to every single one of us in the House and every single Canadian across this country.

We believed that things needed to change, so we moved immediately. In April, as colleagues will recall, we brought forward a motion. The motion was for the government to proceed without delay to provide emergency supports to people with disabilities. It passed on April 29, unanimously. Every single member of Parliament in the House said it had to be a priority.

• (1820)

Then nothing happened for weeks and weeks, as the pandemic increased, as people struggled, as people with disabilities who were seeing increased expenses were trying to figure how they could make ends meet for another month. The government sat for about a month and a half before it endeavoured to bring forward legislation that missed the vast majority of people with disabilities. We said this is not good enough, and in July the member for Elmwood—Transcona provided very important guidance to the minister and to the government on how to set up a system.

We achieved, in July, a bill that provided supports to most people with disabilities. To our chagrin, we found out that a vast number of people with disabilities are not even coded into the federal system. One would think that would mean cabinet and the government would act immediately. If we are missing a third of people with disabilities, let us code them into the system so that we can provide supports for all, but no, that never happened.

We still passed the legislation through the House in July. The member for Elmwood—Transcona said, if we code it now, at least the people who are registered in the federal system will get their supports at the end of August. That was good direction. That was good advice and we put the legislation through. This is phase two now. We have been waiting since April and now we are one day away from the month of October. The banking sector received \$750 billion in liquidity supports in four days, and Canadians with disabilities struggling just to keep a roof over their heads, struggling to put food on their tables, have not received one cent.

This is not something that is partisan. Every single one of us in here, every single one of the members of Parliament who are listening right now on Zoom, should be ashamed of what the results have been. The most disadvantaged people in our country have not received one cent of support in the greatest pandemic that we have seen in over a century. That should shock all of us. That should make all of us ashamed, yet nothing has happened. We raised this issue continuously. We have negotiated three agreements now where the government has agreed to provide the supports. Parliament as a whole said in April, without delay, let us get this support out to people with disabilities across the country, yet nothing has happened.

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I am ashamed and members of the NDP caucus are ready right now to go across the street, to go to the CRA, and start licking stamps. If there are not enough stamps on the cheques, we will send them out. If the cheques have not been printed, we will help any way we can. We want to make sure that money gets in the hands of people with disabilities immediately. There can be no excuse for any further delay. This has been the biggest shame of the pandemic: The government for six months has done nothing to support the ones who are most in need.

I will say that I am optimistic for the long term. I see disability activists stepping forward and speaking out with powerful voices like never before. I am thinking of people like Penelope, Maddie, Nunya, Mondee, Patrick and Sarah. These are disability activists who are making people, through social media, aware of what their daily lives and struggles are like. I am optimistic, despite what is a source of national shame, that eventually we will get to the point where people with disabilities will have the same rights in Canada that they have in other countries, the same accessibility. We will end the practice of ramps that end with two stairs, or deaf events with American sign language interpreters but nobody from the deaf community invited, or big signs in Braille at the entrance of colleges and universities but inside no accessibility.

• (1825)

We will build the kind of inclusive society where Canadians with disabilities can fully contribute, as they want to do and as they can if we eliminate the obstacles, to the growth and the betterment of our country. However, it starts with providing those supports now. The government has no excuse for delay. Let us get that support into the hands of people with disabilities immediately, so that they have the wherewithal to get through the next period of this pandemic.

• (1830)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think in July or it might have been in August, the minister brought forward legislation dealing with the issue of disabilities. I was quite inspired by her comments in regard to the lack of infrastructure in terms of identification, which limited the ability to be able to make payments. My friend from the New Democrats has made reference to that indirectly if not, quite frankly, directly.

All of us would like to see the payments go out. I believe back then, the commitment was to building the infrastructure and getting payments out hopefully in early fall. I would have loved to see it earlier, and it is still a work in progress, but I wonder if my friend could provide some comment in regard to the many different organizations that are out there that indirectly support Canadians with disabilities. Many of those organizations have received some support. Again, it does not go anywhere near far enough, but we would not want to give the impression that there has been no support. Whether it is directly or indirectly, I believe there has been some, but obviously, there could have been a lot more.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I am saddened by the member's comments. I feel, as many members in the NDP caucus do, the incredible frustration of people with disabilities who have not received one cent.

Instead of the government standing up and saying, "We are sorry. We screwed up", which we understand has already happened, it would be good for the government to say to Canadians with disabilities that "We screwed up and we will fix it". That would be the only appropriate response to what has happened here. That is the only way that the government can respond.

Yes, some money went to disability organizations. What difference does that make for somebody who is going to lose their one room because they no longer have the wherewithal, due to the increase in expenses because of the pandemic, to keep that roof over their head? What does that mean to somebody on the streets? What does that mean to somebody who has to go to a food bank because that is the only way they are going to be able to feed themselves and feed their family?

The fact that some disability organizations got some money is insignificant to what they are living through now. The government must respond to what they are living through now, and those cheques have to go out now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby who is very outspoken about how disappointed he is in the Liberal government because the money still has not been transferred since the spring.

The thing that bothers the Bloc Québécois is that every MP from Quebec is calling for an increase in health transfers. We are in a pandemic. That is a health issue, is it not?

We have needs. Testing facilities are open, hospital staff are working overtime, a lot of money is being spent and this federal government has yet to commit to meeting this demand.

The government has enjoyed special powers since the spring. What have they done? They made sure to help their friends in the WE movement, they forced investigations—four committees were looking into this issue—they prorogued Parliament to turn our attention away from it, and when we tell them we want money for health they say no.

My question for my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby is this: Is there no one in New Westminster—Burnaby who needs money for health services?

I think this is an extremely urgent matter and I would like to see this indignation manifested in the vote on the throne speech. For the time being, the NDP are venting their anger, but they have announced that they will vote with the Liberals on the throne speech.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

This is the problem. For years, before the Bloc came or returned to the House, the NDP always defended health budgets. Conservatives made cuts and we attacked the government of the day for making those cuts.

The Liberals came to power saying they would make changes. They did nothing. The NDP will continue to champion and advance health management issues.

The issue raised by the member is very important. It is about the importance of having adequate funding for health care. We will not stop there. We have always been consistent on this issue and we will continue to push for a health care system that is adequately funded.

• (1835)

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I want to acknowledge my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby and the passion he brought to the House on behalf of the disabled community. For my constituents in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, I will repeat those basic points.

The fact is that the House came together and made a commitment so many months ago for persons with disabilities, but we still have yet to see any money flow, and here we are almost in October. We have essentially left the most disadvantaged and marginalized members of our society to the very last. I agree with my colleague that it is very shameful, and I want to thank him sincerely for the passion he brought to the House to illustrate that point.

I have been listening to this debate throughout the day and it has been very interesting to hear various members of Parliament from all parties relate the stories from their ridings. That has served to establish a kind of bond among us. Yes, we have our political differences, but the stories from our individual ridings are largely the same. There have been the same struggles and uncertainty and I want to convey that in the House. For the people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, it has been a very rough number of months. The very least we can do as parliamentarians is recognize the acute phase of the crisis and the tremendous amount of uncertainty. We owe it to our constituents to rise to the occasion, to meet the needs out there with programs and services that will ensure Canadians know we have their backs.

I have to also outline my incredible disappointment in the way today's debate is happening. Yes, of course, I am going to be supporting the legislation. After all, it is a result of a compromise, where the NDP proposed some very important measures. Those measures being incorporated in the legislation are going to make things fundamentally better for Canadians. However, I have to decry the fact that this debate now has to be rushed at the eleventh hour. I believe my colleague used the word "precipice". We are now at the precipice, because this debate is happening under the looming end of the Canada emergency response benefit, and this was totally unnecessary.

We had an agreement with the government to have several sittings over the summer months. We demonstrated an ability among opposition members and the government to bring back the full

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House of Commons when emergencies warranted it. We were expecting business to go along as usual under that same rubric. Unfortunately, when August 18 rolled around, many of us learned, with extreme shock and surprise, that the Prime Minister had taken it upon himself to prorogue Parliament until Wednesday last week. It thereby shut down all the work that was being done at committee. It shut down any ability of the House to come back and deal with emergency legislation. It forced us into the situation we find ourselves today, where, because of the constraints of time, we are having to rush this legislation through.

I am very sympathetic to the concerns of my Conservative colleagues. I was here in the last Parliament and know what it is like to face so-called guillotine motions and operate under the constraints of time allocation. In the previous Parliament, that was employed many times. However, I find myself having to go along because of the simple constraints. So many Canadian families operated through August and into early September with that uncertainty, uncertainty of what would happen when the emergency response benefit ran out, because during that time there was no follow-up program.

Yes, there was some vague announcement from the Government of Canada about using the employment insurance system and so on, but we as parliamentarians, on the opposition benches at least, knew there would need to be a legislative change to implement that. A press release is one thing, but bringing back the House to go through the legislation to ensure it will do what it purports to do is another.

• (1840)

I have to decry the fact that prorogation was employed in such a way. The going narrative was that it was for a parliamentary reset. Give me a break. The throne speech we witnessed last week was not a reset; it was a rehash. It was a trip down memory lane of failed Liberal promises. There was nothing new or inspiring in it. We have promises that go all the way back to 1997 that are still ongoing. I am sorry, I do not buy the argument that it was a parliamentary reset.

I also have to express some disappointment in my Conservative colleagues. I am sympathetic to their arguments of wanting to have more time, but what did I witness this morning? I witnessed a concurrence motion being brought forward on the floor of the House of Commons to discuss the conduct of a Liberal MP who is no longer a member in the House.

We wasted an entire morning debating a completely useless motion, in my view. None of my constituents care about a former Liberal MP and his ethics violations. We can do that any other time, but to do it at the eleventh hour when so many Canadian families are living under this uncertainty is unforgivable. We wasted an entire morning when we could have had more members of Parliament expressing their views on this.

That being said, we have an opportunity here to finally under these constraints come together and bring forward some program changes that will make lives better. They are going to give that certainty finally.

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I came to Ottawa to make Parliament work. That has always been my goal during the five years I have had the honour and privilege of serving as a member of Parliament. This Parliament is certainly a lot more different than the previous one. We were operating under a majority government at that time. This time, the Canadian people sent us a message in 2019 that they wanted to see us work together. By and large, I have been pretty proud with how that has worked out during the time of the pandemic, today notwithstanding, and the circumstances we operate under.

When we look at this legislation, as New Democrats, and we are a small but mighty caucus, we were able to use our leverage. We are not here to prop up the Liberals. We are here to do our jobs. At times over the last number of weeks, I have seen both the Liberals and the Conservatives unhappy with us. Any time New Democrats make the Liberals and Conservatives uncomfortable, it tells me we are doing our job properly.

The very fact that we managed to bump up the benefit from the Liberals' proposed \$1,600 a month to \$2,000 is a significant thing, and we should be proud of that. Four hundred dollars in a month's time is a lot of money. It is the difference between getting groceries or being able to fill up one's car. We felt, because we are now about to enter a second wave, that we needed to give people financial certainty, especially those people who have not yet been able to see their businesses reopen or do not have jobs yet to go back to. We needed to give them the certainty the government was still there to provide that important backstop.

As well, there is paid sick leave. This is a huge victory. It does not go as far as we would like, but at least it is an acknowledgement that it is important to have. We do not want to have a system where workers are having to make that choice between their health and their source of income. We do not want workers who are sick or think they may feel they have COVID going to work, potentially shutting that business down and spreading it around to the population. This is a time when we have to remain vigilant and be on our guard against that.

I wish I had more time to talk about this. My final message for the good people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford is that this is a demonstration of us coming together. Yes, it is under the eleventh hour, but we have come together and we have secured some benefits that are going to measurably make their lives better and hopefully give them a little peace of mind in the weeks and months ahead.

• (1845)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague opposite and I have done some great work together on the agriculture committee. I always enjoy his interventions.

I have never been to the community he represents, but I understand it is blessed with a lot of tourism. I would be curious as to what the member opposite has been hearing in his community and if there are tourism-related jobs in his riding for which these types of benefits would be extremely important, given the fact that tourism has been one of the hardest hit industries. What is his perspective and what are his constituents saying about how important this legislation is to support them in the days ahead?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do like to brag quite a bit about how beautiful Vancouver Island is, and I thank the member for giving me this opportunity to do so again.

It has been tough. We are used to having visitors from all around the world come to our beautiful island. Where I live, it is Canada's only Mediterranean-style climate. We are blessed with incredible scenery, the beauty of British Columbia, the beautiful mountains coming down to the ocean. The best salmon fishing in the world happens in my riding, although my other Vancouver Island colleagues might dispute that.

The fact is that tourism has been hit hard. Efforts are under way where we are trying to ensure that locals are rediscovering their region. We are hopeful, through those strategies and the benefits that are on offer, that we can make some success come back to our hard-hit region.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things the member mentioned in his speech was the lack of time we had to debate these things. I want to ask him about the fact that the House of Commons was prorogued over six weeks ago. What does he think about that and the amount of time that was wasted because of the prorogation?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, here is the thing. Prorogation can be used as a tool with a legitimate use, but if done properly. Every now and then a government may find itself in need of a reset. I argue, though, with the timing of when this tool was used. This prorogation tactic could have been used, with great legitimacy, the week before our scheduled return, not as far back as August 18.

As to my friend's question about the timing, the fact that it happened the day after there was a dump of 5,000 pages of documents with a standing committee shows me that the Liberals were quite worried about what was in those documents and wanted to shut down the committees so they could not investigate the content.

[*Translation*]

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

The NDP is not being clear, and I would like my colleague to enlighten me. Yesterday, the Bloc Québécois moved a motion that called for health transfers, among other things. Some members voted in favour of the motion, while others voted against.

What is the NDP's position on the billions of dollars in health transfers Quebec is calling for?

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry I am not from Quebec. It is a beautiful province and it is a very valued member of the Canadian confederation. I can only speak from British Columbia's experience.

I acknowledge, of course, that the provinces have jurisdiction over health care, but I will always argue that there is a strong role for strong federal leadership in ensuring a Canadian, no matter what province he or she lives in, has the same rights and access of any other Canadian no matter what province or territory people reside in.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, I too am extremely disappointed in the lack of funds going out to people with disabilities. In my community, in the block behind my office, I have a homeless camp and some people there are living with disabilities.

Has the hon. member seen the same situation in his riding, where vulnerable people are living on the streets and should not be there?

• (1850)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, the member's riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith is my northern neighbour. We have very much the same problems in the Cowichan Valley. We are also buckling under the weight of an opioids crisis, which has not gotten enough recognition from the federal government. Our communities need help. We need help with the homelessness issue. We need help with the rampant drug abuse that is going on and the incredible number of people we are losing to this epidemic.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great opportunity to participate. I just want to start by thanking all of the incredible people who work in the House, the administrative and technical staff, for making this possible. I have to be at home right now, but the fact that I can still participate virtually is a great service, not just for me, but for the people I represent. I am extremely grateful for the ability to do this.

Last night, the world passed a milestone. I do not know if a lot of people heard about it, were paying attention to it or are aware of it. Last night somewhere around 4 a.m., we passed the one-million mark for number of people throughout the world who have died from COVID-19. This means that within the last eight months or so, this virus has spread so quickly throughout the world and infected so many people, that we are now at the number of one million deaths throughout the world.

In Canada, we are extremely fortunate. We should always strive to have absolutely no deaths in a pandemic like this, even though that reality is very unlikely to happen. Nonetheless, Canada has only had just slightly over 9,000 deaths. Like I said, it is still a lot, but compared to some of the other countries, in particular those in the G7, it is a relatively low death rate.

I bring this up because I think it is extremely germane to the discussion we are having. This discussion is about timing and about how important it is to deal with something with great haste to ensure Canadians get the supports they need. They need to have that security to continue to support themselves and pay their bills during a time when they are also experiencing a great deal of anxiety.

Over the last number of months, we have made those programs better through work with all parties in the House, and I have no problem giving credit to the NDP and Conservative parties where it is due.

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I heard comments earlier today from the Conservatives. One member in his 10-minute speech said the Liberal government does not want to work with the Conservatives, but then about two minutes later he went on to talk about how the Conservatives would like to take all the credit for changes to the employee benefit because of their hard work. I have no problem giving credit where credit is due. The Conservatives did play a very important role in helping to shape that policy. That is what this has been about from the beginning.

It has also been about moving very quickly. I mentioned this many times in the House, but I am going to say it again. What we saw at the beginning of this pandemic was politicians working together to get the CERB out the door, which would have taken about 18 months by any normal standard. We put it together five days. We have an incredible public service that took this program and pushed it out the door to get money into the bank accounts of millions of Canadians in such short order. We are talking about one month and four days to get money into the bank accounts of 5.4 million Canadians from the day COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the WHO.

I truly believe that it is because of that speedy work and the reiterations on the fly and the willingness for the Conservatives, at times, to push for what they thought was right. Through the Speech from the Throne and what we are experiencing now through this piece of legislation, the NDP were pushing forward to focus on people who inadvertently were not given the full attention they should have received. That is what a minority Parliament is supposed to work like.

When I hear Conservatives say things to the effect that Liberals are not working with them, it is just completely untrue. By their own admission, they will take credit for the fact that they had a lot to do with increasing that wage subsidy early on in the pandemic. As we start to debate this bill, we want to move it forward as quickly as possible.

• (1855)

It is about extending and moving into the second phase of these various different supports for Canadians, whether that is a support to help people stay at home with their children or loved ones; whether it is for sick benefits, and again I thank the New Democrats for being champions of that; or whether it is about creating a benefit for people who will not fall under the reformulated employment insurance program. We need to make sure that these Canadians are taken care of.

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I think that when we look at the timelines, what is so incredibly important is to look at another set of data. I opened my speech by talking about a million deaths throughout the world, and how just over 9,000 of those were in Canada. I have heard the member for Carleton, on a number of occasions, talk about the amount that has been spent in terms of stimulus funding in Canada, and he compares it to other G7 countries. The reality is that, as of the most recent data, Canada has spent 15% of our GDP on COVID stimulus packages. Compare us, for example, to our closest neighbour, the United States, which spent 13.2% of its GDP on stimulus packages. So, we have spent 1.8% more in our stimulus packages. We have moved quickly and we have supported Canadians in great haste, and as a result our death rate is one-third of what it is in the United States. In the United States, as we all know, things are unravelling extremely quickly and their governments cannot seem to get a grasp or a handle on what they need to do in order to control this.

We as parliamentarians, and I use the collective we, worked together early on, sometimes through negotiations, sometimes through compromise and sometimes by yelling at each other across the floor of the House of Commons. We were able to get this package out the door as soon as possible, and now, as we move toward the second wave and we know that more struggles are going to come by Canadians as a result of what is ahead, we need to make sure that they are taken care of again. That is why this is so incredibly important to deal with right now.

I am sure I will get a question on this from a Conservative, so I may as well pre-empt it now. I know the question is going to come up about prorogation, and that we wasted five or six weeks during prorogation. Let us recap for a second. One special COVID committee sitting day was lost as a result of that prorogation, and two regular sitting days of the House were lost: the Monday and the Tuesday before the Speech from the Throne. That is the entire amount of possible debate that was lost. There was no other arrangement with House leaders and certainly nothing that had come to the floor of the House to support some kind of deal that we would sit and debate things in the middle of August. I know we also talk about committees that were doing work. Those committees are being re-established now. They are bringing back the issues again.

I can tell members that I sat on the PROC committee. We did a lot of work with respect to finding a way to vote virtually as we move forward. If we want to talk about wasting time, we are stuck now taking about 50 to 55 minutes to have a single vote happen in the House, when this is the exact model that the Conservatives were advocating from day one in the procedural affairs committee. They wanted to vote the exact way that we are doing it on Zoom, whereas the rest of the committee members suggested we follow what Britain has been doing since the spring and actually have an app-based solution that could confirm all the biometrics and that required less bandwidth to use, as another and more effective way of voting. I have become cynical, and a number of my questions have been about the amount of time that has been wasted by Her Majesty's loyal opposition, because I am left with the thought that this is the only explanation that can be there.

I know I am running out of time. I am thankful for the opportunity to speak today. I want to encourage my colleagues to move with

the same amount of speed that we did in March, because it was extremely important at the time, so that we could get the assistance that Canadians need in order to get through this pandemic and in order to be taken care of. That is what they really care about right now.

• (1900)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do enjoy listening to my colleague from across the way. He has a different aspect and a different take on some things than I do. I learn a lot when he delivers his presentations either virtually or in the House.

The member talked about working together, and that the government moved fast to make sure we had the CERB and benefits get out the door when COVID-19 started. Did his government not know that the benefits were coming to an end September 30? Was there not a conversation when proroguing government to make sure that we did not talk about the WE scandal in committee? Were they not having conversations about needing to have something planned after September 30, because that is when these programs run out? The thing that really frustrates us on this side of the House and most other opposition members is why the Liberals did not have a plan in place. They knew this was coming. Now they have to rush through \$50 billion to \$60 billion in spending in four and a half hours, because they had no plan in place.

Could the member please answer those questions?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the reason the Prime Minister chose to prorogue Parliament was because these programs were coming to an end. Look at the amount of money that has been spent over the last number of months. It is incredible. When the original Speech from the Throne happened just shy of a year ago, there was no possible concept that we would be spending this amount of money and that we would be discussing these matters today. Nobody knew about it.

Now we have the opportunity to reset Parliament and make a decision. That is what the Speech from the Throne is about: decide if, yes, this government is going down the right road and its projection into the future is the right way; or no, we want to go to an election and see what the people think.

Ultimately, that is how we ended up where are, and I absolutely support that. This gives every parliamentarian—

The Deputy Speaker: We will go now to questions and comments with the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Kingston and the Islands for his speech.

My question is very simple. I heard my colleague talk about the priority and needs of the people in his riding and all of Ontario.

On September 18, the Premier of Quebec, François Legault, and the Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford, very clearly set out the provinces' health care needs. They called for an increase in federal government support, from \$42 billion to \$70 billion next year and for the money to be recurring. In practical terms, health care support from the federal government would increase from 22% to 35%.

We understand that the government is opposed to increasing health transfers, but, in the midst of a historic pandemic, what could be more important than ensuring that people have access to health care? For that to happen, the provinces need money.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I will just point out that it is much easier to see you cut me off virtually than it is when I am in the House.

To answer my colleague's question, I am not going to weigh in on the Quebec part as I am an Ontario MP, but the member asked me about Mr. Ford, and what is more important.

I think the most important thing is for a provincial government to want to be a working partner and player with the federal government in this. I can tell my colleague that 97% of COVID relief money spent in Ontario has come from the federal government, and a lot of that was not attached or dictated as to how it would be spent. A lot of it is at the discretion of the provinces.

We need partners who want to actually work together to find solutions and not to play political games at this time.

• (1905)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for acknowledging the NDP's work in getting paid sick days, but we are not done. We are disappointed that this is not permanent.

We are hearing that many people are falling through the cracks. There are people with disabilities who are still waiting for the \$600 payment, which the government has not sent out, and seniors who are living in chronic poverty.

Does the member not believe that the time is now to implement a guaranteed livable basic income so that people are not falling through the cracks in our social safety net, which, clearly, as we are seeing in this pandemic, has huge issues and problems? This is also something that was in the calls for justice from the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry. Does he support moving towards a guaranteed livable basic income for all?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member already knows the answer to that and it is rhetorical, but I am happy to answer.

I will start off by saying yes. There is lots more work to be done, and I am really interested in working with NDP members, in particular, to get to places. Today, I have heard NDP members talk to policy quite a bit, which I find very reassuring.

I am definitely in favour of moving toward a basic income guarantee. I would like to see some real results and some real study and data so that we can look for a made-in-Canada solution. I think

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there is great opportunity there. I would love to work with the member on that, moving forward. I think there is a lot of potential behind the basic income guarantee.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have heard time and again in the House that no Canadian will be left behind. That sounds great, but how is it that we have the arrogance to think that our bureaucracy trickles down enough support to the average Canadian in ways that make this statement true, that somehow these words make everything okay, that an overused phrase can add money to the debit card of a stressed out individual whose card is declined at the grocery checkout? How can we have the hubris to believe that by creating a website we can stop someone from taking their life when depression refuses to loosen its grip, or the audacity to believe that words can find an appropriate, safe, affordable child care spot so mom can go back to work?

I sit here and listen to the same speeches being delivered by different members of the Liberal Party, who proudly repeat the details of a new suite of programs, a new headache for public servants and the CRA, a new batch of confusion for our constituents who will be calling us to clarify and to answer questions, including how they will pay their rent or Internet costs during the waiting period for these new benefits to come into effect.

[Translation]

As a member of Parliament, I have the honour of helping people navigate various government programs. Unfortunately, I am not always able to answer the many questions I get asked.

[English]

One of the questions I get asked the most is when the disability payment will be released. I voted to support Bill C-2 to ensure immediate relief for persons with disabilities through a one-time payment, although inadequate, because they had been waiting long enough and needed it so urgently. That was in July.

Not only do we expect persons with disabilities to live far below the poverty line, with much less than we have deemed livable according to the CERB, but we also expect them to keep waiting. All we have been told is to expect it in the fall. Well, it is fall, so I look to the government to finally deliver. Only then could I be happier with what is on the table now.

Having said that, I will be supporting this bill, as we do not have much of a choice since previous relief efforts have ended and Parliament was prorogued in the middle of a pandemic, as the second wave is hitting and as we send our children to school. I listened to the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader address this issue. He suggested that proroguing Parliament was no big deal, that it was only five weeks and that after sitting three short times in the summer, we should be happy with the level of engagement offered to us as opposition members.

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If members recall, I had been supportive of efforts of the government to involve us, until this move to shut us out. I reject the premise that this is not a serious issue, because we were needed here in Parliament. We would not have allowed benefits to lapse, preventing us from being backed into a corner and rushing through this legislation.

As for the priorities of the bill, I am pleased to see changes to the EI criteria to allow Canadians to apply for benefits where they would not have previously been eligible. The 120-hour base is a welcome sight for the countless moms and pregnant women across this country who feared they would not meet maternity benefit eligibility. However, once again this comes far too late, after hearing their calls for help these past seven months. This would also help those in the gig economy, artists, musicians and so many others, those who we have also left hanging by a thread as we negotiate this bill.

My Green Party colleagues and my NDP colleagues have been pushing for a guaranteed livable income to help these same people. A GLI would eliminate the hoops and the burden of extra administration, as well as the associated costs. The most vulnerable, the perpetually left behind, would be financially okay. However, here we are, with a revamped EI program instead.

● (1910)

[*Translation*]

At least it provides answers to some questions in these uncertain times. I sincerely hope that we will continue to have discussions aimed at ending poverty in this country once and for all.

[*English*]

I am also concerned about the threshold included in the caretaker benefit and for paid sick leave. This has been promoted to Canadians as though they will receive 10 extra sick days to use as they wish. Well, this is not the case. For partners trying to share the caregiver burden, we are removing options from them by insisting that only one of them takes enough days off to qualify for the benefit. I can already predict the calls my office will receive from parents in crisis, with a sick child at home and an ultimatum from an employer. Students are also entirely left out of these new benefits.

My Conservative colleagues were bringing forward the idea that our children will have to bear the brunt of our national debt and our relief spending. Considering these children will first need to survive and live long enough for that to happen, it is clear to me that we must support survival above all else in these times. We need kids to have a roof over their heads, food in their bellies, clothes on their backs, appropriate health services, a safe and healthy environment, and hope for the future.

[*Translation*]

I want all Canadians to have everything they need to survive and thrive.

[*English*]

A consistent piece missing in this puzzle is targeted efforts for mental health supports, and I must sound like a broken record at this point.

[*Translation*]

Canadians need tools to get through this next stage and what is likely to be a difficult winter.

[*English*]

We need increased funding for provinces to tackle this head-on, with counselling services, individual training and skill building to help others in our communities and to help ourselves. Money is not everything. Today, we need money in the hands of Canadians, especially the most vulnerable, but we also need compassion and an honest commitment to truly not leave anyone behind.

I think about the thousands of Canadians who are still separated from their loved ones: their lifelong committed partners, their new loves in a foreign land, their adult children. They need us to listen to them and to act. It is time to reunite. These Canadians have been left behind, and I fear for their mental health as their hearts break with each passing day and the silence from government leaves them more and more hopeless.

While we discuss proposed changes to the Labour Code and the veterans benefits code, we cannot forget the human side of relief efforts. We support those who have the luxury of work and the luxury of a roof over their head, but this still leaves people out.

[*Translation*]

This bill does not solve all the problems that all Canadians are facing.

[*English*]

It is a start, but I look forward to a bill that addresses the toll being taken on the resiliency and well-being of Canadians since the beginning of this pandemic, one that addresses the deep divisions in our country, the social inequalities, the rampant poverty, the racism. We can make the changes we need in Canada, during COVID and beyond, but we must do it together. No more games, no more platitudes: We need transparency and we need collaboration. We need our government to demonstrate that through its leadership, and I am waiting for that day.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's thoughtful speech. I have a lot of respect for the member for Fredericton.

She talked in her speech about the hope people had. People had a lot of hope during this COVID pandemic that the government would come out with a completely different response, one that would create a new normal and a better future for everyone.

She talked about how it has played out for people in her riding and the mental health issues. She and I sit on the all-party mental health caucus, advocating for people who are struggling with mental health issues. She also cited a guaranteed livable basic income and why they are tied together. Maybe the member can speak about the importance of that in supporting people who are struggling: what happens to people's mental health when they cannot make ends meet and how important it is that we, as leaders, pull together and put programs together so that people do not fall through the cracks. I would ask the member to speak to that.

• (1915)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, I am very passionate about a GLI, for multiple reasons; it is mostly because of the conversations I have with constituents day in and day out. Oftentimes we get to a point in that conversation where I have no way to help them through our regular channels. I can only hope that our government will move on something like a GLI, because it catches so many people. It really is a social safety net. It is the next step for Canada. It is something that we could really be proud of, that we could champion.

The member is right; this was the time. This is a missed opportunity to totally reinvent Canada, to really provide that hope for Canadians to have a bright outlook for the workforce, for the economy, for the environment. We had that opportunity, and it was squandered.

I am usually far more positive in this House, and I do not want to give Canadians the idea that I am not still optimistic. I am just a little disappointed with how we have gotten to this point. I believe in a minority Parliament and I believe in what we can do, but we need to listen to each other. So many of us are saying that a guaranteed livable income would very much help our constituents right now and for days to come, for years to come. I am very encouraged to hear even members of our sitting government suggest that they are on board with this. I hear there are conversations around the cabinet table, so I look forward to that coming to fruition.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I enjoy listening to my colleague from Fredericton, whose speeches are always so touching and so true. I too am getting a bit tired of hearing the Liberal members stick up for their government's positions over and over, even though their constituents have the same concerns as opposition members' constituents.

My colleague talked about social inequity and hope for the future. I know her party shares a number of concerns with the Bloc Québécois, such as the environment and a green recovery. One of our proposals is for the government to stop investing in dirty oil and dirty energy and start investing in the energy transition.

Does her party agree with that idea?

[*English*]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, obviously that is a huge piece of this opportunity that I was talking about. It seems that we try not to follow the trends and the good business advice that is being offered by experts that this is absolutely the direction we need to go

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in: focus more on renewables. We still need oil and gas in this country, but we know we need to ramp down our demand and invest in renewables. They go hand in hand. I do not think we need to choose one or the other at this point. We know that the skills are transferable for workers in the oil fields. I want to bring New Brunswickers home from Alberta because I want renewable energy options on the east coast as well.

I am very passionate about seeing those things come to fruition, and I am tired of hearing those words in speeches without actions that make sense, talking about climate crisis one minute and then buying a pipeline the next, when instead we should be ramping down the demand I am talking about. It is confusing, and I have said that before about the messages that the Liberals are giving to Canadians. It is very confusing when it comes to the idea of the environment and the climate crisis.

I am looking for clarity, and that is why I spoke in my speech about transparency and collaboration, because it sounds like we want the same things, but when we come to this House to vote on bills, it is not what we fought for, and I need to see more of that.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this evening to speak in the House for the first time since March, however disappointed I am with the circumstance, namely that the debate is on Motion No. 1, which has been accurately characterized as a “guillotine” motion. The motion would provide a mere four and a half hours of debate in respect of a comprehensive, complex piece of legislation, one that not only has many moving parts, but that also comes with a very large price tag. When one looks at the three new temporary COVID benefits, the cost is somewhere in the range of \$40 billion. In addition to that, there is myriad additional spending amounting to approximately \$17 billion. What we have is four and a half hours of debate in respect of legislation that has a price tag of nearly \$60 billion. Let me repeat that: \$60 billion.

To put that in some context, one needs only to go back five years, to 2015. In 2015, total federal spending amounted to approximately \$250 billion. Now, within the span of four and a half hours, the government seeks to ram through a piece of legislation that equals approximately a quarter of the total federal government spending a mere five years ago. One would think that, in the face of such a consequential piece of legislation, the government would welcome input and provide an opportunity for vigorous and thorough debate in this place.

In order to carry on today, I should note that I am splitting my time with the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

One would think that would have been the case. Instead, what we have is a motion that shuts down debate, shuts down scrutiny, shuts down the ability of all members of Parliament collectively to do our jobs and turns Parliament into nothing more than a rubber stamp.

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Members of the government opposite have said they had no choice. Their hands were tied behind their backs and they were governing, as the Prime Minister so famously said, “from the heart outwards.” They were governing with the best of intentions, and they had to do this \$60 billion of spending in four and a half hours because they had to get the money out the door into the pockets of Canadians.

In response to that, I say how cynical and disingenuous it is on the part of those Liberals. It need not have been so. The Prime Minister knew full well the CERB and other benefits would expire, as they did two days ago. Indeed, he set the expiration date. He knew there was a need to fill the void arising from the expiration of CERB and other programs, and he knew that would have to be legislated upon.

● (1920)

What did the Prime Minister do in the face of that? Did the Prime Minister consult the opposition parties? No. Did the Prime Minister engage with parliamentarians? No. Instead, the Prime Minister shut down Parliament. Why in the world would the Prime Minister shut down Parliament when all of these substantive matters needed to be addressed that had a profound impact on the livelihoods of millions of Canadians?

The answer to that is very simple and deeply troubling. The Prime Minister was caught in a summer of scandal involving hundreds of millions of dollars that went out the door to the Prime Minister's friends in the WE organization. It was an organization that had personally enriched his family, that had let the former finance minister and his family travel around the world and that had financially benefited the former finance minister.

The government was rocked by hearings in which it became increasingly clear that the Prime Minister had acted corruptly. Just by coincidence, on the eve of 5,000 pages of documents being disclosed in relation to WE, the Prime Minister saw fit to shut Parliament down. This shut down three committees, including the committee I sat on, the finance committee, which was undertaking extensive hearings and had a lot of questions arising from the 5,000 pages of documents and testimony that it had heard, but obviously the Prime Minister wanted to change the channel.

Here we are. He shut down Parliament to cover up his own corruption, rushed legislation immediately after the Speech from the Throne and now says it is a *fait accompli*. If Canadians are going to get the benefits they need in this time of unprecedented crisis, we are going to have to ram it through in four and a half hours.

We on this side of the House have made every effort to try to work with the government. Even despite the Prime Minister's attempts to shut us down, we tried, when Bill C-2 was introduced, to work over the weekend, but the government rejected our efforts. The government rejected all efforts to provide an opportunity to call witnesses, to ask questions of ministers, to go through a clause-by-clause process. All of that is gone.

I have to say it would be troubling if it was just this one instance, but what we have seen is a troubling pattern on the part of the Prime Minister in terms of shutting down opportunities for accountability and oversight. This is a Prime Minister who brought forward

time allocations 63 times in the last Parliament, despite saying in 2015 that his government would never, ever think to bring forward time allocation. This is a Prime Minister who shut down the justice committee that I served on in the last Parliament when it was getting to the bottom of the government's corruption with SNC-Lavalin.

This is a Prime Minister who, at a time when the government has been spending hundreds of billions of dollars, has seen fit to shut down Parliament through most of the spring and summer. If ever there was a need for Parliament to sit, it surely would be at the time of this current health and economic crisis.

● (1925)

I have to say it is ironic that, as the government continues to pour out hundreds of billions of dollars with very little oversight and very little accountability, it has seen fit to stop the Auditor General from following the money and has refused to provide the Auditor General with \$11 million. There are hundreds of billions of dollars going out the door, but not \$11 million—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are quite over time.

Question and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been listening very carefully to the member opposite, and I only wish I would be graced with as much time as would be required in order to refute many of the comments my friend has put on the record.

Having said that, I am interested in the member's thoughts with regard to this morning. The member and others were saying that they wanted more time to talk about this very important issue, yet this morning, what did they do? They moved concurrence on a report to talk about a former MP.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: It was not a Conservative, it was a Liberal, but I know what you mean. However, the point is the Conservative loyal opposition felt it was more important to talk about something outside of the pandemic completely.

How can members opposite justify having that sort of debate this morning and now say that they want more time to talk about this? They had time this morning.

● (1930)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, what the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader was saying was unbelievable, but understandable at the same time.

I can appreciate that the government is embarrassed by another Liberal who was found to be in contravention of the Conflict of Interest Act, just as the Prime Minister himself has been found guilty, not once but twice. He is the first prime minister in Canadian history to be found guilty of breaching the Conflict of Interest Act, and the previous finance minister had multiple contraventions of the Conflict of Interest Act. This government is a walking scandal. It has had scandal after scandal after scandal. I know that the member does not like to talk about that, but the real issue is six wasted weeks and now four and a half hours to debate \$60 billion in spending. That is unacceptable.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I certainly agree with all of the criticism from the member towards the Liberal government. The NDP has been on the record as saying that it was deplorable how the government handled the last few weeks.

However, I must say, given the member's words and what he is zeroing in on, that I almost think it is a complete repudiation of the previous Conservative government. He was quite right to criticize the Liberals for imposing closure 63 times, imposing time allocation, except that we remember the Harper government doing the same thing over 100 times. Mr. Harper taught the Prime Minister how to disrespect Parliament.

The member also raised the point of the \$60 billion, except that the Harper government hid \$114 billion in bank bailouts and liquidity supports and never brought those to Parliament.

Is this asking for forgiveness for everything the Conservatives did when they were in government?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I would be proud to stand on the side of a Harper government and its successful record of balanced budgets, economic growth and strong and ethical government compared with this government's record of failure and record of hypocrisy.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from St. Albert—Edmonton for his speech.

I would also like to ask him if he thinks deciding to prorogue Parliament for several weeks, when 24 hours might have done the trick, goes against what our constituents expect of us.

[English]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I would absolutely agree that the voters did not send us here to be prorogued, to be shut down, and then in the middle of the night, indeed in the early morning hours when most Canadians are asleep, pass a \$60 billion bill with virtually no debate.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are here tonight talking about Bill C-4. I have the document in front of me; it is fairly thick. The government wants to ram it through after only four hours of debate. This is unfortunate because there is a lot there. I guess we are supposed to speak to it, so I will speak to it a bit.

A highlight for me is the repayment part of it, where it says:

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If a person has income of more than \$38,000 for 2020 or for 2021, the person must repay an amount equal to 50 cents for every dollar of income earned in that year above \$38,000 of income....

That is a credit to the Conservatives, who really wanted to make sure that those repayment amounts were not just dollar for dollar, that people were not penalized for working more. To me, that is a credit to us as Conservatives.

A bigger conversation that my constituents are having is whether this is affordable. The Liberals are trying to make it sound like we do not want to help Canadians. Absolutely we want to help Canadians. We know there is help that is necessary in times of crisis, such as what we are in and what we saw in March. There is no question that we support that.

I will use a logging company as an example. My son works for a logging company as a heavy-duty mechanic. If those particular owners, Wayne and Marie Harder, and I just saw her on the plane on the way out here, are going to buy a bunch of trucks for their business, they need to make sure they have a business afterward to pay for those trucks.

Likewise, when we have such massive expenditures from the current government, unprecedented amounts of money with \$400 billion this year alone in deficit spending, we have to ask what our ability to recoup that money for Canadian taxpayers is. It is all taxpayer money. Even our Parliamentary Budget Officer, Yves Giroux, speaking about the current Liberal government, said:

It's without a doubt that we cannot afford deficits of over \$300 billion for more than just a few years.... So if the government has plans for additional spending, it will clearly have to make difficult choices and either raise taxes or reduce other areas of spending. Because it's clear that we cannot afford to have deficits of that magnitude for even the medium term.

Again, we support expenditures, but it is the Liberal government that wants to just hand people the fish and not help them to get fishing again. That is the great analogy. The Conservatives have compassion. We would do it in a different way, but ours is sustainable; theirs is not.

This is from John Ivison today. It is not just Conservatives who are saying that we need to have fiscal responsibility to taxpayers. He said, "This points out an inconsistency that is even more apparent - the [current] government's concern about the impact of climate change on future generations but indifference about the threat of massive debt."

Again, this is what my constituents ask questions about. They see in their own lives that unsustainable deficits and debt are exactly that. They are unsustainable. Even the PBO said it can go on a couple of years, but if we keep doing this we are in big trouble.

Government Orders

I had hoped to see a signal in the Speech from the Throne that would speak to the revitalization and the million jobs, which was quoted by the other side, that they were going to re-establish and get those million jobs back.

Typically in the past, Canadians have had resource development to get revenue to pay for health care and all these other programs that we so value in Canada. Resource development has always been the anchor of our Canadian economy, but did we see any resource development in the Speech from the Throne?

This is all we got: “Canadians need good jobs they can rely on.” I agree with that. It is on page 11 of the Speech from the Throne. The speech continues, “To help make that happen, the Government will launch a campaign to create over one million jobs, restoring employment to previous levels.” That sounds great.

I will speak to this is a bit. Unemployment in my neck of the woods in northern B.C. is about 13.7%. It may be higher in certain sectors, obviously, but that is the average. Usually we are record-setting in my part of the province. We have been down to four per cent even. It is almost unseeable, the employment rate is so low. Everybody has a job. We are quite the opposite right now.

If the Liberals are talking about bringing employment back, how do we re-establish that? We have to do it through resource development. However, this is the Liberals' answer: “This will be done by using a range of tools, including direct investments in the social sector and infrastructure, immediate training to quickly skill up workers, and incentives for employers to hire and retain workers.”

● (1935)

There is nothing about resource development. It sounds good if we are training apprentices such as my son, who is a third-year apprentice, if that is what the initiative is. It is absolutely supportive, but there is nothing specific to resource development as being the answer to getting us out of this huge debt and deficit spending that we are in.

Then we see quite the opposite. On page 24 of the Speech from the Throne, rather than signalling this is a government that really wants to get that resource economy firing on all cylinders again, we hear, “This pandemic has reminded Canadians of the importance of nature. The Government will work with municipalities as part of a new commitment to expand urban parks, so that everyone has access to green space.”

I love it. I was fishing on the weekend and I do not get much time to do that, but I absolutely love the idea. It is a great idea, but then it continues, “This will be done while protecting a quarter of Canada's land and a quarter of Canada's oceans in five years”.

That is 25% of ocean closures and 25% of land closures within five years. Can the members guess where we are at right now? I am sure there are a few dozen Canadians watching us here tonight. Right now we are around 11%. We set the goal at 17% and we are only at 11% now. To get where the government wants to go, those protected lands and oceans would have to double.

What lands are the Liberals trying to protect? It is areas in northern B.C. like my own, and the caribou closures, where there is not really any scientific basis for making these closures, but they are

closing out mines, closing out logging and so on. It is all done on the basis of hitting this target.

Now we are going to double that, so where they are going to get all this land from? All those areas where normally those from indigenous communities find jobs in the resource sector. I have many indigenous friends with indigenous companies. They are finding it hard to find work right now with some of the closures that are already being implemented—

● (1940)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): A point of order from the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know we are all concerned to get more time today to be able to speak to the legislation that is meant to replace CERB, and I am very curious to understand the Conservative position with respect to that replacement legislation. I know they have concerns about how to pay for it. I am wondering what they propose as a path forward. We are talking a lot about the Speech from the Throne and protected areas. I am wondering if we might be able to bring the debate back to the matter at hand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is a matter for debate, and I think the member is getting to where he will explain to us.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, I respect the hon. member across the way. We have worked together in the past and what I am trying to do is make the case that if Bill C-4 is going to pass and every party in this building wants to help Canadians, but I want to provide the other argument that if this is going to get a yes to supporting the bill we need to explain to Canadians how we are going to pay for it. That is what I am trying to do right now.

I am talking about indigenous companies in my neck of the woods and the signals that the government does not give in the Speech from the Throne, and we see this increase in protected areas. Again, that is not really favourable to any resource sector. If anything, it restricts the resource sector a lot. It is tightening the resource sector up when we need to be giving it our blessing to keep going. We need logging companies to keep logging. We need the oil and gas sector to keep going, in a good way, but to keep going.

I know my time is short, but an article in the Macdonald-Laurier Institute talks about how indigenous people should be allowed to make their own decisions. In a response to the Speech from the Throne, Chief Theresa Tait-Day from the Wet'suwet'en says, “Most unusually, the intervention of the Governments of Canada and British Columbia have made a difficult situation much worse. The two governments [the Liberal government and the NDP government in B.C.], perhaps to avoid an escalation of environmentalist-led conflict, opted to negotiate only with some of the Hereditary Chiefs.”

She continues, “The communities were not consulted, and the negotiations were not endorsed or supported by the Wet’suwet’en Nation.... Remarkably, the governments chose to meet only with a self-selected group of Hereditary Chiefs, even though any final agreement must be ratified by members in...[a] transparent and inclusive manner by Wet’suwet’en members”.

The governments could have talked to 99% of the Wet’suwet’en community to see this project go ahead, but instead they only talked to the ones who were against the project. Again, we are talking about signals here. Are they really going to get one million jobs going while all the efforts and the Speech from the Throne signal the exact opposite?

• (1945)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about two parts of my colleague’s speech. He asked how we are going to pay for it. He is building up to the premise that we have always had, and that is that there is a lot of unfairness in this country. I hope it will lead the member to talk to his hard-working constituents in support of a tax on the wealthiest of Canadians. During this pandemic, most of the burden has shifted to working men and women, such as our constituents, while the wealthiest of Canadians have seen their wealth increase by phenomenal amounts. We are asking for a 1% tax on fortunes of over \$20 million. I hope he will find it in his heart to support that.

There are eye-watering amounts of money being spent during this pandemic. What is the Conservatives’ proposal? Is it that we allow Canadians to go into debt and pay 21% interest? These are extraordinary times we are in. They require extraordinary measures. Canadians need to know we have their back and \$500 a week is not much. It is \$24,000 a year. That is not even enough to qualify for the middle-class tax cut the Liberals brought in during the previous Parliament.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, I respect the hon. member. We have had many conversations on the flights here and back. He is a fellow British Columbian. However, taxing the wealthiest is going to have a negative impact on our entire Canadian economy. Most of us understand that the people who make this kind of money also have businesses in Canada. They employ a lot of Canadians. We can threaten to tax them more than a reasonable rate and these companies and people will move. They often go to jurisdictions that are more favourable to their incomes and businesses. The last thing we want to see is Canadian businesses go to other countries and set up shop.

I want to touch on the debt and shouldering it all equally. I have a simple calculation. If Canada has spent \$400 billion spent this year, does the member know how much that is per man, woman and child based on 36 million Canadians? That is \$11,000 each, just for the deficit this year. That is what just got added to our credit card bill. If we want to look at the total of national federal debt, it is \$27,777 for each man, woman and child. Each four-person family now owes almost \$112,000. To me, it is all taxpayer money and it is all taxpayer debt as well. We need to be responsible on how we spend their money.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and to the Lead-

Government Orders

er of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, therein lies a contrast between the Conservatives and the Liberal government. On the one hand, we have the Conservatives, who do not believe in the type of support that the government is providing Canadians. That is what is causing the debt. What is causing the debt is the billions of dollars being invested into CERB, which is money that goes to the unemployed and others, and the millions and billions of dollars that are going to support small businesses to prevent permanent job losses.

To what degree does the member believe that the government had to do the things we brought in, in order to support Canadians and our economy?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, the great part of my answer is that we are very likely going to be supporting some of the measures within Bill C-4, because we do believe in support for Canadians during a crisis.

The member across the way has had many words in this chamber, so I feel honoured to be able to reply to his question again tonight. We agree with some of the supports. The key part of this problem is that we have to have a sustainable economy afterward. I think most Canadians understand that too. That would require being supportive of our resource sector and making sure that impediments to those sectors are out of the way so we can get the economy firing on all cylinders again.

I think that is the key difference between the two parties. Conservatives want to teach people to fish, so they can catch fish for themselves and get back to their jobs and provide for their families. The member across the way would prefer to give out handouts, and as the PBO has already said, that is unsustainable.

• (1950)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak to Bill C-2, an act relating to economic recovery in response to COVID-19.

For more than six months, we have been living through the worst health and economic crisis of our lives, the worst in the history of Canada and the world, in fact. The pandemic has affected every aspect of Canadians’ lives, from their health, jobs and family life to how they can see their friends and family members. Businesses have had to close, supply chains have been disrupted, and children have had to stop going to school. Many individuals and families have experienced a drop in income. The past few months have been difficult for many people and businesses.

Government Orders

Fortunately, from day one, our government took extraordinary measures to protect Canadians and our economy. Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan is one of the most comprehensive in the world. It represents 15.8% of our gross domestic product. Our plan has helped Canadians, and it continues to help Canadians. It has protected millions of Canadian jobs, supported families and kept businesses afloat across the country.

Things are starting to look up. The Canadian economy has recovered almost two-thirds of the jobs lost in March and April. More Canadians are working and schools have reopened, but there is still a lot of work ahead of us. Although two-thirds of jobs have been recouped, that means that one-third have not. Unfortunately, many Canadians, including many women, self-employed workers and workers in the gig economy, have not been able to go back to work.

COVID-19 is still here. We are in the middle of the second wave. We have not yet overcome the pandemic. It is still a threat to the health of Canadians and to our country's economy. That is why everyone must remain vigilant and listen to public health experts.

That is also why the government must continue to support Canadians and businesses. To help create more than one million jobs and return to pre-pandemic levels, we need to make investments. We need to help workers learn new skills, and we need to create hiring incentives for employers. That is what we are going to do.

We are seeing a gradual reopening of the economy, but a full recovery will take time. Now is not the time for austerity. I repeat: Now is not the time for austerity. We need flexible programs, programs that will help Canadians get back to work and that will also allow us to adapt to new waves of the pandemic.

This bill therefore proposes to create new programs, such as the Canada recovery benefit, which will replace the Canada emergency response benefit, the CERB. Self-employed workers and those who do not qualify for EI, and who are not working or have lost 50% or more of their income due to the pandemic, will be able to receive \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks.

• (1955)

A similar program, the Canada recovery caregiving benefit, will be available to individuals who cannot work because they have to take care of a family member or because their child's school is closed due to the pandemic. These individuals would receive the same amount, namely \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks.

Finally, the Canada recovery sickness benefit will provide \$500 per week for up to two weeks to workers who are unable to work at least 50% of the time they would normally have worked in a given week because they are sick or self-isolating due to COVID-19.

These programs will be available for one year, because we know it will take a while for the economy to fully recover. The bill lays the foundation for what lies ahead, but we also need to ensure that the transition happens seamlessly.

Let us take a look back. In March, Parliament passed the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act. It is an important part of Canada's response to COVID-19, authorizing the government to make payments to Canadians and Canadian businesses affected by the pandemic.

Take the CERB, for instance. Millions of Canadians received this taxable \$2,000 benefit every four weeks. This act also enabled us to implement the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program for small businesses. Small businesses are the backbone of the economy and the lifeblood of Canadian communities. It is largely thanks to the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act that we are able to assist those who need it, help businesses and support our economy.

As I said earlier, the act was passed in March, at the beginning of the pandemic, and it included a provision stating that the act would remain in effect until the end of September. Six months later, we know more about the virus and its impact on our economy and our everyday lives. The bill proposes extending the application of the act until the end of the year, which is important. This would ensure that there is no interruption to the final payments under existing programs, such as the CERB, and enable us to begin transitioning to the new programs. It would also enable us to continue helping Canadians who need income support.

This may be the worst health and economic crisis of our generation, but it will not last forever. One day it will end. In the meantime, we will support Canadians for as long as the crisis lasts. We will get through these difficult times, and we will do it together. We will build a stronger, more resilient country, a country that works for everyone. That is why I am calling on all MPs in the House to support this bill.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her speech.

The NDP supports the idea that all Canadians should be entitled to 10 days of paid leave on a permanent basis. One of the reasons the bill does not include such a measure is that the Liberal government is opposed to making these days of leave permanent.

Why is the Liberal government opposed to the idea of Canadians having 10 days of paid leave on a permanent rather than temporary basis?

• (2000)

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

I would also like to thank the NDP members for working with the government with regard to the throne speech. We appreciate their collaboration very much.

It is really important for these programs to get off the ground. As I stated in my speech, the current programs expire at the end of September. It is time for other programs to take their place, because we want to transition from emergency measures to long-term measures so we can continue helping Canadians.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 8:01 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Motion No. 1 under government orders now before the House.

[English]

The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of amendment to House]

• (2005)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

And one or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Call in the members.

• (2130)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 4)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|--|--|
| Aboultaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Alleslev |
| Allison | Arnold |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Benzen | Bergen |
| Berthold | Bezan |
| Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis) | Block |
| Bragdon | Brassard |
| Calkins | Carrie |
| Chiu | Chong |
| Cooper | Cumming |
| Dalton | Dancho |
| Davidson | Deltell |
| d'Entremont | Diotte |
| Doherty | Dowdall |
| Dreeschen | Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) |
| Epp | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) |
| Falk (Provencher) | Fast |
| Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock) | Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) |
| Gallant | Généreux |
| Genuis | Gladu |
| Godin | Gray |
| Hallan | Harder |
| Hoback | Jansen |

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Jeneroux | Kelly |
| Kent | Kitchen |
| Kram | Kurek |
| Kusie | Lake |
| Lawrence | Lehoux |
| Lewis (Essex) | Liepert |
| Lloyd | Lobb |
| Lukiwski | MacKenzie |
| Maguire | Martel |
| Mazier | McCaulley (Edmonton West) |
| McColeman | McLean |
| McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo) | Melillo |
| Moore | Morantz |
| Morrison | Motz |
| Nater | O'Toole |
| Patzer | Paul-Hus |
| Poillievre | Rayes |
| Redekopp | Reid |
| Rempel Garner | Richards |
| Rood | Ruff |
| Sahota (Calgary Skyview) | Saroya |
| Schmale | Seeback |
| Shields | Shin |
| Shipley | Sloan |
| Soroka | Stanton |
| Steinley | Strahl |
| Stubbs | Sweet |
| Tochor | Uppal |
| Van Popta | Vecchio |
| Vidal | Viersen |
| Vis | Wagantall |
| Warkentin | Waugh |
| Webber | Wong |
| Yurdiga | Zimmer— 116 |

Government Orders

NAYS

Members

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Alghabra | Amos |
| Anand | Anandasangaree |
| Angus | Arseneault |
| Arya | Ashton |
| Atwin | Bachrach |
| Badawey | Bagnell |
| Bains | Baker |
| Barsalou-Duval | Battiste |
| Beaulieu | Beech |
| Bendayan | Bennett |
| Bergeron | Bérubé |
| Bessette | Bibeau |
| Bittle | Blaikie |
| Blair | Blanchette-Joncas |
| Blaney (North Island—Powell River) | Blois |
| Boulerice | Bratina |
| Brière | Brunelle-Duceppe |
| Cannings | Casey |
| Chabot | Chagger |
| Champagne | Champoux |
| Charbonneau | Chen |
| Collins | Cormier |
| Dabrusin | Damoff |
| DeBellefeuille | Desbiens |
| Desilets | Dhaliwal |
| Dhillon | Dong |
| Drouin | Dubourg |
| Duclos | Duguid |
| Duncan (Etobicoke North) | Duval |
| Dzerowicz | Easter |
| Ehsassi | El-Khoury |
| Ellis | Erskine-Smith |
| Fergus | Fillmore |
| Finnigan | Fisher |
| Fonseca | Fortier |

Government Orders

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Fortin | Fragiskatos |
| Fraser | Freeland |
| Fry | Garneau |
| Garrison | Gaudreau |
| Gazan | Gerretsen |
| Gill | Gould |
| Green | Guilbeault |
| Hajdu | Hardie |
| Harris | Holland |
| Housefather | Hughes |
| Hussen | Hutchings |
| Iacono | Jaczek |
| Johns | Joly |
| Jones | Jordan |
| Jowhari | Julian |
| Kelloway | Khalid |
| Khera | Koutrakis |
| Kusmierczyk | Kwan |
| Lalonde | Lambropoulos |
| Lametti | Lamoureux |
| Larouche | Lattanzio |
| Lauzon | Lebouthillier |
| Lefebvre | Lemire |
| Lightbound | Long |
| Longfield | Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) |
| MacGregor | MacKinnon (Gatineau) |
| Maloney | Manly |
| Martinez Ferrada | Masse |
| Mathysen | May (Cambridge) |
| May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) | McCrimmon |
| McDonald | McGuinty |
| McKay | McKenna |
| McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) | McLeod (Northwest Territories) |
| McPherson | Mendès |
| Medicino | Michaud |
| Miller | Monsef |
| Morrissey | Murray |
| Ng | Normandin |
| O'Connell | Oliphant |
| O'Regan | Pauzé |
| Perron | Petitpas Taylor |
| Plamondon | Powlowski |
| Qaqqaq | Qualtrough |
| Ratansi | Regan |
| Robillard | Rodriguez |
| Rogers | Romanado |
| Sahota (Brampton North) | Saini |
| Sajjan | Samson |
| Sangha | Sarai |
| Savard-Tremblay | Scarpaleggia |
| Schiefke | Schulte |
| Serré | Sgro |
| Shanahan | Sheehan |
| Sidhu (Brampton East) | Sidhu (Brampton South) |
| Simard | Simms |
| Singh | Sorbara |
| Spengemann | Ste-Marie |
| Tabbara | Tassi |
| Thériault | Therrien |
| Trudel | Turnbull |
| Van Bynen | van Koeverden |
| Vandal | Vandenbeld |
| Vaughan | Vignola |
| Virani | Weiler |
| Wilkinson | Wilson-Raybould |
| Yip | Young |
| Zahid | Zann |
| Zuberi— 205 | |

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

[*English*]

The next question is on the main motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you would find agreement, in fact unbridled enthusiasm, to apply the result of the previous vote to the next vote, with Liberal members voting in the affirmative.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply the vote, and Conservative members vote no.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees to apply the vote and votes no.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply the vote and will be voting in favour.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party agrees to apply the vote and will vote for the motion.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply and will vote for the motion.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the vote and will be voting in favour.

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

(*Division No. 5*)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Alghabra | Amos |
| Anand | Anandasangaree |
| Angus | Arseneault |
| Arya | Ashton |
| Atwin | Bachrach |
| Badawey | Bagnell |
| Bains | Baker |
| Battiste | Beech |
| Bendayan | Bennett |
| Bessette | Bibeau |
| Bittle | Blaikie |
| Blair | Blaney (North Island—Powell River) |
| Blois | Boulerice |
| Bratina | Brière |
| Cannings | Casey |
| Chagger | Champagne |
| Chen | Collins |
| Cormier | Dabrusin |
| Damoff | Dhaliwal |
| Dhillon | Dong |
| Drouin | Dubourg |
| Duclos | Duguid |
| Duncan (Etobicoke North) | Duvall |
| Dzerowicz | Easter |
| Ehsassi | El-Khoury |
| Ellis | Erskine-Smith |
| Fergus | Fillmore |
| Finnigan | Fisher |
| Fonseca | Fortier |
| Fragiskatos | Fraser |
| Freeland | Fry |
| Garneau | Garrison |

Government Orders

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Gazan | Gerretsen | Charbonneau | Chiu |
| Gould | Green | Chong | Cooper |
| Guilbeault | Hajdu | Cumming | Dalton |
| Hardie | Harris | Dancho | Davidson |
| Holland | Housefather | DeBellefeuille | Deltell |
| Hughes | Hussen | d'Entremont | Desbiens |
| Hutchings | Iacono | Desilets | Diotte |
| Jaczek | Johns | Doherty | Dowdall |
| Joly | Jones | Dreeschen | Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) |
| Jordan | Jowhari | Epp | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) |
| Julian | Kelloway | Falk (Provencher) | Fast |
| Khalid | Khera | Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock) | Finlay (Haldimand—Norfolk) |
| Koutrakis | Kusmierczyk | Fortin | Gallant |
| Kwan | Lalonde | Gaudreau | Généreux |
| Lambropoulos | Lametti | Genuis | Gill |
| Lamoureux | Lattanzio | Glada | Godin |
| Lauzon | Lebouthillier | Gray | Hallan |
| Lefebvre | Lightbound | Harder | Hoback |
| Long | Longfield | Jansen | Jeneroux |
| Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) | MacGregor | Kelly | Kent |
| MacKinnon (Gatineau) | Maloney | Kitchen | Kram |
| Manly | Martinez Ferrada | Kurek | Kusie |
| Masse | Mathysen | Lake | Larouche |
| May (Cambridge) | May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) | Lawrence | Lehoux |
| McCrimmon | McDonald | Lemire | Lewis (Essex) |
| McGuinty | McKay | Liepert | Lloyd |
| McKenna | McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) | Lobb | Lukiwski |
| McLeod (Northwest Territories) | McPherson | MacKenzie | Maguire |
| Mendès | Mendicino | Martel | Mazier |
| Miller | Monsef | McCauley (Edmonton West) | McColeman |
| Morrissey | Murray | McLean | McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo) |
| Ng | O'Connell | Melillo | Michaud |
| Oliphant | O'Regan | Moore | Morantz |
| Petitpas Taylor | Powlowski | Morrison | Motz |
| Qaqqaq | Qualtrough | Nater | Normandin |
| Ratansi | Regan | O'Toole | Patzer |
| Robillard | Rodriguez | Paul-Hus | Pauzé |
| Rogers | Romanado | Perron | Plamondon |
| Sahota (Brampton North) | Saini | Poilievre | Rayes |
| Sajjan | Samson | Redekopp | Reid |
| Sangha | Sarai | Rempel Garner | Richards |
| Scarpaleggia | Schiefke | Rood | Ruff |
| Schulte | Serré | Sahota (Calgary Skyview) | Saroya |
| Sgro | Shanahan | Savard-Tremblay | Schmale |
| Sheehan | Sidhu (Brampton East) | Seeback | Shields |
| Sidhu (Brampton South) | Simms | Shin | Shipley |
| Singh | Sorbara | Simard | Sloan |
| Spengemann | Tabbara | Soroka | Stanton |
| Tassi | Turnbull | Steinley | Ste-Marie |
| Van Bynen | van Koeverden | Strahl | Stubbs |
| Vandal | Vandenbeld | Sweet | Thériault |
| Vaughan | Virani | Therrien | Tochor |
| Weiler | Wilkinson | Trudel | Uppal |
| Wilson-Raybould | Yip | Van Popta | Vecchio |
| Young | Zahid | Vidal | Viersen |
| Zann | Zuberi — 176 | Vignola | Vis |
| | | Wagantall | Warkentin |
| | | Waugh | Webber |
| | | Wong | Yurdiga |
| | | Zimmer — 145 | |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Aboultaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Alleslev |
| Allison | Arnold |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Barsalou-Duval | Beaulieu |
| Benzen | Bergen |
| Bergeron | Berthold |
| Bérubé | Bezan |
| Blanchette-Joncas | Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis) |
| Block | Bragdon |
| Brassard | Brunelle-Duceppe |
| Calkins | Carrie |
| Chabot | Champoux |

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.**PAIRED**

Government Orders

• (2135)

[*Translation*]

COVID-19 RESPONSE MEASURES ACT

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.) moved that Bill C-4, An Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19, be now read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Two members of each recognized party and a member of the Green Party may each speak to the motion for not more than 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments. Members are permitted to split their time with another member.

The hon. Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to participate in the debate on Bill C-4, An Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered this evening on unceded Algonquin territory.

[*English*]

Bill C-4 has three parts. Part 1 creates three benefits to support Canada's economic recovery in response to COVID-19 and makes consequential amendments to the Income Tax Act and regulations, part 2 amends the Canada Labour Code to extend worker protections corresponding to these benefits, and part 3 amends the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act to provide ongoing financial support to Canadians.

I will focus my comments on part 1 of Bill C-4.

During my term as employment minister, I have seen the unemployment rate go from the lowest in recorded history in January of 2020 to the highest. That, of course, means I have been presented with a big challenge in this role of serving Canadians. As employment minister, I am required to ensure that workers are supported in times of job loss and job transition. I also work to ensure that workers are well prepared for the job opportunities of the future.

[*Translation*]

I know the pandemic has had a devastating impact on individuals and families and that every lost job jeopardizes a household's financial security. That is why our priority has been supporting workers and their families ever since the pandemic started.

[*English*]

We created the Canada emergency response benefit, or CERB, during the time in the pandemic when we were telling people to stay home in order to flatten the curve and keep Canadians safe. We knew we are asking a lot from working Canadians, and that is why we worked tirelessly to get the CERB out of the gate in record time.

I want to take a moment to thank the incredible public servants in my department of ESDC and the Canada Revenue Agency, who

worked day and night to ensure our systems could deliver the CERB effectively and efficiently for Canadians and their families.

We swiftly followed the CERB with the Canada emergency student benefit, or CESB, for students facing uncertain or non-existent job prospects over the summer.

It was clear from the beginning that the pandemic was disproportionately impacting some Canadians, including women, seniors and persons with disabilities. That is why we also provided extra support for families with children, a one-time \$300 payment per child, in May and an increase to the maximum yearly Canada child benefit to keep up with the cost of living. This is in addition to the one-time payment for seniors and, coming this fall, the one-time payment for persons with disabilities. We stepped up and took action.

We also created thousands of jobs and training opportunities for youth and ensured that the not-for-profit sector received support so organizations could continue to help their communities.

To provide certainty and continuity, we recently extended the CERB by an additional four weeks, from 24 to 28 weeks. For Canadian families that rely on the CERB, our government supported them as they figured out what was happening with school and day care for their kids. In addition to this extension, we made changes to the EI program so more people could access EI benefits.

Since March 15, almost nine million people have received the CERB, helping millions of Canadians and their families avoid catastrophic household income loss, while at the same time helping to keep our economy afloat. While many Canadians have returned to the labour market, either through the Canada emergency wage subsidy or as a result of regions and sectors safely reopening throughout the summer months, we know that we need to continue to be vigilant and nimble in our efforts to support people as we continue to work together to stop the spread of the virus.

[*Translation*]

We are still in a crisis situation. We estimate that millions of Canadians still need some level of income support. People are still living in uncertain times, and our government will continue to be there for them. The new benefits in this bill are an important investment in workers and families.

[*English*]

This legislation reflects our vision laid out in the Speech from the Throne last week. We have a plan for a stronger and more resilient Canada. It is a plan that puts the health of Canadians at the core of government decision-making. It is a plan for equality of opportunity. It is clear and simple and leaves no one behind.

This legislation makes good on this promise. If you have lost your job, we have your back. If you cannot work because you are sick with COVID-19, we have your back. If you have to stay home to take care of a loved one for reasons related to COVID-19, we have your back.

We are here tonight to debate legislation that would create a suite of three new benefits: the Canada recovery benefit, the Canada recovery sickness benefit and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit.

Before diving into these new benefits, I would like to say a few words about the employment insurance program and the recent measures put in place to help Canadians.

There is no denying that this pandemic has highlighted the tremendous need for a modernized EI program in Canada. I have spoken about this before. It is vital that we create an employment insurance system that reflects how Canadians work and that is flexible in its ability to respond to major changes in the Canadian labour market.

• (2140)

[*Translation*]

Despite the imminent need to reform EI, this program is the best tool we have right now, and it surpasses any new system that could possibly be brought in quickly during a pandemic. That is why in August our government announced temporary changes to the EI program that would allow more Canadians to access it this fall once the CERB ended. These changes, which have already been made through regulations, will help millions of Canadians meet the eligibility criteria in three ways.

[*English*]

First, with these changes, people can qualify for EI with as few as 120 hours of work. To do this, we are providing all EI claimants with a one-time credit of insurable hours; that is 300 hours for regular benefit claimants and 480 hours for special benefit claimants. This credit will boost people's insurable hours and help them qualify for EI benefits. Furthermore, the hours credit is available for one year and is retroactive to March 15.

This is of the utmost importance for women who, as we all know, have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The credit of 480 insurable hours means that any woman who has had a baby since March 15 can retroactively apply for EI maternity benefits if she did not previously have enough hours to qualify prior to these new measures. This is really important. This also includes expectant mothers who received the CERB over the course of the last 28 weeks. They will now be able to transition seamlessly into EI to access their maternity and parental leave benefits.

The second way we are helping people to meet EI eligibility requirements is by setting a national unemployment rate of 13.1% across all regions of the country. This is providing a uniform requirement of 420 hours for people to qualify for EI. This adjustment will help boost the number of weeks people can receive benefits, thus providing the support Canadians need and expect.

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I also want to assure Canadians in EI regions with a higher rate than 13.1% that their benefit entitlement will be based on the higher of either 13.1% or their regional rate.

The third measure we are undertaking with the EI system is to freeze the EI premium rate for two years, which will help both employees and employers.

Our changes are allowing more Canadians to access employment insurance and its associated tools and resources, like working while on claim, training, work sharing and supplemental unemployment benefit plans. All these things connect people to the workforce and provide incentives to work.

[*Translation*]

That said, many workers are still not eligible for employment insurance, even after these changes. Examples include self-employed workers, workers in the entertainment industry and workers with dependants who are forced to stay home because of school or day care closures.

[*English*]

That is why our government is proposing to introduce a suite of three new benefits via the legislation we have before us now. As I mentioned earlier, they are the Canada recovery benefit, the Canada recovery sickness benefit and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit.

The Canada recovery benefit will support workers who have stopped working or who had their income reduced by at least 50% due to COVID-19 and who are not eligible for EI. It will provide Canadians with \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks between September 27, 2020 and September 25, 2021.

As with EI, workers must be actively looking for work. They must place no undue restrictions on their availability to work and must not decline a reasonable job offer. Just like the EI system, this new benefit will allow people to earn income from employment and/or self-employment while still receiving the benefit. We have designed a process modelled after EI's working while on claim.

Individuals who have a net income greater than \$38,000 in 2020 or 2021 will be required to repay the benefit at a rate of 50¢ for every dollar earned above the threshold up to the full amount of the Canada recovery benefit received.

Our objective is to ensure that it is always in a person's interest to work when it is reasonable for him or her to do so. The Canada recovery benefit aims to accomplish just that. It balances the need for income support, while incentivizing work, and ensures that we continue to target Canadians who need the support the most.

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• (2145)

[*Translation*]

The new recovery benefits will be subject to rigorous checks from the outset to ensure that they are paid only to those who are eligible. Unlike the CERB, the benefits will be retroactive and will be taxed at the source.

[*English*]

The second benefit is the Canada recovery sickness benefit. It will provide \$500 per week for up to two weeks if workers are ill, are susceptible to becoming ill or must self-isolate for reasons related to COVID-19.

We want Canadians to stay calm if they are sick or maybe sick. We also want Canadians to not have to choose between making this choice and paying their bills. We want the choice to be immediate at symptom onset or advice and for Canadians to err on the side of caution. We do not want Canadians to wait for a confirmed diagnosis or a doctor's note. As much as this benefit is about the individual health of workers, it is vital to Canada's successful economic recovery. We have to ensure that workers do not go to work if they have COVID-19, or are at a high risk of contracting COVID-19 or are showing symptoms of the virus. It is in all our best interests that workplaces are safe and healthy.

Finally, while schools, day cares and day program facilities are working to safely reopen according to public health guidelines, we know that closures can and will happen. This is where the third benefit, the Canada recovery caregiving benefit, comes in. It will provide \$500 per week per household for up to 26 weeks for workers who cannot work for more than 50% of the time because they have to care for a loved one due to a school, day care or day program closure.

[*Translation*]

The benefit will also be available to workers forced to stay home because a person in their care is deemed by a health care professional to be at high risk or has lost access to their usual caregiver because of COVID-19.

[*English*]

Finally, the benefit would support workers who have care responsibilities for a child or family member who is sick, in quarantine or at high risk of serious health complications due to COVID-19.

In order to ensure that federally regulated employees have access to job protected leave, the proposed amendments to the Canada Labour Code in part 2 of the legislation ensure access for these employees to the Canada recovery sickness and the Canada recovery caregiver benefits.

[*Translation*]

Taken together, these measures will help Canadians to safely bridge the gap between the major lockdown we had last spring and a cautious reopening of the economy this fall and winter.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the government's determination to build a stronger workforce and create jobs.

[*English*]

As is laid out in the throne speech, we have a unique opportunity to unlock the full potential of every Canadian. We cannot afford to leave anyone behind. Our plan is about fortifying the jobs we have, filling the jobs that are available and developing strategies to create new jobs with appropriately skilled workers.

At the core of these commitments will be the largest investment in Canadian history in training for workers. As a first step, the bill outlines an investment of \$1.5 billion to the provinces and territories to support on-the-ground training services for Canadians. This initial investment will be done through the existing workforce development agreements and labour market development agreements.

We are digging in to ensure we continue to support Canadians, because we are still in a crisis. If we want to get to the point where we build back better, we first need to ensure that the foundation to do so is solid. I encourage my hon. colleagues to support this legislation to help provide that much needed solid foundation for Canadians.

• (2150)

[*Translation*]

I want to conclude by thanking all our front-line workers who are fearlessly looking after our health and safety in these unprecedented times. I also want to thank all the parents, teachers, teaching assistants, child care workers and support staff who make it possible for our students to return to school this fall.

[*English*]

As a mother of four with two still in elementary school, I know they are going above and beyond every day to keep our kids safe. We all need to stay vigilant and keep up the efforts we have been doing to stop the spread of COVID-19. I know it is not easy, but we are in this together.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me first acknowledge that the minister is the only member of the Liberal front bench with the spine to have acknowledged that the government dropped the ball on the WE scandal. I appreciate her direct answers to direct questions through the COVID crisis.

Earlier today, the minister conceded she has not had the time to consult with provincial governments because of the last-minute desperate inclusion of the NDP forced two-week paid sick leave benefit into the Canada recovery benefit. I am wondering now, given that small businesses are concerned this may in fact work against their ability to get workers back to safe workplaces, if she will consult with those governments and respect their concerns with regard to this groundbreaking change to the Canada Labour Code.

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Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, in fact, earlier I stated that I had spoken with my provincial and territorial employment counterparts about this legislation, including the sickness benefits. As well, it has been part of the discussions between the first ministers and the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister with respect to the safe restart agreement. The two-week sick leave was laid out very clearly in that agreement. We are making good on that promise.

Sick leave has been a part of our fundamental COVID-19 response since the very beginning. It was eligibility criteria for the CERB. It is something I signalled a month ago was going to be part of this legislation, and we remain committed to absolutely providing two weeks of sick leave for workers.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her speech.

She has a very important portfolio when it comes to employment. She talked a lot about adjustments to employment insurance. As long as we are reviewing the program, why not do it properly?

I have an example. Shortly before the lockdown, the Bloc Québécois moved a motion adopted by a majority of members of Parliament that sought to extend employment insurance sickness benefits to 50 weeks. Why not take advantage of this opportunity to include that provision in the bill instead of turning a deaf ear?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, the changes being made to the CERB are outside the EI program.

[*English*]

That was out of necessity to be able to give Canadians this benefit quickly. The EI measures we have announced are temporary measures in place for a year. Our government is committed to increasing EI sickness leave from 15 weeks to 26 weeks, and of course we are happy to continue to have the conversation with other parties in this House about even further increasing that.

• (2155)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to recognize the minister's approach and salute her work in being willing to collaborate with other partners. She and I have done a lot of work over the last number of months since the pandemic began, but of course, that does not mean we have always agreed on everything.

The minister will know it is the NDP's position that Canadians should be entitled to 10 paid sick days on a permanent basis and that we believe the federal government could provide leadership by legislating that first in federal jurisdiction. That is not represented in the legislation we are debating tonight because the government gave a hard no on legislating those permanent sick days.

I wonder if the minister could provide the justification for that to Canadians. I asked some other Liberal members here today and never received an answer to the question. I am hoping she can put on the record for Canadians why it is that the Liberal government opposes 10 permanent paid sick days for Canadians.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, I have enjoyed working with my colleague on a number of these important measures to make them even better for Canadians.

This legislation is about temporary measures to help Canadians get through a pandemic crisis. It is not about discarding an important conversation of what should be permanent in the future. It is about putting in place two weeks of paid sick leave for workers who have COVID-19-related sickness or isolation. It does not preclude any conversation in the future about making anything we are talking about on EI or these measures permanent.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier I heard the minister say that the Canada recovery benefit does not disincentivize work, but rather incentivizes it. Some small business owners have concerns about the Canada emergency response benefit. As we transition into the new recovery benefits, can the minister explain the flexibilities of the new benefits in relation to CERB and how the recovery benefits would further incentivize people to work?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, we have done our very best to model all the disincentives to work that are in the EI system. In this legislation, workers have to be available to work. They have to be actively seeking work. They have to take job offers when it is reasonable to do so. Workers, unlike with the CERB, they had to be resident; they have to be resident and present in Canada. They have to not have quit their job. They have to be seeking work. They have to not place any undue restrictions on their availability to work. They have to not have failed to return to work if it was reasonable to do so. They cannot have refused a reasonable job offer.

That is a significant improvement in terms of focusing Canadians on getting back to work.

The Speaker: If we can stop the clock for a moment, before I continue I just want to remind the hon. members, whether they are in the room, at home or in their office, if they are speaking in the House, the rules apply. A tie is required to ask a question. I just want to remind everybody. For everyone who is at home, they are probably near their closet; they can pick one up and come back.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can already hear the questions coming in on one topic here, and that is in the repayment section. Simply put, I am wondering what was used to determine the \$5,000 floor and the \$38,000 ceiling for when people would have to start repaying money that they received from CERB.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, I am tired but I want to get my math right. The \$38,000 was established by using the \$24,000 average annual income of a self-employed individual plus adding the maximum amount a person can get on CERB, which is \$14,000, to get to a total of \$38,000.

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Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the minister's being here. When it came to the SUB plans for EI, the minister denied those SUB plans. When it came to helping people who were looking for work-share, her department and her office did not deliver on that. When it came to dealing with the disincentives on the CERB with having an EI working while on claim, Conservatives brought forward the back-to-work bonus and the Liberals ignored it for months. When it came to parents who were looking for their benefits, particularly single moms for their EI benefits for maternity leave, the minister made promises months ago and did not deliver.

The minister says a lot in this place. She says a lot at committee. She does not always deliver, and when she does, it is quite late into the process.

She has talked today about supporting Canadians with the benefits. She did not mention that the \$500 a week for the CRB actually will be less than that because the government is going to be taking at source. Will she come clean with Canadians in letting them know that there is going to be less money coming to them through this benefit program, or is this going to be more marketing that is not true when Canadians go to pay their bills?

● (2200)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, there was a lot in that question, so let me unpack it a bit.

First, I just made clear in my speech that in fact the \$500 a week would be taxed and deducted at source. We made that decision to help Canadians as they enter the next tax payment season.

Quite frankly, the reason we have designed this new benefit system is to address a lot of the concerns the member has brought forward and we have talked about over and over again. The CRB and the sickness and caregiving benefits are modelled after the EI system.

There is a "working while on claim"-like process. People on EI will be able to access their SUB plans. We have created giving people a credit of insurable hours retroactive to March 15 for parents, for maternity, for women.

We needed to ensure the EI system could be ready to ingest the three million people we expect it to be ingesting over this week. We were not prepared to have failure as an option. It took as long as it took, and I am very proud of how hard people worked to get it ready.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time tonight with the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

In 2019, my pitch to voters in northern Saskatchewan was that I would take my experience as an accountant, a multi-term mayor and a Crown corporation chair to Ottawa and represent the people of northern Saskatchewan to the best of my ability. In my relatively short time of service I have said to many of those around me that if I had run my business like the current government governs, I would have been bankrupt a long time ago. If I had shown the same contempt for my elected council as the Liberal government has for the

elected members of this House, I would have had a mutiny and would definitely not have survived multiple terms as mayor.

Over the past several months the Liberals have shown a pattern of leaving things until the midnight hour and then essentially holding Parliament hostage to get their legislation passed. We have seen four examples of this: one in March, two in April and one in July. When I wrote this, little did I know how true the midnight hour comment would be as we see this literally playing out tonight.

Here we are on September 29 and the government is looking for approval for over \$50 billion in spending with very limited time to either scrutinize it or for us to offer suggestions for ways to improve it. Each time this happened the line always was, "We must do this quickly or else." Each time it meant there was no time for scrutiny and we should just trust the Liberals as they know what is best for Canadians and they do not need feedback from Canada's elected representatives in this House because they have got this.

Announcing these proposed measures the day after shutting down Parliament and then waiting until after the CERB ended to introduce the legislation seems a little suspicious to me. We definitely do not need any committee work on this; after all, committees are a bit of a thorn in the side of the Prime Minister, are they not? I do not know if members see a pattern here, but I do.

There is a second pattern here that is not just about this but about timing as well. There is a pattern where a lack of oversight and transparency is desired by the government, and it goes back further than the pandemic. In my very first experience as an MP, I was asked to participate in a committee of the whole proceeding on December 9, 2019, when we were asked to scrutinize over \$4.9 million in a mere four hours. My first reaction was, "Seriously?" In my role as the mayor of my little city, we spent many hours and even days scrutinizing spending and I can assure members we were not dealing with numbers of this magnitude.

Let me fast forward a bit. I will never forget at the beginning of the pandemic when the government attempted to give itself unfettered powers to December 31, 2021, by slipping these powers into the very first emergency legislation. Members can call me naive if they would like, but I could not believe that any elected official would have the nerve to try and pull off something like this. I asked myself over and over in the days following who was crass enough to think that this was somehow a good idea and that it would fly.

The Liberals clearly have an issue with any kind of openness and transparency. As the old saying goes, actions speak louder than words. May I be so bold as to suggest that a bit more scrutiny may have actually prevented some of the scandals we are seeing. May I be so bold as to suggest that a little more consultation up front and a better parliamentary process might have led to, for example, indigenous businesses being included in the original business supports, like CEWS and CEBA, instead of being added only as an afterthought when they were left out of the original legislation. This is the relationship the Prime Minister likes to repeatedly say is the most important one to his government. If that is in fact so, why did it take weeks of pressure and lobbying to have indigenous-owned limited partnerships included in CEWS? Why did it take months for indigenous businesses to have access to a version of CEBA when a little consultation would have clearly identified that the original version would not work for them as they do not utilize traditional banks.

The same point could be made about many small businesses and farmers as well. A little consultation would have easily determined that there was going to be a significant problem preventing many of them from accessing CEBA. This literally took months to resolve, leaving many fearing for their ability to survive.

Yesterday, my colleague, the member for Thornhill, shared some very wise words in his speech. I think they are worth repeating, so I will quote one paragraph. He said:

The COVID crisis is not just a health crisis. COVID has taken a terrible toll on our Canadian economy, as it has on economies around the world. Canada today has the highest unemployment rate in the G7, despite having almost the highest spending in the G7. With the amendment to Bill...[C-4], now before us today, Canada's deficit and debt would soar to historic record new levels.

• (2205)

Yesterday, I asked the people of my riding a question on social media. I asked what I should say to the government when I had an opportunity to speak today. Their number one answer was, "What is the plan for all the spending?" They then added that when someone takes out a loan, the lender wants to know how it will be paid back, along with other criteria. It is an interesting concept, that of a plan. What a novel concept. The answer I am giving my constituents is that I do not believe there is a plan. There is no plan to ever balance the budget, let alone repay any of the debt incurred.

Former Saskatchewan NDP finance minister Janice MacKinnon co-chairs the C.D. Howe Institute's Fiscal and Tax Working Group with former Liberal finance minister John Manley. In a recent report, they urged the federal government to set limits on spending and ensure that when spending is approved, it is truly necessary and contributes to Canada's longer-term productivity. That sounds like a plan.

In a recent Globe and Mail article, economics reporter David Parkinson shared some very interesting thoughts with us. He talked about the misery that was the second quarter of 2020. He talked about the lost quarter. He then referenced an 11.5% plunge in gross domestic product, which is the worst quarter-to-quarter decline ever.

Millions of Canadians are out of work, more than double the pre-pandemic unemployment rate. However, in the midst of all this,

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Canadians' incomes actually grew. Details contained in the last quarterly gross domestic product report revealed that household disposable income in Canada surged by 11% in the second quarter. That obviously led to the question of where this surprising income explosion came from. It certainly was not wages, because they tumbled by almost 9%. The answer is that federal government crisis income supports more than filled that income hole.

The employment compensation in our country was reduced by \$21 billion, but disposable income went up by \$54 billion in government transfers. That is astounding. This tells us that the government response has gone way beyond the goal of simply replacing lost income.

Let me be really clear: Some will take my comments to mean that I do not believe that some of the extraordinary emergency funding was needed, and continues to be needed to support Canadians in their time of need. Nothing could be further from the truth. Any compassionate and just society has a moral obligation to help people in a time of need.

However, I am a little bit dismayed by the lack of transparency and accountability displayed by the government. I am dismayed by the unacceptable snub of Parliament, and by the time lost during the unnecessary shutdown for all to consider debate and more reasonably determine some outcomes. I am dismayed by the constant rush to ram legislation through the House when in fact the rush is simply one of partisan, self-serving survival.

Finally, I am dismayed by the lack of a plan. What is the plan for our future that I can take back and share with the residents of Northern Saskatchewan?

• (2210)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a plan. That is one of the reasons why the session was prorogued. A document called the throne speech was released on September 23. There are 32 pages on the English side that detail a plan, not only for days, but weeks, months and possibly years into the future.

More and more we get Conservatives standing up expressing their reservations in terms of the government spending too much. The question must be asked of many of those Conservatives because that is the contrast between the Liberals and the Conservative Party. We believe we need to support Canadians in a time of need, whether they are seniors—

Some hon. member: With whose money?

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, to the member across the way asking with whose money, we are talking about tax dollars and a deficit. I can tell members that today we need to invest and support Canadians, their health and their well-being. Our economy dictates that the government gets engaged.

Does the member agree that if the Government of Canada did not engage to the degree it has and work with the different provinces and other stakeholders, the impact on our country would be far more devastating?

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the speech with the short question at the end.

First, let me make very clear, as I said in my comments, that any compassionate society and its leaders have a moral obligation and responsibility to care for those in need. However, from the stories I am hearing, the people in my riding are very concerned about the level of support that has been offered. When we talk \$33 billion in one quarter, in excess of the lost wages, we have gone way beyond the goal of replacing income.

I have four kids, three of whom have spouses and one who has a significant other, and I have my first grandchild. That makes 11 of us. This current year of government spending, not including some of the new stuff that will happen over the coming months, means that my family of 11 people has taken on \$110,000 of new debt. That terrifies me for my grandchildren.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River for his speech. I particularly appreciated the part about parliamentarians' role in a debate.

We can agree with the principle of Bill C-4, but everyone knows that the devil is in the details. This bill has a potential lifespan of one year and will have significant consequences for workers, businesses and the economic recovery.

Using a gag order that the NDP has been kind enough to support, the government is forcing us to pass a bill very quickly because it wants to protect itself from difficult questions about WE Charity. However, this bill would have benefited from support from the people it is intended to help. Workers and businesses could have testified in committee on ways to improve it, since we do not know everything.

Does my colleague agree that this gag order is an affront not only to parliamentarians, but also to the people we represent?

• (2215)

[*English*]

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question, and I apologize but I will answer in English as I do not speak French yet. I am working on it.

I would agree 100 per cent with my colleague's comments. This is a massive change to the Labour Code. In many ways we are concerned about a conflict with provincial jurisdictions, employers, boards of trade and chambers of commerce. None of these people was engaged. None of these was consulted. This was put before us

to pass in a very short time frame, under a bunch of pressure at the 11th hour.

I would 100 per cent agree that there are some really deep concerns when we talk about the WE scandal. One of the comments I have consistently made is I am afraid that all we are seeing is the tip of the iceberg. When we spend hundreds of billions of dollars in a short time frame, how many other WE scandals are under the surface?

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in this debate as well as to make some comments about the general economic circumstances that frame our discussion of the bill. It is fair to acknowledge that the government's response to this pandemic has been a bit chaotic. We have seen constantly shifting programmatic responses as well as advice from the government. There has been a general lack of consistency on many fronts, but at least there has always been firm certitude that the approach of the day is the right approach, until it changes.

It has been well established that if we had had border measures in place, if we had the right advice on masking earlier on, if we had quickly adopted rapid testing tools that had actually been in place for a long time in other countries, if we had learned from Czech Republic, South Korea or Taiwan and other places, and if we had tracing technology ready to go, then there would not have been that economic shutdown. There would not have been a need for an economic shutdown if a public health plan had been in place. This was all evidently quite avoidable if we see what other countries were able to do to respond more rapidly and avoid the same kind of economic disruption.

The economic devastation that we have experienced is the result of the failure of our health minister to respond early to this public health crisis. We still do not have the rapid testing that we need to ensure early warning and rapid response. We saw how, in the early days, the Minister of Health was saying the risk was low, closing the borders would be counterproductive and so forth. That is why we are here: because of the failure of the government to plan and respond effectively in the early days when it would have made the biggest difference.

Now we are teetering on a second wave. We are into a second wave in some parts of the country while we are desperately trying to avoid a second wave in others, and we still do not really have the public health tools in place. In my province, in Quebec and other provinces, we are not allowed to enter a diagnosis in the government's much celebrated, according to the Liberals, tracing app.

Because of a failure to plan for and respond to the public health challenges we face, we face an economic shutdown. Therefore Canadians legitimately expected financial support to be available to them during a time when they were not able to leave their homes to go to work. That is why some new benefit programs were legitimately created.

Having to stay at home, not working, and therefore receiving benefits was clearly not the first choice of Canadians. Canadians are not at all excited about seeing the government using freshly printed money to pay them to sit at home. The Canadians I know believe the supports should be available if they are not able to work, but people would much prefer to go back to work and in general would prefer for things to get back to normal as soon as possible.

Regardless of the nature of the programs that are in place, people cannot have anything near an acceptable standard of living unless most of the population is engaged in productive work. The health of our economy is dependent on the extent to which we are producing useful things. No economy was ever built by printing and distributing paper money. That much should be fairly obvious.

Fiscal control is not an end in and of itself, but it is a necessary means to the material and social flourishing of society. If we run massive deficits endlessly by constantly printing new paper money, the money gradually becomes less valuable. Money is not intrinsically valuable. It is simply a proxy measure of the value of goods and services that are produced in the economy. If we reduce the level of production, we cannot simply make up for it by printing more money.

The leader of the NDP is so proud of the extra \$400 a month that he negotiated as part of the benefit package, but strikingly he seems unconcerned with how out of control spending risks reducing the effective value of that money over time.

Our economy can survive some level of deficit spending as well as supports that are timely, targeted and temporary. Even in those cases, the money has to be paid back. A timely, measured, targeted and temporary response is one thing, but the government's deficit is approaching \$400 billion, which is larger than the entire federal budget was when the Liberals took office. The deficit is well over half the size of the entire debt run up in the preceding 150 years of Canadian history. We went through two world wars, the Great Depression, financial crises and even the tenure of the last Prime Minister Trudeau and the first four years of this government, and we are running up more than half as much debt in a single year as we did in the entire preceding period.

● (2220)

In the lexicon of this brave new world, anyone who thinks we should spend even a dime less is accused of peddling austerity, but for these Liberals, austerity is a word that has entirely lost its meaning.

There are many people who understand what austerity truly is. There are people around the world who are starving as a direct result of the humanitarian crisis caused by COVID-19. There are people around the world who have lived through the experience of a national debt crisis in which their money became worthless and their government could not bail them out. There are people in this country who are struggling to pay their heating bill because of the government's carbon tax. There are people who worry that jobs in their sector will never come back, whether that is in oil and gas, manufacturing or other primary and secondary industries that are no longer in vogue across the way. These people understand and are

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starting to worry about what true austerity would look like in their lives.

Yet, the government pressed ahead with pay raises for elected officials, because to do otherwise would be austerity. It will not rein in profligate spending at the CBC or pull back on corporate welfare handouts to wealthy, connected corporations, because to do so would be austerity. Any review, any efficiency, any constraint whatsoever is considered austerity. Any time people have to pay more to the government, no problem. Any time we suggest that government members should spend less on themselves or their friends, that is called austerity. This is a farce. This is a redefinition of words to mean the opposite of what they actually mean.

I submit that the Liberals generally have no concept of real austerity, because the Prime Minister has not known anything but exorbitant, inherited wealth, and he has tried to transfer as much of the benefits of government to his friends, having three times been caught breaking key ethical rules. What the Prime Minister needs to understand is that austerity for people is when one has to choose between buying food and paying one's heating bill, not when one has to choose between a WE vacation, a French villa and a private island.

If we do not get a handle on public spending soon, we will face real austerity. These deficit levels are completely unsustainable. As it is, they will lead to higher taxes, lower social spending or both in the future, regardless of who is in power, if the situation continues to get worse. We need to sound the alarm on this out-of-control spending, because if we continue at this rate for much longer, we will not be able to afford these types of benefits whether we like it or not. Spending money we do not have, debasing our currency and rendering the government incapable of supporting people in the long run is neither prudent nor compassionate.

Needless to say, the Conservatives are unimpressed by the circumstances that bring us to this debate. The government shut down Parliament for six weeks and is now trying to limit debate on this bill to a mere day. What we see across the board is that the federal government is creating problems and then claiming to be uniquely qualified to offer solutions.

By proroguing Parliament, the Liberals created a problem, the problem being that benefits were going to run out if legislation was not passed at an unprecedented pace. Their programming motion is presented as a solution to a problem that they themselves created. However, it is bigger than that. The need for these benefits is a problem that was created by the government through a failure to have a plan in place to manage the pandemic, a failure to close the border in time, a failure to implement rapid testing and a failure to learn the lessons of other countries.

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When we challenge government members on their spending, they come back to us and ask, “How would you solve the problem? What would you cut? What would you spend less on?” The Conservative answer to this is quite simple: We would not have created the problem in the first place. Even at this late stage, we would ensure rapid approval of rapid testing technology, build benefit programs that provide the greatest possible incentive for people to return to work and quickly approve new development and resource projects, providing a public-dollar-free, private sector stimulus to help workers in our natural resource sectors get back to work. Natural resource workers are not looking for a “just transition” out of their jobs into unemployment. What they want is their jobs back.

Benefit programs can be very generous for people who are out of work as long as we are taking all the necessary steps to ensure that there are as few people out of work as possible. That is why Conservatives have led in putting forward constructive alternatives, in advancing the idea of a back-to-work bonus, in pushing the government to have a private sector stimulus of our natural resource economy and encouraging it to take up the public health measures that will allow people to work in safety.

I am pleased to report that hope is on the horizon. The member for Durham will soon be ready to emerge from isolation. He understands that there is an alternative to the profligate spending that we are seeing from the government and that this alternative does not mean cutting off people in need. We can reduce government spending by reducing people's need for government; by supporting economic growth, a stronger public health response and measures that allow people to return to work in all sectors, including our natural resource sectors; and by creating the wealth that allows all of us to prosper together.

• (2225)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member says that the newly crowned leader of the Conservative Party is going to come back and inspire us on how we can grow the economy. Let me remind the member that his new leader was a minister in the Harper regime. In nine years they generated about a million jobs, and it took us just over four years to generate well over a million jobs.

The Liberal Party and the government understand the importance of the economy. That is one of the reasons we brought in programs like the wage subsidy. It was to protect jobs and make sure that we were in a better position.

Would the member not agree that programs like the wage subsidy are one of the reasons we will be able to continue to grow our economy? These are the types of programs we have been spending money on, whether it is the wage subsidy, the CERB or others. There is probably a list of 24 or more good, healthy programs supporting Canadians.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the member across the way spoke about the record of the Harper government. The Harper government led Canada through the great global recession. Canada had the best job growth, the best GDP growth and the lowest deficit in the G7. We ran surpluses in the years preceding the global down-

turn, whereas the government ran massive deficits in the years preceding the current situation. Now we have not only the largest deficit in Canadian history, but a deficit that exceeds half of the debt that was accumulated in the time up to that period.

We will take no lessons from the members across the way whatsoever. Canada had the best job growth during the global recession. Now we are struggling for jobs and struggling to provide opportunities, and the government thinks that more borrowing is the way out of it. It is not. We need a strategy to grow our economy that gets people back to work.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his impassioned speech.

He is very knowledgeable about international relations, and I agree with him that the government should have shut down the borders when all of this started. The Bloc Québécois had called for the borders to be closed from the beginning of the crisis, but the Liberal government took weeks to do so. Unfortunately, it was too late.

The borders are closed now, and that is a good thing, but it has created other problems. The closure has sadly created obstacles for family reunification, and I know that some of the member's colleagues are passionate advocates for this issue.

Does he agree that, if it wanted to, the Liberal government could allow hundreds or thousands of people to see their loved ones safely?

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, that is a great point by my colleague from the Bloc. The Conservatives have been raising this in question period. There is an inconsistency it seems: Some Canadians in very difficult situations, people who may have serious health challenges and want to have their partners and family members with them, have not been given approval to do so, yet other people seem to have been able to get exceptions in very different circumstances.

I think the member is right to suggest that there have been inconsistencies and problems in the government's response. That is why we have been continually calling on the government to do better.

• (2230)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, listening to the member always gives us a great opportunity to hear a crisp articulation of the Conservative world view.

There is certainly room for criticism of the government's response to the pandemic, but I think it is a fiction to pretend that somehow a Conservative government could have stopped the virus from coming into Canada. When we look around the world, this is indeed a global pandemic. There have been severe economic consequences right across the global.

What I would like to hear, which I have not heard today, is the real answer from the Conservatives on what plan they have for income support for Canadians. Given the situation we find ourselves in now, no matter how we got here, what is their plan, going forward, to support Canadians who would like to work but cannot go back to work because the jobs do not exist and who still need to put a roof over their heads?

The member gave a great lecture on the consequences of public debt. Perhaps he would like to opine on the consequences of millions of individual bankruptcies in Canada and the economic effect that would have.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I think the point is that we do not have to choose. We can have programs that support people when they are unemployed. However, the ability to deliver good, strong supports for people who are unemployed is contingent on the fact that we have enough people who are employed, are able to work and can pay into those programs, and are therefore able to grow our economy.

There has to be something to redistribute money, in other words. My colleagues in the NDP are enthusiastic about redistribution. I say that if we are redistributing money that is merely printed and not wealth that is created, we are not actually helping people in the long run or even in the medium term.

I will quibble with his point that inevitably the pandemic was going to be at the same proportion. I agree it is a global pandemic that has affected every country to some extent, but it has affected some countries considerably less because they took measures early on that the government was unwilling to take. There are still—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately I wanted a brief question and a brief answer, and I tried to allow the same amount of time for both. I know this is a very passionate subject.

[*Translation*]

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Manicouagan.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Repentigny.

I am pleased to rise in the House this evening to speak on behalf of my constituents in Manicouagan. I wanted to say that because, as we all know, every time I speak in the House, I do the same thing: I think of the people of the North Shore, for they are my motivation, the reason for all my speeches in the House as the member for Manicouagan.

We should always bear in mind the fact that we are in this place to represent tens of thousands of people. In a sense, it is as though they speak through us, and so I speak on behalf of my people in this place in the hopes of securing our well-being. At the risk of sometimes seeming naive, I believe we can accomplish this by striving to live up to an ideal that I think is expected of us. I try to live up to that. What I do as an MP, I do on behalf of my constituents. I act on behalf of my people and what I do, I do for them, the Quebeckers, the people of the North Shore, the Innu and the Naskapi.

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My plan is to address two aspects of Bill C-4: the underlying principle, or what it intends; and our responsibility as elected representatives. Social justice, the redistribution of wealth and de jure and de facto equality are all principles the Bloc Québécois holds especially dear. We want some degree of security for all of our people—children, workers and seniors—during these tough and uncertain times.

The duty to care for oneself and others was and seems to be the underlying principle of the Canada recovery sickness benefit, the Canada recovery caregiving benefit and the Canada recovery benefit, which picks up where the Canada emergency response benefit left off with a more flexible employment insurance regime.

The Bloc Québécois is an opposition party that makes proposals, and back in April, we were already calling for an enhanced CERB that would meet people's needs and include an incentive to work designed to support our economy. We had to strike a balance between the needs of workers and those of employers. We needed to take into account the present and the future.

Although the Bloc Québécois would have like to have seen this change to the measure five months ago, we are satisfied that now, as we enter the second wave, the government heard and understood our proposal to help workers, who can now earn more, and business owners, who can now get the human resources they need. This just goes to show that the opposition is essential, as is the necessary democratic dialectic.

This brings me to the second topic I wanted to discuss, which is the responsibility of elected officials. I believe that it was unacceptable for the government to prorogue Parliament, because a crisis is inherently urgent. At a time when there were dire needs, when the public was asked to pitch in, to make sacrifices, to set an example and to demonstrate a sense of duty, the government shut down Parliament and disappeared. Why? Why were they hiding? What were they concealing? Why did they vanish? Did they just want people to forget?

Shutting down Parliament is not pitching in. It is not making sacrifices. It is not stepping up and demonstrating a sense of duty. It is not self-sacrifice. On the contrary, it came across as an act partly—if not fully—driven by selfishness, by blind partisanship, in an attempt to make people forget what certainly appears to be nepotism.

Shutting down Parliament for several weeks in the midst of a pandemic, in the middle of an emergency, as we were coming up with ideas, is not what the public could and should have expected from its elected officials, especially when prorogation need not have lasted more than a few hours.

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• (2235)

Just as it did with the emergency wage subsidy, the government served itself instead of serving others. Now, when we have so little time and people are still coming up with ideas, proroguing and imposing gag orders is not what people can and should expect of us. That is the sign of an arrogant and complacent government that is trying to give the impression that Canadians are its primary concern, when in reality its main concern is its own interest and getting people to forget about the WE scandal, which is still ongoing.

In closing, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the measures set out in this bill that will support our own, the people of Manicouagan. However, we must consider not only the substance of the bill, or its meaning, but also its form. When that form involves a gag order, that has meaning as well.

The government failed in its duty by depriving elected representatives, voters, the people of Quebec, of democracy, all for what I wish were good reasons. If I were a Liberal MP, which, with all due respect, seems like science-fiction or even personal dystopia, and I had to go through the exercise that I spoke about at the beginning of my speech, namely thinking about what motivates me and the reason behind all of my speeches, I would do my job based on that motivation, which for me is the people of the North Shore. If I were a Liberal MP, I would realize how problematic my inconsistency was.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a Liberal member of Parliament, I am very proud of what we have been able to accomplish as a government over the last eight months. The member talked a lot about the prorogation. What we are talking about is that, instead of coming in on a Monday, we came in on a Wednesday. However, what the member does not talk about are the days we sat in the chamber in July and August. We would have to go back in history over 30 years before seeing that sort of coming together of parliamentarians on the floor of the House of Commons. There were hundreds of questions over the summer, possibly even thousands of questions, that were asked of ministers, giving opposition and government members the opportunity to provide direct input into the legislation we have right now.

I appreciate the fact that the Bloc will support the legislation, because through this legislation we recognize there is a way for the federal government, working with the provincial governments, to help all Canadians. I see that as a good thing. Does the member not agree?

• (2240)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his comments. I may not have the 20 years of experience that he was talking about today during the debates—I am just starting my second term—but I would point out that the House was not sitting this summer. We were meeting in COVID committee. Although I have less experience in Parliament, I believe we need to correct this, because that was not Parliament. Soon we will begin to have regular sittings.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, one thing that stood out in my colleague's speech was when she mentioned the equality of chances. One of the main drivers of the economy in western Canada is the natural resources sector. Due to the government's policies, it is not able to equally participate in creating jobs in the economy because of the lack of investment in the sector.

Does the member have any instances similar to this in her riding in any industry, not necessarily in the resource sector?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the question. This allows me to address something that is very important to the Bloc Québécois and me.

I think we are due for a certain reckoning when it comes to some sectors of our economy. I am from a mining and forestry region where there is a heavy industry and good jobs that are being threatened by various industries, including the Chinese aluminum industry, and sometimes even by the United States.

It is an industry that we are proud of, but we know that we must turn to something else. I was saying earlier that we have to consider the present, but also the future. We must never forget that. The future, in my opinion and that of the Bloc Québécois, is green. We need to transition. We need new jobs. We have no choice. The planet needs this shift. It is what needs to happen. The thing we are missing is new jobs. We need R and D for the resources we have in order to create good jobs for our people.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, first I want to thank my colleague for talking about all Canadians coming back better. I appreciate the enthusiasm.

My friend Karen, a constituent of mine, lost her business due to the pandemic, like millions of Canadians. She closed her doors to protect public health. She also was hoping we would have an opportunity to reimagine our future as a country and get retrained so that she could fill a labour market gap in our country and be a health care assistant. Instead, the government prorogued Parliament and delayed CERB, which she is desperately waiting for, like many Canadians. She is scared, like a lot of people are. By delaying it, she was not able to access EI programs that could have had her starting in September.

Maybe my colleague can speak about the importance of training and investing in people so that we can reimagine how we move forward, and so that Karen can get the training to start a new career.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, my response will be brief.

As a teacher, I know the importance of training and I believe in training. However, this is a Quebec jurisdiction. If there is funding I would like it to be transferred to Quebec so that it may do what needs to be done in the area of education.

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Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, as others have said, the reality we have been dealing with for the past six months has plunged workers in Quebec and Canada into a climate of unparalleled uncertainty.

Week in and week out, our constituents have been calling us and reaching out to us for answers to their questions. The government has loosened the purse strings to support people during this difficult time, and that is great. Now the plan is to transition CERB recipients to special recovery benefits outlined in Bill C-4. The bill includes three benefits and measures to make EI more flexible.

As an aside regarding EI, it is important to remember that, over the past 25 years, successive governments have robbed the EI fund of \$59 billion to balance their budgets. Those governments, Conservative and Liberal alike, used their discretion to redirect those billions towards other budget priorities of the day.

With the EI fund having been plundered, COVID-19 certainly required a robust, costly measure that would have to be implemented quickly. That was the CERB. In terms of public finances, one can imagine that the support scenario might have played out differently if the EI fund had not been plundered so badly. Many women and young people have suffered because of this.

The CERB was good, but it had what I would call some design flaws. It helped a lot of families, and with all the uncertainty and the second wave, the Canada recovery benefit is very welcome, especially as it puts a renewed focus on the employment insurance system and more specifically the stabilizing role it plays for the economy. That is the role this system must play.

We were elected by people who are close to us in our ridings. We have responsibilities to them. Even though, as an opposition party, we did not introduce Bill C-4, it is still our duty to point out to the government the inconsistencies in some of the measures or some of the rules. It is also our duty to act with kindness and integrity in the hope that we will be heard. That is how we give a voice to our constituents, regardless of their political stripe. However, are our voices heard when they are conveyed by elected members?

I want to share with this assembly a specific case that is certainly not unique in Canada: the parents of critically ill children benefit EI program. That program came into effect in 2017 with a remarkably compassionate objective.

In the summer of 2019, an evaluation was done. The evaluation noted that there were just over 15,000 recipients, 80% of whom were women earning around \$40,000 a year. The conclusions and recommendations section of the evaluation stated, and I quote:

- ...the Parents of Critically Ill Children benefit was effective overall in meeting its policy objectives. The benefit:
- was effective in easing financial pressures on parents in order to allow them more time to provide care to their...child;
- provided adequate temporary income support;
- helped keep claimants attached to the labour force; and
- contributed to positive social impacts....

These objectives seem quite similar to the objectives of maternity benefits, in that they allow parents to take care of children. Unlike maternity benefits, these special EI benefits for parents of criti-

cally ill children were not factored in when calculating eligibility for the CERB, even though the objectives are very similar.

I bring this up because my office has been devoting considerable time and effort to the case of Ms. Beaulieu, from Repentigny, since April. We have written letters, held Zoom meetings and made phone calls to two departments, including calls to the ministers themselves, a deputy minister and regional assistants. Ms. Beaulieu is one of the people who was left out of the CERB. Her four-year-old son has a critical illness. Ms. Beaulieu will likely never be able to hold a full-time job again.

● (2245)

Because of COVID-19, she lost her part-time job, the first job she had been able to hold in two years. As a result of the design flaw in the CERB that I mentioned earlier, parents of critically ill children do not qualify for the special benefits. This woman's eligible earnings fell less than \$3,000 short of the threshold to qualify for the CERB.

The report indicated that, from 2013 to 2017, the period that was assessed, 15,300 people were eligible to receive the benefit. That is only 15,300 people in four years. When someone is taking care of a sick young child and then COVID-19 suddenly strikes and they lose their income, what are they supposed to do? The options are nothing short of heartbreaking.

How is it possible that no adjustments have been made to these measures after five months of lobbying? How is it that the government took advantage of this new bill to make changes to EI, but it did not listen to these people? Very few people are applying for this benefit, and they can easily be identified based on the seriousness of the child's health status or medical condition.

The government was quick to offer the CERB to other segments of the population. Why did it not listen to this legitimate request on behalf of caregivers of critically ill children? There were simple solutions; they only needed to be deemed eligible. If the government is going to review the terms of the EI program at all, why not do it properly? I just summarized a situation for which solutions could easily have been found.

I have another example. A few weeks before the pandemic eroded our parliamentary democracy, the House voted by a wide margin in favour of a motion moved by the Bloc Québécois to increase EI sickness benefits to a maximum of 50 weeks. This would also have been a great opportunity to align EI with a majority decision from the House. What does this failure to act say to the elected members of the House who voted overwhelmingly in favour of this motion and whose views on the changes were not considered? It is pretty disappointing that the government is refusing to listen.

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We know full well what the deployment of programs like the CERB represents. Nothing is perfect, but our job is to work on improving what is introduced. The changes that should have been made to the CERB were delayed or non-existent. In the case of Ms. Beaulieu, we presented a solid argument. We did so diligently and respectfully in the appropriate forums. Eligibility for the special benefits for parents of critically ill children was never considered. To date, no official answer has been provided on this issue. One minister's staffer even refused to let me contact a deputy minister who was designated as the lead on this issue. Obstacle after obstacle was thrown up.

Ms. Beaulieu would have to wait. Two departments spent months passing the buck back and forth and telling us what we already knew. All we could do was watch as time ran out on the CERB program, without any benefits for critically ill children. Still today, because we continue to fight, we are told that an analysis is under way that will look into the rationale for treating earnings from these benefits the same as maternity benefits. From what I understand of the analysis, this has nothing to do with the issue; it is about determining whether Ms. Beaulieu is eligible. However, that is not what we want. We want this for everyone affected by this matter.

We support the new recovery benefits proposed in Bill C-4, but what are we supposed to think of the past six months and the approach that was taken? How should we interpret the complacency and lack of consideration for such a serious case? The government gave itself extraordinary powers through Bill C-13. Today I will not mention the files that have been overlooked for the past few months, but on the flip side, I do have to criticize the political reasons behind the Liberals' decision to prorogue Parliament for five weeks. Opportunities have been missed, as this bill would have been put through its paces.

• (2250)

To the MPs who watched time run out without doing anything or even responding to the communications from various ridings regarding cases like the one I talked about today, I have just one word to describe how people perceived it. That word is indifference.

• (2255)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, listening to some of the Conservative speakers, we often hear them say that we have gone too far in some of the support programs we have provided. We hear members of the New Democrats and, at times, even members from the Bloc say there is still more that we could do.

The reality is we went from having no program to creating the CERB program, with the support of a first-class public service. It is a program that has provided support for just under nine million Canadians, and the minister herself has indicated that it is not perfect. We are looking for changes. Now we are bringing it through this legislation, picking up where we can continue to support Canadians.

My comment, as opposed to a question, is if the member has those ideas, I would encourage her to continue to advocate as members of the Liberal caucus have done. When we consult with our constituents, and when we have thoughts and ideas in terms of how we believe the system could be improved, we advocate for those changes.

I appreciate the fact that she has brought those matters to the floor this evening.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comment.

I would like to remind him about a question I asked a little earlier during the previous debate. Essentially, we were here to make changes to the employment insurance system. I talked about how hard my office staff has been working. We have never stopped, and we are still working on that woman's case. Before making changes, we should have had time to discuss them, but Motion No. 7 was passed on May 26. This motion moved by the government and seconded by the NDP effectively eliminated both the House and democracy. We could not introduce bills, we could not move motions, we could not talk, we could not debate.

An hon. member: The Bloc did not ask any questions.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, there was nowhere for me to do that.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is interesting. We have heard an awful lot from the government about how the government is there as a team. It is working hard as a team, and it wants to include the whole team.

However, what we heard from the last member who spoke was that the team was not talking to her or to her party. We know that on the Conservative side, the present government has not talked to us about the issues of employment. We heard in the member's speech today about the issues of a number of people who are unemployed and the challenges they have.

I would be interested to hear from the member on the issue of those who are self-employed. I am wondering if the member would comment on how she sees the issue. It is great to have the conversation now, when we should have had it before this motion was brought forward. I would like to hear where the member stands on the issues of self-employment and how to get self-employed people back to work.

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[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for talking about another group of workers that is unfortunately slipping through the cracks. With respect to self-employed workers, I mentioned a case having to do with benefits for sick children. The net is full of holes. We know nothing in this world is perfect. We know that an effort was made and that the CERB was useful to individuals and families. However, if we got a chance to talk about holes in the net, we just might be able to close them up. We were denied that opportunity this spring and again with prorogation. We keep hearing about how this is a crisis, an emergency. I think the parliamentary secretary pointed out that no Parliament sits during the summer. However, when there is an emergency, Parliament can sit in the summer. We could have sat this summer and closed up all the holes in the net.

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are very much in a second wave of this pandemic. When we look at what people are going through right now, it is fair to say that there is a lot of fear. There is a lot of worry, and there is a lot of uncertainty in people's lives. In this second wave, when people are afraid, worried and uncertain, they need to know that help will be there if they need it. We see the number of cases rising in major cities in Ontario and in Quebec.

● (2300)

[*Translation*]

Now people are deeply concerned because the numbers are going up. People are scared that their places of work will be closed again. In this precarious situation, when everyone fears for the future, it is essential to provide the help that people need.

[*English*]

It is essential, in the context of a second wave, that people can count on support.

The first act of the Liberal government after proroguing Parliament for nearly two months was going to be cutting the help that families receive. That is what the Liberals told us in the summer. They prorogued Parliament and, while people are afraid and the second wave is upon us, they were going to cut the help that families need to get by.

Instead of \$2,000 a month, which is not a luxurious amount, but just enough to get by, the Liberal government was going to cut that by \$400 to \$1,600 a month. The Liberals were going to force those families who were just getting by to get by with \$400 less, despite the fact that we knew before the pandemic that families were just a couple of hundred dollars away from not being able to make ends meet. It was cruel what the Liberal government was going to do.

On one hand, the Liberals were presenting a throne speech with all sorts of promises and words to make life better for people, but those words rang very hollow. They were empty words. The first action of the government was going to be to cut the help that people need, so we fought back.

We fought back and made it very clear for Canadians, who are right now afraid of the future, who are worried about the second

wave, that there is no way that we would allow the government to cut the help that families receive. We fought back and we won for Canadians. This was a victory for Canadians. This was a victory to say that we believe in investing in people and we believe that support should be there for families. If there is a situation where jobs have to be put on pause or if there is another shutdown, people need to know that they can count on support.

I was talking to my colleague from Vancouver Island and he was sharing a story of a woman in her 50s who has been a massage therapist for most of her life. She had a successful career, but as a result of COVID-19, she had to shut down. Even after the shutdown, a lot of people are nervous, as we know, about going back to some of the things that they used to do, so she was not seeing a pickup in her business again. She could not go back to work, so she lost everything.

On top of that, the Liberal government timed the throne speech to land just as CERB was ending. There was no time to give that woman any sense of security that there would be help for her. Right now, she is not sure how she is going to pay her rent. She is going to go to her line of credit to see if she can scrounge up enough money to pay rent, and she is waiting every day to find out what is going to happen. She asks if she will get help, but she does not know. I want her to know that we are going to pass this legislation tonight, and she will get that help.

[*Translation*]

Many people cannot work because of COVID-19. Their job and even their entire sector have ceased to exist. It is in no way the workers' fault.

They are scared. They don't know what they are going to do. They do not know how they are going to make ends meet.

This Liberal government planned the Speech from the Throne just when the CERB was ending. That was not right. I want people who need the CERB to know that we will fight for them. This evening, we will be voting in favour of a bill to continue helping people.

● (2305)

[*English*]

However, that is not the only thing that people worried about. As we all know, there are so many Canadians faced with the impossible choice of going into work sick and risking infecting their colleagues, or staying at home without pay not knowing how to pay their bills at the end of the month. That is an impossible choice made even more impossible by a pandemic. How does it make any sense that a worker be faced with this impossible choice when facing a global pandemic?

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Back in May, we fought and obtained a commitment from the Liberal government to bring in paid sick leave for workers. Months later, there was no action. We made another clear demand. We said that if the Liberals wanted our support, they had to bring in paid sick leave for workers in legislation. There should never be any worker making that impossible choice. Any worker who is worried about being infected by COVID-19, who is potentially vulnerable or susceptible to COVID-19, should be able to stay at home and not risk infecting their co-workers and still be able to pay their bills. That is what we did. We fought and we won another massive victory for Canadians and for workers. We want them to know they will never have to make that impossible choice again.

We were able to obtain something that is the first of its kind. This is a historic moment. For the first time in the history of our country, there will be a federal paid sick leave for workers.

[*Translation*]

We are extremely proud of the work we have done. I want to thank my entire team. Together, we fought for Canadians. For the first time in our country's history, we have obtained paid sick leave. This is incredible. It means that workers do not have to make an impossible choice between going to work sick and staying home not knowing how to make ends meet.

We are there for them, we fought for them and we won for them.

[*English*]

These are two massive victories. We are very excited and honoured that we were able to fight for Canadians and win for Canadians. For New Democrats, it is not enough to put in place a paid sick leave during a pandemic. We believe that this is the first brick in the foundation for a permanent paid sick leave for all Canadians now and forever. That should be a part of our social safety net, not just in a pandemic, but all the time. No worker should live in fear that they cannot take time off from work if they are sick. That is our vision.

We know that there will be a lot of folks talking about how we are going to pay for these programs. It is a fair question. We need to be able to pay for these important investments in people. I am worried because as the deficit increases, we will hear more and more from Conservatives who will say we should cut the help to people in the middle of a pandemic. There will be some Liberals who are going to listen to the words of Conservatives and say that maybe we should cut the help. In fact, that is what the Liberals were about to do. They were convinced by the Conservatives there was too much help given to people and were going to cut that help. What other explanation is there for cutting the help in the middle of a second wave as the Liberals were planning to do but for the fact the New Democrats fought back and stopped them.

The Liberals are falling prey to this ideology, this belief of the Conservatives that when times are tough, let us put the burden, the weight and the pain on working people. That is what Conservatives do.

In some cases, I guess the Liberals listen to that because we are seeing a lot of talk about the deficit. It is important and scary to see a massive deficit, but the way forward is not to put the pain on the woman who lost her entire career in massage therapy on Vancouver

Island, the solution is not to put the pain on working-class Canadians who have lost their jobs or on small businesses that are on the brink. Who should pay for this pandemic? The ultra wealthy who made record profits during this pandemic. We are not going to hear this from the Conservatives. We are not going to hear this from the Liberals. They talk about taxing extreme wealth inequality and I challenge anyone on the Liberal bench to explain what that even means. How can the government tax inequality? I know what it can tax. It can tax the ultra rich. It can tax those who make profits in Canada but hide all that profit and pay no taxes in Canada. That is what it can do.

What we are proposing is this. Those who have profited off this pandemic, the ultra rich who have made record profits during this pandemic, the ultra rich who have made billions of dollars in profits, should be the ones who pay for the recovery. If a company makes a profit in Canada, that company should pay taxes in Canada. The reality is there are far too many companies. One is not more than enough, there are so many companies that make a profit here in our country but pay virtually no tax in our country. That is who we should go after. There are companies that make record profits from Canadians in Canada, take that money and put it in an offshore tax haven, hiding it and not paying their fair share. That happens again and again. Recently we saw that the CRA had even taken a company to court for hundreds of millions of dollars of taxes it did not pay. The judge found it had certainly made profits in Canada, that it had taken all those profits and put them into a bank out of Canada and it was legal to do so. That needs to end. We need to stop that. We need to be very clear that the pain of, the cost of and the recovery from this pandemic should not fall on Canadians, on workers or the people who have felt the pain, but on those who have profited. That is what the New Democrats are going to do. We are going to fight to make sure the wealthiest pay their fair share.

While we are dealing with the crisis of COVID-19, it is immediate and we are feeling it right now. People are feeling the pain, they are worried and afraid, so I want them to know that we see them, hear them, know that they are going through difficult times right now and we are going to be there for them. From the beginning of this pandemic, we have fought every step of the way to make sure Canadians were at the centre of everything we did. Whether it was the CERB, the wage subsidy, students, people living with disabilities or seniors, every step of the way we fought for them and I want them to know they can count on us to continue to fight for them.

We know there is not only one crisis we are up against. We are not just facing a COVID-19 crisis. There are so many other crises we are up against. We know the climate crisis is still raging. In my home province of British Columbia and riding of Burnaby South, just a couple of weeks ago the air quality was so bad in the Lower Mainland it was one of the worst air quality ratings of all major cities in the world. While in the classrooms people were being advised to open the windows to let the fresh air in, at the same time they were being told close the windows to prevent the incoming fumes from the forest fires and climate fires. We know the climate crisis is impacting us right now. It is an emergency and we have to do everything we can to fight that crisis as well. That means making the right investments so we create jobs in communities that help us reduce our emissions and make a better quality of life. One example is if we invested in retrofits and building affordable housing, we could create local jobs, make life more affordable and fight the climate crisis. That is what a just recovery would look like.

● (2310)

We also know we are up against a crisis of systemic racism. Just recently, there was an example of an indigenous woman in Quebec, a heart-rending story, who pleaded for help with her dying breath. It was recorded and put on Facebook. She asked for somebody to please help her.

● (2315)

[*Translation*]

She asked that someone come for her.

[*English*]

She was dying in a hospital bed and the video recorded hospital staff mocking her and insulting her as she was lying and dying. I have said before that systemic racism kills people. It strips people of their dignity and it kills them. This woman died and while she was sick was subjected to racial taunts and systemic discrimination.

I have said again and again that it is not enough to just talk about these things. That woman's life was precious. She did not deserve to die that way. We have to end systemic racism in all its forms, whether it is in health care, in our criminal justice system or in our judicial system. We have to stop talking about it and actually get to the work of ending systemic racism. Enough is enough.

We know we are still faced with an opioid crisis that is taking the lives of so many Canadians. We have to stop our approach to this crisis as a criminal justice problem, as a problem that we can arrest our way out of and, instead, look at it for what it really is: a health care crisis that is going to require compassion and care to save lives.

We know that the impact of COVID-19 disproportionately affected women, so we need a she-covery. We need to be very thoughtful and purposeful with our investments to acknowledge that if women were impacted disproportionately, then we need to have a clear path to remedying that problem. One of the solutions that all of the experts are calling for is massive investment in child care. Therefore, if women, parents in general, but specifically women, choose to go back to work, they do not have to be faced with the impossible reality of not being able to find affordable child care or losing their careers. That should not be a choice that anyone

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has to make, particularly for women. If we believe in a society where everyone has the right to work and participate, we need to invest in child care.

I will end on this last note.

[*Translation*]

There is always talk about what should be done about the many crises we are facing, including the climate crisis and the systemic racism crisis, but we have to act. We do not have time to wait before taking action; we have to do it now. Words are no longer enough, and now is the time to act. We have solutions, and we can do something, so I demand that the government take concrete action to address these crises.

We must ask ourselves what the price of inaction is. Unless we take action, inequalities will certainly continue, and the gap between the average person and the very wealthy will only widen. That is why action is needed.

[*English*]

The reality is we need to act. Some people will say we should just let it be and not act. Inaction is a choice. If we do not act, if we do not fight the inequality in a meaningful way, if we do not make the wealthiest pay their fair share, inaction will result in the wealthiest getting even wealthier and everyone else falling behind, and that simply is not a choice New Democrats are going to let happen.

We are going to make sure that this crisis does not create more wealth inequality. We are going to ensure that this crisis does not make life worse for women or working-class people. We are going to fight for them because we know the cost of inaction is too grave. We will fight to make sure we have a more just, resilient and fairer economy, one that works for everyone, one in which everybody has the opportunity to live their best life.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to rise to the challenge the leader of the New Democratic Party gave us when he asked what we are doing regarding Canada's wealthiest. The Prime Minister addressed that point in a question and answer earlier today, where he illustrated that one of the first actions we took after the 2015 election was to reduce the taxes of Canada's middle class and at the same time increase the taxes for Canada's wealthiest.

I remind the leader of the New Democratic Party today that the NDP voted against that particular tax decrease. In fairness, he was not the leader back then. It was Tom Mulcair, and those were the days in which they had a tough time even acknowledging the need for a deficit. I appreciate the fact that the NDP is supporting the bill. It was a very bold move for New Democrats to come forward and say that they wanted to see this legislation.

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Would the leader of the NDP not agree it is absolutely critical that the government invest in people in order to minimize the negative impacts of the second wave?

• (2320)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, what the member is talking about is an action taken over five years ago. Right now we are calling for clear action to make sure that those who profited off this pandemic pay their fair share, that we close offshore tax havens and that any company that makes profits in Canada pays taxes in Canada. The fact that I have to say that and it is not already happening is a problem. The fact that the Liberal government has been in a majority and allowed that to continue speaks for itself.

We are saying very clearly that everyday people pay their taxes. The member contributes. What about those companies that make record profits and then hide those profits and do not pay any taxes here? That is what the Liberal government has failed to address and that is what we are fighting for.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I find it curious that the parliamentary secretary speaks about what the Prime Minister spoke about today about the top 1% paying their fair share. Shortly after that was implemented, the Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that the net negative effect to the treasury was going to be \$8.9 billion over six years. What that meant was that the Liberals' top 1% tax plan actually was going to cost Canadians money.

The ones who benefited the most from this were actually MPs, where we saw, according to the Centre for Policy Alternatives, our tax rate decrease. We are \$343 billion in deficits and approaching \$1.2 trillion in debt. Has the hon. member costed out what a tax on the top 1% would be, and would it pay down the \$343 billion in deficits and the \$1.2 billion in debt?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, one of our measures, which we campaigned on and we still believe must happen, is a tax on the ultra-wealthy, those who have fortunes of over \$20 million. The Parliamentary Budget Officer costed out this proposal, a tax on the wealth of those who have fortunes of over \$20 million. Over 10 years, it would raise over \$70 billion. That is a massive revenue increase. It is something that has been costed out.

There are many other examples. We know we are losing billions of dollars of revenue to offshore tax havens. Companies make profits in Canada off the backs of Canadians, and then they hide that profit in offshore tax havens. There should be no excuse. If one is going to make profits in Canada, one should pay taxes in Canada. It is a simple thing we are asking. Everyone else pays their salaries, earns here and pays taxes here. If a company makes money off Canadians, it surely has to pay taxes here.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the leader of the New Democratic Party and the team who made the improvements in the legislation we have before us tonight. It is very important. It is important to see people are not going to be receiving less off CERB as they transition to EI.

I also recognize, though, the leader of the New Democratic Party is in a position to do considerably more. About climate he said, “the climate crisis is still raging”. Of course it is. It is worse by the

minute. With the power that party has, I wonder why in the election we heard that this was going to be a priority for the NDP. The NDP in British Columbia has of course increased greenhouse gases and bet its money on fracking and LNG.

I wonder when we will see this federal NDP press the federal Liberals to give us more than lip service on climate. This is the moment. We are running out of time.

• (2325)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, in fairness, the member is right when she talks about a Liberal government that pays lip service to the climate crisis but then does the opposite. The Liberals talk about these lofty goals, and then miss each and every one of them without any accountability. They talk about planting two billion trees and have planted zero. They talk about the importance of our climate and then buy a pipeline.

What we need to do is to stop the pretty, empty words. We need some concrete action. One of the things that we are fighting for and pushing for, once we get past the immediacy of the second wave of the pandemic, is the recovery where we invest in people, create jobs locally and fight the climate crisis by reducing emissions. We must do that. Nothing less can happen.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the NDP leader for his speech and for the work that he has done over the past while.

I am proud of the work that we have done to drive aspects of the government's response to the pandemic. Sometimes, and just from the previous question, I get the sense that we made it look too easy, but I know how hard fought and hard won the victories we did get are. I know that there are some people now in the country who think there is some kind of hotline, that we just call up the Prime Minister and he gives us anything we want, but that is not true.

We hear from people who would like us to push all sorts of things, including proportional representation and climate action, which are things we remain very committed to. I know that the NDP leader raised the question of proportional representation with the Prime Minister, and I would like him to tell us if there was any openness at all to discussing issues outside of the constraints of the pandemic and just how difficult it has been to extract these concessions from the government.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Elmwood—Transcona. He was critical in the negotiations in achieving this massive victory, as was our House leader. In fact, I want to thank all of our team for their solidarity.

This was hard fought. Every step of the way, with any victory that we won for people, we had to fight tooth and nail. The Liberal government was not just going to do any of these things. It was not going to help students. We had to fight for that. It was not going to help those living with disabilities. We had to fight for that. Then it offered something that was so little that we had to fight more to make sure that it did not exclude so many Canadians, but there is still so much more to do.

With respect to the help for Canadians and paid sick leave, the Liberals promised this in May. We had to fight for months and months to get legislation. We had to fight tooth and nail every step of the way to win for Canadians, and we are not going to stop fighting.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, in my riding of Beauce, dozens of businesses are at risk of closing down or are being forced to slow down production.

This is not because they cannot sell their products, but because they are in need of workers, and factories are not the only ones with this problem. For example, Giovannina Pizzeria in Sainte-Marie has been a family-owned business for over 50 years. It has to close at least three days a week now.

How will Bill C-4 help in this case?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, the labour shortage is a big problem, and it has come up a lot on my visits to Quebec.

That said, we did manage to do something important with this bill. A number of workers are afraid to work because they do not have paid sick leave. With this paid sick leave, they will now know that if they become sick, they will be able to stay home. This makes workers more confident about returning to work. They will have this assistance, this support, which can give them more confidence.

I know that there is still a lot of work to be done. I am prepared to do what it takes to move forward on this issue. It is a big problem in many regions of Quebec and across the country.

• (2330)

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise this evening in support of Bill C-4, an act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19.

This is a very important bill. It will allow us to build on the measures already set out in Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan so we can protect Canadians during the next wave of the pandemic and, more importantly, continue to support them as the economy reopens.

A number of my colleagues have already spoken eloquently about the new measures this bill proposes, such as the Canada recovery benefit, the Canada recovery sickness benefit and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit. I will also talk about them in a few minutes, but I would first like to talk about the importance of passing Bill C-4 quickly. Time is running out.

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[English]

As we know, the legislation we are debating here today would, among other things, extend the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act to the end of this year. It is a very long title for a very important act that is otherwise set to expire. As hon. members may recall, it was enacted in March as part of Bill C-13, adopted by the House. It allows the government to spend the money needed to protect Canadians and address the public health crisis of the global COVID-19 pandemic. It has been a cornerstone of Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan, a plan that has been critical to supporting Canadians and Canadian businesses.

I know I have spoken about this many times, but I cannot understate the extent to which Canadians have relied on our economic response to get them through these extraordinary times. Through this plan, our government has delivered on programs, such as the Canada emergency response benefit, that have helped millions of Canadians. The CERB has ensured that millions of Canadians have not had to make impossible choices between putting food on their tables and paying their bills when they have lost their jobs or seen their incomes reduced as a result of the pandemic.

The CERB has helped nearly nine million Canadians since March.

[Translation]

Given how many Canadians lost their jobs this year, it quickly became apparent that many of them would need financial support until they could get back to work. However, the existing income support programs were not designed to deal with a crisis of this magnitude. That is why we created the Canada emergency response benefit, or CERB, and made sure that many Canadians would be eligible, for instance by allowing workers to earn up to \$1,000 per month while still receiving the CERB.

[English]

The Canada emergency response benefit has been a key program, supporting millions of Canadians unable to work because of COVID-19. It has had a tangible impact on the quality of life of millions of families from coast to coast to coast, in every constituency in this country, and that is thanks to the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act. The Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act also paves the way to support businesses across this country, especially our small businesses.

Canadians have worked their whole lives to establish businesses that serve their communities and provide good local jobs. Small businesses not only are the backbone of our economy, but define our neighbourhoods. They give our main streets their character, owners become community leaders and they become the places we rely on to connect to one another.

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• (2335)

[*Translation*]

The list goes on. It is largely thanks to the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act that we are able to help Canadians, support our businesses, and protect everyone's health and safety. However, there is still more work to be done. The increase in COVID-19 cases across the country and the arrival of the second wave clearly show that we are still grappling with the pandemic. We must not let our guard down. We must continue to protect the Canadians who need us most. We must continue to support them, but first we must give ourselves the means to do so, and we must do it now. When Parliament passed the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act in March, the date of repeal was set for September 30, 2020. This means that the act will expire tomorrow, but COVID-19 will not expire. We must extend the act. We owe it to Canadians.

[*English*]

The limited extension of this act would allow the government to continue to do a lot of the things we have been doing to support Canadians and businesses that are most in need. For example, this act would allow the government to keep buying the necessary personal protective equipment to help essential workers. It would also crucially continue support for the public health, social and economic response in indigenous communities. We understand that indigenous communities are vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19, which is why we acted quickly to provide nearly a billion dollars to support public health and community-led responses in these communities.

[*Translation*]

Extending the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act to December 31 would ensure that there are no needless interruptions to several programs, especially since a second wave of the pandemic is imminent and has already hit some regions. The extension would enable the government to continue to support the provinces and territories and improve the capacity of our health care system. Take, for example, the federal government's investment in testing and contact tracing. We are talking about a legislative framework that has been essential to our assistance plan.

Extending the act would also enable the government to help small businesses and maintain support measures for farmers, food companies and food supply chains. It would ensure that there is no interruption to the final payments under existing programs, such as the CERB, while we begin to transition to the new assistance programs.

[*English*]

We are now six months into the worst health and economic crisis in Canadian history. COVID-19 has affected all aspects of Canadians' lives, from their health to their livelihoods. We will overcome this pandemic, but this will require the work of every order of government, every community and every one of us. For our part, we will support people and businesses through this crisis as long as it lasts. Let me be absolutely clear with the House and with all Canadians: We will do whatever it takes to get through this pandemic.

[*Translation*]

We are trusting science to lead the fight until a safe, effective vaccine becomes available. Until then, we must remain vigilant and use the tools available to us, such as testing, treatment and physical distancing. The government will continue to be there for Canadians, just as Canadians are there for each other. We will do whatever is necessary.

[*English*]

Canadians are counting on their government to be there for them when they need it. We know that too many are still unable to work because of COVID-19, including many women, many newcomers to Canada and many people who are self-employed. As we have said previously, and the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion said earlier this evening, we will continue to support these vulnerable Canadians. Those who have been receiving CERB will be supported by the employment insurance system. Let me be clear on something: We will not let down those who do not qualify for EI.

Bill C-4 would ensure that the workers impacted by COVID-19 have the support they need by creating three new transitional benefits to ensure that Canadians can continue to support their families and make ends meet.

First, under the Canada recovery benefit, \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks could be available to those individuals not working due to the pandemic and who do not qualify for EI, including the self-employed. This would also be available to those individuals working reduced hours who have lost 50% or more of their income due to the pandemic.

Second, the Canada recovery sickness benefit would provide \$500 per week for up to two weeks to workers who are unable to work for at least 50% of the time they would have otherwise worked, either because they contracted COVID-19, think they might have it or because they isolated because of the virus.

Third, the Canada recovery caregiving benefit would be available to those who cannot work because they are caring for a close relative or because their child cannot go to school or day care because of the pandemic. These Canadians could receive \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks.

These transitional benefits are proposed as part of the government's plan to support Canadians, as we work to build a stronger, more resilient economy. All three would be available for one year. We know this crisis will not pass this week or next.

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• (2340)

[*Translation*]

This pandemic is the worst public health crisis Canada has ever encountered. Canadians of all ages everywhere in the country have been hit hard. Millions of Canadians lost their jobs or had their hours cut along with their income. Job losses may be the most obvious effect of the global economic shock we have all had to withstand, but the shock also highlighted a whole range of quality-of-life issues, such as mental health, family violence and social ties.

We firmly believe that policy development must be guided by prosperity and quality of life for all Canadians. That is what will help us build a stronger, more resilient country, and that is what guides us as we develop the pandemic recovery plan.

This is not the time for austerity. As Canadians continue to weather the consequences of the pandemic, we must maintain certain assistance program and launch others. Bill C-4 will enable us to round out many of the existing measures. It will also help us make our COVID-19 economic response plan more effective. In the medium and long terms, we will also have to recover from the pandemic by building a stronger and more resilient Canada.

[*English*]

Canada entered this crisis in the best fiscal position of its peers. For the past six months, the government has been using that fiscal firepower so Canadians, businesses and our entire economy have the support needed to weather the storm. The same firepower can also help us to overcome this crisis and build back as a stronger, more resilient country.

It is critical to ensure that the Canadians who need it the most continue to receive the support they need. It will help to ensure that Canadians and the businesses where they work continue to receive the support they need.

I will end by saying this. Our government's first priority is addressing this pandemic and ensuring Canadians are healthy and safe. We are getting them the help they need today, while finding solutions which will improve their quality of life over the months and years to come.

• (2345)

[*Translation*]

Our government's priority is to fight this pandemic and make sure Canadians stay healthy and safe. We will give them the help they need now, and we will come up with solutions to improve their quality of life in the months and years to come.

[*English*]

The measures contained in this bill would help us to do exactly that. I urge every member of the House to do the same.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, dozens of businesses in my riding of Beauce are at risk closing down or are being forced to slow down production due to a labour shortage. It is not that they cannot sell their products, it is that the labour shortage is a serious problem locally. Factories are not the only ones with this problem. In my riding, Giovannina, a restaurant in Sainte-

Marie-de-Beauce, has to close three days a week because they are short-staffed.

How will Bill C-4 help in this case?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his question and for his concern about his constituents.

We know that we are all working to find solutions and help workers and businesses during this pandemic. From the start, as we have seen, the emergency wage subsidy was a very important solution that allowed more people to continue working.

This bill, Bill C-4, will also allow workers and Canadians to continue to be supported during this crisis. We know that their health and safety are a priority during this period. In addition to providing this support to Canadians and Quebeckers, we will continue to work hard to create more than one million jobs, returning us to pre-pandemic levels. We will also work with the provinces, territories and parliamentarians to find ways to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I apologize, but others want to ask questions. Answers should be about the same length as the questions.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, the minister told us that it was not going to last a few weeks, but a full year. I would like to ask her why we are once again being presented with a temporary measure when so many changes could have been made to employment insurance.

After the EI program was ransacked for years and the EI fund plundered, why is the measure temporary? Is it so that they can have an excuse to get rid of it in a year?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. colleague for her question and comments.

In my opinion it is important is to demonstrate adaptability despite the uncertainty of these times. At the start of the pandemic, we truly wanted to help Canadians who had lost their jobs or could not work. The CERB supported millions of Canadians.

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We are going to transition to the EI system. We will improve our EI system by developing these supports. With Bill C-4, we will give Canadians and Quebecers ways to obtain support so they can subsequently return to work.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, the minister talked about having the backs of businesses, but the government's flawed commercial rent assistance program has been a boondoggle. This morning we learned from the PBO that it only will have spent half the money budgeted because it made it a landlord-driven application process.

The minister of small business said we should stay tuned three weeks ago. We are looking at this. The government keeps saying that it is listening to small businesses, but small businesses are saying that this program is only going to save businesses two days from now.

Businesses in Quebec will be closing their doors because the second wave of the virus is hitting us. The lockdown will affect restaurants, cinemas and other businesses. They cannot wait to stay tuned any longer. They need the minister and the government to fix that program.

The government keeps pointing its finger at the provinces, but the provinces are saying that it is the federal government that needs to lead on this. These businesses are counting on the federal government. Will the minister fix this?

• (2350)

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the member for sharing what I have heard across the country since the beginning of this crisis. Many businesses have asked for support. That is how we know that thousands of small businesses have been hard hit. It is why we brought many programs forward: CEWS, the Canadian emergency wage subsidy; the Canadian emergency response benefit; and the Canadian emergency business account. As of September 28, commercial rent assistance has helped over 120,000 Canadian small businesses, representing over a million jobs, over \$1.68 billion in support.

Our government is actively exploring options to further support small businesses as they face the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the challenges of fixed costs and rent. This is at a time when health concerns and precautions prevent many businesses from operating at full capacity.

We will continue to work with businesses to ensure they have a bridge through this pandemic.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, there is an issue clearly looming as we look at where we are in terms of the deficit and our debt. I was recently looking at an article by our former parliamentary budget officer, Kevin Page, pointing out that we really cannot continue spending without looking at the revenue side of the ledger.

As the minister looking at middle-class prosperity, when will we look at a wealth tax? We need to find new sources of revenue. The Green Party has been advocating for a wealth tax. I wonder if she has had a look at it. The PBO has costed it and it is viable.

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her leadership on many files. By working all together, we will find ways to make sure we get through this pandemic. She has encouraged us to all work together, and it is important to do that.

I want to recognize that the PBO has done important work on behalf of Parliamentarians and all Canadians. As we entered as a country into this crisis, we had a strong fiscal position relative to our G7 peers. By using this fiscal firepower, we will continue to ensure Canadians, workers and businesses get the support they need. We have a well-deserved international reputation for small and prudent fiscal management. Our plan continues to be fiscally sustainable, and we will continue to be responsible.

Canadians are counting on our government to be there for them. We have done, and will continue to do, exactly that.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I want to go back to the commercial rent assistance program. I have outlined that many businesses have not received the support they need. The minister spoke about the other programs. What we are hearing from small businesses, and CFIB again this morning, is that many of these businesses simply will not survive without commercial rent assistance. They have closed their doors for public health reasons to do the right thing, and they should not be on the hook when their landlord does not apply or if they do not meet the threshold and only lost 60% of their business. Trying to survive losing 50% or 60% of business is going to be nearly impossible. They need help. They need the government to fix this program.

Will the minister reassure those small businesses that she can help them and fix this broken program?

• (2355)

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Speaker, it is important to say that since the beginning, we have developed and implemented many programs to support businesses. I mentioned this earlier. The CECRA program has had its difficulties, but we have been working really hard to make sure we work with provinces and territories to find a way to encourage owners to use the CECRA program that was developed and offered.

As I said earlier, over 120,000 Canadian small businesses, representing over a million jobs, had access to commercial rent assistance. As we continue to face COVID-19 challenges, we will continue to find ways to support the fixed costs of businesses, including rent, and we are working on this as fast as we can.

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Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Before I came here at this late hour, I watched something that I am having trouble processing right now. That is the coverage of the death of a first nation woman, Joyce Echaquan. It should trouble all of us. We are sitting in this place tonight, debating this bill, and I am reflecting on the Prime Minister's comments. I actually agree with him for once. I do not agree with his overall response, but he made some comments earlier this week around the Speech from the Throne, and how the pandemic had exposed cracks in our society. It has, but it has exposed the cracks to people in Canada who have such privilege that they do not have to live in those cracks on a daily basis.

I worry about our capacity to address these issues because we have such a divide. There is a privilege in making the statement, "This pandemic has exposed cracks in our society" like a revelation, because there are people living this so profoundly day to day. What we saw tonight in the death of this woman should shake us all, regardless of political stripe. It should shake us into realizing that there is much more to be done, and statements of sympathy and caring down a path that is set one way or the other is not going to address this in a pluralism. It just is not.

That is where I would like to frame some of my comments tonight on the bill. How do we address these cracks? We are ostensibly addressing a bill tonight, given that closure was invoked on it. That is a signal often given by the government to say it is an important piece of legislation that is going to fix a bunch of problems. I think it is a missed opportunity. The process we are going through here, the time that we lost in prorogation, at this moment in our country's history, is a missed opportunity for us to look past our individual dogmas and actually chart a course forward that can address some of these fundamental inequities, the systemic racism, the systemic misogyny, the class divide that we see widening in our country.

I wanted to come in here and talk about this issue from the perspective of the people who live this reality in my community, because they have experienced the situation of the pandemic in a unique way. We already had a severe jobs crisis going into the pandemic.

I am hoping everyone can put their partisanship aside for a minute tonight, and understand what it is like to be living in a community that has no hope of getting back to work. We are here debating a bill tonight that is not tied to a plan for long-term economic viability or tied to measures that will get us through the pandemic beyond lockdown. That is the failure of the bill.

Of course, I think everybody in this place, including me, wants to ensure that Canadians have the benefits they need through the pandemic. There is no question of that. I know people in my community who need the CERB to make ends meet. That is the reality. For them it is like, "You guys have shut down my job. I need to eat, and you as government have made a decision to do this, so where is it?"

I was going to give a huge speech about how prorogation cost five weeks that we could have continued their benefits in.

• (2400)

Members have to understand what it is like to not only be told that one's job is dirty, but to have it disappear and then have no plan for what comes next.

I will speak from a woman's perspective tonight. The women in my riding have gone through so much. They are trying to keep marriages going throughout the downturn of the energy sector, and they hear that their jobs are dirty and that they just need to diversify the economy. These are women who care about the planet. They care about climate change, but they also work in an industry where they know that our energy is part of the solution to a transition to that clean economy and there is no plan, beyond government handouts, to restore their dignity and work. It is just take away jobs, take away dignity, take away marriages and take away their houses.

I just feel that the bill before us is a continuation of that spirit of the paternalistic attitude, the misogynistic attitude that is pervasive in this place. It is pervasive in our approach to legislation. It is pervasive in our messaging and our paternalism, be it "everybody just do their part," or "we just need to give you more benefits." There is dignity and beauty in self-determination that our systems, and the government's response to current events, have removed from people. So, yes, cracks in our society have been exposed to those who benefit from the power structures of systemic racism, of systemic misogyny, of systemic regional alienation, but they are apparent to everyone else. They are apparent to people who live this day to day. They are apparent in every part of our society, and I just feel like the bill fails it.

Of course we want benefits to be continued for people. I want the people in my community to work, but I want them to have an answer for their kids when they ask about Halloween, about holiday dinners, or when they wonder if they can go and see their mom in a long-term care facility after it has been shut down. It is not sufficient to say that an entire society should be dependent on the government. It is paternalistic, and it is misogynistic, to say that the government should be the only answer to this situation.

I guess I am pleading, after nearly 10 years of being in this place. I have tried the fight. I have tried the bombast. I do well at that. I am proud of the fact that, over the last two weeks, a small group of feisty people in Room 600 Valour got the government to admit to rapid testing, and I thank Bari, Julia, Sean and Jill. Those guys got her done. However, I am tired of this attitude that is so disconnected that some of the people in my riding feel that they cannot be Canadian anymore. That breaks my heart, and it breaks my heart to watch what we saw on TV tonight.

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It is such a late hour, and I did not come with a prepared speech, but we can do better. The government has to do better, because our country is failing. It is not about politics anymore. It is about doing something bigger than that, and the bill before us could be so much better. It could do so much more. It could inspire Canadians. It could get us through this, but instead it is being rammed through in four hours. I cannot speak in 10 minutes to everything I talked about tonight, but Canadians need us to do that, and that is why this place matters. That is why each of us matters in here.

It is up to each of us, regardless of political stripe, to reclaim that power that every Canadian has and to make democracy matter again, especially with what we saw tonight south of the border. This is not entertainment, folks. These are people's lives, and what is happening here with the bill, with prorogation, is not enough. We need to do better. I call out of desperation and with a plea for hope that the government can do better than this. It is not enough.

I am happy to answer questions.

● (2405)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments this evening. They remind me of a tour I had earlier this month of an organization called LITE, Local Investment Toward Employment. She is right that there is a certain segment of society which far too often we overlook. I do not think it is intentional; I believe unintentional things take place that unfortunately cause some people to fall through the cracks as the Prime Minister made reference to and the member just spoke to. It was Tyler Pearce who provided me with a tour of the facility. This organization does some incredible work which COVID-19 has had an impact on. The people who are being serviced in many ways are completely dysfunctional and need the assistance and the opportunity to put in a few hours and get some cash. There is a willingness to do that.

In good part, I agree with what my colleague across the way is saying and maybe government needs to be more involved in directly supporting those individuals who are finding it so difficult to—

The Deputy Speaker: We will go to the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I think it is deliberately intentional that we overlook that stuff because, to be honest, the plight of people who suffer only comes to this place when it becomes politically inconvenient. That is what is wrong with our system in Canada right now. We are at a place in our nation's history where people have actually forgotten the power they hold because they have been conditioned to think what we are getting here is sufficient, that a daily ration from the government is what Canada is capable of. It is not. It is much more than that.

The country my family came to and worked in was one where anything was possible. I am not sure that it is the same country for the people who are coming to Canada today or live here. It is arrogant to say it is not intentional because the choices we make here have intent and our choices in this bill mean that we do not have a plan going forward to deal with the pandemic in a way that is be-

yond that daily handout from the government. I believe there should be more. I wish there were more—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague made a passionate plea on behalf of those who are falling through the cracks during this pandemic.

I may digress a little from the main topic, Bill C-4, to speak on the same issue. In the middle of a pandemic, the Bloc suggested amendments to the throne speech, to make sure it did not leave out seniors aged 65 to 75, for example. We suggested immediate health transfers so that no one in Quebec's health care system would fall through the cracks. However, the Conservatives voted against our amendment.

Does my colleague think that the government is letting other people fall through the cracks right now?

● (2410)

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I worry about seniors in Canada. I worry about my mother. I worry about how I am going to be a caregiver to my parents as I do this job. I worry about so many people and what has happened with the long-term care facilities in Canada right now during the pandemic.

What we should be doing here is having a discourse of thought on how we can solve these problems for Canadians. I feel like my power is being eroded, that I do not have the chance to meet with my colleague. We have never had a chance to have wine and talk about the areas we agree on and do not agree on because we have not been together.

Tonight I hope we realize the sanctity of this place and its ability to keep peace and bring prosperity and do not let that power go away. Of course I am open to talking about ways to help our seniors. I hope to have that glass of wine with her, but we need better than what we have here and we should have time to discuss that and come together as a country rather than accepting the status quo.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Calgary Nose Hill not just for splitting her time with me tonight and giving me an opportunity to speak to this bill, but also for her passion, her empathy, the respect that she has for this institution and the respect that she has for this country. She affected me and I think she affected a lot of Canadians tonight.

Now, I am an emotional guy by nature. Those who know me know that it does not take much for me to get emotional. I cry when I watch *Uncle Buck*. That is just the way it is. That scene at the end gets me every time.

I get emotional about this place as well. I have said many times in this House, and now even more so as the shadow minister for veterans affairs, that I think of the lives that have been lost. I think of the blood that has been spilled. I think of the families that have been decimated by war to allow all of us the privilege to sit in this place, to sit in our symbol of democracy, because of the fights that have gone on over the course of not just Canadian history but the history of war and other things. It is something I respect, and it is something, quite frankly, that I treat with the reverence that it deserves.

It is a place where Canadians can come together through their elected officials to have discussions, to have debates, to talk about how we can make the lives of Canadians better than what they are now. Canadians have been suffering greatly over the course of the last six months. We can all acknowledge that. Any of us who have been on the front lines, and we all have, know the types of calls we have had to our offices, with the level of despair, the level of anxiety and the level of anguish, and we have been there trying to help them.

We have taken that team Canada approach over the course of the last six months. To me, this was never a partisan thing. It was all about helping my constituents who were dealing with issues like the CERB and the Canada emergency wage subsidy. When the Canada emergency business account came out at 10%, I was getting phone calls from business people. They were crying on the phone with me. Many of them were crying because it was not enough, not just for them to keep their businesses but to keep the people employed.

We all went to work, all of us, not just Conservatives, not just NDP or Bloc or Greens. All of us worked together to recognize the issues that existed with the legislation that was being proposed, whether it was the emergency business account, the wage subsidy, the CERB, rent relief program, or repatriation. I worked directly with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, because there were lots of people from my riding in Costa Rica. Again, there was anxiety and anguish for the families who were in Barrie—Innisfil but also the families that were stuck there. We worked together on this stuff to try to help Canadians who were stranded abroad.

I gave credit publicly to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as he deserved, because he worked very well with us to repatriate those Canadians who were stuck. Many of them were from opposition ridings.

On the long-term care centres, I was getting phone calls. My family was directly affected. My mother-in-law was stuck in a long-term care facility. We have seen the decline in her mental capacity over the course of the last six months. Talk about anguish, my wife is dealing with that every single day.

• (2415)

When we come to this place, because of the sanctity of it, because of the respect and reverence that we have for it, the least that we can expect is the ability to deal with legislation and not have it rammed through like the Liberals are doing. There are things within this legislation that all of us can improve on. I said it yesterday. There are stakeholders. There are people who are going to be directly affected by this, just as business owners were affected when

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the Canadian business account was announced, when the wage subsidy was announced and other programs. They were calling us telling us that it was woefully inadequate. The rent relief program was another example.

There are things that we can improve on with this piece of legislation, but we cannot do it in four and a half hours. We cannot do it unless and until we get the input from not just parliamentarians but also those people who are going to be impacted by what this legislation calls for.

It is a \$57-billion bill and we are being given four and a half hours to deal with it. I can be bombastic and say that the government and the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament to save their political skin. They had every opportunity over the course of the last month to deal with this piece of legislation so that we would not be in the situation where we are trying to ram it through. There is no question that Canadians need it, because many Canadians are still feeling that anxiety. They are still feeling that anguish and they are wondering what the future holds for them.

It is easy for people to become cynical of government. When I look back at the 2015 plan of the government, the real plan, the Liberals talked against the very things that they are now doing. Maybe it was the newness of a government; maybe it was the naivete of a government that they thought that they could do all these things. That is what got them elected. That is why people voted for them.

They said that the government “will not interfere with the work of parliamentary officers; and it will not resort to devices like prorogation and omnibus bills to avoid scrutiny.” They also said, “And to give Canadians a stronger voice in the House of Commons, the Government will promote more open debate and free votes, and reform and strengthen committees.”

The Liberals are not doing that. They are not doing that at all. The very thing that got them elected in 2015 is the very thing they are moving away from now, and this is not the first time. I can go through the history of Motion No. 6. I can go through the history of earlier this year with the piece of legislation where the Liberals were trying to effectively seize control and power of Parliament for spending purposes for a period of a year and a half. That is not an indication of a government that respects this place, that reveres this place for those who have given so much to allow us to be in it. It is not an indication of that at all.

The thing that disturbs me most is, how can we not support this? How can we not support giving help to Canadians when they need it the most? However, this could have been done earlier than today. It could have been done with a lot more scrutiny and a lot more input, not just from parliamentarians but also stakeholders and individuals across this country who are going to be impacted by this.

The last thing I would say about this is that earlier tonight, John Ivison wrote an article in which he said:

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The Liberals have signed a Faustian pact with the NDP that they seem intent on honouring until they have a large enough lead in the polls, at which point the New Democrats will be cut loose and patronized as being erratic and unreliable.

I will say this for my colleagues in the NDP. The Liberals are going to wrap the New Democrats around their finger. They are going to chew them up and then they will eventually spit them out. They know right now that they need them because they cannot win a majority government, but when they get to that point, unfortunately, the New Democrats will be irrelevant to them.

This is what the Liberals do. This is all about power for them, and it shows very little respect. In fact, it shows a lack of respect for this place that it so richly deserves.

● (2420)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank my colleague from Barrie—Innisfil for his passion. He gets emotional because he cares, and I do want to thank him for that. I do want to let him know, when he talks about the Liberals and the NDP, that we are here for people. We are not here for power. We are here to help get people the help they need. That is what we are here to do as New Democrats.

One thing I appreciate about my friend is that he cares deeply about veterans, and many veterans, throughout this pandemic, have not been able to get the help they need. They have been waiting for the help they need. In fact, they were not even mentioned in the throne speech. My friend also voted with his caucus for my motion, an NDP motion to end lapsed spending, two years ago in this House. Both the Prime Minister and the leader of the official opposition voted for it. It was a unanimous motion.

Last year the Liberals left \$103 million in lapsed spending. We then learned from the PBO that if they hired people to fill some of the jobs that were cut by the Conservatives in the Harper government, at \$23 million a year for the next five years, the backlog would be gone.

Does my friend support using lapsed spending, hiring those workers back, and ending the backlog once and for all, so the government meets all those service standards it is not meeting?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank my friend for his passion and advocacy on the part of Canada's veterans. I know just how sincere he is in that advocacy. We did support the motion from a few years ago that called on the government to use lapsed spending to improve the case loads, which were already mounting two years ago. Of course, we found out from the Parliamentary Budget Officer just yesterday that the case load is now at 50,000. That is 50,000 veterans, and their families, who are waiting for adjudication and for those claims to be processed.

Part of my responsibility, since I was named three weeks ago today, has been to reach out to those families, and many of them are quite concerned about the status of VAC claims. We absolutely, 100% supported it then, and we continue to support the use of that lapsed spending to hire people to help veterans and their families with those claims.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr.

Speaker, I do take some exception, and I totally disagree with the member when he makes reference to process and expresses his disappointment.

I have been a parliamentarian for 30 years. Most of those years, more than 20, were on the opposition side of the benches, and I am very familiar with opposition tactics. I am very familiar with being in government, opposition and a third party. I can tell members, with the experience I have, I would have no problem whatsoever going to any university, whether it is here in Ottawa, Winnipeg or the member's riding, speaking with the member and doing a comparison of how this government has provided accountability and transparency, and has been true to democratic principles. I would invite my colleague to take me up on it.

● (2425)

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I do not even know where to start with that. This is a government with a Prime Minister who in 2015 said that they were going to be different, and they have been anything but. They are using omnibus bills. They are using prorogation when they said that they would never use prorogation. They are using prorogation for what reason? It was to get themselves out of a political scandal.

We find ourselves here tonight debating in just four and a half hours a piece of legislation that costs \$57 billion, without the process of Parliament. Here we are, returning to the full process in a hybrid manner of Parliament, but not having the ability to scrutinize this piece of legislation to make it better.

He can live in the lollipop, gum drop and fairy dust world all he wants. Canadians know the truth, and the truth is that the Liberals have not been as he describes them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how fascinating.

One thing I want to say is that I was deeply moved by my hon. colleague's speech. I too am an emotional guy. I too am in touch with my emotions. What is fascinating in all of this is that in 2011, when Stephen Harper was in power, the Liberals claimed it was impossible to impose a gag order or to prorogue Parliament, and yet Stephen Harper did it. The NDP said the same thing. Now, the Conservatives are telling the Liberals that it is not possible to prorogue Parliament or to use a gag order.

I want to understand something. Could my hon. colleague tell me whether the Conservatives, if they were to regain power, would be okay with proroguing Parliament and using gag orders again, as they have done in the past?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak a little French because I know that my colleague would like me to speak more French in the House.

I was not here when the Harper government was in power. I ran for office in 2015 for Prime Minister Harper, but we are not the ones who promised to do things differently in the House. It was the Liberals who promised that. The Liberals did not fulfill their obligations to Canadians in 2015 and they are not doing so now. I think that is the big problem that we are talking about today.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

I am extremely pleased to be here tonight to debate Bill C-4 on behalf of the people of Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

Before I begin, I would like to address a somewhat sensitive subject. I think that my colleagues were shocked and saddened by the same news as I was today. An indigenous woman died from an overdose of morphine administered by nursing staff in a Joliette hospital who did not listen to her when she said she was allergic to the drug. Staff were uttering racist and violent remarks as she lay dying, a horrible death.

Apart from Bill C-4 and the government's response to COVID-19, I think that it is going to take a lot more than a prorogation. The government can no longer hide behind that tactic to infringe on other jurisdictions. It is also going to take a lot more than a law instituting a national day for truth and reconciliation with indigenous people to fight systemic racism in Canada.

Now I am going to talk about Bill C-4. Earlier today, I heard the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons insinuate that the reason opposition parties wanted to prolong the debate was probably that they did not understand what it was about.

I can assure all members that we know exactly what this is about. We know it so well that we have already noticed the problems with this bill and want to fix them now, not when it is too late or when most individuals will already be involved in the program.

I would note that hundreds, if not thousands, of people have called their MPs to say that they did not think they were entitled to the CERB but that it was so easy to get that it must have been fine. Now many of them no longer have enough cash to pay that money back.

Those people could have stopped collecting the CERB at some point during the crisis when it was time to go back to work and do their bit to restart the economy. Unfortunately for our businesses, the lack of incentives to work meant that people were making more just staying home than they would have made going back to work.

This is the type of flaw that we must take the time to shed light on today in Bill C-4 even though the government wants to speed up

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the process. We owe at least that much to the people who elected us.

I will take this opportunity to make suggestions to the government to ensure the well-being of the people in my riding and those in Quebec and Canada. The Bloc Québécois presented its recovery plan yesterday and I invite the Liberals to read it carefully and use it as a guide because it reflects the needs and demands of the people of Quebec.

I am from Amqui, a small town in the Matapédia region in eastern Quebec. I am deeply attached to my region and the success and survival of all the regions in Quebec. I am sure that the economic future of Quebec lies in these regions and only Quebecers should decide how to use public funds.

The role of Canada, as long as we are part of it, is limited to the authority it is given under the Constitution. We talk about this Constitution a lot, probably because of the very centralizing Speech from the Throne that was delivered last week. What does the Constitution say? It says that the federal government must transfer to Quebec money to which it is entitled according to its areas of jurisdiction.

Since Ottawa is going to continue to pump huge amounts of money into the programs set out in Bill C-4, it is imperative that this be done properly. Yes, we need to support those most in need, those who have lost their jobs or have to stay home because of COVID-19. However, before it can start talking about creating thousands of new jobs, the federal government must ensure that existing jobs are protected. We need to support businesses that are struggling to stay afloat after the first wave.

One such business that comes to mind is Marmen, in Matane, a leader in the development of wind power in Quebec. This company is an expert in its field and is doing the Lower St. Lawrence region proud. Yesterday Marmen had the difficult task of announcing that it will have to lay off 55 employees on November 22 and another 100 or so the following week. When we hear news like that, we really need to hear the government say it will take the bull by the horns and make investments to support not only our people, but also our expertise.

We need a government that will once and for all stop investing directly in western Canada's fossil fuel industry through subsidies and tax breaks. We need a government that will invest in the energy transition instead, in wind power, forestry, innovative technologies and research and development. That is also what we need to hear. We also want to hear the government stand up for sectors that have been falling through the cracks since the crisis began.

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● (2430)

I am thinking in particular of travel agencies, which have been hard-hit from the beginning of the crisis. Ms. Labrecque is the owner of a travel agency in Maria, in the Gaspé, which is in my riding. Unfortunately, she thinks that she will not be able to keep her doors open for more than a few weeks for lack of funds. One of the problems is that she does not qualify for the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program and her business is considered to be a risk. Given that the travel industry is paralyzed, she no longer has access to credit.

For some businesses in Quebec regions, the summer of 2020 set records for visitors, but not for those agencies trying to survive on only 3% to 4% of their usual revenue. More than 200 agencies in Quebec have already closed their doors permanently. From the beginning, the Bloc Québécois has criticized the commercial rent assistance program as being ineffective and a poorly designed program that has failed miserably.

Bill C-4 is unfortunately not enough to help the travel industry. It is a dying industry. The Bloc Québécois proposed a refundable tax credit of 50% of recognized fixed costs. I am very interested to hear what the government has to say about that.

I now want to talk about seniors, a topic that is very close to my heart. I am fortunate in that my four favourite seniors are still living. I want to take this opportunity today to acknowledge Noëlla, Florent, Lorraine and Jean-Marc, from the bottom of my heart. No matter how old I am or how old they are, I will always call them grand-maman, grand-papa, mamie and papi. I am fortunate in that they are in good health.

It is difficult for me to restrict contact with them during the pandemic, but it is even harder for them and for all seniors in Quebec and Canada. They have been isolated for months, without support from the federal government, aside from a single, paltry cheque. It was a pittance.

Seniors have been hit hard by the crisis, as has their physical and mental health. We need to help them by immediately and permanently increasing the old age security pension, starting at age 65. Yes, I said age 65 and not 75. The guaranteed income supplement is in urgent need of being adjusted so that no one is penalized. We are calling for the federal government's health transfers to be increased to 35%, without any conditions. We will be repeating this many times.

The tragedy that struck long-term care facilities and seniors' residences in Quebec during the pandemic is the result of many years of underfunding, particularly on the part of the federal government. The situation in many facilities in Quebec is still difficult.

To date, over 5,800 people have died in Quebec. Of those, 4,000 died in long-term care facilities and 976 died in private seniors' residences. Those numbers are growing every day. We must not kid ourselves. The storm is not over yet.

I would like to take a brief moment to talk about the health care workers who care for seniors. Personal support workers and registered practical nurses work under extremely difficult conditions and they deserve our respect and admiration.

Canada needs people like Ahmed Aouad who works in a seniors' residence in Mont-Joli in my riding. This man does vitally important work, particularly in the current context. For months, he has had to work seven days a week because of a labour shortage. Mr. Aouad is seriously considering leaving Quebec, but it is not because he does not like his work, his home or his new country. On the contrary, he would like to live in the Lower St. Lawrence area. The reason he is considering leaving is that his wife lives in Morocco and it is practically impossible for her to come join him in Canada. The situation in Morocco is troubling, not only because of COVID-19, but also because of the political situation. All steps taken with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to help her come to Canada faster have been blocked indefinitely. I would have liked to spend more time talking to this man, but I am sure I will have the opportunity to do so soon.

In closing, I want to point out that the government could have prorogued Parliament for 24 hours but decided to prorogue for five weeks. As a result, we are being asked to rush Bill C-4 through without hearing from witnesses, even though that would have enabled us to identify and correct problems in the bill. That all happened because the Prime Minister wanted to sweep the WE scandal under the rug. Although we wanted to do whatever it took to serve our constituents' best interests, we deplore the government's approach. The government introduced Bill C-4 at the last second and is now asking us to pass it without conducting a thorough analysis because there is not enough time.

● (2435)

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member only gets one question in French.

This has been a very interesting day. Obviously there has been a series of votes. The vote earlier called for four and a half hours of debate on what is effectively a \$57-billion piece of legislation. Prorogation delayed, over the course of the last five weeks, the ability of the House to sit, and the Prime Minister, as I said earlier, did it to save his political skin at the height of the WE Charity scandal.

I am interested to hear my hon. colleague's views on what the Prime Minister did, how that impacted our ability to scrutinize this piece of legislation and the impact this could potentially have going forward.

● (2440)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I wish he had asked it in French, but I do appreciate his effort earlier.

I will answer the same way several of my colleagues have already answered today. We could have spent all summer debating bills and other things that are just important as the response to COVID-19, as I said at the start of my speech. Instead, the government chose to prorogue Parliament on the grounds that we had had plenty of time during the debate to ask our questions. That is not true. Today we are rushing this bill through in the middle of the night. I am happy to be here, but I think we could have dealt with this a long time ago for our constituents.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

I felt the same way when our colleague from Calgary Nose Hill spoke about the terrible tragedy of the death of Joyce Echaquan, an indigenous woman. A few minutes ago, I read in the news that an investigation has been launched and a nurse fired.

The problem of racism also exists in our public health system in British Columbia. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, a prominent indigenous woman and lawyer, is now leading an investigation into a similar matter. However, the circumstances are not as horrifying as those mentioned by my colleague.

What does my colleague think we can do to eliminate racism in our societies? It is not the focus of the bill before us, but that is what is in our hearts right now.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I am glad that she raised this subject.

I will come back to what I was saying earlier. Prorogation had several negative repercussions. I had the opportunity to sit on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, which was studying systemic racism in Canada's police services. Yes, racism is present in the health system, in police services and in many other places.

There have been reports on systemic racism. Everyone recognizes it. We were about to draft a new report, but Parliament was prorogued and the committee is no longer. The government must act. It knows what to do. The demands of the various groups have not changed. We know what needs to be done to eliminate or at least to work on eliminating systemic racism. However, the government chose to prorogue Parliament because of the scandal.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Brian Sinclair, an indigenous person from Manitoba, sat in the emergency ward for 36 hours, and he died. He was dead for 36 hours before it was found out, and there was an issue of racism tied to it. Based on some comments I have heard, we should have an appreciation of how important it is, from a national government perspective, for there to be a role for us that goes far beyond some of the things we have talked about over the last little while.

I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts on what role a federal government could play in the various issues that have been referenced this evening.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I agree that the federal government cannot do it all and cannot fix every problem, but it can certainly do a lot.

For instance, it could do more to support police services across Canada, such as providing more resources for officer training, to educate officers about systemic racism and the differences that exist in our society. There are a lot of things like that that it could do. It just has to pay attention and listen to what the opposition parties

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and groups that appear before parliamentary committees have been saying. It just needs to act.

• (2445)

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are currently debating Bill C-4. A debate is fine, but it would have been nice if the government had observed the rules of democracy from start to finish.

Near the end of her speech, my colleague said that the government could have prorogued Parliament for just 24 hours, rather than the five weeks. Like all bills, this bill may contain flaws that we might not notice at first glance, which is why the parliamentary process is useful, as it allows us to study the bill properly and hear from witnesses. That will all be impossible, unfortunately. We have to accept it, since now the government wants to fast track this bill, ignoring the need for rigorous, thorough analysis.

Not that the situation is not urgent; far from it. As we have been saying from the outset, a work incentive should have been included in the CERB way back in April. The lack of any incentive may have gone unnoticed when we were in lockdown, when virtually everything ground to a halt. That said, over the summer, Quebec tried to lift the lockdown and get the job market moving again. It was an extremely difficult situation.

Let's be honest. The CERB is not the only factor causing problems for employment. In times of uncertainty and fear, it is easy to imagine that many workers are afraid or do not really want to go back to work.

Let's get to the heart of the matter. As we know, the Bloc strongly favours workers. For that reason, as we have said, we support Bill C-4 in principle. We are naturally in favour of the idea of benefits that incentivize going back to work and that support people who have to stay home from work because they are sick or self-isolating. We are naturally in favour of providing support to those who would be putting themselves at risk by going to work. We are naturally in favour of supporting caregivers. That goes without saying. There is no problem there.

Furthermore, the bill will probably help unemployed workers, whether they are salaried or self-employed. Capping the benefit at \$500 a week is entirely appropriate because under this new program, if an employer brings rehires an employee on a part-time basis, the employee does not lose the \$500. My beloved riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot is very reliant on agriculture and agri-food and is heavily dominated by the service sector. The coming into force of Bill C-4 will certainly do it some good. It will have a positive effect. While the CERB was rigid and vanished as soon as workers earned more than \$1,000 a month, Bill C-4 adjusts the benefit in proportion to income. No worker will lose their income because they want to ply their trade. That is what the Bloc has been calling for since the spring. So much the better.

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We are also in favour of support for caregivers. However, we think it would have made more sense to extend the benefit to parents of children aged zero to 16, instead of 0 to 11, purely because school is mandatory up until the age of 16. It is as simple as that.

We hope to be worthy of speaking for Quebec workers. Two days ago, Pierre Céré, from the Conseil national des chômeurs et chômeuses, said that these benefits will ultimately support the economy as the second wave begins. These benefits will help people pay their rent or mortgage and bolster consumer spending. These benefits will help keep the economy operating at a certain level during these difficult times.

Yesterday I also spoke about this with Mouvement action chômage in Saint-Hyacinthe, a partner of my office. This organization thinks the bill is worthwhile, which is similar to our position. We think the bill is worthwhile, but woefully inadequate, and we think it contains some grey areas. Some other aspects are worthy of mention, such as the single eligibility criterion, which we have not seen since 1977; the elimination of the waiting period until October 25; the 26-week minimum; the reduction of hours to 120; and the reduction of sanctions for terminations that are deemed invalid. In addition, the benefits system is much more flexible. The bill does contain all kinds of good ideas. As members know, the Bloc would prefer that Quebec be allowed to administer its own program and its own EI fund.

• (2450)

The fact remains that this bill contains many of our long-held ideas and requests, along with several things that unions and lobby groups have been calling for for decades.

It even makes good on some election promises that the Liberals made in 2015 but did not keep.

Some may say that all that is fine and dandy, but that is precisely the problem. Why did it take a pandemic for this to happen?

The pandemic did not create the difficult conditions for unemployed workers. It simply exacerbated a situation that has existed for a long time. The major difference is that all of the demands and proposals that I shared with the House, our own and those of the unions and lobby groups, centred on an overhaul of the EI system, not a temporary fix. It almost seems as though the Canadian parties are leaving some wiggle room so that they can go back to the way things were as soon as the opportunity arises.

What will happen when the pandemic is over? Will we go back to the old EI system, or will Bill C-4 be the basis for real, lasting change?

Over the last 20 years and more, the EI system has been slowly but thoroughly dismantled. Fewer and fewer people qualify for benefits. Only four out of 10 unemployed workers have access to the program.

I remember that when I first became involved in politics about 10 years ago, during the election campaign, there were already posters asking who had stolen money from unemployed workers. Unfortunately, nothing has changed. Employment insurance has been altered so drastically that it can almost be seen as more of a tax than an actual assistance program. That says it all.

The National Assembly has adopted several unanimous motions calling on Ottawa to stop making changes that negatively impact Quebec workers. The story is always the same, no matter which party is in power in Ottawa or which party is in power in Quebec City. We are being accused of engaging in constitutional squabbling. I am not afraid to talk about the Constitution. The Constitution applies to us until proven otherwise, so we should be talking about it.

Ever since 1996, Ottawa has orchestrated an outright misappropriation of money from the employment insurance fund. Surpluses have been transferred to the federal government's consolidated revenue fund. In 2014, the real government of Canada, the Supreme Court, overturned Quebec unions' case against Ottawa for misappropriating nearly \$60 billion from the fund. Canada's highest court, which some see as the government of judges, allowed that money to be diverted. Then, in 2008, the Supreme Court found that surpluses were illegally diverted in 2002, 2003 and 2005, but it did not require the government to pay back what it took. What kind of a lesson is that? In all, workers were stripped of several billion dollars. All that shows a consistently predatory approach to employment insurance.

To sum up, we are not happy with the way Bill C-4 was imposed, but we do support, to an extent, much of what it contains. Here is the real question: Is this a major step on the path to concrete, long-term change, or is this a temporary change that will evaporate the moment the crisis is behind us?

It would be good to ask the parties seeking to govern Canada about this. If the past is an indicator of the future, we have good reason to be worried—quite worried. Luckily, the Bloc will not give up the fight.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know it is late. I appreciate the way you are managing things. I have a question for the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

I know his region quite well, and I liked his speech very much. I have explored every corner of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. I know the issue he raised is a real concern there. This money that was stolen from the EI fund means that workers who paid for insurance for years in case they lost their jobs ended up not getting insurance benefits when they needed them. Often, in almost 60% of cases, people who lost their jobs did not have access to EI. That is ridiculous and disgusting. It shows a total lack of respect for workers.

My question is quite simple. The fact is that the Conservative Party and the Liberal government stole from an insurance program that was there for workers. In this case, it was not available for the people who lost their jobs. What impact did that have in my colleague's riding?

• (2455)

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, probably much like in every corner of Quebec and Canada, this obviously has had extremely serious repercussions.

Agriculture and agri-food are huge in my riding. While Saint-Hyacinthe is a major centre for agri-food processing, the service industry is also very important for the region. There have been serious repercussions. Since the pandemic has only exacerbated those problems, it is never too late to do the right thing. Let's hope, once again, that this is not just temporary. It would be nice to hear some commitments in that regard.

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things the member mentioned in his speech that I found interesting was that things that seemed impossible for the Liberal government suddenly became possible when COVID-19 hit. I noticed the same thing about the illegal border crossers at Roxham Road. Suddenly we seemed to be able to solve that problem once COVID-19 hit.

I am wondering what the member's thoughts are on that.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, my colleague certainly asked a leading question.

We often hear about things being impossible, but it is often a self-imposed impossibility, so to speak. In many cases, it could be called self-censorship. Motivation can often be found when needed, but at other times it is elusive.

My colleague's remarks were eloquent enough without my needing to add anything. He asked a question that was really more of a comment, and I agree with him.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question in regard to recognizing that in order to maximize the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic what we have witnessed is governments at different levels, the provincial governments across Canada, working with Ottawa and we have seen a heightened sense of co-operation.

Would the member agree that governments working with different types of responsibilities still working together on the responsibility of serving Canadians first and foremost was one of the reasons why we were so effective at getting the resources to the people who needed them the most during this pandemic and one of the reasons why it is important that we continue on with the legislation that I understand the member will be voting for and I appreciate the member's and the Bloc's for support for the bill.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I believe the member is asking about working together, working with governments at different levels.

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In the past two weeks, health transfers have been a popular topic. Of course, when there is a pandemic, work is done within a Parliament or between governments at different levels, but the Quebec National Assembly is unanimously calling for health transfers. I am not talking about the Government of Quebec or the Premier of Quebec. Everyone across the political spectrum, from Québec Solidaire to the CAQ, is calling for this.

For the past two weeks, the government has been accusing us of trying to pick a fight, but these problems have been around since the 1990s, when a minister in Jean Chrétien's government called cuts to health transfers a political weapon.

Who is the one picking a fight here?

• (2500)

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver East.

I am delighted to be able to join today. I am delighted to be able to virtually participate in our discussion on Bill C-4. I have enjoyed listening to all the members speak and I do miss being able to be in the House, but there is some benefit because it is a little bit earlier in the day in Alberta where I am at the moment.

I am going to talk about Bill C-4 and I am also going to take a moment to talk about what COVID-19 means in Alberta and how Bill C-4 will help in Alberta. I was certainly moved by the words we heard from the member for Calgary Nose Hill and I would like to add to that, if I may.

I first want to say that Bill C-4 is a good first step. I am so proud that because of what the NDP fought for, including the paid sick leave and for supports for Canadians who cannot return to work, Canadians, Albertans, Edmontonians, people in Edmonton Strathcona, will not be as anxious about they will deal with the second wave of COVID-19 we know is coming.

People will worry about their health and safety, and the health and safety of their family, but they do not need to worry about their bills or how they are going afford to meet their needs. Extending the supports until summer and keeping the support at \$2,000 a month means that people impacted by this pandemic can pay their rent and can put food on their tables in the coming months.

Paid sick leave means that Canadians who are sick or Canadians whose children are sick, can stay home and do the right thing to protect themselves and our communities without worrying about losing income.

I would like to congratulate the government on listening to the NDP and recognizing that Canadians need sick leave during a global pandemic. Of course, Canadians need sick leave at all times, but we will keep fighting for that. Canadians also need to know that they will have adequate support until they go back to work.

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We know that this bill would provide help to millions of Canadians and I am proud of that. I appreciate the collaborative way that some, certainly not all, parliamentarians have worked to help Canadians during this pandemic. I am particularly proud of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party and the members who have been fighting for Canadians since the very beginning of this pandemic. We are ensuring help for people out of work through no fault of their own, seniors, students and recent graduates, small businesses and people living with disabilities, all those who were forgotten by the Liberals in their initial plans. I am proud that we were able to improve on almost every single proposal by the government and I am proud to say we will continue to fight for Canadians and we do not think that our job is done.

I do want to focus on Alberta for a moment. Even before the pandemic was declared six months ago, Edmonton had one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. Our economy was in free fall. The provincial government had done cuts that were leading to layoffs. The post-secondary institutions we needed for innovation and diversification were dealing with deep cuts to support. Women were facing higher levels of violence than in other regions of the country. We were also already facing a homelessness crisis.

I recall standing in the House and asking what the government's plan was to support Alberta workers facing a decimated oil and gas sector and the desperate need for us to help to diversify the Alberta economy. I pleaded with the government then to create a plan and solution to the economic crisis that is gripping my province. A plan for an economy that will support Alberta now and into the future. That was in February. I stood up in the House and said those things in February and then COVID-19 hit and that has made it worse.

While some provinces are beginning to see a recovery, in Alberta, we are not. In my riding of Edmonton Strathcona, CERB has been a lifeline for tens of thousands of constituents and constituents need the support to keep their homes, to pay their rent, and to put food on the table for their families.

I have personally spoken to hundreds of Albertans who have used CERB to survive. I am not sure if members heard in the news today, but not a single one of those people I spoke to used that benefit for Cheezies, cartoons or drugs. I am appalled that a Conservative in my province thinks that 1,062,640 Albertans did not need the support they received during this unprecedented global health pandemic.

● (2505)

I live in Edmonton Strathcona, the heart of the creative sector. It is where we have the fringe festival, the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, theatres and restaurants that work with those theatres. Those artists, musicians, venue operators and restaurant owners were all so worried about what would happen and how they would survive at the end of CERB. I am so pleased that I can offer them support with the CRB.

I have spoken to small business owners, to parents and to recent graduates struggling with debt and a lack of income. I have spoken to people with disabilities who are desperate to know when they will be supported. I cannot say it enough that people in Alberta are dealing with the triple blow of an economic catastrophe, a provincial government that has implemented a cruel regime of cuts and

layoffs, and a global pandemic unlike anything we have ever seen. Those people in Alberta need the support that the bill would provide, but it is not enough for Alberta. Albertans will need all of us, all parties, to fight for them in the coming years ahead.

We know that the supports in Bill C-4 are good, but they do not go far enough. If it was not apparent before COVID-19, we know that so many people in Canada, so many people in Edmonton Strathcona, have precarious employment. They rely on part-time work and gig work. They are contract workers or self-employed, and they are not covered by EI benefits. It is critical to recognize that the EI system is inadequate for our needs with or without a pandemic. We need to make these temporary emergency fixes permanent, because all workers need to be protected, not just some.

We know that at the beginning of the pandemic my NDP colleagues and I pushed for an emergency basic income that would have gotten support out to everyone who needed it. Instead, the government relied on the EI system. We asked for something that would go out to everyone, but we did not get that. What we got instead was a system that was based on exclusions. Dozens of students did not qualify for CERB. Expectant mothers lost their EI benefits. People living with disabilities facing enormous challenges were left out. What we have to do now is to make sure that those people are not left out going forward.

I am pleased that the government is extending emergency support beyond basic EI into the summer. I am pleased that the government has adopted our recommendation not to cut the benefit to Canadians from \$2,000 a month. I am happy to see the Canadian recovery child care benefit and the Canadian recovery sickness benefit, but I have concerns. These things have to become permanent. Sick leave has to become permanent. Things like child care cannot be limited to children who are under 12 years old. I am the mother of a 12-year-old child. If that child has COVID or is ill, I cannot leave them at home. We need to do better. We need to look at what is in Bill C-4, recognize the value in it and improve it.

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I am happy to support Bill C-4 for what it does for Canadians, but there is so much more we must do. We must extend the moratorium on student loan payments. We must provide support for students and graduates who cannot find work. We have to ensure that there is accessible, reliable, universal child care. We need to make sure that our seniors are protected in long-term care centres that are not driven by profit, but rather have national standards that protect all seniors. We need to invest in our public health care system with things like pharmacare, mental health care and dental care.

We must identify the people who are left behind, and we cannot let them fall through the cracks again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's speech. I have a good relationship with him.

Today, former NDP MP Françoise Boivin tweeted that she felt a pang at seeing her former NDP colleagues vote in favour of a gag order. I wonder what the member, who just gave a wonderful speech, thinks about that. One of her former colleagues, who was here during the Harper era and experienced these gag orders, would never have voted for one. She felt a pang at seeing her former colleagues vote in favour of the motion.

I would like to know how she feels about her former colleague's tweet.

• (2510)

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, the member and I work very well together and he will know that, at the international human rights committee, we had planned to bring forward a report on the genocide of the Uighurs in China. Of course I was very disappointed to hear the government had chosen prorogation. It is the reason we are supporting this now. It is very disappointing that we have not been debating this, looking at it and taking care of Canadians while Parliament was prorogued, but I feel it is so important that we get the help out to Canadians. Of course I am completely disappointed that the Liberals dropped the ball on this and left it to the last minute. It is a complete abdication of their responsibility, but I understand that it is more important for us to get the support to Canadians as fast as we can.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that my hon. colleague said we need this to go out as fast as possible but we also need a guillotine motion, a debate closure motion, and that the NDP are supporting that. We have all said we need to take care of the citizens of this country. Would it not be appropriate to just have allowed debate to fall on its own?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I really wish we had that opportunity to debate, but because we have run out of time, I do not want to go back to the people of Edmonton Strathcona and tell them they have to wait. I spoke to a woman on the phone who burst into tears when I told her that we were fighting to have the CERB extended. I have talked to artists who do not know what they are going to do. I have stood on people's doorsteps and the one thing they have said to me is that they need to know how they are going to be taken care of because they cannot go back to work.

It is not about us in the House, or what we do in the virtual or the real House. It is about what Canadians need right now, and they need the support they are going to get from Bill C-4.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on this theme because, as the hon. member mentioned, it is frustrating to find ourselves with this sense of urgency, which was concocted by the government. I wonder what it will mean for Canadians if every time the Liberals come up with some kind of cockamamie political scheme, we decide to punish them.

I wonder if the member would like to remind members of the House when exactly the CERB expired and what that means for Canadians who do not know what is coming as a replacement and who already have to plan for October and have to know how they are going to pay their landlord and put food on the table. Yes, the blame lays squarely at the feet of the Liberal government for having created this sense of urgency when there was time to debate it.

However, is it the right thing to do to punish Canadians who are on the ropes for the incompetence of the Liberal government, or is it better to put that aside, in a state of emergency, and move swiftly to make sure that while we figure out the politics of it Canadian households are not on the ropes?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I feel we are really missing the thread if we start to focus on whether or not we have had adequate time to debate the bill. Yes, it is vital for the strength of our democracy, but as I said, I am talking to people in my riding who are desperate, who need support and who need to know what is happening when the CERB ends. This will give them the ability to have some peace of mind.

• (2515)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to join in this debate tonight. We have heard all through the night from members of Parliament about the issues around the impact of the pandemic and what it is like for their constituents, for the people in their community. The impact has been significant. There is no question.

It is no less significant in my community of Vancouver East. Right from the get-go, when the pandemic was on the horizon, New Democrats got up on the floor to call on the government to act. Members will recall that the government's response was that it was going to waive the 10-day waiting period for EI. That was the extent of what the government was going to do.

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New Democrats said that was absolutely unacceptable, because some 60% of Canadians do not qualify for EI. Through all of that process and in driving the issue, New Democrats would have ideally liked to see a universal direct payment or a livable basic income. The government resisted that, and instead it came in with the CERB program.

The CERB program is an important program, but let us be honest with ourselves. Even the Liberal members know this. The CERB program excluded a lot of people. As soon as the government announced that program, we had to fight like crazy to drive the issue, to bring forward the voices of the people who were left out and to say that we could not leave them behind.

The Liberals left seniors behind. They left people with disabilities behind. They left students behind. They left self-employed individuals behind. They left so many people behind, part-time workers, migrant workers, and on and on the list went. New Democrats went at it like there was no tomorrow to drive home the message that we had to do better, that it was our obligation to do better.

We did get there. The government slowly, bit by bit, fixed some of those programs. Even with that, there are still people who did not get the support they should have gotten. Here is one example, and I raised this directly with the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. Single parents who are reliant on child support, as a result of COVID-19, lost that income. The Canadian government did not see that as income and, therefore, they did not qualify for CERB. I raised that directly with the minister, who indicated that she understood that she had to be there and that the government had to be there to support women. However, to this day, that has not been fixed.

That has been the pattern of the Liberal government to date, quite frankly, and it has been the NDP's job to consistently go after the government to do better. Bill C-4 is exactly just that, because we went after the government to do better.

I know some people will say that the NDP is in bed with the Liberals. Let us be clear about that. We are not in bed with anyone, with the exception of Canadians who need help. Our job is to make sure that we deliver support to them at this most critical time, a time when we are faced with a pandemic.

The government decided to prorogue the House and it was a shameful act, to be honest. It left people in the lurch in the middle of a pandemic and wondering what was going to happen to them. Before the government left, it said it was going to end the CERB program, but it was going to come in with another measure that reduced the amount of support. It was going to reduce the amount from \$2,000 a month to \$1,600, leaving so many people behind.

New Democrats never gave up. Our leader, the member for Burnaby South, and our critic, the member for Elmwood—Transcona, just went after it relentlessly, saying that we needed to do better and demanded better. The result is Bill C-4. We actually got the government to change the program, to move towards what it needed to be, which was to provide \$2,000 a month in support for people in need, for all the people who were left out. This is why we have Bill C-4 before us today.

Right from the get-go, New Democrats have said there is something wrong with our labour standards, in the sense that somehow people who fall ill are not eligible for paid sick leave. What is wrong with this picture? It was particularly evident in the middle of the pandemic when this occurred.

● (2520)

The government was not really going to move on that. It was the New Democrats who continually drove that issue to where we are today, with the changes we see before us in Bill C-4, so that people could get the sick leave they need.

All of that said, these measures are a patchwork approach. That is the reality of what we have today, and it is better than nothing, but the government claims that it wants to build back better. It should give some meaning to those words and make these programs permanent. We should not have to fight this every single time we are in a situation where we do not know what the future may hold. People should not have to worry about their future. People should be treated with the kind of respect and dignity that we all deserve. That is what the New Democrats will continue to fight for.

I think this highlights a very clear issue for us with respect to what needs to be done. My very good colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, put forward a guaranteed livable income motion. We should be debating that. We should be talking about how to implement that to make sure that nobody gets left behind.

The government talked about the great work it is doing with respect to housing. I listened intently to the throne speech and was looking to hear from the government about real, concrete action to deliver housing to people in the middle of a pandemic. Just before the throne speech the government announced 3,000 housing units. It was a rapid housing response, it said. Let us put this in context. From a homelessness count that was recently done, we know there are over 2,000 homeless people in Vancouver alone. Three thousand units are not going to do it.

My colleague, the member for Nunavut, just took a tour of her region, and it makes my heart weep to hear the testimony she shared with me and my colleagues about what she saw, about the experiences of people who are homeless and living in “mouldy boxes”. These are houses so infested with mould that it is making them sick. People are losing their children because they do not have proper, safe, adequate, affordable housing. Families are breaking up. She called it the modern-day colonization. That is the reality. What is wrong with this picture when we have this situation today and the government brags about 3,000 units as though that is the solution?

Today I say it is not good enough. This is a start, and the New Democrats are doing their level best to drive forward this issue with the government. We have to do more than just talk. It is incumbent on all of us as elected members in the House to do that job, not to play games, not for partisan politics and not to point fingers. At the end of the day, we must ask what we are delivering to the people who elected us to represent them.

For those in Vancouver East and all the people in my community, people in the Strathcona encampment who are homeless today, people struggling with the opioid crisis, seniors who need standardized national long-term care support, and people and families who need support from the Canadian government, we need to be a real partner at the table. We need to deliver, not just talk. It is enough already. This is a heads-up to all Liberal members to stop patting themselves on the back. They should ask themselves what they are going to do today to do better.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate and recognize that the New Democrats are supporting the legislation. That is a good thing, as they have a great deal to contribute. However, I would not want to underestimate anything. The member said that we should not pat ourselves on the back, but she has spent a great deal of time patting the NDP on the back.

Looking at what we have accomplished in the last eight months, support programs have been put in place. From day one, the Prime Minister has said that we will be there for Canadians during this trying time. There was the creation of the CERB program and the wage loss program; supports for the GIS program, the OAS program and our students; and the summer programs. The list goes on. I can comment about members in the Liberal caucus, but members of all caucuses contributed immensely to the debate and ensured that we could get some of the changes we are seeing here today.

I wonder if the member acknowledges that it took a combination of a wide spectrum of people, even beyond members of Parliament, to ensure that we had the changes we are bringing forward today to continue to support Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

• (2525)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals are truly reflecting on their actions today, then they really should ask themselves why they did not follow what the New Democrats said and brought in a universal direct income program. If they did that, people would not have to fight continually for the government to fill the holes and gaps that it created. The Liberals should truly reflect on that and understand the implications of what it means. Going forward, what can we do and what can the government do to do better?

In this debate on Bill C-4, why not put in the legislation that it would be a permanent program so that we do not need to have this debate over and over again? Who among the Liberals said to the Prime Minister that this is not acceptable and that they want to see a permanent program? I challenge the—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saint-Jean.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I am having some difficulty understanding my colleague's beliefs. She voted in favour of the gag order, but she voted against the Bloc Québécois motion calling on the government not to leave out seniors between the ages of 65 and 75. Perhaps that is not what really bothered her. She voted against health transfers. Perhaps that is not what really bothered her either. There was one

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other thing in the motion, and that was respect for Quebec's jurisdiction. Her colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie even said that he supported the Bloc Québécois because he believes in respecting Quebec's jurisdiction.

Am I to understand that a gag order is more important to her than respecting Quebec's jurisdiction?

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. The New Democrats have always recognized Quebec's unique history within Canada.

With respect to the motion put forward by the Bloc, the component I find myself challenged with is the suggestion that the federal government should provide funding to Quebec and other provinces with no strings attached. In some cases we actually do need to set national standards. For example, with the Canada Health Act, we need to set national standards to ensure that when dollars flow we have the deliverables from the provinces.

Take a look at what is going on right now in New Brunswick with Clinic 554. Right now people are not able to access the very services they need for reproductive health, particularly the LGBTQ2+ and transgender communities. That is not okay. We need to set national standards to ensure that everyone can access the health care they need.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House at any hour to address the important issues that Canadians are facing as we are in this pandemic.

• (2530)

[Translation]

To begin with, I would like to acknowledge that we are on the territory of the Algonquin nation.

[English]

To the Algonquin Nation, I express gratitude for their extraordinary generosity and hospitality. *Meegwetch.*

This evening has been an interesting experience because we are of course at distance and each party has to reduce its numbers in the House. I have been with my colleague from Fredericton and my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith. We have been coming in by turns, so in our last round of voting I was voting by Zoom. Probably some of us now in the House were as well. There was an eerie moment when, as we were voting, one could hear Donald Trump's voice. Someone on one of the channels was paying attention to the U.S. presidential debate.

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I only mention this because I am extremely grateful to be Canadian. I am very grateful to be with all of the members here tonight and those who are still on Zoom. I am very grateful that even in our partisan debates, which for Canadians can sometimes veer toward the toxic, we hear each other and, for the most part, speak respectfully to each other. We do not have a leader who yells and refuses to condemn white supremacy. It is distressing, to put it mildly.

In the context of speaking to this, I want to commend those things about all of us that make us Canadian. I am grateful that this Parliament is a minority Parliament. I do not much like false majorities where a minority of the voters can deliver 100% of the power to the party that has the most seats. I am grateful for how closely this Parliament, facing the COVID pandemic, as the member for Barrie—Innisfil was mentioning earlier tonight, was working with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the parliamentary secretary and many others to get our constituents home. We have for the most part, throughout this pandemic, found ways to work together.

I am grateful that the New Democratic Party worked with the Liberals to vastly improve the piece of legislation we have in front of us. However, we cannot say it solves all the problems, and I will speak to that for the bulk of my remarks.

Earlier tonight, one of our colleagues said that Canada was failing, and I want to address that directly. We are struggling. Every single part of the human family is, no matter where we find those governments and societies, however they are knit together in successful, healthy democracies that are prosperous like ours or in countries that were on the verge of collapse before COVID hit. Every country is struggling to one degree or another. I thank God I am not in Brazil, where Bolsonaro just got rid of all the restrictions on logging in the mangrove forests while the Amazon is so dry that the Pantanal wetland, an extraordinary wetland of biodiversity, is on fire.

[*Translation*]

This is our entire planet's heritage, and our planet is now on fire. In British Columbia, we are breathing in the smoke from fires in California, Oregon and Washington State. We are dealing with two emergencies at once: the pandemic and climate change.

[*English*]

When I look around the world at where I could live, what I could be, what country I could belong to, we are not failing; we are struggling. We are working together too, and as long as we keep the spirit of working together, we will get through this okay. We will get through this and will be capable of building back better. We will be capable of reimagining our future. We will deliver. We may not trust each other all that much because we belong to different political parties, but when we get past the thing about our parties, we trust each other. If I were in trouble, I could call any of the people here and I know there would be help coming. We are one family, all of us Canadians.

In that context, I welcome this legislation. I hope it alleviates the concerns for most Canadians, but it clearly does not speak to all of us. There is much more work to do.

One particular group of Canadians that has been let down badly through all of this is Canadians with disabilities. We have a lot

more work to do there, as well as for businesses. As my friend from Courtenay—Alberni mentioned earlier, so many businesses are in deep trouble.

I am very concerned for the tourism sector. There is an iconic tourism business in my riding, the Butchart Gardens. My colleagues from Vancouver Island and others across Canada know Butchart Gardens. I have been talking to the general manager and the CEO, who are very worried that they will not make it to next year. Their business has dropped by 90%. They had to lay off 450 people. Help is not coming, so the tourism business particularly needs an infusion of relief help and cash. Somehow we have to do that.

Individual small businesses, restaurateurs, touring companies, in fact all kinds of companies, small and large, are still in trouble and we do not know when the pandemic will end. I remember when it started, more or less, and standing here on March 13, I wondered if we really did not have to come back until April 20. That seemed a rather long time.

Do my colleagues remember how that felt? We had no idea then and we still do not know, so it is very important for Canada that we actually hold together.

I will reference something before I turn back to the bill: One of Canada's more brilliant academics, Thomas Homer-Dixon, has a new book out called *Commanding Hope*, which is about how it really matters to use hope as a tool to hang on to and pull people through in tough times. It could not have come out at a better time than now, with the dual threats of the climate crisis and the pandemic. He mentioned to me that, in polling around the world, an encouraging sign was that most countries are encouraging more social cohesion than before the pandemic started. That is not the case in the United States or Brazil, but most nations are feeling that sense of all being in this together that my father used to tell me about. He grew up in London during the Blitz.

My father said, at one point when we had been busy fighting the government of Nova Scotia on one environmental fight or another, that he really preferred the Second World War. I asked him how he could possibly prefer the Second World War when he was at risk of being blown up at any moment. He said, "Back then, you know, we really had the feeling the government was on our side." That is how people are feeling now, I think.

In a long time, generationally speaking, we have been distanced from the notion that if someone is in real trouble they are not going to turn to the billionaire class to bail them out, because they are busy making money on their own. They are not figuring out how to hold bake sales for the rest of us.

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Coming back to this bill, I am extremely glad to see the changes that have been made to make sure that it is \$500 a week and not \$400 a week. I am extremely glad to know that we are trying to figure out how we can have a Canada recovery benefit, a Canada recovery sickness benefit, and a Canada recovery caregivers benefit. Reading the details of this, what comes to me is how hard it is to legislate by specific example while hoping not to forget anyone.

I would like to read an example. Of course all of my colleagues here have read this, but if anyone is an insomniac and watching this right now: Someone will qualify for this benefit if they have a child who is normally cared for, and who is under the age of 12, on the first day of the week because the school that the child normally attended has had to close for reasons related to COVID. Maybe the school would be open at certain times of the day, or the child could not attend school because the child had contracted or might have contracted COVID-19. Maybe the child was in isolation because a doctor said they might be better off in isolation, or they might be at risk of health complications. Maybe the person who usually cared for the child was not available because of COVID-19, or because they cared for a family member who required supervised care because the day program or facility that the family member normally attended was closed.

● (2535)

I could go on and on. In trying to anticipate every specific in order to have the benefit work for everyone, listing specifics inevitably leaves something out. I would suggest again, and not for the first time in this place, that we really need to think about the universality of our social safety net. Our health care system works because it was made universal. If Tommy Douglas had sat down in Saskatchewan way back when and said, "Let us create a health care system where we can list the people who might need help," it would not have worked. If people happen to be very sick, and let us say there is only x amount of money in their bank account, or let us say someone is only a bit sick, it would never work. Universality is necessary for a social safety net. It is really time to talk about and implement a guaranteed livable income.

We know the Parliamentary Budget Officer did an initial review and said that a universal income would be cheaper than CERB. A truly universal income would be enormous but would end up saving our society money in the health care system, because poverty is the single largest social determinant of health. It would save us money on corrections, because it is a lot cheaper to make sure people are going to school, getting a good start in life and going to university than keeping them in jail, which costs over \$100,000 a year per prisoner. As Hugh Segal, former Progressive Conservative Senator has shown in his book, *Bootstraps Need Boots*, there are multiple good, solid reasons to move to a guaranteed livable income.

I put this to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion earlier today and I was really pleased with her answer, which I will paraphrase. She said what we are doing now is getting this benefit out to replace CERB, and CERB is going to turn into EI. Then there are relief and sickness programs, and I completely agree with the New Democrats that being able to take sick leave is something that every Canadian should be able to count on.

However, all that aside, the minister shared that just because we are doing this now does not mean that there are other conversations to be had. Let us hang on to that and really work with Finance Canada, the Parliamentary Budget Office and the provincial and municipal orders of government and figure out how much money could be saved if we stopped having shame-based poverty band-aid programs. These include welfare programs where, if a single mother goes back to work, any money she makes is clawed back from welfare, or if a single mother lives with her boyfriend, she loses all the benefits. This kind of programming does not eliminate poverty, it perpetuates poverty.

It is in the interests of Canada as whole. It is in the interests of the health of our society, our resilience and our ability to manage the next pandemic. We really cannot manage what happens with the climate crisis if we do not act fast. Frankly, the Speech from the Throne is quite inadequate in that regard, but tonight's debate is not on the Speech from the Throne, so I will stick to the Canada recovery benefit and the other sections of the bill.

This gives us a sense of what must be done, but we are still falling short. I take heart from the minister's response about 13 hours ago. Her response earlier today was that there is a conversation to be had about guaranteed livable income in this country. How much progress is that? In the 2019 election, only a year ago, only the Greens were talking about guaranteed livable income. Some NDP spoke of it as well, but not in the platform.

We need to grab this moment. How large are the transformational moments that are possible now? This is not just a pandemic affecting Canada. This is global. Every single modern democracy, every G20 country is dealing with debt and deficits.

● (2540)

We have to think big. We have to reimagine our rules. I was pleased that the Prime Minister said to the United Nations, let's think about something as big as a new version of the Bretton Woods Conference. Let's really look at what can be done, because we are at a hinge moment in history.

This bill helps. It will not be enough, but let us pass it quickly.

● (2545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have tremendous respect for the member who just spoke. Frankly, I have been around since she got her start, and I have to admit that I adore her. We are really opening up tonight.

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My mother told me something I will never forget. We cannot compare ourselves to the worst of our kind because then we will certainly be the best. This evening, we listened to Mr. Bolsonaro and Mr. Trump. Obviously, compared to them, we are the best.

The reason we are here tonight is that the government imposed closure and prorogued Parliament six weeks ago. I do not think that is what it means to be the best.

I have enormous respect for the member, and I would like her to tell me why she thinks the government prorogued Parliament. Was it really to deliver a throne speech and reorient its vision vis-à-vis COVID-19? Or was it to hide scandals like the WE Charity scandal?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. I am truly delighted to know that he adores me. It is so difficult to talk about the other things right now. I apologize, it is late and it is difficult for me to speak French.

[*English*]

I do not think there is any doubt that we would not have had prorogation if Bill Morneau and the Prime Minister had not bumped into the WE Charity scandal. I do not think there is any doubt about that.

I am much more charitable than most, in that I recognize the immense difference between this and the 2008 prorogation, which was epically unconstitutional. It was an effort by a prime minister to avoid a vote he knew he would lose, in which he might not have been able to form a government because there was a coalition waiting in the wings. That is a very different situation. In all of the Commonwealth nations, those that use Westminster parliamentary democracy, our very interesting archaic system, only one other country had ever had a prime minister go to the Governor General for prorogation to avoid a vote they knew they would lose. The previous example was also Canadian: Sir John A. Macdonald. The only other country where this had ever happened was Sri Lanka, where the Governor General turned them down.

There are prorogations that are toxic and unconstitutional, and there are prorogations that are convenient and politically unworthy. This was of the latter variety.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and neighbour. I can see the beautiful Mount Maxwell on Salt Spring Island from my house, and that is part of the riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands.

I want to thank her for expanding the conversation we are having tonight on Bill C-4, to talk about how this really is a first step. I think many Canadians are seeing this as a moment in time where we have the ability to reimagine what Canada's full potential can be.

We have heard a lot of discussion today. Part of the discussion has centred on the cost, and I will agree that it has been a significant cost, but I am really glad that in the course of her debate she also started touching on the cost of institutionalized poverty and how that continues to be such a drag on so many of our communities right across this great country. I look, in the Cowichan Valley, at how the opioid crisis is ravaging the downtown core of Duncan

right now. That is traced back to institutionalized poverty. These are individuals who have suffered multiple forms of trauma.

Whether it is mental health, physical abuse or the ongoing trauma of everyday lived experiences in poverty, those have real costs to our society. They have costs that the member mentioned in incarceration rates and in our health services.

I just want to ask her to again comment on how investments in things like a guaranteed livable income are actually, in the long run, going to make our country a better place, not only socially and in terms of health, but also economically, to put us on a path for the better.

• (2550)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, yes, of course, I know my dear colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford could not see Mount Maxwell lately because we were in so much smoke. It has been a very depressing time between knowing we can only visit our friends outdoors and at a distance, but we cannot because we have to go indoors because of the smoke, and our friends cannot come in with us because they are not in our bubble. It is a distressing time.

The institutionalized poverty and accepting it as normal is not something Canada should ever do. I do not know how many people experienced this walking along in Europe, but I did not see anybody homeless on the street there with a hat upside-down hoping they could panhandle their way to their next meal. That is not something we see. I talk about Jim with my friend from New Westminster—Burnaby. I have not seen Jim lately, but I have not been walking on the street. Jim is a friend, a veteran, who needs to panhandle for his medication just outside of the Château Laurier.

There is no excuse for a country like Canada to tolerate poverty. Martin Luther King said many years ago that there was only one solution he had ever found to eliminate poverty and it is a guaranteed income.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by acknowledging that the signature, eloquence and passion of the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is not diminished one bit even at 1:50 in the morning.

I very much appreciate the comments the member shared at the beginning of her speech when she emphasized the collaboration and the real, true team Canada approach, which is really the signature of this piece of legislation and how it came about. It is a common theme that I noticed, and was also in the comments that were made by my colleague, the MP for Edmonton Strathcona as well as the MP for Vancouver East. They acknowledge the fact that this bill really is the product of the government and the opposition working together, listening to each other. I think that is the particular strength of Bill C-4, that it is undergirded and supported by the fact that this was a tremendous listening exercise.

We listened not just to each other, not just to members across the aisle, but we also listened to our constituents. We listened to workers, Canadians, families, unions and businesses. That really is that particular strength, the collaboration, that listening and working together, for Bill C-4.

As the member pointed out as well, moving forward, the legislation is going to evolve. This legislation that is being brought forward is not going to preclude other changes. In fact, the evolution has always been the signature of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that we adapt to it.

I would ask the member to comment on that sense of collaboration and team work that really undergirded the design and development of Bill C-4.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, we have been holding community meetings, as I am sure other members have, but the community meetings we used to have in the local community hall have been replaced by the latest thing that has come to both aid us and torment us: Zoom. I meet with my constituents frequently, and their concerns are the same as I think all of us have heard. There are concerns about how they are going to make ends meet and concerns about keeping a business open, but they are very encouraged when I tell them that we are all working together. Civil servants are working awfully hard. Everyone knows that by hanging together, we will help each other.

Partisanship is our enemy in this. That is why I am very nervous with first New Brunswick, and now British Columbia and Saskatchewan, because the more elections we have, I feel as though the less safe we are. It is not that democracy as experienced in an election is not a healthy thing, but I worry about us trying to score points off each other more than band together to help our constituents.

The legislation before us shows that spirit of collaboration in the interests of Canada.

• (2555)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[Translation]

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

And one or more members having risen:

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made Wednesday, September 23, we will now proceed to a recorded vote.

Call in the members.

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• (2705)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 6)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Aboultouf | Aitchison |
| Albas | Alghabra |
| Alleslev | Allison |
| Amos | Anand |
| Anandasangaree | Angus |
| Arnold | Arseneault |
| Arya | Ashton |
| Atwin | Bachrach |
| Badawey | Bagnell |
| Bains | Baker |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Barsalou-Duval | Battiste |
| Beaulieu | Beech |
| Bendayan | Bennett |
| Benzen | Bergeron |
| Berthold | Bérubé |
| Bessette | Bezan |
| Bibeau | Bittle |
| Blaikie | Blair |
| Blanchet | Blanchette-Joncas |
| Blaney (North Island—Powell River) | Block |
| Blois | Boudrias |
| Boulerice | Bragdon |
| Brassard | Bratina |
| Brière | Brunelle-Duceppe |
| Calkins | Cannings |
| Carrie | Casey |
| Chabot | Chagger |
| Champagne | Champoux |
| Charbonneau | Chen |
| Chiu | Collins |
| Cooper | Cormier |
| Cumming | Dabrusin |
| Dalton | Damoff |
| Davidson | Davies |
| DeBellefeuille | Deltell |
| d'Entremont | Desbiens |
| Desilets | Dhaliwal |
| Dhillon | Doherty |
| Dong | Dowdall |
| Dreeshen | Drouin |
| Dubourg | Duclos |
| Duguid | Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) |
| Duncan (Etobicoke North) | Duval |
| Dzerowicz | Easter |
| El-Khoury | Ellis |
| Epp | Erskine-Smith |
| Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) | Falk (Provencher) |
| Fast | Fergus |
| Fillmore | Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock) |
| Finnigan | Fisher |
| Fonseca | Fortier |
| Fortin | Fragiskatos |
| Fraser | Freeland |
| Fry | Gallant |
| Garneau | Garrison |
| Gaudreau | Gazan |
| Généreux | Gerretsen |
| Gill | Gladu |
| Godin | Gould |
| Gray | Green |
| Guilbeault | Hajdu |

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| Hallan | Harder | Stubbs | Sweet |
| Hardie | Harris | Tabbara | Tassi |
| Hoback | Holland | Thériault | Therrien |
| Housefather | Hughes | Tochor | Trudeau |
| Hussen | Hutchings | Trudel | Turnbull |
| Iacono | Jaczek | Uppal | Van Bynen |
| Jansen | Jeneroux | van Koeverden | Van Popta |
| Johns | Joly | Vandal | Vandenbeld |
| Jones | Jordan | Vaughan | Vecchio |
| Jowhari | Julian | Vidal | Viersen |
| Kelloway | Kent | Vignola | Virani |
| Khera | Kitchen | Vis | Wagantall |
| Koutrakis | Kram | Waugh | Webber |
| Kurek | Kusie | Weiler | Wilkinson |
| Kusmierczyk | Kwan | Wilson-Raybould | Wong |
| Lake | Lalonde | Yip | Young |
| Lambropoulos | Lametti | Yurdiga | Zahid |
| Lamoureux | Larouche | Zann | Zimmer |
| Lattanzio | Lauzon | Zuberi— 307 | |
| Lawrence | LeBlanc | | |
| Lebouthillier | Lefebvre | | |
| Lehoux | Lemire | | |
| Lewis (Essex) | Lightbound | | |
| Lloyd | Lobb | | |
| Long | Longfield | | |
| Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) | Lukiwski | | |
| MacGregor | MacKinnon (Gatineau) | | |
| Maguire | Maloney | | |
| Manly | Martel | | |
| Martinez Ferrada | Masse | | |
| Mathysen | May (Cambridge) | | |
| May (Saanic—Gulf Islands) | Mazier | | |
| McCauley (Edmonton West) | McCrimmon | | |
| McDonald | McGuinty | | |
| McKenna | McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) | | |
| McLean | McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo) | | |
| McLeod (Northwest Territories) | McPherson | | |
| Melillo | Mendès | | |
| Mendicino | Michaud | | |
| Miller | Monsef | | |
| Moore | Morantz | | |
| Morrison | Morrissey | | |
| Motz | Murray | | |
| Nater | Ng | | |
| Normandin | O'Connell | | |
| Oliphant | O'Regan | | |
| O'Toole | Patzer | | |
| Paul-Hus | Pauzé | | |
| Perron | Petitpas Taylor | | |
| Plamondon | Powlowski | | |
| Qaqqaq | Qualtrough | | |
| Ratansi | Rayes | | |
| Redekopp | Regan | | |
| Reid | Richards | | |
| Robillard | Rodriguez | | |
| Rogers | Romanado | | |
| Rood | Ruff | | |
| Sahota (Calgary Skyview) | Sahota (Brampton North) | | |
| Saini | Sajjan | | |
| Samson | Sangha | | |
| Sarai | Savard-Tremblay | | |
| Scarpaleggia | Schieffe | | |
| Schmale | Schulte | | |
| Seeback | Serré | | |
| Sgro | Shanahan | | |
| Sheehan | Shin | | |
| Shipley | Sidhu (Brampton East) | | |
| Sidhu (Brampton South) | Simard | | |
| Simms | Singh | | |
| Sloan | Sorbara | | |
| Soroka | Spengemann | | |
| Stanton | Steinley | | |
| Ste-Marie | Strahl | | |

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The member for Richmond—Arthabaska on a point of order.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I would like some clarification. We saw many members turn their cameras off during the vote. It seems to me that the rules are extremely clear, and I am sure that your staff, the IT people, can check on that. You have already pointed out this situation several times. One day, a vote might bring down the government. There are important decisions to be made. It seems to me that the rules are extremely clear. I would like you to clarify the situation for us so that we can be sure to follow the rules we were given.

The Speaker: As I mentioned earlier, it is very important that members' cameras remain on for the duration of the vote. Members' cameras must be on from start to finish.

I will finish and we will then proceed to points of order.

[English]

The bill stands referred to a committee of the whole.

Pursuant to an order made earlier today, Bill C-4, An Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19, is deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, deemed read a third time and passed.

(Motion agreed to, bill deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, deemed read a third time and passed)

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska on a point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

PRESENCE OF MEMBERS VOTING VIRTUALLY

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know whether the rule is going to be applied so as to cancel the votes of those whose cameras did not stay on from beginning to end, or is this simply a request.

The Speaker: The rule is there. If someone raises a point of order and makes the request, we would have to check. Since these are the first few votes, some flexibility is needed.

However, if the member for Richmond—Arthabaska would like, we can examine the situation and do something.

Is that what the hon member is requesting?

Mr. Alain Rayes: Yes, that is my request, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay, we will see what we can do from a technical standpoint and get back to the House.

• (2710)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I would ask that, in consideration of that, you ask your technical team to reach out to individual members because—

The Speaker: I believe there is another point of order coming up from the member for Perth—Wellington that we do need a tie in order to speak in the House, and I am going to have to cut that off.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

During the vote the screen on my tablet went black and when I used my mouse to bring the screen back, the video had stopped. I did not turn it off, but there were technical issues, so it went off on its own. I want to put that on the record, because my video was off but I certainly was in front of the camera the entire time, and it was not anything I had done to turn the camera off.

The Speaker: I thank the member and will take that into consideration.

Point of Order

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I did have some technical problems where I got disconnected, and therefore I had to reconnect twice.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. You made a point the other night of telling people that there were three ways that they could unmute their microphones. One of them was pressing the space bar. I tried that earlier today and it turned off my video. There are obviously some things going on that we do not know about and maybe the technical people do.

The Speaker: We will consult our technicians on that one.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I too would like to report that my screen went blank after I voted and before the end of the votes, and it took some time to go back on. I did call in and they said I was reconnected, but I just wanted to make the House aware of that as well.

The Speaker: I thank the member.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The House will now see that I am wearing a tie.

The point I was trying to make was very similar to that of the member for Oakville North—Burlington. I had a technical issue where my camera went blank for about 10 seconds. When giving consideration to this, I would also encourage you to give consideration to members who leave their screen on, but physically leave the presence of the screen so that they are not being recorded, which I think would be considered just as egregious, in terms of any ruling you might have on this.

The Speaker: We will take that into consideration.

It being 3:12 in the morning, this House stands adjourned until later today at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 3:16 a.m.)

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