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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 1, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)
[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy).

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

CONVERSION THERAPY

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise in the House. I want to start by recognizing that the House is located on the traditional lands of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

Today I rise to present our government's plan for banning the destructive, harmful and deadly practice of conversion therapy.

[*English*]

There should be no place for the destructive, harmful and deadly practice of conversion therapy in Canada. When we ask a young person what they want be when they grow up, they answer an occupation. We do not ask about who they want to be or who they think they might be. Imagine a young person trying to come to terms with their identity, wondering what others will think and having questions about what makes them happy, what makes them feel like themselves and what they see when they look in the mirror.

If they are lucky, some young people may have these conversations with their parents. Some will turn to their friends, to religion or to scripture. Many may seek out help from those who they believe are professionals with credentials and therefore must know best. The answers to these questions help shape a future; they help shape a life. Imagine individuals at their most vulnerable putting all their trust in these people for help. While the pandemic has made us all feel vulnerable at times, imagine living that way every day and carrying that weight. Telling someone they are not who they think

they are or that who they are is wrong, abnormal or unnatural has devastating consequences.

The limited Canadian studies we have on this practice confirm that this so-called therapy is happening right here in Canada. It is estimated that over 20,000 LGBTQ2 Canadians have been exposed, and 11% of trans individuals in Canada are survivors. We are indebted to survivors and advocates for their strength in speaking out and shining light on this dark practice.

It is our duty to do everything we can to make a better future for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

I hope all members of the House agree with this viewpoint.

[*English*]

That is why within a week of coming back to Parliament we have reintroduced the bill, an act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy), to abolish conversion therapy in Canada. On this side of the House we focus on advancing and protecting LGBTQ2 rights and addressing all forms of discrimination, including hetero-cis-normativity and systemic racism. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, we believe that with this legislation we are building a society where one accepts people for who they are. We are stating to all people in Canada that it is okay, and they can follow their heart, their faith and be true to themselves.

On this side of the House, we believe that acceptance and diversity are absolute. There are those who refuse to accept that sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression have been enshrined into Canadian law as part of the Canadian Human Rights Act. It is unfortunate that in 2020 we continue to have to have this debate. LGBTQ2 rights are human rights, full stop.

Together, we can help to create a country where everyone is free to be who they are. LGBTQ2 people are valued members of Canadian society, and we must ensure that Canada is a country where everyone, regardless of their gender expression, gender identity or sexual orientation, can lead a happy and authentic life and be loved.

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Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, service in the Canadian Armed Forces is a commitment to defending our country, its institutions and the rights enjoyed by our citizens. My service in the military taught me many lessons, but the importance of respecting the rights of my fellow citizens was paramount.

[*Translation*]

I completed my military service and worked in the private sector for a decade before becoming a member of Parliament. I have always had deep respect for the rights of Canadians. My record speaks for itself: I have always voted in favour of the LGBTQ community.

• (1010)

[*English*]

In my first four months as a member of Parliament, my vote was one of a handful of Conservative votes that helped an NDP bill on gender identity to pass. I stood and was counted for rights that day. As a parliamentarian, I am here to secure the rights of every Canadian, including those in the LGBTQ community, and to build an inclusive and prosperous country for all. Now, as leader of the Conservative Party, I pledge to continue this work. I will also hold the Liberal government to account when it falls short and when it prefers to contrast its virtue in a way meant to castigate others.

[*Translation*]

Once again, let me be crystal clear: Conversion therapy is wrong. In my view, it should be banned.

[*English*]

This is particularly the case when it could be threatened against someone against their will, or when it is used to denigrate or demean someone for who they are.

Sadly, the Liberals are once again playing politics. Instead of working hard to get things right and make life better for Canadians, they seem intent on scoring political points. Why do members think this bill is here on day two for me as a new leader in the House? Better yet, why do they think the Liberals have reintroduced the exact same bill they did last year, having totally ignored the well-known drafting failures of their first bill? They did this not because they want to get it right for the LGBTQ community. They did this because they want to force the Conservatives to seek amendments or possibly even vote against this bill.

[*Translation*]

As usual, the Liberals are playing petty politics in an attempt to scare Canadians. They want to divide us.

[*English*]

However, I know that Canadians are smarter than the Liberals think they are, and I know that the LGBTQ community sees through this too. I therefore want to use my time to talk for a moment to those in the LGBTQ community.

Some of them grew up in a home that did not understand or support them. Many of them faced persecution at school, at work, out in public at a restaurant, on a date, riding the subway, living life.

For too many LGBTQ Canadians, that persecution may have even involved the threat or use of conversion therapy. To be forced to change who they are is not okay. That is something I hope no Canadian ever endures again, and if that is the intent of this bill, it needs to be clearly written that way.

In fact, clarity is one of the goals of legislative drafting, but the Liberals know that clarity and sincerity do not always make for good wedge politics in the age of Twitter. The Liberals know that if the bill is more clearly drafted they might lose the gotcha effect, which is becoming far too common in the politics we see to the south of us.

The Liberals know that by ignoring the thoughtful advice they already received from parents, teachers and faith leaders, they create a situation that allows for people who ask a simple question about this bill to be shamed into silence or cancelled on social media in the age of cancel culture. How is this fostering inclusion? In fact, many Liberal operatives are likely on social media right now claiming I am being divisive because I would prefer that we get this bill right and not work to divide Canadians.

The Liberal government knows that most Canadians do not want to see conversion therapy continue, but it also knows that most Canadians do not want conversations between a parent and a child or a religious leader and a young person to be criminalized either.

• (1015)

[*Translation*]

I know that my LGBTQ+ friends want everyone to be treated with dignity and respect.

[*English*]

They want vulnerable members of their community to be protected, and they want people who try to use conversion therapy to denigrate others to be prevented from doing that. I know they do not want to criminalize the conversations of others, because a community that has been unfairly persecuted for generations does not want to start unfairly persecuting others.

People need to be free to talk openly to people they trust in their families or communities. That could be about coming out. That could be about their orientation or their gender identity. It could also be about their own faith or their own personal life journey. They should feel free to talk to others without the fear of a public prosecution.

Kids need more support from adults, not less. In an age when young people are swiping and texting more than talking and connecting, we should not be criminalizing talking. Some very simple amendments could fix this, if this bill is truly more than a political wedge. Conversion therapy should be banned to protect young people coming out as LGBTQ.

[*Translation*]

I repeat: Conversion therapy should be banned to protect young people who identify as LGBTQ+. I want everyone to feel accepted in our society.

[*English*]

Let us do this in the right way and make sure their support networks are not jeopardized in the process. We will be seeking reasonable amendments to try to get to yes on this. I challenge the government to be reasonable as well.

LGBTQ Canadians deserve a bill that can ban conversion therapy and remind Canadians that the rights of their fellow citizens are important to defend. They also deserve respect and honesty from their elected officials. I hope they see that from me they can always count on honesty and commitment to their rights.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government has finally decided to not only ban but actually criminalize the practice of conversion therapy. According to several witnesses, some of these practices are more like torture than therapy.

I will be very blunt. This practice, promoted and carried out primarily by religious groups, is based on the idea that homosexuality is wrong. According to such groups, it is more than just disturbing; it is wrong to the point that they think these people are evil and are going to hell. I am not the only one who disagrees with such groups, since this practice has been largely discredited by Quebec and Canadian psychologists and specialists in human sexuality.

Homophobia exists; expressions of it can be seen practically every day. It is unacceptable that it has been institutionalized like this by religious groups. It is one thing to feel uncomfortable or to not understand; it is quite another thing to subject human beings to goodness knows what kind of therapeutic process to become someone they are not. We have many historical examples of this, but this is another matter that merits its own debate.

These therapies perpetuate myths that should no longer exist in 2020. The WHO declared as far back as 2012 that these practices have never turned exclusively homosexual people heterosexual.

The media recently reported on the case of a boy who underwent conversion therapy. To read his story, I do not understand how anyone could inflict such anxiety and deep self-hatred on their own child. I am trying not to judge. I refuse to believe that the family of this beautiful boy did not have good intentions. Motivated by religion and an intense desire not to disappoint his loved ones or his God, he paid out of his own pocket for therapy to make him normal.

The words he used to describe the process are quite apt, describing conversion therapy as social support for self-rejection. That is

Routine Proceedings

painfully accurate. Unfortunately, this story echoes that of many children and adolescents who want their parents to be proud of them and to love them.

It is for young men like this that I commend and thank the government for introducing legislation. The government can obviously count on my support and that of all my colleagues in the Bloc Qu b cois.

Many countries have led the way in criminalizing conversion therapy. Quebec has also committed to it. The former British Prime Minister described this therapy as abhorrent.

The abhorrent thing is that, in most cases, these people turned away from religion, left their families and even started a new life somewhere else. They went through all that before finally deciding to accept themselves and live in a way that is true to themselves. I simply cannot imagine the time and courage needed to decide to stand up to all that pressure and say, "No, this is not working. That is not me."

We all know that, when we are young, we are very dependent on our family and friends and we care a lot about what they think of us. We are not always able to make our own choices, to decide to find ourselves or to make peace with ourselves.

Many of us, who did not have to ask ourselves all of these questions, sometimes have a hard time finding inner peace. I cannot even imagine what it must be like for these people. Many of them have spent decades trying to fight against themselves, against their true nature and against what they are, wondering why they were born like that, why this had to happen to them or why they are unable to change. They end up hating themselves. They come to hate who they are and those they love. It is terrible.

People who have undergone this type of therapy are survivors. Now that conversion therapy is illegal, it sends a clear, if somewhat minor, political and social message. My wish for all members of the LGBTQ+ community is to not only survive, but also to live in a way that is true to who they are, how they feel and who they love.

• (1020)

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning I want to start by congratulating the government on the prompt reintroduction of this bill to ban conversion therapy in Canada, despite some members being in their early days in the House.

At this ungodly hour in British Columbia, I want to stick to three simple points.

Routine Proceedings

First, this is very welcome legislation. No one in the SOGIE community needs fixing because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In fact, attempting to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity is impossible, and the attempts themselves do great harm to those fearing or already suffering from rejection by family, friends and their community. Again, this is welcome legislation, and I am glad that the Liberals in this Parliament have changed their position to support the ban on conversion therapy.

The topic was first brought before Parliament by Sheri Benson, former NDP member for Saskatoon West, with an e-petition more than two years ago that received more than 18,000 signatures. The government's response at that time was that this simply was not a matter for federal jurisdiction, so I was glad to see the Liberals change their position during the last federal campaign, and I was glad to see Bill C-8 introduced on March 20, which I know to all of us seems an eon ago. Now COVID, combined with prorogation, has put us back to square one on this bill today. When it comes to the practice of conversion therapy, which attempts to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity through counselling or aversion therapy and does great harm to those subjected to it, we need protection from harmful attempts to get us to deny who we are. The practice must end. Again, no one in the SOGIE community needs fixing.

Second, on all issues of importance to the SOGIE community, progress has been achieved as the result of brave advocates from our community stepping forward. In terms of protecting our rights, nothing has ever been given to my community without a struggle. I want to give a particular note of thanks to conversion therapy survivors who have stepped forward to tell their stories, two of whom have had a particular impact on me in terms of focusing my attention on this issue. They are Matt Ashcroft and Erika Muse. Just a couple of days ago, three conversion therapy survivors organized an online summit entitled End Conversion Therapy. I want to thank the co-founders of CT Survivors again for their important work: Rocky Tishma, Michael Ferguson and Matt Ashcroft. The conference focused on preventing anyone else from having to suffer the harm of conversion therapy by discussing how to defend, strengthen and heal our communities. Participants heard first-hand accounts of the damage that conversion therapy does, from people who had lived it, and heard how conversion therapy survivors are now working to support each other.

Third, I want to emphasize again that the NDP will support the bill before us, but I have said all along that we need to listen carefully to the SOGIE community, and in particular to conversion therapy survivors, as we work to strengthen the bill at committee. The Liberals have suggested a legal strategy that falls short of the real demand of survivors and the SOGIE community: a complete ban on conversion therapy in Canada. There is also concern that the ban does not capture the full range of conversion therapy practices and that there needs to be more attention to those practices directed at the transgender and non-binary community. Thousands of Canadians have been subjected to the harmful practice of conversion therapy, and it is something that is still with us. Studies have shown that, even more than the minister suggested, nearly 50% of trans and non-binary Canadians have been subjected to some form of conversion therapy, instead of being affirmed and celebrated for who they are.

It is past time to ban this practice in Canada, but as we do so, we must also remember that it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of the SOGIE community to work with survivors to repair as much of that harm as possible. I will be watching to make sure that the federal government makes a significant contribution to that effort.

I look forward to working with the government to make sure that we get both parts of this job done soon.

• (1025)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, in Canada we have the right to live free from discrimination. Across the nation we are setting the example of what it means to live freely, to be who we are and to love who we want.

We must not forget that globally more than 70 countries still criminalize consensual same-sex acts, countries in which people experience violence, discrimination, harassment and are victims of hate-motivated violence, including physical attacks, torture and murder.

In Canada, our constitution and our laws protect people from discrimination based on grounds such as sex, religion, disability, sexual orientation and sexual identity. Through the years, the scope of these protections must evolve. Looking through the historical lens, we can be proud of when the former prime minister, the Right. Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, affirmed that what is done in private between adults does not concern the Criminal Code, and when marriage between two partners of the same gender became legal in 2005. Through this evolution in our society, we witnessed the power of the rising tide of freedom and love, but to say that these rights were recognized without any suffering would be to blind ourselves to the constant fight for justice that achieving equality requires.

Even with our laws and protections providing a safe haven for many, when compared to other nations, the reason we are here today is evidence that for many Canadians, being who they are is still not a safe option. The cruel practice of conversion therapy is a practice aimed to change, by employing various approaches, an individual's sexual orientation to heterosexual, or their gender identity to cisgender.

The World Health Organization issued a statement almost a decade ago, saying that this type of therapy poses a severe threat to the health and human rights of the affected person. The Canadian Psychological Association warned in 2015 of the numerous impacts on the health of an individual, from depression and anxiety to self-harms and suicide. It is more than time that we act and criminalize this inhumane practice.

I want to strongly affirm my support to the proposition to criminalize conversion therapy, completely and utterly. We must protect Canadians from the harm of this practice and not leave any stone unturned to ensure a future where no one will have to undergo such pain.

We must also understand that for many, the realization of their true identity only comes once they have the opportunity to experience and explore life. Criminalizing the practice for minors is essential, although we must go further to ban the practice for everyone and not legitimize any loophole. Assuming that people, even if they are not a minor person, will not hope to try to please family members who offer their love only on the condition that the person goes through conversion therapy ignores the human need to receive parental and family support, freedom and affection. Many adults would accept to undergo the procedure in the hope of erasing who they are, to finally receive the love that they need. That is why allowing the therapy to simply exist in any shape or form is unacceptable.

Beyond the criminalization of conversion therapy, we need to invest in services that support people. Discovering oneself in an accepting family environment can still come with challenges for many people. Everyone should have access to the affirming and caring support that they need to thrive.

Educators and health care providers must receive training to ensure that they are providing the best support to the people who they are supposed to help. That means learning about gender identity, respecting pronouns and not further fostering an environment that assumes heterosexuality as the norm. That means supporting, financially, community organizations and health care providers, such as Clinic 554, whose work has had life-saving impacts for many patients.

Canada must continue to stand up for the protection and promotion of the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit and intersex people globally. All of us here in this chamber must ensure that we pass legislation that effectively protects that community, but also support any measure that would fund services and ensure that anyone who needs support can easily access it.

To the parents, teachers and coaches out there, many of our children are hiding their truest selves from us because they are still afraid that they will not be loved for who they are. Join me in celebrating this bill for what it is: a chance to explain to all our children that they are worthy of love just as they are.

I would like to give a shout-out as well to journalists, who have done the important work of bringing many of these voices forward.

I am eager to see the bill passed in the House.

Routine Proceedings

• (1030)

PETITIONS

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here to present three petitions today.

The first petition is from constituents in my riding who are concerned about access to cereal grain seeds. They have a campaign called “Save Our Seeds”. They are looking for Parliament to enshrine the inalienable rights of farmers and other Canadians to save, select, exchange, condition, store and sell seeds.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on sex-selective abortion. The people who have signed this petition are concerned that this practice is happening in Canada, and they are asking Parliament to quickly pass my Saskatchewan colleague's bill on this subject.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition today is timely, as the petitioners are calling for the government to fix the definition in the conversion therapy ban bill. They are calling for the government to ensure that parents can speak to their own children about sexuality and gender, set house rules about sex and relationships, and allow for free and open conversations.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present an e-petition signed by 515 residents of Ontario calling upon the government to seek special sessions of the UNHRC to conduct an independent inquiry into human rights violations in Iran since November 15, 2019. Academics and those speaking out have been wrongfully imprisoned.

• (1035)

PHARMACARE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to introduce e-petition 2649 today, signed by thousands of Canadians and spearheaded by the wonderful Colleen Fuller in British Columbia, calling for safe, affordable and effective prescription medications.

The Address

The petitioners point out the obvious fact that drugs do not work if Canadians cannot afford them. They note that the number of patented medicines costing over \$10,000 per year has tripled since 2006 and accounted for 40% of all drug sales in 2017. The PMPRB has proposed regulations and guidelines to reduce drug prices and increase transparency in the pricing process. They are calling on the government to enact these overdue changes, reduce prices for Canadians and ensure that all Canadians can get the medications their doctors prescribe when they need them.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to table yet another petition on behalf of my constituents who have been asking for the Government of Canada, in particular the Prime Minister, to take note that they would like a national pharmacare program. They are calling upon the Government of Canada to work with other provincial and territorial jurisdictions to make that happen.

* * *

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 would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of ministerial statements, Government Orders will be extended by 28 minutes.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[*English*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from September 30 consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, and of the amendment.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to put my thoughts on the record today with respect to the 2020 Speech from the Throne.

There was a lot of hype generated from the Liberal benches for the speech, particularly because the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament with the excuse that his government needed six weeks off from parliamentary duties to formulate it, but in reality, there was not a whole lot new in this throne speech. It was mostly recycled Liberal promises from the past 30 years. For example, if we take child care and pharmacare, I was but a very small child in the 1990s when the Liberals first announced they were going to do this. That was 30 years ago, so from that perspective the Liberals really have no credibility on any of the priorities they have promised in the throne speech. I am certain many Canadians would agree.

Perhaps the six-week prorogation in the middle of the worst health and economic crisis in a century was really to avoid the billion-dollar WE scandal, the resignation of the former finance minis-

ter or possibly the Prime Minister's third ethics violation investigation, or maybe it was a pre-election strategy to announce massive spending in order to court votes for the next election. Regardless of the reason, the Liberal government had the responsibility to introduce a plan for Canadians to get them back to work safely and failed to do so.

Shamefully, the throne speech failed to even mention Manitoba, and it was nearly an hour long, which really shows the priorities of the Prime Minister with respect to the concerns of Manitobans. There were so many opportunities for the Liberals to support Manitoba, in particular, our critical infrastructure needs.

I have personally called on the Minister of Infrastructure to support the partnership between the Province of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg and approve the \$321 million in federal funds required for the north end wastewater treatment plant upgrade project in my riding. Manitoba needs this project in order to support the health of Lake Winnipeg, which as all Manitobans know has been severely impacted by algae blooms due to too much phosphorous. It is a green infrastructure project, a no-brainer for the government, and I have asked and urged it to please approve this funding.

Additionally, some of the hardest-hit people in my riding have been small business owners who employ thousands of Manitobans, and these jobs are in jeopardy. Many of these businesses were not eligible for any support from the Liberal government. There are still issues with small business owners qualifying for the CEBA loan, where business owners used personal banking accounts rather than business banking accounts and as a result were not eligible. The Liberals promised this change months ago to much fanfare and it has yet to be delivered. Many other businesses in my riding were not able to access the commercial rent assistance program, which has been widely regarded as a dismal failure, despite the desperate need for its success.

One area in which Canada cannot afford to be anything less than successful is with rapid testing. Possibly one of the most frustrating things about this throne speech is the failure of the Liberal government to prioritize the desperate need for rapid testing in this country. It is not as if the Liberals did not know it was a priority. The Prime Minister himself mentioned it back in March, six to seven months ago.

The Address

If we fast-forward to today, my constituents are sitting in long car lineups on Main Street in Winnipeg because of the Prime Minister's lack of leadership on this and the apparent inability of the health minister to pick up the phone and call our trusted allies in Germany, the U.K., Japan and many others, to ask how they brought about these rapid tests for their citizens months ago.

Rapid at-home testing would be a game-changer for Canadians, especially in parts of Canada that are entering a second shutdown, like in Manitoba where we are no longer allowed to gather in groups larger than 10 people, even if we are outside, which has been really tough for Manitobans. Rapid testing would allow Manitobans to safely visit their elderly parents in care homes or send their kids to school with the all-too-common runny nose, and our front-line workers could feel assured that their dry cough is not a death sentence to those around them. Importantly, for the immigration file, rapid testing could give Canadians confidence that families separated due to the Liberals' border closures could safely reunite. Safety is key. The Liberal delay on rapid and at-home testing is unacceptable. Canadians deserve far better from the Liberal government.

The stakes have never been higher. Our economy and the finances of our country are facing desperate circumstances. We have spent \$380 billion of deficit so far in this pandemic, which as we have learned from our shadow minister of finance would be roughly \$40,000 per family of four. We are only seven months into this pandemic since the first lockdown, so imagine where we are going to be in a year at this spending rate. More than that, our national debt has reached over \$1.5 trillion under the Liberal government's watch. I do not even understand how much money that is because it is so gargantuan. While the Liberals continue to tell Canadians that it is all fine because interest rates are low, Canadians have the right to know that there is no guarantee interest rates will remain low.

• (1040)

The Liberals seem to have no intention of ever balancing the budget, and conceivably, Canadians alive today may never see another balanced federal budget if these Liberals remain in power.

Conservatives recognize that it was the government that forced Canadians to stay home and businesses to shut down, stopping their ability to earn an income, and so it was the government's responsibility to compensate for them for that.

However, now Canada has the highest unemployment rate in the G7, with 10% of our working population unemployed, and many more working at a reduced capacity. In fact, compared to our G7 allies, we have spent the most on the pandemic recovery, yet we have the worst economic outcomes. How is that possible? It is far from over.

Our beloved neighbourhood businesses are at risk. For example, we know that three out of five of our restaurants may close permanently. It really is terribly sad to think about what Canadians are going through during this very difficult time.

The Liberal government needs to be doing a far better job on many things, and one of those things is immigration. I am honoured to serve as the shadow minister of immigration, refugees and citi-

zenship. I sincerely thank our leader for entrusting me with this incredible responsibility on behalf of all Canadians.

As I peel back the layers of this \$4-billion department, I am finding that the Liberals have severely mismanaged many areas of immigration, particularly family reunification. COVID-19 is the greatest challenge Canada has faced in 100 years, yet the Liberals have asked some Canadians including and Canadian children to navigate this challenge alone, without the support of a spouse, a parent or a close sibling.

Canada's Chief Public Health Officer has told Canadians that the virus may be with us until 2022. What message does the Minister of Immigration have for families currently separated in response to this warning? The status quo has been cold-hearted and unsustainable. The emotional well-being and financial realities of separated families must be addressed immediately by the Liberal government.

Conservatives believe in a non-partisan, welcoming and well-managed immigration system for Canada based on a fair, transparent and efficient process that earns the respect of all of Canadians. We firmly believe in compassionate measures to assist in family reunification and to uphold Canada's humanitarian tradition as a safe haven for refugees. I will work diligently to hold the Liberals to this standard.

Canadians expect Conservatives to face this unprecedented challenge head-on and to put forward a robust and inspiring vision for the future of this country that ensures national unity, prosperity and regaining respect on the world stage.

We understand the suffering of working people, because we are working people, and we will champion their ambition to be successful and support their families in a free society. Canadians deserve a government that will lead them through the difficulties we face. They deserve a government that is steady, reliable, responsible and ethical, and a government that thinks outside the box and allows the choices of Canadians to reign supreme in their lives.

I love our new caucus mantra, given to us courtesy of our leader. It is *Per ardua ad astra*, which means "through adversity to the stars". Conservatives will show Canadians that we are a government in waiting. As a shadow minister, I have been entrusted with the responsibility to fulfill my role with respect, professionalism, the pursuit of excellence and the duty to fight for everyday Canadians. That is exactly what I plan to do.

The Address

• (1045)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought the member was appealing to her own audience. When I reflected on what she said about balancing a budget, I thought of how the last time the Conservatives ever balanced the budget was during Bennett's time. This is an interesting one. Mr. Harper inherited \$13 billion in surplus from the Paul Martin government. He whittled it away before the 2008 financial crisis and left us with \$3 billion in deficits and \$700 billion in debt. He increased it.

Where is the member getting her figures from?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the strange question from the Liberal member opposite. However, I wish to take this time and use the privileged position I am in and speak to Liberal governing members of this country and urge them to consider family reunification, particularly that of Charie Santiago. Her husband has alerted the public that Charie is facing stage 4 cancer. She is on her death bed and she is pleading with the Minister of Immigration to allow her sister, who is her best friend, to enter from the Philippines to hold her hand on her death bed.

I see the member for Winnipeg North, who is the president of the Filipino friendship group for Parliament. I urge him to use his incredible position of privilege as the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister to allow Charie to be reunited with her sister before she dies.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague for her speech.

I am a little dismayed to see the government members playing a kind of partisan politics. They claim that the opposition's comments are always partisan, yet this government shut down the House for five weeks and then forced us to pass legislation at breakneck speed.

I just want everyone to understand what happened this week when we were forced to vote so quickly. Based on the total spending set out in these bills, we were voting on more than \$200 million per minute. That is a mind-boggling figure, considering the agricultural industry as a whole got a paltry \$252 million during the entire pandemic. This is so wrong.

I would like to hear what my colleague thinks about this, and especially about the compensation for supply-managed sectors that was mentioned in the throne speech. This is the umpteenth promise from the government. I would like her to tell us about her concerns and whether she is worried. Is it actually going to happen this time?

Could she also talk about all the supply-managed sectors and processors that did not get mentioned?

[English]

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to say that I appreciate the very fervent support of the member and his party for their province of Quebec. I also support my province of Manitoba.

I appreciate that his party has been standing up for the province's desire for autonomy on health care and child care, and the many other areas where the Liberal government is trampling over provin-

cial jurisdiction. I greatly respect the member and his party for their ardent support for their province's constitutional rights to health care.

I would also urge the Liberal government to ensure it is not trampling on those rights. I urge the government to allow the province of Manitoba to do what it needs to do with health care, and get those transfers done.

• (1050)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned small businesses. Living through this pandemic, in New Westminster—Burnaby and right across the country, one of the saddest moments we are seeing is when people, who have given their lives to keeping their businesses going, close the door to that small business for the last time and walk away, leaving the key in the lock. It is sad.

We have pressed the government to put commercial rent relief in place, but the commercial rent relief process is so complicated and it goes through landlords. What we have been saying to the government, which does not seem to want to listen, is that commercial rent relief needs to be something that commercial tenants can apply for directly, making it easier to access.

Would the member not agree that the government has a responsibility to make the commercial rent relief program work so that small businesses can stay alive during this pandemic?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question. I have raised this issue on several occasions in the House of Commons to a deafening silence from the Liberal members.

In my riding, female-owned businesses are suffering under the lack of support from the Liberal government, and, in particular, the commercial rent assistance program. I doubt very much that this program was put through the government's GBA+ analysis because, if it had, we may have seen that the difficulties of small business owners to approach their landlord to plead and negotiate for this commercial rent assistance is a problem for many businesses.

It seems to be a problem for female-owned businesses in my riding, likewise with the CEBA loan. Many small business owners use personal bank accounts. The Liberal government promised they would be eligible for that loan, yet that change has yet to happen. It is very disappointing for my riding.

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (FedDev Ontario), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague, the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle.

The Address

[Translation]

I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to the recent Speech from the Throne. As Her Excellency the Governor General said, each of us, as parliamentarians, has a duty to work within the constraints of these challenging times.

[English]

The members of this House are not only tasked with addressing a once-in-a-century health crisis, but also a devastating climate crisis, long-standing social and economic inequalities, and unrest around the globe. COVID-19 has highlighted existing inequalities in our society and the urgent need for these to be addressed. Although the past few months have shocked our systems, this is not the first time we have been called to address a quickly changing world amid social and economic unrest and a devastating global health crisis, but we have to go back 100 years to find anything quite like what we are dealing with today.

Much has changed in Canada since the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918 and 1919 swept over a nation already strained by the unprecedented impacts of one of the first truly global wars. This House was a very different place then. It would be another two years before Agnes Macphail would become the first woman elected to the federal Parliament. In that same year, Canadian women were given the right to vote.

During this Women's History Month, it is important to remind ourselves of these facts. The idea that it was important for the government to step up and help its citizens in times of difficulty, and support them when they needed it, was new and radical at the time, but it would not remain so. After losing 60,000 Canadians in the First World War, we were to lose another 50,000 while politicians in the House said public health was not their concern but that of the provinces, or the municipalities, or hospitals and charities, or the individual. Canadians were not prepared to accept such heartless indifference from their elected officials and were not going to take it. They demanded change, as they would again and again during times of crisis. Our predecessors in the House of Commons listened. It is our turn to listen now.

We are the delegates of the people and, as Agnes Macphail said, "The first thing to be considered by...the delegates of the people...is: what do the people want?" I quote the words of the first woman elected to this House because the people want gender equality; the people want us to support the most vulnerable in our society, including seniors and persons with disabilities; the people want social and economic justice; the people want us to fight climate change and leave a healthier planet for our children; the people want us to fight discrimination and bigotry; and, the people need support from their federal government.

Although COVID-19 has negatively impacted Canadians of all races and genders, it is women who have been hardest hit. At the height of the pandemic, 62% of job losses impacted women. Many had to make the difficult choice between their jobs and their children, leading to what has been called a "she-cession". Over the past five years, our government has made historic investments to promote gender equality. We cannot afford to lose the ground we have gained, and we must do more. In building back better, our government plans to create an action plan for women in the economy,

guided by experts whose diverse voices will help power a whole-of-government approach.

I am pleased to see the government's commitment to make a significant long-term investment to create a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's she-covery project report, by supporting women's participation in the workforce, by 2026, Canada could add up to \$150 billion to our annual GDP. To achieve this, we must offer Canadian families both day care and before- and after-school programs. We are talking about helping more families, helping more women join the workforce and be treated equally to men. I am surprised that I have to say it in 2020, but women are still fighting and we cannot give up now.

Supreme Court of Canada Justice Rosalie Abella recently wrote an opinion piece on the death of her friend, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Justice Abella said Ginsburg spent her life explaining that being fair to women is not being unfair to men, it is simply catching up.

● (1055)

Young or old, our government remains committed to helping the most vulnerable Canadians. Supporting people with disabilities has always been a passion of mine, and I continue to encourage our government to do more for people with disabilities.

I was very happy to discuss the throne speech with disability advocates like Professor Jeff Preston at King's College in London. Our intent to introduce a new Canada disability benefit along the lines of the guaranteed income supplement as well as reforming the eligibility process for Canadians with disabilities is being well received by the disability community. However, Jeff is worried about what will happen after a vaccine is found and people with disabilities try to get back into the workforce. Our government recognizes this problem and has committed to a robust employment strategy for Canadians with disabilities.

While some of us are getting tired of doing business by Zoom, many people with disabilities see this as a lifeline. We must harness this new way of doing business to help everyone.

Over the last six months, we heard about many long-term care facilities that had been ravaged by COVID-19. The tragic scenes that we have watched unfold across Canada these past few months should never have happened. Of all of Canada's deaths related to COVID-19, a staggering 85% of them occurred in long-term care homes. Now with the second wave, we have to do more.

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On this National Seniors Day, Canadians have demanded we do more. This is why we will work with our partners in the provinces and territories to implement national standards for long-term care homes, so all Canadian seniors can live securely and with peace of mind. The Prime Minister said recently that he remained unapologetic for doing everything we could to support our seniors, that they deserved nothing less.

While COVID-19 has been raging around the world, fires on the west coast, so massive the suffocating smoke has reached Ontario, remind us of another insidious threat that imperils our world, climate change. Canadians are joining people around the world who are saying we must act and we must act quickly. We cannot put aside our plans for a cleaner environment because we are fighting a pandemic.

I wish this was not a political issue, but regrettably some of my colleagues have turned it into one. They ignore the economic opportunity that creating a greener, more sustainable economy can provide Canadians, including those in the natural resource sector. They ignore the long-term savings for individuals, businesses and governments in transitioning to a net-zero economy. We have not. Our government will utilize the expertise and know-how of the energy sector and the natural resource sector to reach net zero.

A key part of this plan will be continuing to support innovation and help businesses grow and grow green. As the parliamentary secretary for economic development for southern Ontario, I spent the last number of months speaking to mayors, chambers of commerce and business leaders across sectors. They were all very supportive of the government's quick action to support the many businesses that had been adversely affected by COVID. Whether it was the Canada emergency wage subsidy or the Canada emergency response benefit, they knew we had the best interest of workers and businesses in mind.

Just before the throne speech, I spoke with the manager of the London International Airport. He said that they were really hoping CEWS would be extended so they could keep staff on the payroll and be ready when travellers came back, and they will come back. He of course was very happy to hear that our government was proposing the emergency wage subsidy be continued until the summer.

Other businesses were kept afloat during COVID-19 because we offered close to \$1 billion nationally with the regional relief and recovery fund, or RRRF, through our economic development agencies. Many of these businesses would not have survived even six months without this support, particularly in rural and remote communities.

Countless Canadians are in sectors like the performing arts and the hospitality or tourism whose livelihoods have been especially hard hit. That is why Destination Canada is investing \$30 million to support the recovery of communities. We know the hotel industry is the backbone of tourism in our country and we are working tirelessly to help affected workers and entrepreneurs.

I look forward to supporting even more initiatives. I hope my colleagues of all parties will work with us constructively as we rise to meet the challenges we face today. We are privileged to meet in

this chamber. Canadians are calling upon us to meet the times we face. It is our duty to meet them.

• (1100)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about climate change. As Canada is only 1.8% of the global problem with emissions, if we were to remove Canada's emissions, China would replace our emissions in a matter of weeks.

I wonder if she would commit to the fact that we need to take the fight global, but with Canadian energy and solutions, and not vilify what we do in Canada.

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, it is so important for people who are in provinces with energy and natural resources, and they all do but some more than others, to know that we are on their side and are there for them, to work with them to look for a cleaner, greener Canada. That is what is in the best interest of all of us. We know that we can do more. We need to continue working with the provinces and with the oil and gas sector to find new ways to make our country greener and better for all.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

She spoke about the health crisis, of course, and also about the climate crisis. We must connect the dots: the health crisis is the result of the climate crisis.

We will be celebrating the fifth anniversary of the Paris Agreement, but what about our targets?

I would like to point out that more than a third of economic recovery measures in Germany, France and the European Union are focused on a green recovery.

Before the throne speech, the government announced that it would announce ambitious plans for a green recovery. There really isn't much in the throne speech in that regard. During the lockdown, and since March, Canada has made disproportionate investments in fossil fuels.

I would like to understand the logic of her speech. We must avoid a climate disaster. How will Canada help prevent this disaster?

• (1105)

[*English*]

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, speaking about how climate and health are so connected, I spoke with some pediatricians in London just this week about their concerns on the well-being and health of children and how it is affected by climate change. We have to remember that it very much affects our young people. We cannot look back. As a government, we are doing many things to help improve what is already being done to ensure we meet and exceed the targets we have set for 2030 and 2050.

Together we will achieve great things.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I, like many members of Parliament, have been in regular contact with the chambers of commerce in my riding. The two biggest fixed costs for small businesses are labour and rent.

I am glad to see that the emergency wage subsidy will be extended, as outlined in the throne speech. However, commercial rental assistance was not mentioned. I am thinking of small businesses in my riding like V2V Black Hops Brewing or Sports Traders Duncan, both of which are facing financial ruin because they have uncooperative landlords.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development is in a position of authority to answer this question. What is her government going to do to fix this delinquent program to ensure that people who are facing troubles with their commercial rent can access this program and are not dependent on uncooperative landlords?

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's question is an important one. As MPs, we know this has been a concern. The rent subsidy program has helped many, over 120,000 Canadian small businesses, representing over a million jobs. We know that some people are doing well because of this program.

Can we do better? Yes. We need to continue working with the provinces, as rent is under their control, to ensure they understand how important it is to encourage people who rent buildings, commercial tenants, and to give them a break. They need to continue that throughout the COVID crisis. It is not going to end soon and these people need our support.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure to appear before the House today to speak to our government's Speech from the Throne and why I believe it presents the best plan possible for Canadians who need support during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Our government's plan will ensure not only that our economy can rebound once COVID has been beaten, but that we come back as a stronger, greener, more inclusive Canada.

I am proud of the great solidarity and resilience that the people of Châteauguay—Lacolle have demonstrated during this difficult time. From the beginning of the lockdown, many volunteers and community groups stepped up to help those who were most affected by the health crisis. Terrific organizations such as Sourire sans Fin in Saint-Rémi and the Centre d'action bénévole du grand Châteauguay provided services, such as much needed food to local

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families, and the coordination of personal outreach calls to seniors confined to their homes. I was very pleased to see our government sent supplemental funds out to these and other groups in our regions that were providing emergency relief.

I also want to take this opportunity in the House to thank the front-line health and essential services workers in our region who worked tirelessly to ensure our health and safety and for their continued dedication to the public good.

With the sudden lockdown, many people found themselves, through no fault of their own, without work or the possibility of finding work. Providing income replacement to the unemployed, self-employed and gig workers was our top priority in March 2020.

With the rapid rollout of the emergency relief benefit, Canadians could breathe a sigh of relief. Many in my riding called and wrote me to tell me how much the CERB helped them and their families cope with the financial insecurity of this crisis. It helped them to do what they needed to do to keep themselves and their families safe during the first six months of this crisis.

I do not have to tell members that the COVID-19 lockdown was a huge shock for businesses. In my region, my team and I worked with farmers, manufacturers, restaurants and retailers who had to adapt to the COVID reality. Very quickly we were able to collaborate with our regional development agencies, whether municipal, provincial or federal, as well as our chambers of commerce to identify needs and facilitate access to programs, such as the Canada emergency business account and the Canada emergency wage subsidy. These and other programs were greatly appreciated in my riding, and our government's commitment to extending these programs is welcomed.

We have weathered the first wave of this pandemic and we are now beginning the second. We know this will not be easy, but with the plan that our government has outlined in the Speech from the Throne, we have a pathway forward to take bold action on health, the economy, social equality and the environment to build a more resilient and sustainable Canada for everyone.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

The throne speech presents the four foundations of our action plan presented to Canadians to respond to COVID-19 and recover from the consequences of this pandemic.

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The first foundation is to fight COVID-19 and save lives by doing everything in our power to protect Canadians, especially the most vulnerable. We need to work together to ensure the health and safety of our citizens and to beat this virus. We will do so by guaranteeing Canadians that they can be vaccinated as soon as the vaccine is ready. We will also support our provincial partners and ensure that we have adequate supplies of protective equipment and testing materials.

The second foundation of our plan is supporting people and businesses through this crisis as long as it lasts, whatever it takes. Contrary to what some say, this is not the time for austerity. The strength of our actions now will determine the quality of the world we will leave our children and grandchildren. The best thing we can do is to support Canadians during this health crisis.

Why did our government take extraordinary, but necessary, measures during the first wave of the pandemic? Canadians should not have to choose between their health and their job, just like Canadians should not have to take on debt that their government can better shoulder.

This will be our guiding principle from here on out.

I thank members from all parties for their unanimous support of the measures in Bill C-4, which passed in the House the other night. These important measures, including a more flexible EI program, paid sick leave and a caregiver benefit, will allow us to continue helping Canadians and their families.

By extending the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency business account, we will help companies stay in business, create jobs, support women in the economy and ensure our financial sustainability.

The third foundation in our government's plan is to build back better to create a stronger, more resilient Canada. One thing we have seen is that this pandemic has laid bare unacceptable inequalities in our society. We need to do something and bridge the gaps in our social systems, invest in health care and strengthen our workforce.

Today is the International Day of Older Persons, and I want to say that our government remains committed to increasing old age security once a senior turns 75 and to boosting the Canada pension plan survivor's benefit.

The fourth pillar of the plan is standing up for our Canadian identity and values. Canadians take care of one another, as we have seen from coast to coast to coast in recent months.

I am proud of the solidarity the people of Châteauguay—Lacolle have demonstrated. For example, a group of girls organized a Black Lives Matter rally with help from our Kahnawake Mohawk neighbours. Since then, a number of initiatives have sprung up in my riding to raise our community's awareness of racism and to support people demanding an end to violence and discrimination.

I would like to take a moment to note the tragic death of Joyce Echaquan, which occurred under deplorable circumstances, and to express my deepest condolences to her family.

We must keep working together to gain ground in the fight against systemic racism and achieve gender equality and reconciliation.

We are proud to champion the values that define our country. This pandemic is the worst public health crisis Canada has ever experienced. The past six months have exposed fundamental flaws in our society and around the world.

We must tackle today's problems and prepare for tomorrow's. Now is the time to remember who we are as Canadians. Now is the time to seize the opportunity to contain the global crisis and rebuild better together.

• (1115)

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are hearing a lot about a green recovery and the green economy. The government made a commitment to plant two billion trees and yet the total number of trees planted so far is zero. I am wondering how outraged she is at this fact as we go forward. Liberals keep talking about green energy, but her government has done nothing on its commitment.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, he may have noticed that we are in a pandemic and that has delayed certain ambitious projects that we had when we came into government last fall. That being said, we remain committed to planting the two billion trees and I am hoping that he will join me in planting a few in his riding.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague for her speech in the House.

For me, it prompted many questions about the Speech from the Throne, which she vigorously defended. I feel that there are a lot of concerns to be raised.

If members recall, before the Speech from the Throne was announced, the government decided to shut down Parliament. The Prime Minister also decided to deliver a throne speech. We figured it was going to be something big, because Parliament had been shut down and they were going to address the nation. It was going to be revolutionary and change everything.

We did not know what to expect, but the government had created certain expectations. We thought there might be money for Quebec's aerospace sector, which has been struggling since the pandemic, or the transportation sector. We were hoping for health transfers. We know that Quebec is struggling with health care, the system has been hard hit. We thought there might be money for our seniors, who are isolated and have suffered a great deal.

As it turns out, it was a dud. There was nothing new. All we saw were old recycled Liberal promises. The only thing new we saw—

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The Deputy Speaker: We need to leave more time for answers to the questions.

The hon. member for Châteauguay—Lacolle.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, who asked a number of questions.

I absolutely agree that some sectors and industries have been impacted more directly by COVID-19. We expect to have measures in place to support them soon.

With respect to health, we just gave the provinces \$19 billion, which will help them do the important work of protecting the public and delivering health care.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, throughout this pandemic, the Liberal government has left out Canadians with disabilities. Only after months of the NDP pushing did it promise a one-time \$600 payment. However, knowing the flaws in the DTC program, the Liberals designed a program that left the majority of people with disabilities out. Even people who qualify still have not received their \$600 payment.

I have heard from so many people in my riding who continue to be left out. How does the member defend a government that continues to leave Canadians with disabilities behind?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, the throne speech talks about the issue that has been too long neglected, and that is the whole way we address disabilities pensions and the way they are done.

We have made the commitment to revise and modernize the disability pension, so that it would resemble the guaranteed income supplement. That is going to be an important change for people with disabilities in this country.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned greening the future and this opportunity that we have. However, I could not help but notice that nuclear was mentioned in the throne speech, and there was an announcement by our natural resources minister just days after.

I am wondering what the member thinks about further investments in nuclear. We have already dumped \$20 billion into it, federally, since 1950. The nuclear industry failed to deliver on its promise to provide cheap, safe energy. Globally, the industry is in decline.

I wonder what the minister thinks about this instead of supporting Canadian gas as we move to renewables.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly not an expert on energy and the different options that we have before us as we move forward to a greener future.

I will say, as a member from Quebec and a proud owner of a fully electric vehicle, in Quebec we are using electric and it is working very well. I certainly welcome more research and innovation into alternative forms of green energy.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

I would like to start my remarks today by commending people of the Kelowna—Lake Country community. Their resiliency in the face of this pandemic has been truly remarkable. I would also like to thank my team in our constituency office and in Ottawa, who work as one cohesive group as we triage daily issues, for their hard work in ensuring that our constituents have been responded to quickly and given information or assistance as needed during a very challenging time with daily announcements and also with Service Canada office closures.

It is also important to recognize the many essential workers who have gone above and beyond over the last six months, ensuring food is on our table, mail is in our mailboxes, medicines are in our cabinets, and transportation is available through transit and taxi; and, of course, our law enforcement, medical workers and first responders, who are always on the front line every day in our community and in communities across the country.

Our hearts also go out to those who have lost loved ones during this time.

This pandemic has created uncertainty for so many. Individuals, families, not-for-profits and businesses are having to make tough decisions and, at times, heartbreaking ones. During the course of this pandemic, I heard from countless constituents and business owners in my riding that the programs the government was implementing simply were not working for them. Families have been separated and many still have limited access to each other. People have passed away, either from COVID-19 or other ailments, including in my family, and it has been tough for everyone in different ways.

The last time Parliament sat with its full functions and usual powers was on Friday, March 13, 2020. I took a picture on that day, which I posted on my social media last week, of the calendar right here after we voted to adjourn in response to the spread of COVID-19. I had a feeling it was going to be an important date in our Canadian history and was compelled to capture it as we were filtering out of the House of Commons. Little did I know at the time how significant it would actually be and what the next many months would bring us, or that the next time we would be back at regular sittings with all functions and powers of Parliament would not be until six months later, on September 23.

Some committees, but not all, sat virtually since March. Important committees such as natural resources, justice and human rights, and national defence have not sat once since March, and many other meetings sat infrequently.

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It is unbelievable that the government had the international trade committee sit only once since March. I have been honoured with this as my new shadow cabinet ministerial portfolio. There have been important issues we should have been discussing, causing great concern to Canadian businesses. China still has agricultural products embargoed. Canada's trade agreement with the European Union, CETA, will no longer apply to the United Kingdom as of December 31. We received shipments of defective PPE from China. The U.S. put tariffs on aluminum. There were to be four committee meetings to discuss the trade dispute with Australia over excise taxes, which Canadian wineries and cideries will have to start paying on domestically grown product. This will mean, for example, a new \$30,000 a year tax bill to small farm-gate wineries.

It is said that someone's true character shows during times of extreme, stressful situations; we saw the true character of the Liberals come out during this time. They just could not help themselves. Their desire for ultimate control, dislike of governance and the parliamentary process, and helping their elitist friends will be their legacy during this pandemic.

Just a few examples include trying to pass legislation giving the finance minister ultimate power to tax, spend and borrow for almost two years, without debate or parliamentary process; not allowing all committees to be sitting virtually and regularly to discuss important issues to Canadians; an order in council in the middle of the pandemic on gun legislation that had no input from stakeholders at a committee so that all voices and facts could be heard.

We saw another example of the dislike for parliamentary oversight in a process here a couple of nights ago where some of us were in this place until after 3 a.m. Instead of properly bringing forth a bill weeks ago, a bill worth over \$50 billion in taxpayer spending, for a wholesome analysis and debate and for study at committee to hear from everyday Canadians and stakeholders who would have brought their voices forth with ideas and suggestions, the Liberals allowed for only four and a half hours of debate and forced a confidence vote.

The Liberals have given sole-source contracts with no public request for proposals. There was extensive lobbying with a non-registered lobbyist, of course I am referring to WE Charity; and they were planning on giving an almost-billion-dollar government program to active Liberal campaigners and supporters, again WE Charity, who showed clearly they did not have the financial or operational capacity to fulfill the program.

● (1125)

I was here in Ottawa on August 12, one of only four times we were scheduled to sit this summer, and I had the opportunity to question the former finance minister. Little did I know at the time that I would be the last member of Parliament to question him prior to his resignation during all the conflict and ethics investigations over the WE Charity scandal.

We are here today debating a new throne speech, because on August 18, the Prime Minister announced the prorogation of Parliament, triggering the second throne speech in under a year. He stated that he did so because we need a plan to help families, businesses and individuals and to relaunch the economy. This cancelled all sittings and scheduled committee meetings. This was a real shame,

because I sit on the industry committee and we were slated to hear from businesses and industry associations regarding their challenges and recommendations as we work together to recover. I had submitted several names from my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country to bring their voices and ideas forth.

[*Translation*]

Where is the big economic recovery plan?

● (1130)

[*English*]

Where is this big relaunch plan that we were expecting in the throne speech? We have been anticipating it for five weeks.

Much of the throne speech looks like it was cut and pasted from the last throne speech, which was 10 months ago. When we add that to statements made by the government over the last few months, there was nothing really new that we have not heard before.

We have a Prime Minister who prefers to give speeches from podiums rather than to govern. This was shown a few days ago. When the Governor General had barely finished reading the throne speech, the Prime Minister went on national television to address the nation, basically paraphrasing what the Governor General had just read but in a partisan, election way. It was hardly a unifying and inspirational speech one would expect from the leader of a country.

Unity and sovereignty are not mentioned in the throne speech. These are core values of our country and have been put in jeopardy by the government. The only time unity is mentioned in the throne speech is when it is part of another word, like “immunity”.

There is a large backlog in the processing of disability benefits for veterans. I received an email late last night from a veteran in my community who had been waiting for years for back payments for benefits. He was shortchanged because of an accounting error. The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has not met once since March, and we have learned that Legions across the country are in jeopardy of closing. They have been networking with their veterans. The service of veterans was only mentioned briefly, in a round-about way, in the throne speech, with no acknowledgement of key issues to veterans.

The government is vague in the throne speech when it talks about things it is not passionate about, yet it is very specific on others. One example is further restricting responsible gun owners.

First responders are dealing with overdoses continually, every day, and the government said that it will “continue to address the opioid epidemic tearing through communities”. What does this mean? There are no actions or policy ideas.

Planting two billion trees was in the last throne speech, and planting two billion trees is in this throne speech. What a lost opportunity this summer. People who were looking for work could have been outdoors planting trees. There were volunteer opportunities.

Businesses, particular small businesses, were mentioned, but there was nothing new or hopeful to grasp on to. There was no inspirational relaunching of the economy. There was only a listing of existing programs.

Our important manufacturing, natural resource and energy sectors are mentioned briefly, but only in relation to climate change. They should be strong economic engines of our recovery. Businesses in all of these sectors are on hold, and not because of COVID-19 but because of uncertainty, thanks to the policies and ideologies of this government.

The throne speech talks about creating one million jobs. Two million jobs were lost and one million have been recouped, but a lot of people are still out of work. If new jobs are to be created, we should be talking about the high-paying jobs that have been lost over the last couple of years.

The official opposition has made many recommendations to the government, which it has implemented as part of its program. I will continue to stand up for what is important to my constituents in Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech we speak about building back better and putting in place a number of programs to help our economy continue to grow, and grow like it was pre-COVID, when we had the lowest unemployment rate in 40 years, created over a million jobs and lifted hundreds of thousands of individuals out of poverty. In the throne speech we talk about assisting the hardest-hit sectors and getting women back into the labour force, because COVID has very much impacted women to a greater extent than men.

I am wondering what constructive measures the member would recommend to the government for the economy. We put in place the CEWS, the CECRA and the CEBA. There are a number of programs, and we continue to do the good work. Where are the constructive ideas of the member opposite?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, we have to remember that we have the highest unemployment rate right now in the G7, and part of that is because of the uncertainty.

A number of programs are still not working for people. We have the commercial rent assistance program, but a lot of businesses are not eligible for it. I heard about this a lot in my riding, and it has really affected small business owners. One business owner's revenue loss was only 68%, not 70%, and that made him ineligible for the program.

The Address

The Conservatives made multiple recommendations to allow small business owners who do not have a commercial bank account and are using a personal bank account exclusively for business to apply for some of the funding. That has fallen on deaf ears for months.

Those are two very specific examples, and changes there would be very helpful to business owners.

• (1135)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kelowna—Lake Country, a fellow British Columbian, for the part of her speech that centred on the opioid epidemic, which has affected our province the most out of any province in all of Canada. I agree with her that there was only a passing reference in the throne speech to it despite the scope of this epidemic.

The NDP has been saying for a number of years that the federal government should declare this a national health emergency. Recently, multiple health experts from across the country and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police called for decriminalization.

I wonder what the member's views are on the two policy ideas of declaring a national health emergency and decriminalizing possession of small amounts. Does she agree with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police that this is something we should employ to try to get a handle on this epidemic and save the carnage of lives being lost every day?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, with regard to addiction and the opioid crisis, in many communities more people have unfortunately lost their lives in this way than to COVID-19. This is something we absolutely need to address.

A lot of what I hear in my community is that the focus is solely on harm reduction. This is absolutely a part of dealing with the situation, but there are so many other ways that we could be dealing with this. We could do it through recovery and treatment facilities, for example, but this is not being focused on at all. It was actually in the last Conservative election platform.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

She talked about her work at the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. We are currently into the second wave of the pandemic, and we know that many businesses in our ridings could face difficulties or even lose the fight altogether and go bankrupt. The House was prorogued.

The Address

My colleague talked about a recovery plan. I wonder if she could comment on the need for this recovery plan to be green. We need to emphasize the importance of green technologies. The recovery will have to find ways to reduce our carbon footprint and our dependence on oil. What are my colleague's thoughts on this energy transition?

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, in the province the member is from, there is a very large aluminum industry, which is touted as green aluminum. A lot of these manufacturing sectors are going to be the economic engines.

We have heard that a lot of investment has been cancelled across the country. It is worth billions of—

The Deputy Speaker: One moment, please. I think the interpretation is not working.

[Translation]

Is the English interpretation also working?

[English]

I will ask the hon. member to finish her thought and then we will wrap up.

The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, we know that a lot of investment across the country is on hold right now, waiting for government policies. We know there are organizations that want to produce more PPE, but that includes being able to get the raw materials. They come from the oil and gas sector. We also know there are businesses in Alberta that are looking to invest billions of dollars in other types of manufacturing facilities. This is all on hold right now. We need policies that will encourage our manufacturing sector and the use of the natural resources we have here.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the member for Kelowna—Lake Country for her great speech today and her outstanding work since her election last year. She is a strong addition to our government in waiting. I just want to let her know that her hard work is very much appreciated.

I would like to thank all of the workers in my community who have put their community first during 2020. From prevention to testing to treatment, people in the health care field, and those who have stepped into the health care field, have done so much for our community. We have essential workers who, in times of great uncertainty, continued to provide the services that we required of them, and everyday folks whose jobs were not declared essential soldiered on to continue to serve their friends, neighbours and family members: people working at grocery stores, repairing roads, collecting garbage or working at financial institutions. Whatever it was, they carried on in the face of adversity.

Early in the pandemic, we were called on by the country to come together to provide the support that Canadians desperately needed. Giving credit where credit is due, there was a fast reaction from the government, but it needed a little help to get where it needed to be for Canadians. The wage subsidy is a great example of that. Through the work of all the members in this place, we were able to

take it from the 10% proposed wage subsidy to the 75% that businesses were calling for, and that they so desperately needed to be able to keep businesses open and keep employees on the payroll. It is a tremendously important improved outcome created by the work of parliamentarians.

What also happened around that same time, early this year, was an unprecedented attempt at a power grab by the government, looking to tax and spend without parliamentary oversight until December of 2021. Parliament pushed back and we were able to stop that attempt at a power grab.

At that point we knew that the work of the government was going to require a close eye. That became so apparent during the summer months, when we learned that a company had paid members of the Prime Minister's family half a million dollars. His government saw fit to give that organization half a billion dollars.

At every turn, when members of the House or committee members tried to seek answers, they were faced with obstruction. They were faced with filibusters. The government wanted to deflect, duck and avoid accountability.

While many Canadians were making tough decisions about how they were going to pay their mortgages or rent, and worried, looking ahead, about how they were going to heat their homes or how they were going to eat, the Liberals were looking out for their well-connected friends and the insiders: people with access to the halls of power and the Prime Minister's office, believing that the executive had a set of rules that was different from the rest of the country.

We heard a great deal of testimony that was very damaging to the government, damaging to the Prime Minister, and so damaging to the then finance minister that, in fact, Bill Morneau resigned in disgrace.

• (1140)

There were echoes of a scandal from the Liberals' first mandate, the SNC-Lavalin scandal, which saw the Prime Minister fire cabinet ministers and kick women out of his caucus who had the courage to stand up to him and speak truth to power. That was the subject of the Trudeau Report 2, in which he was found to have broken ethics laws when he interfered in the prosecution of his well-connected friends at SNC-Lavalin.

During that same mandate the Liberals had, there was also the Trudeau Report 1, in which the Prime Minister was found guilty of breaking ethics laws for his illegal trip to billionaire island, and now here we are. Canadians gave Liberals a reduced mandate and put them on notice. They shortened the leash, but the Prime Minister is under investigation again by the Ethics Commissioner.

The Address

While these investigations were going on and the government was being damaged, the Prime Minister shut down Parliament. He prorogued, breaking a promise that the Liberals would never prorogue. In fact, the Prime Minister marched in the streets against prorogation, stating he would never do it and would never try to avoid accountability.

What did the Liberals do with those six weeks, aside from hiding from accountability? They did not get ready. They did not consult with stakeholders and opposition parties. They did not prepare to provide Canadians with the help they need. While all of our allies had approved rapid testing, we were into the second wave here in Canada. After weeks of opposition pressure, after we had come back, and after the doors had been unlocked after they had shut down Parliament, we put the pressure on for rapid tests. We were talking about rapid tests in March and are still asking the Prime Minister where they are. The government bought 7.9 million of those tests, but they were not approved. Suddenly, the next day, they were approved.

We have been calling for these tests but they are not in the hands of the government or Canadians yet. The Prime Minister says it is going to be a couple of weeks for the tests. How many schools are going to be closed in the next couple of weeks while Canadians wait for those tests? How many workplaces will close? How many more community outbreaks will occur? This is a failure of the Prime Minister, one of many during this pandemic.

Canadians deserve better. The Prime Minister said a couple of weeks, but he had a couple of weeks. He had six weeks. However, the Liberals had to rush through the reforms to the emergency response benefit because they did not get ready. They did not use those six weeks. The Prime Minister hid.

Let us talk about the commercial rent assistance program which has been, frankly, a disaster. It is expiring. There is nothing on the Notice Paper. There is no plan. The Liberals failed businesses. For many of the programs they have had, and in spite of urging from business groups, small business owners and the opposition parties, the criteria were often very narrow and excluded many Canadians. Many people in my community did not qualify for a single program.

For the six weeks the Liberals had, the Speech from the Throne fell very short of what Canadians deserve. What we did see, and what has been demonstrated to Canadians, is the importance of having this place, of having our parliamentary democracy and having a check on the power of government. The work that opposition members do is critical to the function of our democracy. Canadians get better outcomes when we do our work, when Parliament does its work and when committees do their work. That is what we are going to continue to do.

As the official opposition, Canada's Conservatives are going to continue doing the work of holding the government to account. When the time comes, this government in waiting will act on the lessons learned during this pandemic, and we will continue to deliver for Canadians.

• (1150)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is in the neighbouring riding to mine, and I get to drive through his riding when I am heading to Ottawa. It is quite a beautiful riding to drive through.

I want to start by thanking the member for showing confidence in the government. When we voted in the wee hours of yesterday morning, we were voting on a bill that included a confidence motion. I know that he is quite tough on the government from time to time. He has no problem showing where he thinks things should be changed or where things should be done differently. However, at the end of the day when we did have that vote on supporting Canadians, he chose to vote in confidence of the government. It truly was inspiring to see that, despite what we heard today.

When it comes to the rapid tests he brought up, we know that the best way to make the decisions is to let Health Canada, the professionals, make those decisions. Those are not decisions that should be made by politicians.

If the member had been in the position of the Minister of Health, would he have made that choice as a politician or would he have relied on advice from professionals in those positions?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that I inspire the member. That is the role of any good opposition member: to inspire members of the government to do better.

In March, when the Prime Minister talked about rapid tests, when those calls were made, that is when action should have been taken. The health minister should have been looking at our trade agreements and looking at the obligation of Canada to recognize the approval of medical devices that had been approved in those partnering areas, to be able to recognize and take advantage of that, and to leverage that for the health and safety of Canadians.

That is what the government should have been doing. That is what it should do on a go-forward basis.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about the reference to infrastructure in the throne speech.

We heard that the federal government wanted to invest in all types of infrastructure over the next two years. This morning, we heard the Prime Minister announce a \$10-billion plan over three years. No one said anything about whether the provinces and territories were consulted or whether transfer payments would be made.

Does my colleague share the Bloc Québécois's concern regarding how the federal government failed to consult the provinces about areas of shared jurisdiction?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, it is troubling that we have this Speech from the Throne, where time and again it is clear that there has not been adequate consultation, or at least the government did not listen to its own consultations with the provinces.

The Address

I know here in Ontario, much like in Quebec, the lower tiers, the municipalities and the province, are calling for certain infrastructure projects to be completed, but the government is missing in action. In Ontario, there are bilateral agreements in which the federal government's participation is required, but it is very slow to act on it.

The federal government made an announcement this morning, and I know that it will grab some headlines, but actually seeing shovels in the ground is a different thing. We hear a lot of talk from the government, but what we want to see is action. Before the government makes these announcements, it ought to make them in full consultation with the provinces.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about the scandals and ethical violations, about the government proroguing Parliament to avoid accountability.

I want to highlight one of the many impacts: the \$900 million promised to WE Charity that was actually supposed to be promised to students. When the Liberals were caught, that help for students evaporated. Students are still waiting. They are still struggling to afford rent, tuition and food.

Would the member agree that in the government's attempt to have Canadians forget about the WE scandal, it has forgotten about students?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, the government has absolutely left students behind. It has left many Canadians behind.

That money, that \$912 million, could have had an impact if it had been invested, for example, in the regular Canada summer jobs program, if the government had fully funded those programs. The nearly \$1 billion could have been added to a program that already existed.

In all of the ways that the government could have invested in students, instead it missed the opportunity. The government took the opportunity to look out for its Liberal friends and well-connected insiders, and it let Canadians down.

• (1155)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I will indicate that I will be sharing my time with the member for Don Valley East.

Before I commence my address, I want to thank another group that is very important: my constituents.

I thank those who are essential workers, who have stocked shelves in grocery and convenience stores, driven Ubers, delivered takeout and kept our neighbourhoods and schools safe and clean.

I want to thank the medical professionals, like those at St. Joseph's Health Centre, who are bravely treating those with COVID-19, and those who provide health care to the very vulnerable, people like Angela Robertson and her team at Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre, who are on the front lines of the opioid crisis.

I want to thank neighbours, like the ones on my street in Roncesvalles Village and so many other streets around Parkdale—High

Park, who organized to deliver groceries to people in quarantine who tested positive.

I want to thank musicians and artists in our community, like Jordan Isaac, who took curing isolation and loneliness to heart by serenading seniors on their balconies at long-term care homes like the Elm Grove Living Centre, and the organizations for whom seniors are a part of their clientele, like the workers at Parkdale Intercultural Association, CultureLink and Parkdale Community Information Centre, who are addressing the mental health and well-being of our elderly throughout this pandemic.

I want to thank those on the front lines of the spike in domestic violence caused by this pandemic, people like Abi Ajibolade and her team at The Redwood shelter, who are working overtime to keep women and children safe.

I want to thank the small businesses that, despite their own struggles to stay afloat during very challenging circumstances, have found the time to give back to their employees, like the Stay Home ale that was created at the Indie Alehouse, the funds of which go to support the employees themselves. I also thank the businesses that give back to our communities through fundraising efforts, like Barque, which provided food to front-line workers, and the efforts of Cici's Pizza in Parkdale and Scout in Roncesvalles Village to raise money for food banks.

I want to thank the organizations that have been going above and beyond the call in addressing the critical issue of food insecurity, which has always existed but has been acute during the pandemic. The most notable of these is the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre, which has provided the use of its industrial kitchen to Jagger Gordon at Feed it Forward so that their joint forces could deliver meals to those in need with the help of the Tibetan Women's Association of Ontario.

I want to thank the advocates in my riding who have continued to shine a light on the need for things like climate action, addressing housing, and most recently, the continent-wide movement to confront systemic discrimination and anti-Black and anti-indigenous racism. I thank people like Debbie King, Ayan Kailie and Alexa Gilmour.

As the Prime Minister said, the story of Canada is about ordinary people doing extraordinary things. This rings true with the residents of Parkdale—High Park, who I am proud to represent here in Ottawa. I outline these attributes and achievements not simply because of what people have been doing in my riding during the pandemic, but because of what their actions have taught us about the pandemic, the fault lines and vulnerabilities they have exposed and the opportunities they have highlighted to build back better.

Let me now turn to the throne speech and the priorities we are outlining for the next session of Parliament and our country.

The Address

The first is that the path back to economic recovery starts with a plan to crush the coronavirus itself. This is why addressing the health care needs that relate to the virus is the lead pillar outlined in the throne speech. This means investing heavily in things like domestic supply chains for personal protective equipment. It means investing in research and development to develop a domestic vaccine. It also means procuring the supply of promising potential vaccines that are being developed abroad. It means putting in \$19 billion, as we have already, to help all the provinces and territories with the safe restart of our economy. This is fundamental because, without a health plan, we do not have an economic plan and path forward to recovery.

Another thematic point I have learned from my constituents and my capacity as a member of Parliament and parliamentary secretary is that any plan for an economic recovery must start with women. We are in the midst of a “she-cession”. What we need to get out of this “she-cession” is a “she-covery”. These are terms that have been coined in the last few months that very aptly describe where we are as a nation. That is why we heard very active commitments outlined in the throne speech with respect to engaging women more robustly in this economic recovery and a commitment to an action plan specifically for women and their full participation in the economy.

We also saw a commitment to nationwide child care, which has been the subject of much discussion on the floor of the House over the past several days. People say they have heard that before and ask why they should believe people this time around. I understand their frustration. I remember some of those commitments being made by past governments. What is important now is that this is the first time in 16 years any federal government has come to the table in the form of a throne speech or a budget statement and said that, nationwide, child care is a priority. That is a critical commitment, and what I am dealing with here and now is the renewed vigour and interest in that commitment.

• (1200)

What am I talking about? To be candid, I am talking about people like me. For far too long, the notion of child care and a universal nationwide child care program has been deemed to be the purview of women of child-bearing age. The critics would call it a 25- to 35-year-old female issue.

What this pandemic has exposed to all of us, working from home, juggling and trying to balance caring for people who are ill and looking after children with the competing demands of work, is that the current system is not working. What we need is robust child care. By addressing robust and universal child care, we can fulfill the commitment we have repeatedly made that we want to ensure women's full participation in the economy. It is time to achieve and move on this demand. It is good that men, particularly men in this country who have now been through and are still going through the pandemic, are getting on board with this important idea.

The third issue is that we cannot recover from this virus or even prepare for the next one, and indeed there may be a next one coming, when isolation and quarantine at home is critical but too many

do not have a safe and secure place to isolate, a place to call home, as we have heard so often in the vernacular.

Housing has to be addressed. Housing has to be part of a plan to build back and build back better. That means owning homes, renting affordable homes and supportive housing. Those three planks of our national housing strategy were announced three years back, with funding to the tune of over \$50 billion, but what is very recent is that we made a commitment in the last two weeks to put \$1 billion around the country into a rapid housing industry, or RHI, which will do things like build modular homes quickly for people who are in acute housing crisis and need homes to be built now. These are important steps in the right direction for things, as the pandemic has exposed and my constituents have explained to me, where the needs are acute.

I represent a riding in the city of Toronto. Much like many other urban centres around this country, we are experiencing an acute homelessness issue, a homelessness crisis, which has to be addressed. It is not sufficient when people are unable to be housed. Not only are they not able to look after themselves but they are also not able to curb the spread of this virus. What we are doing is upping our ante with respect to homelessness. We are saying that we will commit to ending chronic homelessness. The previous commitment our government made was to reduce it by about 50% over a period of years. We are saying that is not sufficient, and we are upping the priority and making a bold commitment to end chronic homelessness.

The fourth issue is that the recovery must not only build back better but also greener. People have been captivated by what we have seen in terms of a lower carbon footprint and animal life surfacing all around us, etc. They have also raised concerns about the usage of single-use plastics during the pandemic, when people were using single-use plastics at much higher levels. We are addressing things on both ends. We are committing to conservation measures. We are also renewing our commitment to ban the harmful use of single-use plastics.

We are also embracing where the economy is going, as well as what a just transition for workers looks like in terms of embracing a green economy by focusing on clean tech, clean infrastructure and zero-emission vehicles. Part of the million jobs plan we have for this country will involve this new economy, a greener economy, and we will continue to price pollution, an important statement that was reiterated in the throne speech.

The last theme I will discuss is the commitment to ending systemic racism and confronting discrimination. In the wake of what we have seen in the United States and are seeing here in Canada, this is a critical need. It is something I personally have believed in and advocated for all of my adult life. I am glad to see so much interest in it across all sectors of Canada, across all racial demographics and across all groups.

The Address

People want to see change. What are those changes? We are redoubling our work on reconciliation. We are working hard to have diversity and procurement. We will address overrepresentation in prisons and corrections through diversion and rehab. We will enact standards about the appropriate use of force and address online hate, something I had the privilege to work on all summer long in my capacity as parliamentary secretary. We are addressing seniors' needs with national standards and with beefed up amendments to the Criminal Code about the neglect of seniors.

What all these themes represent is that we are listening. We are listening to what we have heard from Canadians during this pandemic and as we continue to fight this pandemic. Therefore, those views have shaped our priorities. These are important initiatives that I hope we can have all-party support for, and I look forward to working with members opposite to enact these bold visions.

● (1205)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing that I wanted to touch on, which is affecting many small businesses in my riding, is a need for commercial rent assistance.

I was glad to see that the government is committed to extending the wage subsidy, because we know that small businesses have two major fixed costs. One is labour, which will be handled with the emergency wage subsidy, but the other is commercial rent assistance. The problem so many small businesses are having is that when they have an uncooperative landlord, who is unwilling to engage with the program, they are left with no options.

I had a business in my community that was called Sports Traders. It ran for 25 years and was a bedrock member of the small business community of Duncan, but it went under because of an uncooperative landlord.

I would like to hear the parliamentary secretary's comments on how the government is going to fix this program and make it so that tenants are not dependent on landlords to access those funds.

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, my thanks to the member opposite for his contribution to the House during this Parliament and the previous Parliament.

The rent issue is not a simple one. I will be very candid here in saying that. Based on the division of powers in the Constitution, we require intense participation and co-operation on the part of the provinces. Some provinces have been more forthcoming in terms of providing that co-operation; others have not. That has been a challenge. What we are trying to do is to ensure that we are putting in place programs that would incentivize landlords to participate and provinces to play ball with respect to rent assistance. The wage subsidy that the member mentioned is also an important step.

There are also commitments in the throne speech to expand the CEBA, which is, in part, a grant-based program, where 25% would be in the form of a grant and the rest would be an interest-free loan, to assist with small businesses in terms of overcoming the very serious problems that they are facing right now with the pandemic.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will continue in the same vein and ask the member to comment on

the numerous failures that have been identified within the very programs he discussed.

The government talks about extending the CEBA, yet it still has not fixed the problems that have already been identified, problems that the government has already acknowledged and promised to fix. However, they are still not fixed. Many small business persons still cannot even get CEBA as it is. The commercial rent program, which the previous questioner spoke of, ended yesterday as a complete policy failure and not a word about it in the throne speech. These problems are failures that the government has not fixed so far.

Can the member comment on the problems the government already has, never mind the new programs they discussed in the throne speech?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, the issues of small businesses are replete around the country. There is no denying that. The issue of fine-tuning the programs is also a completely fair comment, but this is very much a dynamic process. When programs are being rolled out in eight to 18 days, programs that would normally take eight to 18 months, there will be some lacuna, some voids or some gaps that are identified.

What we have done is worked diligently with the civil service to identify those gaps, to hear from opposition parliamentarians and government parliamentarians about where the gaps are, and to fill them, for example by expanding the eligibility on the lower end and on the higher end with respect to the business account.

With respect to rent assistance, it is at the forefront of all of our minds that rent assistance is critical for small businesses facing landlords who do not want to participate in these programs. Designing them in a better way that incentivizes landlords is the magic that we are trying to ensure is achieved here, but that requires provincial co-operation and the co-operation of the landlords themselves.

[*Translation*]

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

I am extremely pleased to hear that he is concerned about housing. In Montreal, this has been a matter of great concern for years. Since the beginning of the pandemic, people have been camping on Notre-Dame Street in Montreal. They are sleeping in tents. The situation is really bad.

Recently, the government announced a federal-provincial agreement under the national housing strategy, which was launched three years ago. Quebec did not get anything. This disaster could have been avoided if money had been given to Quebec. The agreement was signed, but we did not get any details. Another billion dollars was allocated, but we did not get any details about that either.

The Address

Can my hon. colleague guarantee that this money will help the people who are sleeping on Notre-Dame Street find housing?

• (1210)

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We will be providing the details of the program and allocating the necessary funds to help people across Canada, not just in Toronto and Vancouver, but in Montreal and all the other cities in Quebec too.

Housing issues are a national problem that requires a national response, including the details that the member has asked for.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the members that when the Chair says the question needs to be brief, it is because they only have one minute left. We expect members to take 30 seconds to ask their question, and the answer should take 30 seconds as well. I just wanted to mention this so that members do not start making minute-long speeches.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Don Valley East.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to support the Speech from the Throne. On March 13, 2020, Parliament shut down, and in the days that followed, in consultation with premiers from across Canada, a strategy was developed for curbing the COVID-19 crisis.

We were in uncharted territory. We asked businesses to close and employees to stay home. In these unprecedented times, the Prime Minister and our government had to rapidly prepare a plan to ensure that Canadians could still put food on the table and pay the rent, and that businesses could stay afloat.

[English]

The government introduced the Canada emergency response benefit to help, first and foremost, the most vulnerable. For businesses, it introduced the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which allowed employees to retain their jobs and businesses to stay open.

For businesses, our government introduced various measures, including the Canada emergency business assistance and the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance. Many businesses in my riding, especially in the entertainment and tourism industry, have thanked our government for the CEWS as it has allowed them to retain their employees. We know that over four million people have gone back to the workforce. The fact that the government has proposed to extend CEWS until next October is a welcome relief for employees and employers.

For families with children, we increased the Canada child benefit. For seniors, we provided a one-time tax-free payment on their GIS and OAS. This has helped over 6.7 million seniors. As well, we provided a one-time special payment in April, through the GST credit for low and modest income seniors, of between \$400 to \$600.

Many Canadians have written to say that the concrete investments we have made in them have alleviated their financial stress.

[Translation]

I held a virtual town hall during the pandemic, and the comments I received from the people of Don Valley East helped us refine many programs. I want to thank all my constituents for their input, which was incorporated into the Speech from the Throne. My constituents will be glad to see that the post-pandemic recovery outlined in the Speech from the Throne balances the needs for equity, sustainability, environmental responsibility and fiscal prudence.

[English]

With the ending of CEBA, our government has ensured that these Canadians who have been unable to find a job are transitioned to the EI. Again, I thank my constituents of Don Valley East for their input to ensure that the EI system is aligned to the 21st century.

As a government that is concerned with the welfare of all Canadians, we have used the fiscal firepower to the benefit of all Canadians, unlike the 2008 financial crisis where the previous government gave boutique tax cuts to the rich and left out the middle-income and low-income Canadians through austerity.

How have we been able to invest in people? According to senior economist at CIBC Capital Markets, Canada entered the COVID-19 pandemic with a healthy fiscal situation out of all G7 economies. In my previous life, where I did business—

• (1215)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Shefford has informed us that there is a problem with the interpretation.

[English]

We will wait for a minute. It now works.

The hon. member for Don Valley East.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Madam Speaker, as a government that is concerned with the welfare of all Canadians, we have used fiscal firepower to the benefit of all Canadians, unlike the 2008 financial crisis when the previous government gave boutique tax cuts to the rich and left out middle-income and low-income Canadians through austerity.

The Address

How have we been able to invest in people? According to senior economists at CIBC Capital Markets, Canada entered the COVID-19 pandemic with a healthy fiscal situation out of all G7 economies. In my previous life, where I did business turnarounds, I know that when we invest in people, we get a 100% return on investment. The best way to keep the economy strong is to keep Canadians healthy.

COVID-19 has exposed that women, especially the front-line workers, have taken the brunt of the stress and job losses. According to the OECD, 56% of women work in the five C's, caring, cashiering, catering, cleaning and clerical, and 71% have lost their jobs. These are not just statistics, but the reality of many, including in my riding. Women, along with racialized Canadians, youth and persons with disabilities, are facing slower returns to work and dim employment prospects. This is unacceptable.

To get women back to work, we need an affordable child care system. I would like to remind the House that in 2006 the Paul Martin government had secured a national day care strategy, signed by all provinces and territories. This progressive plan would have seen the implementation of affordable child care for all Canadians two decades ago and we would be in a better position today. Unfortunately the Harper government tore up the hard-won agreement, and parents and children alike are feeling the damage of that heartless decision.

Going forward, we need to have a bold agenda. That is why our government and the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion introduced three new programs: the Canada recovery benefit, the Canada caregiver benefit and the Canada recovery sickness benefit. These programs will capture people in the gig economy, the self-employed and the contract worker as well as those who do not qualify for EI.

COVID-19 exposed food insecurity. Our government stepped up to the plate and provided \$100 million to various food banks. A few weeks ago, at a virtual meeting with organizations across Don Valley East, I was pleased to announce that they had received \$2 million in emergency funding. This money is to be used to facilitate better food distribution.

To help alleviate isolation among seniors, we provided \$9 million in funding for the United Way. To help students through this pandemic, we created the Canada emergency student benefit, which has helped over 650,000 students. Through the Canada summer jobs, we are able to help both businesses and students lessen their economic burden due to this pandemic.

During the crisis, we saw the horrible images of long-term care facilities and the highest death rate. This is a provincial responsibility. COVID-19 exposed how the provinces that did not invest in long-term care facilities and allowed private organizations had the highest death rates.

The Prime Minister showed leadership and worked with the provinces to provide funding of \$2 billion to alleviate stress and allow the front-line workers a safe environment. I would like to thank all the front-line workers for their selfless service in keeping Canadians safe.

In addition, through the safe restart agreement, our government has provided over \$19 billion to provinces and territories to safely start their economies. These funds are to be used to support the most vulnerable, invest in child care, increase testing and contact tracing, the procuring of PPE, etc.

Farmers should not be forgotten as they have stepped up to the plate to ensure Canadians have access to food. The Conservatives made false statements that no Liberal had ever visited a farm. This is nonsense.

On September 9, I visited the Sculthorpe family farm in Port Hope, Ontario. I was joined by members of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association. The farm raises grass-fed cattle. Farmers like the Sculthorpes are doing important work in sustainable beef production for both Canadian and international markets.

Contrary to what the opposition claims, our government has invested millions of dollars for beef produces and in Alberta alone, \$8.3 million for six projects that will help support Canada's world-class beef industry.

• (1220)

Investment in agriculture, one of the largest contributors to the economy, is an important investment. These monies will help producers become more competitive and provide them with the tools they need to remain sustainable and innovative.

Contrary to the statement by the leader of the official opposition, the pandemic has brought all Canadians together. My constituents from all political stripes participate, provide their input and want the government to continue doing the good work it is doing.

I urge all members to show leadership and not play politics. People are united, not divided, and it is critical that we remember this.

With COVID-19 in resurgence, I urge all Canadians and residents of Don Valley East to download the COVID-19 alert app on their phones. This app provides guidance to the government in helping to slow the spread.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member's time is up. I am sure she will be able to add, during questions and comments.

The Address

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to various Liberal government members' speeches since our return to the House after prorogation.

They appear to be talking up their track record in all of these speeches, but they forgot to back up those claims. They extol the virtues of the CERB, but I would remind members that if the Liberal government had taken action back in 2016, when it promised to completely reform our EI social safety net, we would not have been in this position.

In a discussion about women and equity, we cannot forget that the Pay Equity Act, which has received royal assent, has still not come into force.

I also want to point out that the assistance for seniors is not recurring or long term. It was a one-time payment, and the government did not make any further commitments.

The government has also bragged about the millions of dollars it has allocated to farmers. How did it deal with supply management before today? Prevention is the best medicine.

I want answers.

[*English*]

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Madam Speaker, it is because we have managed the economy so well that we have the firepower to give people money. People were left jobless: women in the gig economy, women who are self-employed, women who work in restaurants. It is important that we look after them. We have done what it takes to look after everyone.

For the farmers, we did not kill the supply management. The members should look to a previous government and ask questions to those Conservatives.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, he hon. member talked about Canadians being united, not divided.

In my riding of Essex, many Canadians are divided because they are across borders. I do not suggest for a moment that we open our borders right up, but there must be a compassionate side for so many people who are separated, so many loved ones, so many who have to make a decision between working across the border or staying with their families at home.

Would the hon. member agree with me that there must be a compassionate component to reuniting Canadians, families and loved ones once again?

• (1225)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Madam Speaker, I am facing the same issues. We have had conversations with the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, and there has been some allowance for people. If the member has questions, it is important he bring his case forward to the minister and I am sure he will look at it.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, how many times were veterans mentioned in the throne speech? Zero. The report released just a few days ago from the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirms what New Democrats have been saying for years. Veterans are not getting the support that they need.

Many veterans in my riding have been waiting for years. How does the member defend a throne speech and a government that continues to shortchange our veterans?

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Madam Speaker, as a member of OGGO, we studied veterans' issues. I would like to inform the member that had the Harper government not shut down nine veterans offices and cut funding to veterans, we would not be in a situation like this. How did it happen? The NDP joined hands with the Conservatives and gave the Harper government power.

Therefore, I think you have to take responsibility for that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member again that she is to address all questions and comments to the Chair and not to the individual members.

Continuing debate, the hon. member for Montarville.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will begin by informing you that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

We are here to debate the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. Perhaps we should first ask ourselves why there was a Speech from the Throne.

The government had not even gotten through the first items on its legislative agenda from the previous throne speech, which was delivered barely a year ago. Then the government sidelined Parliament for months, preventing it from passing legislation and implementing this legislative agenda. Why did the government suddenly decide to prorogue Parliament and come back with another Speech from the Throne?

We need to look back at the context of the prorogation. What was happening then?

At the time, four parliamentary committees were studying the WE Charity scandal, the government did not know how to handle the matter, and the resignation of the finance minister had not taken the pressure off.

In a situation like that, what better way to take the pressure off than to completely shut down Parliament? They had already sidelined it for months, and then they decided to shut it down altogether. The committees that had started working on WE Charity were told, "Game over! Hit the showers!"

The Address

We figured that they were raising the stakes, that we would get a substantial throne speech announcing something new, because they had not even been able to carry out the legislative agenda from the previous throne speech that had been delivered only a few months earlier. We thought they would have something big for us, especially since they announced there would also be an address to the nation, which is an exceptional event, a very rare occurrence. We thought we should all sit down in front of the TV, because something absolutely spectacular was coming.

Let me point out to my colleagues that the opposition parties have been working with the government since the pandemic hit, because we felt it was the right thing to do. All but one party ended up regretting it. The government took advantage and started acting like a majority government, ignoring any positive input it might have received from Parliament.

The work of Parliament was suspended, in came a throne speech, and we were all glued to our screens, sitting on the edge of our seats, wondering what would be announced.

In the end, we got nothing but platitudes and recycled promises from last year. The government told us to wash our hands and maintain social distancing and announced what it had already been doing for months, namely being generous to everyone and their dog and throwing around money that it does not have to get Canada through the crisis.

Lord knows it has been tough to get through this crisis so far, in part because, as my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville said earlier, the government has utterly failed to do its job within its own jurisdiction.

When it came time to close the borders, the government once again sat on its hands, wasting weeks. In the meantime, the virus, which was not yet present in the community, made its way into the country. The government's reaction was so pathetic that the mayor of Montreal had to send teams to Dorval airport to warn travellers who were arriving in Canada. That went on for at least two weeks.

• (1230)

The government is continuing to hand out money, but the only people it has not been generous with are supply-managed farmers, despite a formal agreement to compensate them. The government is generous with everyone but supply-managed farmers.

The government has also not been generous with seniors. It is giving them peanuts. It is thanks to seniors that the government has so much flexibility and the privilege of a certain prosperity. The government owes that prosperity to seniors and it has forgotten them.

What is worse, the government has now created two classes of seniors, younger seniors and older seniors. It is as though there is a huge difference between the age of 74 and a few months and 75, as though a person somehow all of a sudden needs more help as soon as they turn 75.

Obviously, Quebec and the provinces have been neglected by the current government. Yesterday, I heard the Prime Minister, all happy and proud, say that, at the beginning of the crisis, the government gave the provinces nearly \$1 billion to deal with the pandem-

ic. That is nearly \$1 billion to ensure that 10 provinces and three territories are able to deal with the pandemic. That is right: \$1 billion. He was all proud and happy to tell us that.

This same government was prepared to give \$1 billion to an organization that is close to the Trudeau family to manage a program that would pay people to volunteer. What is the thinking behind paying people to volunteer? The very definition of volunteering does not square with the idea of getting paid to do so. The government wanted to give this organization millions of dollars in fees to manage the program. This government thinks \$1 billion for a Liberal-friendly organization is not too much, but then claims it is being generous by offering \$1 billion to support Canada's health care system during a pandemic. That is amazing.

When we say that makes no sense, that more support needs to go to the provinces, which are struggling to meet intense demands with the resources they have, the government tells us with contempt and in a patronizing way that we are asking for a blank cheque, for money to be sent without any strings attached, no guidelines and no conditions.

The reality is that it was the provinces that gave the federal government a blank cheque when it proposed an agreement that would create a single health care system from coast to coast. To get the provinces on board, the federal level proposed paying 50% of the bill. Now it assumes only 22% of the cost. We trusted the federal government and we were ripped off. Once again it failed to keep its promise, and now it is talking to us about blank cheques.

Just pay the provinces what you owe them. Give the provinces what is rightly theirs. It was the provinces that gave the federal government a blank cheque.

While the government lectures Quebec and the provinces about what happened in long-term care centres, the reality is that on top of paying 78% of Canada's health care costs, the governments of Quebec and the provinces assume 100% of the costs associated with seniors' needs and care. That is the reality.

The government wants to stomp all over us once again and is proposing an agreement with conditions attached if we want the money. We will never accept it.

• (1235)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member that he must not use the name of another member or the Prime Minister in the House. He cannot do indirectly what he cannot do directly. Also, he must address the Chair, and not the government directly.

*The Address**[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 give the member credit, he delivers a fairly passionate speech. However, the problem with the speech is the content. To say that it grossly exaggerates would probably be generous. To say that it was inaccurate would probably be a lot more accurate. It is full of falsehoods.

A prime example is the member said the federal government is giving WE \$1 billion to provinces. It is over \$19 billion just for the safe restart agreement throughout the country.

The member draws the comparison saying the government was giving WE \$1 billion; not true. The member says we are giving the provinces less than what we were giving WE; not true. That made up much of the member's speech.

The federal government is there in a real and tangible way for all Canadians in all regions of the country. Would the member at least acknowledge that it is a \$19-billion restart program that is getting Ottawa and the provinces to continue to work together?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, I would urge my hon. colleague to actually listen to the speech instead of getting his questions ready for when the speech ends.

What I was talking about was the Prime Minister, who just yesterday was boasting of having given the provinces \$1 billion at the start of the pandemic so they could deal with it. That is the billion dollars I was referring to. The member needs to pay attention.

I thought it was especially ironic that my colleague would talk about the content of my speech. Perhaps he could talk about the content of the throne speech instead. Was there any content?

[English]

Show me the money.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member started off his speech asking why we had the throne speech in the first place. That is my exact question.

Ultimately, as I follow this debate, all I hear from the Liberal side of the House is talk about things they have already done. As the member indicated, the whole purpose of the throne speech was to lead us to see something grandiose, to see how we were going to be progressive and doing exciting things for this country. However, we heard the same old things.

The member did talk briefly about debt, and he is probably aware that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has talked about how big that debt is becoming, over \$1 trillion, and how the government has put over \$27,000 per person onto the debt.

Could the member comment on how that \$27,000, which amounts to roughly \$100,000 for a family of four, is going to affect people in Quebec?

• (1240)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that excellent question.

I want to be crystal clear. We in the Bloc Québécois have one question: Is it appropriate to support individuals and businesses in need? The answer is yes, but it has to be done properly. The government plainly admitted that there was a problem with the CERB, not because it rewarded laziness, as some have claimed, but simply because it did not encourage full-time work. Rather than fix a problem that even it had recognized, the government doubled down and created even more problems.

Unemployment is around 9%, yet businesses are struggling to find staff. There is a problem. Solutions need to be found. All the government is doing is making sure everybody gets a cheque. It is paying for its next election win on the backs of future generations. That is the problem.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the NDP has long supported the principle of asymmetrical federalism because we recognize that Quebec has its own distinct history, language and culture.

However, I would like to ask my Bloc Québécois colleague the following question. Are the reasons for greater autonomy for Quebec based on this distinct culture and history, or is my colleague saying that, as a province, Quebec has provincial rights like all the other provinces and this comes down to recognizing the rights of all the provinces?

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, whether we like it or not, Quebec is one of the provinces in this federation. The Constitution sets out a certain number of powers that belong to the provinces and, consequently, to Quebec.

When the federal government negotiates a health care agreement with the provinces, the expectation is that it will abide by and respect the agreement signed. We know that sometimes the federal government's signature is not worth the paper it is written on. Here we can add my colleague's very pertinent arguments on the particular history, evolution and development of Quebec, which make it—without wanting to seem presumptuous—a distinct province and a distinct society.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, our reading of the throne speech makes it clear that the Prime Minister's government has once again ignored Quebec's demands. It is actually very hard to find any concrete answers to people's demands in the throne speech. I myself do not see any.

We want measures for our farmers, especially measures that address compensation, the importance of getting cheques quickly and the agriculture programs that do not reflect the reality of small farmers. We want answers about the aerospace industry, but we did not get any.

The Address

SMEs are another issue, specifically partnerships, business owners who pay themselves dividends and very small businesses. Liquidity issues are going to be huge. With all the problems suppliers are having and the whole fixed-costs issue, I am worried we are going to see a spate of bankruptcies. None of that is in the throne speech.

The Liberal plan also involves interfering in areas under provincial jurisdiction, such as health and infrastructure, by investing money without going through the Government of Quebec. The Government of Quebec is opposed to that, of course, and is backed up by the Canadian Constitution.

What about the increased health transfers called for by Quebec and the other provinces? There is nothing about that in the speech. How to explain that Canadians have to wait until the age of 75 before getting help? It is impossible. COVID-19 has real-world implications. I will share two examples from my riding. The Agora des arts, a theatre and concert hall, has undertaken a major renovation. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has made the bids skyrocket by 60%. A project that was supposed to cost about \$5 million will now cost about \$9 million. The federal government's contribution was already limited at 14%. The Government of Quebec covered the majority of the costs, but the community also invested \$700,000 to get this project completed. The project is now in jeopardy because of COVID-19, but there are no programs to help in this case. I am very worried, and I am calling on the Minister of Canadian Heritage to ensure that the federal government will join the Government of Quebec in contributing to the project. I also encourage the people of Abitibi-Témiscamingue to show their support for the Agora des arts.

Then there is the issue of the Resolute Forest Products paper mill in Amos, which is facing an extended shutdown. This is happening in my area, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, on the North Shore and in other regions of Quebec. We need to create a recovery committee and I would like to be able to propose real solutions to promote the recovery and help processing. Can we capitalize on secondary and tertiary processing? I would like to be able to say that I am building on federal government solutions but, for now, that is not the case. People can count on me: I will be very involved in this file.

The solutions are not in the plan entitled "A Stronger and More Resilient Canada" but in the document known as "Le Québec choisit, le Bloc agit". That is recognized. The Bloc's COVID-19 recovery plan is strong and practical and based on what people in Quebec's regions are asking for. My leader and all the Bloc members went to meet with Quebecers. They listened to them and came up with real solutions. I will name several of them.

There is the whole issue of people who are receiving the Canada emergency response benefit. We are very concerned about that. These people are going to have to pay back the money they were given. Could that not have been addressed beforehand? Obviously, the answer is no. It is the same thing with the problems that the lack of employment incentives have caused for businesses. Businesses were looking for workers. Could the government consider giving non-fraudulent CERB recipients an eight-month grace period on any penalties and interest they have to pay when they file their taxes? It is going to be chaos in our 338 riding offices this spring. We will be getting a huge number of calls from people who are unable

to pay back the thousands of dollars they owe as a result of the CERB.

We are talking about increasing federal health transfers to 35% with no strings attached. I would remind members that, under the initial agreement set out in the Constitution, the federal government is supposed to cover 50% of health care costs. I am tired of being told that my province is poor when Canada is not paying the share it owes Quebec.

I will continue by talking about the recovery plan. Quebec deserves the truth about the country's public finances. Will the government provide its fiscal projections for the next three years? That is fundamental. Can it give our business owners and our governments an idea of what to expect? It seems to me that that is just common sense.

• (1245)

The Bloc Québécois is proposing new revenue sources to restore the economy. In particular, we must stop tax avoidance by large corporations that use tax havens. That way, the government could recoup billions of dollars and help the provinces and the less fortunate.

We could force tech giants to pay GST. We could also charge a 3% royalty on their Canadian operations. The royalty would go to arts and media organizations that deliver 40% French-language content. We need to stop saying that we are proud to be a country whose two official languages are French and English, and we need to take concrete action.

The moving expense deduction for oil, gas and coal companies could be eliminated. Legislative amendments could be made to collect sales tax from retailers without a local place of business, including on tangible goods purchased from abroad and online. What I find absolutely astounding is that it costs more to send a parcel through Canada Post. For example, Miellerie de la Grande Ourse sells two jars of honey for \$12, but Canada Post's fees push the cost to \$30. How can our businesses stay competitive? If that parcel were sent from the United States, it would cost less due to international agreements. I do not understand the logic. We need to support our businesses more, especially by lowering transportation costs.

There are concrete ways to support economic recovery in our regions. How can we develop a collective, pragmatic vision? The answer is economic nationalism. For example, we could create a regional development, recovery and economic diversification fund geared toward processing natural resources in Quebec. Regional funds like these could be administered by regional councils empowered to set their own priorities for our own resources in collaboration with Quebec. This could be done for various sectors, such as aluminum, forestry and farming. In my riding, a territorial innovation support fund could be used to build a slaughterhouse.

I think one great idea is to use the infrastructure of the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation, but its budget will have to be increased and indexed retroactively so that it can provide concrete assistance to our SMEs.

We could bring workers back to the regions by creating a tax credit for young graduates, newcomers and families who settle in the regions. COVID-19 is an opportunity to encourage people to move back to Quebec's regions.

Federal programs have to be more flexible and adapt to different realities in each of Quebec's regions. No more unilateral solutions, because they are bad for us. Employment insurance clearly needs a complete overhaul so that it covers all workers.

With regard to agriculture, it is time to stop selling out supply management in future negotiations and start compensating farmers without delay. A lot of promises have been made to farmers, but they are still waiting for their cheques. Then we have to promote local agriculture and let Quebec take over the management of the temporary foreign workers program, which has been disastrous.

As far as fisheries are concerned, a domestic market needs to be developed by improving distribution networks and promoting lesser-known seafood products. This would help reduce our dependence on foreign markets. All of this comes with a cost. Why is fish from China cheaper than fish from the Gaspé Peninsula? I will never understand that.

When it comes to transportation and infrastructure, Ottawa needs to commit to contributing unconditional funding for upgrading Route 117, which is notorious in my region as the site of countless accidents. It is a dangerous highway back home in Abitibi—Témiscamingue and in Laurentides—Labelle. This is a trans-Canadian highway. The federal government should contribute. It should also support the regional airports' development plans and encourage a Quebec alternative to Air Canada's virtual monopoly.

We are concerned. The NAV Canada issue had repercussions. If we want our regions to be autonomous and have a strong economy, then investments need to be made in our infrastructure, in our airports.

We need support for programs that help people who work in the tourism industry.

The government can help the region of Montreal. I talk a lot about the regions of Quebec because that is where I am from. Fighting climate change is crucial.

The Speech from the Throne only makes me more of a sovereigntist. After all, if you want something done right, you are better off doing it yourself.

● (1250)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad the member talked so much about agriculture. He and I both represent ridings where agriculture is important.

He talked about compensation for dairy farmers. His colleague from Montarville implied that no compensation has been paid yet. The riding I represent, Kings—Hants, has the largest concentration of dairy farmers east of Quebec, and I can attest that \$345 million in compensation began to flow last year.

Does the member recognize that compensation has begun to flow to dairy farmers, since those in my riding of Kings—Hants have received it?

The Address

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and for his concern for our workers.

I worked for the Union des producteurs agricoles, and the psychological distress among farmers is palpable, because they simply cannot count on any predictability. How many times have we heard from people who joined unions to improve their working conditions because they were not getting any government support? The AgriStability and AgriInvest programs are simply not working.

Getting back to the question of financial compensation, we are talking about a first and second cheque, and about a deal reached several years ago. We are also talking about the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and the comprehensive economic and trade agreement with Europe. There is still nothing for the Canada-United States-Mexico agreement, and I think that is appalling. We want our farmers to survive so they can ensure our food security and food sovereignty. That is what is at stake.

● (1255)

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, as members know, today is National Seniors Day. We heard a very passionate speech talking about a nationalized economy.

I would like to put a question to my friend from the Bloc Québécois, understanding, as reported, that close to 80% of the close to 10,000 deaths that have happened during COVID, most have been associated with long-term care facilities. Does the hon. member support a national program that would provide public, nationalized health care in the long-term care sector?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

What I support is transferring money directly to the provinces so that they can look after their own jurisdictions, including health care.

Health transfers were originally supposed to be 50%. However, the federal government currently covers just 18% of costs. There is a gap there, and we are proposing a compromise at 35%. If we had that money, seniors would be able to live in dignity and receive quality health care in long-term care homes. If we had that money, we would not wait for seniors to turn 75 before giving them money to cover the rising cost of living, including groceries and rent. That is dignity.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I can see how passionate my colleague is about making Quebec a country.

The Address

At the end of his speech, he spoke about climate change and environmental issues. In the throne speech, the government rehashed the idea of planting two billion trees. My colleague comes from an area with lots of trees. Two billion trees would reduce greenhouse gases, or GHGs, by 30 megatonnes by 2030. However, the Trans Mountain project would increase GHGs by 620 megatonnes by 2030.

Could my colleague comment on that?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, as my colleague from Montarville mentioned, we should perhaps start planting those two billion trees.

Setting that aside, the issue of the environment is worrisome. The recovery plan should include one very simple element: the carbon footprint should be one of the criteria used in granting service contracts. That would change everything.

We could be more competitive and promote the use of wood. Besides being more beautiful, wood is strong and durable and can lower the carbon footprint. I believe that is major. With innovations like these, we will ensure economic growth and protect our environment.

[*English*]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Beaches—East York today.

I rise today in a virtual manner to first and foremost thank you, Madam Speaker, and all the House staff for making our participation in this virtual Parliament possible. It is important to be able to have MPs across the country participate, and while I would much rather be in Ottawa physically, I am pleased to be able to represent my constituents here today.

Given this is my first address in the new session of Parliament, I want to recognize two things before addressing the Speech from the Throne.

First, I want to recognize that today is Treaty Day. I am privileged to represent communities across the riding of Kings—Hants, including three indigenous communities: Sipekne'katik, Glooscap and the Annapolis Valley First Nation. Sipekne'katik was involved in the signing in the peace and friendship treaties with the British Crown back in the 1700s, whose agreements form a key basis of the Government of Canada's relationship with indigenous peoples today. I wanted to recognize Treaty Day at the beginning of my remarks and join those in my community and across the country who are celebrating today.

Second, I want to acknowledge and thank my constituents for their hospitality and caring for others during a difficult time. Of course, it was and remains COVID-19 where constituents helped by making masks, delivering groceries and providing fresh produce to those who needed it. These are just a few examples, but I could honestly create an entire speech simply on the kindness that was shown since COVID-19 and in the days following the Nova Scotia mass shooting, and I want to recognize those efforts.

As it relates to the Speech from the Throne, there were many themes that I think are important for the communities I represent,

indeed, all Canadians. In the time I have remaining, I will highlight some of those.

I will start by saying that Canada is still in the midst of fighting the pandemic, and while I sit here in Nova Scotia where we are fortunate to have a very low case count, we are seeing a rise across the country and, indeed, across the world. That is why I thought it was prudent that the first half of the Speech from the Throne was focused on efforts to continue fighting the virus while supporting Canadians.

We have already taken significant measures as a government to protect Canadians' health and economic security. As it relates to health, there have been direct investments to the provinces, including the safe restart agreement, with \$19 billion to support measures such as greater testing capacity, improved testing, support for the purchase of personal protective equipment for health care facilities and resources to municipalities across the country that are on the front lines, frankly, of delivering key services.

This summer, I had the chance to connect with my constituents directly on their doorsteps. As we approached September, the back-to-school plan was the top priority, whether it was grandparents wondering about their grandchildren's plans for going back to school or parents wondering how they could balance jobs and whether their children were going to be safe. This is why I am proud of the government for investing \$2 billion to provide support directly to the provinces so that they have the resources necessary to keep our kids, teachers and staff safe, which I know has been a conversation we have heard a lot in the House over the last couple of months.

Programs such as the Canadian emergency response benefit, the wage subsidy and the emergency business account have benefited millions of Canadians and protected their jobs. I would like to highlight investments through the regional relief and recovery fund, which allowed local development agencies, such as the Hants-Kings Community Business Development Corporation, to provide funding to businesses that needed help and did not meet eligibility criteria in other programs.

Given the importance of agriculture in my riding, and I mention this every time I get the chance, nearly \$500 million of COVID-19-related support provided to various commodity groups was welcomed and will be important to reducing the negative impacts felt in the industry.

In my riding, I have spoken to many business owners, individual employees, those who have had to stay home to look after a loved one and seniors who benefited from additional top-ups under the old age security. These investments and programs have ensured that Canadians stayed safe and have helped our economy avoid the worst impacts. However, there remains a lot of important work to do.

The Address

I represent a riding with many jobs of family members, friends and neighbours tied to the Halifax Stanfield International Airport. There are thousands of jobs in Kings—Hants tied directly and indirectly to the vitality of our airport. I was pleased to see mention of airports and airlines in the Speech from the Throne. While we know that air travel will not return to normal any time soon as a result of the pandemic, it is important for us, particularly in rural communities, to have transportation links that can connect us as a country and serve as a gateway to the world beyond our borders.

● (1300)

I was also pleased to see a commitment from the government to expand the Canada emergency business account to support businesses that are the hardest hit by helping support their fixed and overhead costs.

I have said this many times, but I will say it again. Kings—Hants is home to the highest tides in the world and it is an emerging wine region with hospitality second to none. I hope my colleagues and, indeed, all Canadians will consider visiting when they feel comfortable in doing so. However, I have heard many tourism and hospitality operators and business owners whose model is built around bringing people together who have suffered greatly, so I was very pleased to see mention of the tourism and hospitality sectors in the Speech from the Throne and I look forward to our government's work to support them in the days ahead.

I was also heartened to note that the government has committed to promoting affordable housing. Affordable housing is often referenced as solely an urban issue. It is not. This matter is in the community that I represent and in many rural communities across the country, in particular, by adding the national housing strategy and increasing investments to rapid housing in the short term. We saw that with the \$1-billion announcement by our government about a week and a half ago.

I want to mention one development. The Ryan's Park development in Kentville, the community that I represent, serves as an ideal example of what can be achieved through solid public partnerships and the right vision.

I know this topic has been discussed in the House as of late, but I was also encouraged to see rapid testing as a top priority for our government. Given the fact that COVID-19 is likely to be a reality for many Canadians at least in the year ahead or perhaps longer, this is going to be an important tool for us to try to adapt to what is, frankly, our new normal.

Finally, as aforementioned, child care and early education are top of mind for Canadians across the country and I was very pleased to see a focus on early education and a national strategy for after-school programs. Of course, we have provinces that are able to deliver that, but us working with the provinces and territories is important. We have seen that collaboration throughout the pandemic and this is an important step forward.

While our focus must remain on the challenge at hand, we cannot forget about other challenges and opportunities that Canada needs to address, and I would like to address some of the build back better aspects of the Speech from the Throne.

We knew rural connectivity was a challenge before the pandemic. We had invested \$500 million under the connect to innovate program and the universal broadband fund and accelerating that is going to be extremely important because we have seen the divide between rural and urban Canada in terms of connectivity. It is like not having electricity in the 21st century. I look forward to our government and all parliamentarians helping support us on that initiative.

I also want to talk about greening the economy. This was a top issue in my riding during the last election. Of course, it is across the country and, indeed, the world. I really appreciate the reference to working with rural industries to help transition them and be ready to be competitive in a low-carbon economy. That is things like agriculture, forestry and mining. It is extremely important that our government work hand in hand with these industries to have them ready to compete in a low-carbon economy.

I will quickly mention the Atlantic loop, the coal to clean strategy. We have a tremendous opportunity in Atlantic Canada, in partnership with Quebec, to have electricity that is zero-emitting by 2025. This is going to open up a world of opportunities.

Platform commitments around old age security, a 10% boost for those over 75, I know will be extremely important in Kings—Hants. I hear from seniors often about the fact that they have challenges in dealing with increasing costs and I was pleased to see that, along with a plan for national pharmacare.

I mentioned agriculture in my riding. One of the silver linings of COVID-19 has been the benefit to local agriculture. Canadians across the country are focused on where their food is coming from. We have seen that the agri-food industry has become very centralized. We need to position ourselves to feed the world, but we also need to be mindful of making sure that our regional and domestic supply chains are strong and that we can support local farmers. It will not only help the local economy, but it will also help for environmental reasons.

The final thing I will mention, which was in my remarks before I joined in today, was around the SM5. I was very pleased to see the continued support for our supply-managed sectors. I have the greatest concentration of supply-managed farms east of Montreal and this is extremely important in my riding.

The Address

I am pleased to say that I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne. It is a Speech from the Throne that puts Canadians at the centre of its work and I look forward to working with all parliamentarians to address the needs of Canadians in the days ahead.

• (1305)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's speech, but the problem I have is that many things in this particular throne speech are recycled rhetoric from elections past.

The member raised the issue of Internet access. The government has been promising to service rural areas and it has not gotten the job done. In fact, the Liberals go so far as to criticize the previous government on other issues, such as addressing climate change, but their own government allows an extension for coal-fired plants in Nova Scotia. Tires have been burned in his province to generate electricity.

How can the member continue the charade of saying the Liberals are all about these good things when they do not address the actual behaviour of the government in its own policies?

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, the member opposite had two frames, so I will try to address both in the time that I have.

The first is digital connectivity. We know it cannot come soon enough. I will point out that one million Canadians have been connected since we formed government in 2015 and that through the connect to innovate program, over \$500 million has been invested. Had the Conservative government, during the 2008 recession, put a similar amount of focus on connecting Canadians, we might have been way further along than where we are today. Regardless, under the universal broadband fund we are going to continue those efforts. As chair of the rural caucus of the governing party, I will continue to push for these efforts.

I also want to address the member's comments about Nova Scotia. We are one of the leading jurisdictions within the federation when it comes to using renewable energy to fuel our electricity. I find it a bit disingenuous for him to suggest that Nova Scotia is not a leader on this. Of course, there are agreements for coal-fired generation, but we are one of the leaders in the country, and the Atlantic loop will help us get there even quicker.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for his speech. I am very pleased to sit with him on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. I know that he is just as worried about these issues as I am.

He ended his speech by insisting on the importance of food self-sufficiency and local production, which has been highlighted by the pandemic.

Like all my colleagues, I am disappointed by the general nature of the throne speech and its lack of detail. Yes, compensation was paid to dairy producers. However, it was to be paid out over eight years, not just one. When will the other payments be made?

The other producers, egg and poultry producers, need to launch their modernization and marketing plans very quickly to counter unfair competition. In addition, processors are not mentioned in the throne speech.

Can my colleague assure me that all these sectors will be adequately covered?

[*English*]

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, while my French is improving, I better answer in English for clarity. However, I will continue to work hard on my language skill set.

The member mentioned that the Speech from the Throne is general. Well, indeed it is. A Speech from the Throne does not necessarily get into the deep details of public policy. However, I think there was a lot mentioned about agriculture. I share with him the desire and the want to implement more regional capacity and to have more focus on the ability of Canadians to access healthy, nutritious foods locally.

He can rest assured: Our government understands the importance of agriculture. I look forward to working with him in the days ahead on implementing these policies that we both share as important issues.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about greening the economy and that he is a member of Parliament from the coast. I am a member of Parliament from the opposite coast. The government spent \$4.5 billion buying a pipeline that puts my coast at risk. It is also an economic and environmental disaster. Over 100 economists just wrote to the Prime Minister asking him to rethink Trans Mountain given that it no longer makes sense economically.

Only a fraction of this pipeline has been built. Would it not be better to take those billions of dollars and invest them in a just and sustainable recovery?

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, if the member opposite will recall, we had a chance to discuss this with media outlets in the fall of last year. I explained to her that the investment in Trans Mountain makes sense economically and that the pipeline is indeed the safest way to get our products to market.

I understand her concern and her ideology on this. We are a government that is focused on climate change. We are a government that will continue to make those investments. I share her concern, given the fact that I represent a riding with the highest tides in the world. However, that particular investment was about the safety of communities and the fact that product would be going to international markets. As opposed to sending it by rail, where we have seen, at Lac-Mégantic, the impact of having product go through communities, we should be doing this in the safest manner.

The Address

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at the outset, I want to thank every constituent in Beaches—East York and every Canadian across our country who has stepped up in these difficult times, whether they are essential front-line workers in health care, grocery stores or food supply chains, or whether they are teachers or individuals looking after loved ones. I give sincere thanks to everyone who has stepped up and made a difference in these really difficult times.

In the throne speech, we have seen a comprehensive set of old commitments, from the 2019 platform, mixed with a set of new commitments that respond to lessons learned in the course of this pandemic. I want to focus on lessons learned and what we can glean from the throne speech in answer to those lessons.

First, it is important to recognize that we face an economic crisis because of the health crisis and that the best economic response is also a public health response. In the short term, that means a massive rapid-testing program, and in the long term, that means a vaccine. In the throne speech, we heard our government commit to doing everything it can to see rapid tests deployed, upon approval. With respect to a vaccine, the government notes that Canada has already secured access to vaccine candidates and therapeutics, while it is investing in manufacturing here at home.

Second, our social safety net was not fit for the purposes of millions of Canadians. When we look at the CERB numbers, we see there were almost nine million unique applications. Almost nine million Canadians received income support in their time of need.

Our social safety net, specifically employment insurance, was not fit to answer to this crisis. Our government's new EI recovery benefit will ensure that most people will be supported in the coming six months. That is important because there was a lot of angst from people who were worried the CERB was going to end. They now know they are going to receive supports through the EI system in the months ahead.

However, fundamentally, we need a permanently strengthened social safety net. I have pushed within caucus and outside of caucus for a permanent minimum floor below which nobody will fall in our society. In a wealthy country like ours, we should not have the poverty levels we have.

My third point is about essential workers. I mentioned at the outset a need to thank essential workers, but we have to do more: We need to protect essential workers. That fundamentally means ensuring that there is leadership. I know provincial minimum wages matter more than a federal one, but we should lead through a federal minimum wage, as we committed to doing in 2019. It also behooves us to ensure that we work with provinces for portable benefits. Where there is federal jurisdiction, we should also ensure that we are updating our competition laws to address wage fixing. We have seen concerns there recently, and certainly I saw concerns there through my work on the industry committee, where our national grocers communicated directly about the prospect of ending pandemic pay premiums for front-line workers.

We also need to recognize our migrant workers, who are so often our essential workers, whether on farms or in health care settings. We need to ensure that we are protecting migrant workers and end-

ing the systemic exploitation of them. This means prioritizing permanent residency through immigration work programs.

In the throne speech we see language that says, “We owe an immense debt to those who served and still serve on the frontlines...earning the lowest wages in the most precarious sectors...on the frontlines of the pandemic.” It also notes, “Canadian and migrant workers who produce, harvest, and process our food...deserve the Government’s full support and protection.”

Fourth, a lack of supportive housing has undermined isolation efforts, and existing supportive housing, especially for-profit nursing homes, has failed our seniors. We need more supportive housing, but also national standards for nursing homes and increased staff and training levels, with a focus on non-profit care.

In the throne speech we see a commitment to a conversation with provinces about national standards for our nursing homes. We see a commitment to targeted measures for personal support workers to provide increased supports. We see language that says, “No one should be without a place to stay during a pandemic, or for that matter, a Canadian winter.” It also references a recent \$1-billion announcement that is focused on eliminating chronic homelessness. Importantly, with regard to old commitments and new commitments, there is an important new commitment in this throne speech to ending chronic homelessness in our country.

Fifth, the economic fallout has disproportionately affected women, and we know that child care is a significant answer. Our federal government has taken important steps over the last five years to support child care, but we need to build on these efforts. In the throne speech we see a commitment to building on these efforts. We see an acknowledgement that we must not let the legacy of the pandemic be one of rolling back the clock on women's participation in the workforce.

● (1315)

Canadians need more accessible, affordable, inclusive and high-quality child care. The government will make a significant long-term sustained commitment to create a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. Also important to note is that there is a renewed attention to before- and after-school care, an acknowledgement that flexible care options for young children are more important than ever.

Sixth, the twin health and economic crises have disproportionately affected people of colour. We need to double down on our efforts to address systemic racism and reconciliation. Working to end poverty will make the biggest inroads.

The Address

As an aside, during the course of this pandemic, I had the opportunity to spend a considerable amount of time reading and learning more about a number of different issues. I read the last writing of Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*, from 1967. More than 50 years ago, this leader was focused on tackling racism and speaking about the need to end poverty. Of course we need criminal justice reform, but we also need to focus on our social safety net, not only as a matter of justice for essential workers and people in poverty, but also if we are serious about addressing systemic racism.

We also need to focus on reconciliation. In the throne speech we see acknowledgements that we need to keep moving even faster: We are going to work toward a national action plan for missing and murdered indigenous women; we are going to have UNDRIP legislation before the end of the year; and we are going to continue to work to close the infrastructure gap and make sure there is clean water in every community. I said this in answer to the first throne speech, but I will reiterate it again: We need more attention to our urban indigenous communities. As we know, here in Ontario, over 80% of indigenous Canadians live in our urban centres.

Seventh, we have listened to public health experts to save lives in this pandemic and need to continue to heed their advice to address the opioid epidemic. That work should include a federal task force to reset our national drug strategy, which has been called for by police chiefs, and action toward decriminalization and safer supply projects. We have heard so many different voices: Public health experts across our country have called for this conversation; police chiefs have called for this conversation; the Chief Justice of Ontario has called for this conversation; and people who have lost loved ones have called for this conversation. Every serious person who has looked at this issue has said the current drug prohibition framework is killing people and that we need drug policy reform to save lives. I hope we have a serious conversation about this and put the politics aside to save lives going forward in the same way we have put politics aside in the course of this pandemic.

Eighth, our government can respond quickly and successfully to a crisis with determination, and we need that same level of determination brought to a green recovery and the climate crisis. The throne speech rightly acknowledges that climate action will be a cornerstone of our plan to support and create a million jobs across our country. We need great action, from the retrofits announced in the throne speech to the clean vehicle supports announced in the throne speech, and so much more, to make sure we get to net zero by 2050, have stronger science-based 2030 targets and ensure we have effective climate accountability legislation to set five-year carbon targets and turn those long-term targets into short-term practical actions.

Ninth, infectious diseases represent an incredible threat to our collective well-being, and we need to be proactive in order to prevent the next pandemic. I would argue the Public Health Agency's Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response should issue a public assessment of how Canadian activities, domestic and abroad, contribute to pandemic risk and then tell us how we can take steps to reduce those risks. I had the luck to speak to Dr. Jane Goodall recently, and she made it very clear that this pandemic is at least in part a result of the way we have disrespected our planet and ani-

mals. We need to reconsider and reset how we treat both our planet and animals as this relates to pandemic risk.

Lastly, the pandemic is not over and there will be more lessons to learn. This summer obviously offered us a reprieve, but as the cold weather sets in and we move increasingly indoors, we need to maintain our bubbles strictly, as much as we reasonably can. We need to keep physical distancing with others and wear masks when distancing is not possible.

I want to close by thanking every single person in our community who, through the Michael Garron community campaign, has sewn and helped distribute masks. Our office alone distributed 10,000 cloth masks in our community. I want to thank everyone for those efforts.

The federal government will continue to be there, in partnership with Canadian families and the provinces, to make sure we get through this pandemic, not only to address the economic crisis, but also to address the health crisis.

● (1320)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I must say I was quite disappointed in the Speech from the Throne. Even while I was thinking that I would disagree with many aspects of it before it came out, I was expecting more fireworks and a big bold vision, but we can see that it was basically a rehash of the 2019 throne speech.

That begs the question of what the prorogation was all about. Was it truly necessary to prorogue? The timing of the prorogation was very suspect, as it followed right on the heels of a large document dump.

What does my hon. colleague think about the prorogation and its timing?

● (1325)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Speaker, I said at the time of prorogation that I would have liked our committee work to continue, but I also did not think that the outrage at the time was entirely warranted, given we were really talking about losing weeks of committee time and a mere day or two of House time.

However, I also want to respond to the member's suggestion that there was nothing new in the throne speech. Obviously, there are many emergency supports in this throne speech, through EI extensions, to help Canadians in need with income supports and the extension of the wage subsidy for businesses, but we also saw renewed and new commitments to child care, rapid testing, national standards in nursing homes, and ending chronic homelessness. The scale of ambition has also been seriously ramped up when it comes to climate action and reconciliation. I would also be remiss not to note that in the throne speech our federal government seriously answered the concern of the high unemployment rate with a plan to create one million jobs.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like my hon. colleague to talk a bit more about arts and culture.

I come from a region of Quebec where it is a bit more difficult to ensure that culture thrives, not just during the pandemic but in ordinary times as well. It is difficult for cultural workers to keep their heads above water. They have had ongoing financial difficulties.

I was talking with one cultural worker who told me that the assistance offered under the Canadian Heritage program was completely ridiculous. He did not even receive 25% of the amount he normally receives. One of the solutions he proposed was for the government to provide support equal to ticket sales.

I know that the throne speech talked about helping cultural industries. I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Speaker, I will say very simply that similarly to other industries, such as tourism and hospitality, many elements of the arts and culture industry are going to have a very challenging time coming back in the short to medium term. Obviously we are not going to see large scale in-person events, for example, so the throne speech did commit to sector-specific support for industries that are more deeply affected by the pandemic. This is a conversation that needs to continue and flow from that answer in the throne speech.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the speech by my hon. colleague, but I could not help but notice the lack of enthusiasm in his voice when he is talking about these promises.

How could I be excited about the speech? Is there something I am missing? Is there something for us to believe this time versus following the 2019 speech? I would like to hear the member's thoughts on that.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Speaker, do not let my working from home and the technology suggest that there is any lack of enthusiasm for what we saw in the throne speech. I had enthusiasm for the 2019 throne speech as well, and as I say, we see a mixture of commitments. Of course we want to carry through with gun control and pharmacare and other commitments from 2019. Of course we want renewed commitments and faster action on all sorts of things, including on climate.

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I will end by speaking on climate specifically, which I know we share a concern for. Since 2015 we have seen the projected 2030 emissions go from 815 megatonnes down to 592 megatonnes, a 25% reduction, because of the climate action policies we put in place. So long as they hold, and so long as we do not have a Conservative government heading into the future, we will absolutely build on those efforts. I am absolutely committed to doing so. I know the federal government is committed to doing so.

I am not only enthusiastic about those commitments, but also in delivering on those commitments. The work ahead in a fiscal update, the budget and more will be far more critical than the throne speech. Delivery is what matters.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to throne speech presented to Canadians last Wednesday.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

I would also like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Barrie—Innisfil.

[*English*]

First of all, I want to give a nod to the member for Kings—Hants, and I hope he is still online, who talked about the highest tides in the Bay of Fundy. Let him not forget that he shares the Bay of Fundy with me, as the member for West Nova, the member for Cumberland—Colchester, the member for Fundy Royal and also the ones down around Saint John. When he says that he has the highest tides in the world, of course he has to share that with us.

It has been a week since the throne speech was presented to all Canadians. Under the current circumstances, I had wished that I would be welcoming it with relief, but unfortunately, this speech is a collection of previous speeches. It is a leftover potluck of previous Liberal promises that they never delivered on, which leaves me very skeptical regarding Canada's post-COVID recovery.

It is absolutely shameful and unacceptable to have prorogued Parliament for six weeks, only to come back with a speech so ill-suited to the health crisis affecting our country from coast to coast to coast. We are all affected by the challenges that we all know about, as well as those specific challenges that are different from one province and one region to another.

We know Canadians have been in dire need of support. Folks need to be supported for many months to come, and we, in the opposition, have been recognizing this necessity. However, to ensure the government's future spending is done correctly, it is incumbent upon parliamentarians to ask the government some tough and important questions before it injects substantial sums of money into programs.

The Address

A responsible and respectful minority government consults opposition parties sooner than 48 hours before a throne speech is printed, especially in the current period, and at a time when national debt has reached an unenviable and worrisome level.

With a minority government, the country's economic recovery during a crisis must be done in collaboration with opposition parties for the good of the Canadian population. The Prime Minister should have, for once, worked with the other parties to reinforce the team Canada approach, not only when it suits him, such as when he is trying to defend his throne speech.

[*Translation*]

We know that the throne speech shows a lack of backbone and a lack of will. It contains no economic recovery measures.

[*English*]

As well, we need the additional health transfers to the provinces and territories to be without condition, rather than with conditions that are a direct intrusion upon provincial jurisdiction. This is certainly not the time to accentuate the deep disagreements the Prime Minister has with his provincial counterparts. Instead, it is the time to help Canadians, small businesses, industries, the elderly and the most vulnerable of our country.

I held the minister of health portfolio in Nova Scotia 12 years ago and know very well that the health of my province was not that of Quebec or Alberta. This is even more the case today, as the cases in the Atlantic bubble are still close to zero, unlike here in Ontario and Quebec. It is essential that the Prime Minister let the provinces manage their needs themselves.

How is it that Canada, which the Prime Minister has been saying for years is doing better than any other country in the G7, still does not have faster access to COVID testing for individuals, has an unemployment rate that is higher than all others, and has a deficit reaching a catastrophic and unprecedented level?

Where is the Prime Minister's real leadership? When it comes to testing, the government made the announcement yesterday that it will be two to six weeks, or even longer, before Canadians have access to the new testing.

Back home in West Nova, the heart of our local economy is generated by tourism and the fishing industry. These two local economies were hit hard in the early weeks of the pandemic crisis. They are still being greatly impacted and will certainly remain deeply affected over the next couple of years.

I quickly addressed to the ministers my concerns and the challenges West Nova businesses were experiencing early in the pandemic. Then, when the government emergency measures finally arrived, it was too late for many of those businesses, as they did not meet the eligibility criteria.

My interventions, I felt, were on time, but the government's slow emergency response for the tourism industry and other small businesses came too late. The tourism season in Atlantic Canada and the survival rate of these businesses has been catastrophic, just like elsewhere in the country.

In the throne speech, it was mentioned that additional support for small businesses will eventually be available, but unfortunately, it is too late for many of these businesses. They were expecting, and I was expecting, real change in the throne speech.

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

I still believe that, had the Prime Minister not prorogued Parliament for so long and had he acted like a real government leader who makes the survival of his country a priority, we could have worked together, as respectful parliamentarians, on financial measures and emergency programs that could have been adapted to the country's different realities.

[*English*]

I spent the summer travelling in my riding, talking to business owners, especially those in tourism-related businesses. I did my part in supporting them and making the hidden gems of West Nova known to a wider audience. We have a beautiful riding, from the Acadian shores of Clare and Argyle to the mountains and farms of the Annapolis Valley. It was very apparent that they feel completely forgotten by the government, because, for one reason or another, they could not qualify for any of the business programs.

Several elements in the throne speech are, as was mentioned earlier, recycled broken promises, such as high-speed Internet access in rural areas like West Nova, the modernization of the Official Languages Act and reconciliation with our first nations.

The promises related to reconciliation with first nations have been talked about by the government since 2015, and they are now seen as a bit of a joke. I find it distressing that the Liberals continue to use the promise of reconciliation with indigenous peoples so lightly. It is a real and serious issue, but the Prime Minister opportunistically uses it only when he is in trouble and needs to shine up his image. It is sad to see the failures of his promises to the first nations, such as the response to the report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and last spring's blockade crisis with the Wet'suwet'en.

The best example of this failure is the lobster fishery crisis that has been going for almost a month in my riding. That crisis has been foreseeable for months, almost a year now. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, with her hands-off approach to the crisis, preferred to ignore all the warning signs, believing that the dispute between commercial fishermen and the Mi'kmaq was going to settle itself, just like the Prime Minister thought that a budget would balance itself. However, neither will happen as long as the Liberal government is in office. All of the catastrophic situations that the government causes and ignores will only get worse, and this is causing suffering that can be avoided for many Canadians.

For weeks now, tensions between these two groups have been at their peak. Public safety is at stake, both on the sea and on the wharves. Protests are still being planned, with no clear and equitable deal for either party. Weeks ago, the Minister and I engaged in a dialogue in which we agreed that we needed to work together to solve the issue in a reasonable time, and by considering both parties' interests.

This situation is a perfect example of how I, as a Conservative, wanted to work with the government, and we could have worked together, but I am still waiting for the regular follow-up and fair closure that the Minister was to provide to me. It is completely unacceptable that the Minister says that she is having discussions with the two groups of fishermen, while the commercial fishermen are still trying to make themselves heard. The Minister has been telling us for weeks that progress is being made, but it is clearly not happening in St. Mary's Bay. She should be ashamed of her lack of leadership and her failure to deal with this urgent situation diligently, as a minister should be doing. It is a time-sensitive situation, and she must act immediately.

How can we have lasting reconciliation with our indigenous peoples when the government's mismanagement has set these two peaceful groups against each other, jeopardizing the possibility of reconciliation for another generation? For this, these Liberals should be truly embarrassed.

I look forward to working as the shadow minister for intergovernmental affairs and ACOA. I promise the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs that I will not abuse his phone number. How much trouble can two Acadians actually get into?

This leads me continue my work in keeping the government to account in this chamber, in committee and, of course, back home.

[Translation]

Nova Scotia and Canada deserve better.

• (1340)

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my riding is located right in the very heart of Hamilton Centre.

It is interesting that my Conservative friends down the way are talking about reconciliation. I would agree that this has been, by and large, a series of disappointments and failures on behalf of the government. Processes are in place to settle land claims. These are fundamentally a part of the indigenous genocide that is ongoing. In fact, not far from my home, in the Six Nations, the Haudenosaunee territories, there are still government expansions onto disputed land claims and territories.

Within the legal framework of UNDRIP, which the Liberal government talks about, and as a meaningful path forward, what would my Conservative friend suggest we do to ensure indigenous sovereignty in land claims is respected in treaty to treaty, nation-to-nation relationships?

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Speaker, I cannot get into land claims. Nova Scotia has the peace and friendship treaties of 1752. I think there were two others after that. What we are running into

The Address

right now is a court decision in Marshall on how fisheries should be managed, along with access to that fishery, for indigenous groups.

The department, under the direction of the minister, has been negligent in having that dialogue, ensuring people understand the situation and truly coming up with a definition of "moderate livelihood". That is at the core of this dispute and discussion.

It is up to the minister, the government, Prime Minister and anyone who has an interest in this to sit down with the parties involved to ensure they come up with a solution so this crisis comes to an end. It has to come to an end at some point.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

There is a similar situation in my riding. An indigenous community in Listuguj organized the fall fishery. Negotiations were going very well with Fisheries and Oceans Canada. A few months ago, it was said that things were coming along nicely and that the community would probably get a commercial fishing licence. At the last minute, right before the fishing season began, the government changed its mind and did not issue them a licence.

I would like my colleague to tell us how the federal government plans to start this reconciliation he so often refers to if it continues to act like this with indigenous communities.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague.

We often run into this issue when interpreting bills and court rulings. How are we to find solutions for those affected by these rulings? In this case, they have been trying to find a solution for 21 years. I think the department is not showing leadership. It is proposing different solutions for different people in different regions. I think it needs to find a definitive solution, and only the minister can really ask her department to find that solution.

[English]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very appreciative of the fact that the member highlighted reconciliation and indigenous issues. Progress has been imperfect at times. There has been some success, such as over 60% of all long-term boil water advisories lifted, but there has not been enough progress. It is easy and right to argue that.

Could the member name one specific thing he has argued for to improve the lives of indigenous people?

The Address

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Speaker, I have two indigenous bands in West Nova, the Acadia band and the Bear River band, two very pivotal bands in the lives of Canadians. They were basically the first natives to welcome Europeans to our great country. They were the impetus of many of these decisions we see before us.

I have been working tirelessly, trying to come up with solutions to ensure all parties are happy in this, unlike the Liberals who are pitting indigenous groups against the non-indigenous groups, creating strife in a people who have been together for 300 years. Shame on them.

• (1345)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a real honour to rise on behalf of the people of Barrie—Innisfil to speak in reply to the throne speech.

Before I begin, I would very much like to thank all first responders, not just in Barrie—Innisfil but right across the country, those who have been on the front line, health care workers. As a former firefighter in 2003, I recall the SARS crisis and the anxiety that was felt by myself and others who I worked with in the paramedic and police services in dealing with that crisis. That anxiety was heightened by the fact that we did not know if we would get the virus and take it home.

I really appreciate the first responders and front-line health care workers. They deserve our greatest respect.

I also want to thank the administration staff in the House. I know Gaétan is keeping all our desks clean so we do not take the virus back to our ridings.

Six weeks ago, the government prorogued Parliament. At the time, we were at the height of a scandal that was becoming more emboldened as new information became available. The Prime Minister said that the reason why he would prorogue Parliament was to come up with a bold and ambitious new course for the country. I would suggest that the ambition was on the part of the Prime Minister to save his political skin at that time.

Members will recall that the government was becoming more embroiled in the scandal. More information was becoming available. There were more indictments of individuals who were involved. Therefore, the Prime Minister and the government simply decided to prorogue Parliament so they could make it go away. It is not going away.

Let us look at the Prime Minister's bold and ambitious plan. If any of us looked back to the 2015 election platform of the Liberal Party, "Real Change", we would see that much of what was promised back then was recycled or rehashed in this throne speech. Many of us will recall that at the beginning of the current government, in 2015, Liberals were big on "deliverology", but we have seen very little in that regard, except for this rehashing and recycling of promises.

At the beginning of this crisis, all of us were working together in a team Canada approach. I said this the other night when I spoke to Bill C-4. Many MPs were on the front lines. We became the front-line voice of the government, because in many cases Service

Canada offices were closing. People were calling our offices because they were anxious. The level of anxiety was heightened as a result of the fear, the unknown and the uncertainty of what was going to happen next.

All of us worked together. Many programs that were announced initially became woefully inadequate, and were found to be that. The Canada emergency wage subsidy, for example, started off at 10%. If it was not for the opposition, all opposition parties, and I am sure the government heard about it as well from business, then that wage subsidy would not have been brought up to the level it was.

There were problems with the CERB. People were falling through the gaps. Maternity benefits is an example of where people were falling through the gaps on CERB. It was the same with the CEBA, the Canada emergency business account. A lot of businesses did not qualify for that benefit.

We all parliamentarians worked together to ensure that these programs were in place. Of course, they were meant to be temporary.

Now as we enter into a new wave of COVID-19, clearly we as parliamentarians and the government need to be there to help Canadians. However, we need to be there in recovery as well, not so much as an issue of dependence on the government but to create a recovery plan. What I fail to see in the throne speech is that recovery plan.

• (1350)

What does recovery look like?

We have to ensure the government gets out of the way of recovery and allow the power of the free market, allow the power of Canadian businesses, the people they employ and the products they produce to do that. It comes in every sector of our economy.

The other thing we did not see in the throne speech was any sense of investor confidence in those sectors of our economy that have been decimated as a result of government policy, legislation and regulation.

Clearly the natural resources sector has been impacted as a result of the government. We hear many stories of Alberta being on its knees as a result of the legislation, Bill C-69 and Bill C-48, regulation and taxation policies that have been imposed on the sector. We want to ensure we move from dependence to recovery, and there was very little in the throne speech that spoke to this.

The Address

With respect to recovery, the other area we really need to focus on is the issue of rapid testing. I find it curious that just yesterday the government approved a rapid test for which an application had been filed with Health Canada just 24 hours before. It is amazing how rapidly the government and Health Canada will move when there is a tremendous amount of anxiety on the part of Canadians who are standing in line for COVID-19 testing. The fact is that rapid testing has been around in other countries. Twelve countries around the world have approved rapid testing, many of them our allies. We have trade pacts and trade agreements with them. Many rapid tests have been put in front of Health Canada, so why the delay? Why the delay that further causes problems for Canadian families that have to wait in line for testing and then for the results?

Rapid testing is going to become critical for us in our recovery. I was glad to see the rapid test approved, but the government needs to do more to ensure that it is there.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that the longer the spending plan goes on it will become unsustainable: \$343 billion in deficits, approaching \$1.2 trillion in debt. That is on the expenditure side of the ledger. We will need to ensure that we create revenue to pay for these types of programs. We have to allow the power, as I said earlier, of the Canadian economy to do that through less legislation, less regulation, fewer policies, less taxation and create investor confidence that will provide us with the revenue we need to pay for those programs.

October 1 is a troubling day for many businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises. Rents are due today, yet the commercial emergency rent assistance program that business owners have relied on, though not many of them because it is a deeply flawed program, will cause those business owners problems.

The last thing I want to talk about are veterans. In its boldness and ambitiousness, the one thing that was neglected in the throne speech were veterans. Not one word of veteran was in the throne speech. Earlier this week, we heard from the Parliamentary Budget Officer about case loads approaching 50,000 that had to be adjudicated and they had yet to be processed. That means 50,000 veterans and their families are living with additional anxiety. I would hope the government would announce a plan to help fix that.

Two years ago the NDP suggested a plan to help alleviate some of those backlogs, and we supported it. The government needs to ensure that is fixed. As shadow minister for Veterans Affairs, I will do everything I can to hold the government to account to have those backlogs fixed.

● (1355)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have heard a number of Conservative members today speak about rapid testing and how disappointed they were with how long it took to get rapid testing on line. However, I can tell members that I much prefer to take advice from Health Canada than from a politician when it comes to my medical advice and telling me when a test is ready. I know that this member and other members have talked about other countries and rapid testing, but we have our own independent health agency to advise us on best practices within our own autonomous borders. I would add that my wife spent five hours in line waiting for a test just two days ago here in

Kingston, and she as well would much rather know that her test, if it is a rapid test, is one that is approved by Health Canada.

My question to the member is quite blunt, and I had asked it to another Conservative member who really just did not answer it. If he were the Minister of Health, would he have approved a rapid test without the advice of Health Canada?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, clearly, the issue of rapid testing is top of mind for all Canadians. If I were the minister, at the height of this pandemic back in March or April when 12 other countries, including some of our allies, had approved the issue of rapid testing, I would have made sure that Health Canada moved quickly so that the member's wife would not have to stand in line for five hours for a test.

If our allies have approved these tests, and the EU with more stringent testing regimes than anywhere in the world has approved similar rapid testing to what is in front of Health Canada right now, why is it taking Health Canada so long to approve them when Canadians desperately want and need rapid testing and so too does our economy?

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about natural resources and the economy.

There are two ways to look at this. We can focus on the short term and exclude a number of sectors that will automatically have weaknesses. We can also take a more long-term view that will bear fruit over a longer period of time but will take patience. I am not the one saying that. Donald Drummond, the former chief economist at TD Bank and a professor at Queen's University, says we need to look at the long term. Some countries already have fiscal and economic measures that support a green transition.

What does my colleague think of Mr. Drummond's view?

[English]

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, it is an inherent responsibility on the part of government to look long term when dealing with the economy, economic forecasts, etc. However, the way the throne speech is designed, one would almost think that we are going to flip the switch on a green economy at the cost of everything else that has gone on.

I believe that we need to take a parallel path. There is still going to be the demand for natural resources. There is still going to be the demand for oil. There is still going to be the demand for liquefied natural gas. Who better to supply that demand globally than clean, environmentally sustainable Canadian natural resources? If we do not support our natural resource sector while that demand still exists in addition to pursuing the green-tech path, then we are going to rely on despot nations who do not have the same human rights or environmental and labour standards as we do for the energy we depend on.

Statements by Members

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about veterans. I remember the 2015 campaign was distinctive in that a lot of veterans organizations became far more politicized than they had been before in reaction to the Conservatives' cuts to veterans services. The government that promised to fix that really has not, and there have been many reports showing that.

I am just wondering how we move from words to action when it comes to supporting Canada's veterans, because it has been a couple of governments now that have not gotten it right and done justice for Canada's veterans.

• (1400)

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, the way we move forward, frankly, is to stop lying to veterans.

Veterans have dealt with a generation of lies from successive governments, and I will blame us, as a Conservative government, for that as well. Stop the lies, and tell them the truth. What we can do, we tell them we will do, and what we cannot, we tell them why. That is how we deal with veterans in this country: no more crap.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CLINIC 554

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, on a day where all parties rose in the House and denounced the hateful practice of conversion therapy, I rise once again to speak about Clinic 554.

There has been a lot of talk about the work of this clinic on ensuring New Brunswickers have access to abortion services. What has flown under the radar is that Clinic 554 is also a centre of excellence for trans health care in a province where there is still a lot of stigma. Many of the same people who have been vulnerable to the human rights abuses of conversion therapy have experienced the life-saving compassion and validation that Dr. Edgar, Valerya and the whole team at Clinic 554 provide.

Clinic 554 saves lives and it is closing because the province will not rescind regulation 84-20 of the New Brunswick Medical Services Payment Act, in direct contravention of the Canada Health Act, nor will it recognize that trans health care is a subspecialty in medicine that deserves compensation commensurate with the service.

To save this clinic, to protect human rights and to save lives, we need federal intervention in New Brunswick.

* * *

CLINIC 554

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yesterday Clinic 554, the only provider of out-of-hospital abortion care and specialized trans health care services in New Brunswick, was forced to permanently close its doors due to the provincial government's refusal to repeal regulation 84-20. This regulation withholds medicare coverage from abortions performed

in community-based clinics, and it has repeatedly been found by Health Canada to constitute a clear violation of the Canada Health Act.

The closure of Clinic 554 as a result of this policy also constitutes a clear and unjustifiable infringement on the charter rights of women and LGBTQ2IA+ people in the province. This is completely unacceptable. The Higgs government must immediately repeal regulation 84-20, and the federal government must continue to take the unprecedented actions necessary to protect and promote the right to choose and the rights of LGBTQ2IA+ people in the province.

* * *

ONLINE PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has indicated it wants to take on big tech and I would urge it to start in Canada's own backyard by requiring platforms to be free from sexual exploitation.

PornHub and its parent company MindGeek, based in Montreal, operate with complete impunity as they profit from sexual exploitation and bring in nearly half a billion dollars annually. For years, videos featuring child abuse, torture, rape and sex trafficking of women and children have been published and monetized by MindGeek.

These videos of sexual exploitation uploaded to MindGeek's platforms can be viewed and uploaded millions of times, in each instance revictimizing the individuals. Many of these videos remain up for months, even years, even after they are brought to light, and this blatant exploitation has led to companies like PayPal ending its relationship with MindGeek. This is an outrage. It is time to end MindGeek's impunity.

I am calling on the government to end the exploitation of women and girls online.

* * *

[Translation]

ESTIA RESIDENCE

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on September 18, I visited the Estia Residence, a new seniors' facility in my riding, Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, in Laval. My colleague, the member for Vimy, and I toured the new residence, which is ready to safely welcome our seniors.

*Statements by Members***THE NEW TANNER NEWSPAPER**

I am proud to say that our government has made a clear commitment to seniors during this crisis and that we will not abandon them. The new horizons for seniors program is one example of that commitment. It provides grants to help prevent elder abuse and support the social participation of seniors.

Take care of yourselves. *Efcharistó*.

* * *

● (1405)

CATALONIA

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec is not the only place where October brings back dark memories of a federation that claimed to be a friend sending in its army to march through the streets in the heavy boots of repression.

Three years ago today, on October 1, in a bid to suppress the referendum on self-determination organized by the legitimate government of Catalonia, Spain disgraced itself by resorting to violence.

By backing Spain, Canada is hedging its bets for dealing with Quebec's independence movement, which refuses to give up because, of the two nations, Quebec is the one that has no reason to be ashamed.

To President Puigdemont, living in exile, and President Torra, who was deposed by Spain, I extend my friendship and my pledge to ensure that each nation gets to exercise its right to self-determination and express its own culture in its own language, reflecting its own values.

Long live free Catalonia.

* * *

[*English*]

SKILLED TRADES WORKERS

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we build back better from the pandemic, the government is investing in Canadians, investing in our social safety net and investing in the critical infrastructure we all depend on. We need to ensure that we have a 21st century labour force to build our infrastructure and create good paying jobs, like the ones set out in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge by the apprentice training at the facilities of LiUNA Local 183 and Local 27 of the carpenters and allied trades workers.

Part of the COVID-19 response of our local unions has been to strengthen safety practices and make sure their members continue to get the job done safely.

During his career, my father was a labourer, a carpenter and a sheet metal worker and roofer. His generation sacrificed so much to help build our great country. Now we must continue to invest in and train the next generation of men and women in the trades. That will not only provide good jobs for Canadians, but also build the communities in this country we are all blessed to call home.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another local newspaper is closing down. For 22 years, The New Tanner served as an important voice for Acton and the surrounding community. Since it was founded by Ted Tyler and Hartley Coles, The New Tanner has been the go-to source for local news, giving local residents a sense of place and community in a globalized world.

It is no secret that newspapers have been struggling for some time. Then the pandemic hit.

Local sports, after-school activities, Legion events and other local goings-on have all been cancelled, creating an impossible situation for the small papers that covered these events. Last month, The New Tanner decided to close.

What was started by Ted Tyler and Hartley Coles so many years ago touched the lives of tens of thousands of local residents over many decades. I thank The New Tanner for bringing the community together by telling our local stories over so many years.

* * *

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to mark the 60th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Cyprus. As this is my first statement as a member of Parliament since my election, I am honoured to stand in the House to celebrate this important day.

Canada and Cyprus have enjoyed a long history of international co-operation. Our countries have maintained strong bilateral relationships through our membership and work in several multilateral organizations including la Francophonie, the World Trade Organization, UNESCO and the International Criminal Court.

[*Translation*]

One of the most important things about Canada's relationship with Cyprus is our country's ongoing participation in the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus.

Since 1964, Canada has played an active role in keeping the peace and providing humanitarian aid in Cyprus. On the 60th anniversary of Cypriot independence, Canada joins Cyprus in celebrating our common democratic values and respect for human rights in both Canada and the rest of the world.

Cyprus is an important international partner for Canada, and we hope to maintain close ties with the Cypriot people in the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation.

*Statements by Members***NATIONAL SENIORS DAY**

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is National Seniors Day. They need our help more than ever. They built this country and they deserve to have a safe and dignified retirement. The pandemic has impacted our seniors, who are facing more economic and social challenges. Together, we must do more and we can do more for our seniors.

That is why our government is introducing additional measures to help them. Not only will we increase the amount of old age security when a senior reaches the age of 75, but we will increase the survivor benefits of the Canada pension plan. We will introduce additional measures to help seniors stay in their homes longer and establish new guidance for long-term care. We will continue to provide the help seniors need and to support them during this pandemic

Happy National Seniors Day.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

LATIN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate all Canadians on Latin American Heritage Month. We appreciate all the contributions of Canadians of Latin American descent who, for generations, have helped build our communities and made them stronger. Despite all the challenges and barriers, they have shown how hard work and determination always prevail. Their communities from coast to coast are essential to building a brighter future. I also want to acknowledge how Latin American communities came together during the lockdown to help the most vulnerable.

Lastly, I want to pay tribute to the sponsor of the bill in the Senate, our late Conservative senator, Tobias Enverga. Tobias was a vocal advocate for diversity and multiculturalism in Canada who dedicated his life to building bridges between communities.

On behalf of the Conservative Party and our leader, I wish everyone celebrating Latin American Heritage Month a joyful celebration.

* * *

[Translation]

MADAWASKA—RESTIGOUCHE

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we go through this pandemic, I have to say how proud I am of the people of my riding, one of the most beautiful in the country, as you can imagine.

In the midst of the health crisis in the spring, before the second wave even arrived, officials all over Madawaska—Restigouche remained in constant communication with our offices. Provincial MNAs, mayors and municipal councillors, as well as representatives from non-profit organizations, the business community, and the sports and socio-cultural sectors, all showed us their support and contributed their ideas, suggestions and constructive opinions to help our government develop emergency measures to respond to

the greatest nightmare of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact.

I would like to thank everyone in this beautiful and resilient riding, Madawaska—Restigouche, who helped me bring solutions to Ottawa that reflect our region. These solutions are helping our people, businesses and organizations get through this health crisis.

Everything is going to be okay, and thank you from the bottom of my heart.

* * *

[English]

MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tonight Asian communities across Canada will celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival, also known as the Moon Festival. Traditionally celebrated when the moon is roundest and brightest, this holiday is a great opportunity for families to reunite at a festival table and express gratitude to each other. While this year's celebrations will look different because of the ongoing pandemic, they will nevertheless be filled with joy and delicious traditional food, including moon-cakes.

Asian Canadians have contributed richly to the development and continuing vibrancy of this country and are a strong and growing voice in our politics. Asian Canadians were at the forefront of those calling for a stronger response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the early days, and for a principled foreign policy that seeks the expansion of democracy and human rights.

Many Asian Canadians have felt increasing pressure in 2020 as a result of racism, violence and increasing foreign-state-backed intimidation. The Conservatives will always stand with Canadians of Asian origin. We will never tolerate bigotry, hatred or intimidation in our communities.

On behalf of Canada's Conservatives, I would like to wish all members of Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Malaysian, Taiwanese and Singaporean communities across Canada a happy Mid-Autumn Festival.

* * *

● (1415)

NATIONAL SENIORS DAY

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, on National Seniors Day, we pay tribute to Canada's seniors. They have made profound contributions to our families, our workplaces, our communities and our country. Every day they continue to make a positive difference in all of our lives.

Younger generations have the privilege to build on the accomplishments and lessons learned from the generations before them. In fact, we owe Canada's seniors a lot and cannot take them for granted. We know this year has been particularly difficult for many of them. Never has it been more important for us to step up and better support our seniors, because when our seniors are honoured and supported, our society as a whole is stronger.

I invite my colleagues and all Canadians to join me in honouring seniors and their lives and wish all of Canada's seniors a happy National Seniors Day.

* * *

NATIONAL SENIORS DAY

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on National Seniors Day to honour and thank older adults across our country for the many contributions they have made and continue to make to our families, our communities and our country. However, if we truly want to honour our seniors we need to also protect them, and the recent pandemic has shown all of us that we have some serious work to do.

Too many of our seniors are on long waiting lists for affordable housing. Too many of our seniors are dependent on food banks on a weekly basis, and too many of our seniors are still rationing their medication. The list goes on.

Today, I am asking the government to finally implement what our NDP caucus, the National Association of Federal Retirees, numerous health care organizations and others have been calling for: a national seniors strategy. A national seniors strategy would boost seniors' financial security and improve their quality of life. Seniors deserve no less. This would show our seniors that they are important, valuable members of our society, every day, not just on National Seniors Day.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL SENIORS DAY

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, October 1 has been known as National Seniors Day since 1991. This day is an opportunity to acknowledge how much seniors contribute to society and our communities.

On this day, I want to remind members that seniors' finances have been made worse by the crisis, and with the arrival of the second wave and the return to self-isolation, we can no longer just say that it will all work out. A simple, inexpensive solution is to provide ongoing, long-term increases to their spending power.

Let us lift seniors out of poverty by increasing old age security by \$110 a month, with an adjusted guaranteed income supplement starting at the age of 65, not 75, so that we do not create two classes of seniors. Let us pay our respects to the people who built Quebec. Let us recognize the invisible work that many of them still do. Let us honour them and, most importantly, let us remember everything we owe to them.

Statements by Members

[English]

ANNIVERSARY OF CYPRUS INDEPENDENCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to congratulate Canadian Cypriots and Cypriots around the world on the 60th anniversary of Cyprus independence.

For 29 years, our Canadian Armed Forces contributed to the UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus. Both of our countries are full members of the Commonwealth and La Francophonie, contributing to even closer co-operation and partnership between our nations.

[Translation]

I congratulate Canadian Cypriots and Cypriots around the world on the 60th anniversary of Cyprus independence. As a member of the Canadian Forces, I had the honour and privilege of taking part in Canada's peacekeeping operations in Cyprus in 1992. Twenty-eight Canadian heroes died in the line of duty on this Mediterranean island.

We will forever be grateful for their sacrifice and their service.

* * *

[English]

APHASIA

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following is a typical opening to an aphasia program like the one I visited in Burlington led by Carly.

Checking in: this afternoon, I am a 10 because on Saturday I took part in the Halton-Peel Community Aphasia Programs' virtual Talk, Stroll and Roll to raise money to support this amazing program. Today is Thursday, October 1. Today's theme is aphasia awareness. Ninety-five per cent of Canadians do not know what aphasia is and the challenges faced by those living with it.

Aphasia is a language disorder that affects the ability to communicate. It is most often caused by strokes that occur in areas of the brain that control speech and language. Aphasia does not affect intelligence, but it makes speech jumbled, fragmented or hard to understand, which can be frustrating. Words that my friends with aphasia have used to describe themselves include outspoken, friendly, trustworthy and adventurous. I would describe them as resilient and courageous.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Before going any further, I would like to thank all members who made statements of 60 seconds or less.

[English]

I want to remind hon. members that statements by members are 60 seconds long, so if they could keep it to that, it would avoid their cutting off the tail end of a very important message to their ridings and to the rest of Canada. I thank all members for co-operating.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS**

• (1420)

*[Translation]***HEALTH**

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada had the Global Public Health Intelligence Network, an organization that was supposed to detect pandemics throughout the world. It was a well-respected organization.

Unfortunately, several months before the pandemic struck, the Minister of Health shut the network down. After that serious error, the minister launched an investigation into herself.

Why is she making note of her own mistakes after failing the test?

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, public health intelligence is vital to identifying and monitoring outbreaks.

From the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, the global public health intelligence network has been an important source of public health intelligence for PHAC. We were very concerned over reports that GPHIN analysts were not able to proceed with their important work. We will be conducting an independent review of these changes to make sure that this vital tool continues to inform decisions to protect Canadians well into the future.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an independent review on their own mistake. The government turned off Canada's pandemic early warning system in 2019 without an explanation.

Today he describes it as vital. This system was vital. It was 20% of the world's pandemic intelligence information. It helped stop H1N1 and Ebola. The Liberals chose to ignore the warnings of our security experts and instead began to rely on open-source data from China.

The Liberal government put lives at risk when it shut down Canada's pandemic early warning system. Why?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we see this as a vital tool. It is very important that this tool is able to contribute intelligence to our country in the future. We will be conducting this independent review to make sure that this vital tool continues to inform decisions to protect Canadians.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another vital tool is rapid testing and this spring the absence of it has consequences being felt across the country.

Lab workers here in Ontario are feeling it. One told the Ottawa Citizen that everyone is working crazy numbers of hours to try to get all the tests they get in a day done, and it is just not possible.

Will the Prime Minister admit that his failure to approve rapid diagnostic testing is leading to the burnout of our front-line health care workers?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canadians need access to better and faster testing no matter where they live. We have been working around the clock on the approval and procurement of new testing technologies.

As we heard yesterday, the Prime Minister, in the House, announced the approval of the Abbott ID NOW point-of-care test and an order for 7.9 million units of this. We will continue working with industry, provinces and territories, as we have since day one when COVID-19 hit our shores.

The Speaker: Before we continue, I just want to remind hon. members that the way it works is that we ask a question and there is an answer. We cannot keep throwing questions at people to confuse things. I just want to make sure everyone has the rules down right.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are working around the clock and getting nothing done.

In Calgary, the Foothills hospital has 300 workers who have had to quarantine because of COVID-19 exposure. No hospital can lose 300 front-line workers. If these workers had access to rapid tests, they would already be back at work, but the Prime Minister says they have to wait weeks.

If the next hospital is in B.C. or Manitoba, will the Liberal government, once again, blame the provinces for the Prime Minister's own failure?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from day one, we have been great partners with the provinces and territories, getting them the investments they need to come up with the ability to increase the capacity for rapid testing.

When I say that we have been working around the clock, we have been working around the clock. I want to take a moment to thank the public health officials in Canada, the bureaucrats, the public servants, who have truly been working around the clock for the betterment of Canadians. Health Canada works closely with companies applying for authorization in Canada so that we can provide multiple testing options for all Canadians.

• (1425)

[Translation]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government's slowness to act is completely unacceptable.

Quebeckers in the Outaouais region have to wait seven days to get the results of their COVID-19 tests, despite the purchase of new analysis equipment. Everything is ready, but Outaouais region medical centres are still waiting for Health Canada's approval to use one of the most commonly used pieces of equipment in the world.

Oral Questions

Why is the government taking its time during a national crisis?

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we believe in science and evidence. I get the impression the member across the way, if he were in this position on this side of the House, would put an iron fist down on the Health Canada scientists, on the people who are working hard on evidence-based decisions, and make a political decision. We cannot have politics interfering with the outcomes we are looking for here.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of a full-blown health crisis.

Now more than ever, people need good quality health care. Now more than ever, it is time to work with Quebec to help our health care providers and protect our seniors. Quebec needs an increase in health transfers to more effectively fight COVID-19, and it has been asking for those transfers.

What was the government's answer? It said that Canada is not Quebec's ATM and that Quebec needs to make do with its equalization payments. Nice collaboration there. I would be embarrassed if that were me.

Quebeckers need better health care and they are calling for health transfers from Ottawa.

What is Ottawa waiting for?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague speaks of collaboration, but we did not wait.

At the outset, we transferred \$113 million for health care. For the safe restart, there was \$675 million for testing and another \$675 million for PPE. There was \$167 million for vulnerable communities and \$286 million for home care.

Beyond the numbers, we have truly worked together, and it is making a difference in the lives of all Quebeckers. The Bloc may not like it, but that is the truth.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 81% of Quebeckers want the government to increase health transfers, and 73% of Canadians agree.

The National Assembly is unanimous on this, and all the provincial premiers want health transfers to be increased. They experienced an immediate shortfall of \$28 billion. The government boasts that it transferred \$500 million to them, but that is not even 2% of the total, and during a pandemic, no less.

When will the government take this seriously and give Quebec and the provinces what they want?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Quebec government is more than capable of speaking for itself.

We have discussions with Quebec. It does not need the Bloc Québécois in the House to negotiate on its behalf. It negotiates. We

speaking regularly with the Quebec government. This year, we have transferred \$11.6 billion for health care.

I know that the Bloc would like us to squabble about this, but there is no squabbling.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government announced the Canada Infrastructure Bank three years ago.

Three years have passed, and it has not kept its promises. It has not built anything that would show this is working.

What has it done? It has helped its close friends. It has paid out huge salaries, but it has not really invested in building new infrastructure.

When will the Liberal government invest in infrastructure for real, instead of just making big announcements?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am always happy to talk about our infrastructure program, which is generating thousands of projects, creating good jobs across the country and building a healthier future.

Today, we partnered with Michael Sabia, who is well known across Canada and in Quebec, to announce a \$10-billion investment in retrofits and electric buses. This investment will support our transition to a cleaner economy and create 60,000 jobs.

Montrealers are well aware of how the infrastructure bank works because the REM project—

● (1430)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby South.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt the Liberals are going to make great announcements. They made another great announcement. However, they have only actually funded nine projects in three years and none of those projects has been completed. It is a great announcement tool, but they have not built infrastructure. What have they done for three years? They certainly have enriched their close friends. They have great salaries. However, they are just making announcement after announcement and not building things in communities. They are not building infrastructure.

When will the Liberal government admit the Canada Infrastructure Bank was just an announcement ploy? They need to start investing directly in projects people need.

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am always proud to talk about the infrastructure investments we are making across the country, including in the member's riding. We have invested in thousands of projects that are creating jobs across the country and building cleaner and more inclusive communities.

Oral Questions

The REM project in Montreal, funded by the Canada Infrastructure Bank, has created thousands of jobs and is advancing quickly. Today's announcement is a demonstration that under the leadership of Michael Sabia, we are going to get even more built. A \$10-billion investment that will crowd in the private sector will mean retrofits in buildings across the country. It will mean more electric buses and better public transportation—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the primary responsibilities of any federal government is to manage its borders. Canadians recognized that the government was dragging its feet early on in the pandemic when it came to managing our borders. At the time, the Liberal minister said the government knew better than everyone and was following advice from the WHO. Today, the New York Times is reporting that the WHO's policy was more about politics and economics than science.

What does the Liberal government have to say to Canadians who waited for days for the government to do the right thing and close the border, as all Canadian scientists and all Canadians with common sense were calling for?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I would disagree with the characterization that there was any delay. Our government acted with remarkable speed in closing our borders and placing appropriate restrictions on international travel. It was unprecedented and, prior to the pandemic, almost incomprehensible. We acted quickly to put in place strong restrictions on non-essential travel and to take the action necessary to keep Canadians safe. That has been effective. We were able to maintain important supply lines so that goods, services and essential workers could continue to do their jobs of serving Canadians—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

* * *

HEALTH

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we asked the Minister of Health in March why her government had not shut down international travel or established testing requirements at our airports. She stated that their decision to allow flights to continue and not require screening was based on the best scientific evidence from Canada with recommendations from the World Health Organization. The New York Times has now revealed that the WHO advice was never based on science.

Will the minister now explain why she risked the health of Canadians and continued to defend policies based on politics rather than science?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have used science and evidence from day one. I disagree with the member's comments and the member's question.

Science has evolved in this process. We have learned through this process. When we think about this resurgence, we know so much more now than we knew before. We have so much more knowledge about COVID-19 than we had back in January. The Canadian response has been driven from day one by evidence and science, and it will continue.

● (1435)

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months the COVID pandemic has ravaged our economy. Nine thousand Canadians have lost their lives, many more are hospitalized and we now know that, last year, the health minister shut down Canada's pandemic early-warning system, if members can imagine. When former Liberal health minister Ujjal Dosanjh heard this, he called the minister's actions "a colossal failure".

Why did the minister shut down the system, and does she not realize that the early-warning system could have saved many lives?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend for Abbotsford for the question, a question that had been asked earlier today, but the same answer is the same answer.

Public health intelligence is vital to identifying and monitoring outbreaks. We were concerned about reports that GPHIN analysts were not able to proceed with their important work. From the start of COVID-19, the Global Public Health Intelligence Network has been an important source of public health intelligence. That tool is a vital tool and needs to remain, in the future, as a tool of intelligence for Canadians.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, we read that the health minister ignored critical pandemic information and relied on intelligence from foreign governments. She prioritized information from China, of all places, rather than using public sources that would have told her how dangerous the virus really was. For months, the minister said that the risk was low. Now we find out that she shut down one of the most important tools to protect Canadians against this virus.

Does the minister realize this is another WE Charity in the making? Why should Canadians continue to trust her?

Oral Questions

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were very concerned by reports that GPHIN analysts were not able to proceed with their important work. As I have said before, we will be conducting an independent review of these changes to make sure that this vital tool continues to inform decisions to protect Canadians into the future. Public health intelligence is vital to identifying and monitoring an outbreak.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, shortly after leaving politics, the Liberal MP Frank Baylis was awarded a \$237-million contract to make medical ventilators. Since then, billions of dollars have been awarded to companies we have never heard of. The government cites national security reasons to avoid telling us who is getting these contracts. As we saw with the WE scandal, the Liberals often hide the truth from Canadians.

We want to know if the Liberals are awarding these contracts to their friends.

[English]

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying we made all of our contracts public on our website at the end of July in the interest of full transparency for Canadians.

With regard to the contract mentioned, it was actually with a company called FTI Professional Grade, for \$237 million for 10,000 ventilators. There is no contract with Frank Baylis. The contract that is referenced is with FTI, so the question is actually irrelevant.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is another WE scandal in the making, so let us review.

First the Prime Minister destroyed our stockpiles of PPE on the eve of a global pandemic, then he sent what little we had left to the Chinese communist regime. Now we learn he is slapping national security designations on government contracts for PPE. National security designations are meant for national defence, not cloaking public health contracts in secrecy. This is just another attempt by the government to avoid accountability.

What are the Liberals trying to hide this time?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I need to highlight what I just said, which is that in the interest of full transparency we revealed on our website at the end of July all of our contracts and suppliers. I would like to take issue therefore with the insinuation that we are not acting in the interest of transparency, and I will say that we now have over two billion items of PPE in this country for Canadians, for front-line health care workers, and we will continue to act with vigour and diligence on their behalf.

[Translation]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at midnight, the majority of Quebec was deemed a COVID-19 red zone. The entire restaurant industry and cultural sector have closed their doors for at least 28 days.

In the Speech from the Throne, the government promises “to target additional financial support directly to businesses which have to temporarily shut down as a result of a local public health decision”.

This afternoon, the Government of Quebec announced its plans to help businesses.

What will the federal government do in the very near future?

● (1440)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question. Of course we sympathize with those affected by the lockdown announced by the Quebec government.

Since the beginning, we have been there for our business owners to ensure that they get through the first wave, and we will be there during this second wave, taking other measures such as the wage subsidy and others we will be announcing soon.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, businesses have already closed. We are in a red zone. We must take action now, not in a few months.

As I said, the federal government cannot take months to provide assistance. Businesses need it now. The Bloc has been asking for help to cover fixed costs, for example, for six months, to no avail. Financial support for safety measures for school openings arrived one week after the children arrived. In about 50 schools, COVID-19 arrived before the support. We are not making this up.

Time is running out for businesses. Action is needed now.

What will Ottawa do?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in recent days, I have had the opportunity to speak a few times with Quebec's minister of the economy. I am well aware of his new program. That is good news for business owners.

It complements several measures we have introduced, such as the wage subsidy and small business loans. In addition, the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec has received more money.

Oral Questions

Of course we are very worried about what business owners are currently going through in locked-down areas, and we will be there to help them.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, small businesses like restaurants, bars and theatres were the first to shut down during the first wave of the pandemic. They are now having to close down again because they are in the red zone. Loans are all well and good, but debt is not an option for them.

The Bloc has been saying for more than six months that in order to prevent bankruptcies, we need to provide assistance for fixed costs. Thousands of businesses are at risk of collapsing. The government agreed with us. We put assistance for fixed costs into a motion on April 11, and the Liberals voted in favour of it.

When will the government keep its word and announce real assistance for fixed costs for businesses?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that we need to support our business owners. We have been there for them from the beginning of the pandemic and we will continue to be.

That is also why many of these business owners have been able to keep their employees: because there is a wage subsidy.

We know that some regions have been affected more than others. This is why we said in the throne speech that we would be there to help business owners and workers in these regions. That is our objective.

Not only do we support them, but we will also take action.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister shut down the system that was supposed to warn us about pandemics, and he costs people their lives and their jobs. The Prime Minister kept our borders open, knowing that the virus was entering our cities, and he cost people their lives and their jobs. In Ontario alone today, 82,000 people are waiting for test results because there are no rapid tests in our schools, in our places of work and in long-term care facilities because the Prime Minister failed to get them.

The Prime Minister is costing workers their jobs and people their lives. Why?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were first alerted to an outbreak of pneumonia in late December 2019. Since then, we have been working together with all levels of government to respond to cases of COVID-19 in Canada. We have used science and evidence to inform our decision-making, based on the data available. We know that the situation changes every day. We are working with experts, public health officials and our partners, working together to keep Canadians safe.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand with Kim MacInnis in Dartmouth who had to take five days off work to wait for her toddler's COVID results. The best that this guy can do is stammer through his minister's talking points, which lose something in translation from Beijing. He sat by and did nothing while the Liberals sent precious masks to other countries while our doctors went without. It is disgusting.

Why is the Prime Minister costing Canadians their lives and their jobs?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from day one this government has been a partner with provinces and territories. We have invested heavily in ensuring that provinces, like my province of Nova Scotia, have the money to ramp up the capacity that they need.

My daughter had a test in Nova Scotia and she had her test results back in eight hours. We have done great things with the provinces and territories, and we have an unprecedented level of co-operation and collaboration with these provinces and territories.

I want to thank those folks in the provinces and territories for working with the government, but we have made federal investments to help with that capacity.

● (1445)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is great. Liberals get their test results in hours but Kim MacInnis has to wait for five days for her kid's. That is how it works with the government: a contract for Frank Baylis and special test results for the parliamentary secretary. The government needs to start standing with regular Canadians. They are the ones who are making the sacrifice.

The only sacrifice the Prime Minister has made is Bill Morneau. He is costing Canadians their lives and their jobs. When is he going to get his act together, and when are Canadians going to see a plan?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have used science and we have used evidence to drive the Canadian response to this. What we see on the other side of the House are people who, if they were in these positions on this side of the bench, would make those decisions for scientists. If the scientists were not at the stage yet where they could approve it, across the way they would rubber-stamp it just because it makes good political sense.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a Vancouver Islander I can attest to how important B.C. ferries are as a vital link to the mainland. Strict COVID-19 measures have kept people safer, including an exemption that let passengers stay in their vehicles. Despite an expected second wave and the objections of the premier, the provincial medical health officer, passengers and some ferry workers, the Liberals have rescinded that exemption and are insisting on cramming people onto the passenger decks, insisting that it is safe.

Why is the Liberal government exposing passengers on B.C. ferries to risk? Do the Liberals really think Ottawa knows best?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the issue of ferries and closed car decks, it is a difficult decision but it is one that has to be made for reasons of marine safety. Closed decks on ferries are not safe places for passengers to be, in case there were to be a fire or flooding or some other catastrophe. At this point in time, we have measures in place to ensure COVID safety on our ferries, and we hope that all people will understand that this is the proper way to go.

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SENIORS

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were horrified to see the appalling conditions our seniors are experiencing in long-term care centres across this country. Of the deaths from COVID-19, 80% occurred in these facilities, giving Canada the worst record of all comparable nations. The situation was so bad the Armed Forces had to be called in.

As Canadians brace themselves for a second wave of this pandemic, families are extremely worried about their loved ones in long-term care. What is the government doing specifically to ensure seniors will be better protected in the critical months ahead?

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will be there to support the provinces and territories that need help managing their long-term care systems. Whether it is with the support of the Canadian Armed Forces, investments in PPE or providing the \$3 billion for essential workers' wages, know that the safety of seniors is our top priority. Under the safe restart agreement, our government has provided \$740 million to support one-time costs for measures to control and prevent infections. Our throne speech identified the additional actions we will take to strengthen long-term care in our country. We will be there for our seniors.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know our government has been outspoken in the past about opposing the United States administration's plan to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil drilling and that it could auction off drilling leases this calendar year. The ANWR is a critically important calving ground for the Porcupine caribou herd. With the ongoing decline in many herds, we need to collectively protect them and assist in their recovery.

What has Canada done and what more can we do to address this incoming threat?

● (1450)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the Northwest Territories for his question, and for both his and the member for Yukon's important work on this issue.

As I said in the statement I released in early September, the Porcupine caribou herd is invaluable to the culture and sustenance of the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit peoples, and to biodiversity in this country. This government has long advocated for the permanent protection of the herd's habitat, including in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. We have made strides to protect this herd through

Oral Questions

the establishment of important habitat areas, including two national parks, Ivvavik and Vuntut. We have and we will work together with our indigenous and territorial partners to protect this iconic species.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, I asked the minister when she planned to modernize the Official Languages Act.

For weeks, the Commissioner of Official Languages, the FCFA and every organization representing francophones in Canada have been asking the same question. I fully expect the minister to respond with yet more attacks against Conservatives, but the fact that she is ignoring all of these stakeholders is highly disrespectful to them. I am giving her a second chance.

When will she introduce a bill to modernize the Official Languages Act?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that modernizing the Official Languages Act is important. Why? Because we must always work to strengthen language rights for linguistic minorities in Canada and to strengthen French across the country, be it in Quebec or in other regions.

I have had these same conversations with language rights stakeholders. They are very pleased that our throne speech recognized the importance of our two official languages. We will keep working with them, because we are here for them.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Official Languages Act was rewritten by the Mulroney government. It was under the former Conservative government that historic investments of \$2.2 billion were made. The former commissioner of official languages confirmed that the situation improved during the decade that the Conservatives were in office. The Liberals have been in power for five years and have done nothing tangible, as we see in the most recent report from the Commissioner of Official Languages, which was tabled this week.

We are sick of the rhetoric. We want to know when the minister is going to introduce the bill on modernizing the Official Languages Act.

Oral Questions

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to give my colleague a history lesson, but the Official Languages Act was adopted 51 years ago by a government headed by a certain Mr. Trudeau, following the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission, which advocated for official bilingualism.

Furthermore, every budget cut over the past few decades has come from provincial or federal Conservative governments.

Under the current circumstances, I have a question for the Leader of the Opposition.

Will the Leader of the Opposition speak out against the budget cuts that are currently harming Franco-Albertans and Campus Saint-Jean in Alberta?

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was quick to put all of the resources of government at the disposal of his failed and ethically challenged white, male, former finance minister in his bid to become OECD secretary-general. However, when a Muslim female senator with multi-party support and an unimpeachable record put her name forward for the presidency of the Interparliamentary Union, the government is working against her behind the scenes.

What happened to team Canada? Why are the Liberals failing to support a strong Canadian voice on the world stage?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from the Conservatives when it comes to gender or diversity. Everyone in the House recognizes that Senator Salma Ataullahjan is doing important work on human rights issues. I understand that there is a deadline for candidates by October 18. I will be happy to meet with all candidates and I spoke with the senator today and she was very happy about our intervention.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on diversity the government is all talk and no action. Liberals fired a public servant who criticized the government's approach to blackface. We saw with the former attorney general that the Prime Minister only wants women in leadership roles if they sing from the song sheet that he provides.

Senator Ataullahjan's bid had the support of multiple Liberal MPs. The Prime Minister is putting politics ahead of our national interests. Why is the government working behind the scenes to block a strong Muslim woman from representing Canada on the world stage just because she happens to be a Conservative?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member were to listen, I said that I spoke with the senator today. We had a good conversation. I invited her to come to see me and I said that I would meet all participants who want to put their name forward. That is democracy. That is the way we operate on this side of the House.

• (1455)

[Translation]

SENIORS

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, most Quebecers are in the red zone as of today. Seniors cannot have visitors for the next 28 days, and they will be more isolated than ever.

In addition to the anxiety caused by COVID-19, our seniors continue to live with financial stress, yet Ottawa refuses to lift a finger to help them. Instead of simply talking the talk on the International Day of Older Persons, could the government actually walk the walk and immediately increase old age security benefits by \$110 a month starting at age 65? That is a federal responsibility.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning, the federal government has been there for all Quebecers and especially for our seniors, those who have been struggling more in long-term care centres. Our government has been there through the medium of the Red Cross and the army, as well as through a direct payment of \$500.

We have stepped up in many ways to help Quebec society as a whole. Whether for our seniors, our families or our workers, we are there for Quebec and always will be.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have good news for seniors between the ages of 65 and 75. According to the federal government, they are immune to COVID-19. Even in a lockdown, they are immune to loneliness and isolation. The cost of groceries is not going up for those privileged to be between the ages of 65 and 75.

Seriously, can the government explain why seniors aged 65 to 75 do not deserve the same pension increase as other seniors? Why is the government creating two classes of seniors? Poverty does not wait for someone to turn 75.

[English]

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the government remains committed to implementing the policies as reaffirmed in our throne speech, at this time we are focused on managing the COVID-19 public health crisis. This year, we have invested over twice as much financial assistance for seniors as we committed to in our platform. We provided financial support to seniors 65 and above sooner and with greater support for the most vulnerable.

Seniors can be assured that our government has been there to support them during the pandemic and will continue to be there for them.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the industry minister said in 2016, “We must address the needs of Canadians who could have access to the Internet.” In 2017, he said, “They need these services”. In 2018, he said, “...high-speed Internet is no longer a luxury.” In 2019, he said, “Access to high-speed Internet is essential”. Now it is 2020 and the Liberals are rehashing the same tired promises.

It has been five years. Canadians are frustrated and still waiting on this promise. When will we finally see some improvement on this issue?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been five years and since we formed government, over a million households are on their way to getting connected to high-speed Internet. Today, the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, along with the Prime Minister, announced an additional tool to connect three-quarters of a million households and businesses in underserved communities to high-speed Internet. That is in addition to the investments already made and in addition to the universal broadband fund.

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): And it is still not working, Mr. Speaker.

The rural broadband expansion has been an unmitigated disaster. We have heard plenty of big plans from the Liberals over the last five years, but very little delivery and many unsatisfied Internet users. However, a new entrant, SpaceX, may be able to offer a solution that rural Canadians and their businesses have been desperately needing. It is not asking for a cent. It just wants its licence approved.

When will the minister get busy and give it the green light?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's passion on this file. If he would like a briefing on how we have been moving forward and how we can work together, I am happy to offer it to him.

The needs across the country are diverse. We are attuned to those. We are looking for diverse partners to make that happen. Today's announcement on the partnership with the Infrastructure Bank is one way that we are moving forward.

If my colleague has solutions that he would like to bring to the table, I know we are all busy, but I will happily make time for him.

● (1500)

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, announcing the same money over and over again is just not getting the job done. Here in New Brunswick, there remain tens of thousands of households and small businesses without access to reliable high-speed Internet connections.

In 2019, the Liberals said they would accelerate the expansion of rural Internet. They promised the same thing in May. They have made the same promise again in this new throne speech.

When will the minister give a clear timeline? When will upgraded connections roll out in rural New Brunswick?

Oral Questions

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope that our Conservative colleagues will, first and foremost, support the Speech from the Throne where the commitments to accelerated and more ambitious supports for communities, like those in New Brunswick, were made.

Second, I want my colleague to know that we are working very hard to ensure that every household is connected to this essential service.

Third, I truly hope that colleagues who are interested are working to get their communities connected to our department so that we can help support strong applications moving forward.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize that today is National Seniors Day. Here in Cumberland—Colchester, we have many incredible seniors who have helped build Nova Scotia through good times and bad times. In fact, they have helped build the Canada that we love today.

However, many seniors across Canada are facing isolation and uncertainty, especially with fears of the second wave of COVID-19. I was pleased to hear a renewed commitment from government to protect and support seniors in the throne speech.

Could the Minister of Seniors please tell us exactly what she has been doing and will be doing to help support Canadian seniors?

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester for the opportunity to send my best wishes to our elders on National Seniors Day.

Today I invite everyone to show their love and appreciation for the seniors in their lives. During the pandemic, our government has provided financial, social and health supports to seniors. We have an ambitious agenda to increase old age security and improve the quality of long-term care, and accelerate universal pharmacare and help seniors remain in their homes as they age.

We will continue to be there for Canada's seniors every step of the way.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal government, Health Canada is permitting dozens of large-scale medical cannabis grow ops with hundreds of plants to operate in the suburbs of my riding.

Oral Questions

One family suffered a break-in after their home was mistaken for the grow-op next door. Health Canada is refusing to share critical information that law enforcement needs in order to shut down any illicit gro ops.

Medical cannabis can be grown safely, but there is a loophole that is impacting the safety and quality of life of my constituents. Will the health minister be putting their needs first and close the loophole immediately?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we worked very hard to ensure we would get the bulk of the illegal cannabis industry off the streets, having a product on the street without knowing what was in it. The legislation to legalize cannabis in Canada has been successful and we have taken away a big portion of the business that was on the street.

I would be pleased to open up a dialogue with the member, to have a conversation at any time, at her convenience on this issue.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been over two weeks of questions about the Nova Scotia fisheries crisis without getting great answers.

The Prime Minister made reconciliation with our first nations a priority, speaking of understanding, friendship and redressing past digressions. Honest discussions must take place with both sides so they can work together for a better future.

In its desire for reconciliation, why is the government knowingly pitting indigenous and non-indigenous against each other in St. Mary's Bay and destroying any friendship that has been maintained for over 300 years?

● (1505)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since day one, the priority has been to de-escalate the tensions that we have seen on the water in southwestern Nova Scotia. I am thankful to say that this actually is happening now.

Now we work with the first nations community as well as with industry as we go forward. We believe that the best way to do this is through respectful dialogue. We are currently in discussions with first nations communities. They are actually saying that these discussions are positive. Today is an extremely special day in Nova Scotia, happy treaty day.

We will continue to do this to ensure we implement these first nations' rights.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has the highest unemployment in the G7 and our finances are teetering on the brink.

TC Energy's natural gas pipeline expansion could have generated 5,500 good-paying jobs and \$4 billion in investment, with all the tax revenue to go with it. The Canadian Energy Regulator recommended this project for approval back in February, but the Liberals still have not acted.

Does the lifeline that the NDP threw the government include a knife in the back of the west again or are the Liberals just this spiteful all on their own?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the face of COVID-19 and at the request of several indigenous communities, our government extended the deadline for a decision on the NGTL project in order to safely and meaningfully consult and address outstanding concerns as appropriate.

As the House knows very well, good projects only get done when we take the time and do the hard work to meet our constitutional duty to meaningfully consult with potentially impacted first nations.

* * *

JUSTICE

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in February, our government tabled Bill C-7 to comply with a Quebec Superior Court ruling, which ordered changes to Canada's medical assistance in dying law. However, due to the pandemic, our government was granted an extension until December 2020 to comply with this order.

Could the Minister of Justice please update the House on our government's plan to comply with the Truchon decision and to respect the court-imposed deadline?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the coming days, our government will reintroduce what was formally Bill C-7 on medical assistance in dying. We consulted extensively on this legislation and believe that it ensures personal autonomy and choice, while protecting the most vulnerable. It affirms the inherent and equal value of every life.

As we move forward, we will work to ensure the parliamentary process is inclusive and accessible. I want to assure my hon. colleague and all Canadians that even in a pandemic, all voices will be heard on this deeply personal and important issue.

* * *

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my constituent, Brian, tried to apply online for CERB retroactive payments on September 29, after learning the rules for CERB had changed. To his shock, he was told that he could only apply for the last period of the CERB payment.

When we looked into this, the CRA agent told my office that on September 28 they received direction to limit the retroactive applications. There was no public warning whatsoever of this change, and it is contrary to what the government's own website states. This is utterly unfair and unacceptable.

Will the minister honour the original deadline for retroactive payments?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member that if there are any particular cases, I will certainly look into it.

When Canadians needed support the most, the Canada emergency response benefit was there to help support nearly nine million people pay their bills and be there for their families. While we see an economic restart in some jurisdictions and sectors, we know there is still a long way to go.

That is why our government is implementing the next phase of our economic recovery plan, new flexibilities in the employment insurance program that will allow more Canadians to apply and receive a minimum of \$500 per week for at least 26 weeks and new income support benefits that will provide similar support to non-EI Canadians.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear the government's announcement of the purchase of 7.9 million rapid point of care COVID-19 tests, which have been approved by Health Canada.

As we head into the fall months, could the minister update the House and Canadians on three things: first, the accuracy of the test; second, to whom the tests are being distributed across Canada; and third, who is making the distribution decision?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need access to better and faster testing. That is something we are all very clear on and that is something we are delivering on. We are working around the clock to make evidence-based decisions so we can approve and procure new testing technologies. After a thorough review by Health Canada, the Abbott ID NOW rapid test, as announced yesterday, was approved for use in Canada.

Decisions on distribution are not and must not be political. PHAC is working closely with its provincial and territorial partners to ensure these tests go where they are needed most.

* * *

● (1510)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, page 623 of Bosc and Gagnon states, "The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all Members. Thus, the use of of-

Points of Order

fensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden."

Today, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement called the question from my colleague for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles "irrelevant". She may have also inadvertently misled the House. In fact, I have great respect for the minister; she is a learned law professor. She suggested his question was irrelevant because the contract for ventilators was with a company FTI Professional.

Let me pierce the corporate veil. A press release this year from Baylis Medical said, "The Baylis V4C-560 ventilator, manufactured in partnership with FTI Professional Grade Inc. (FTI), and Baylis Medical, is part of the order commissioned—

The Speaker: I will interrupt the hon. member. I think we are getting into debate. I can understand the first part.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: We have pointed out that the minister used language. We will go to the minister and then come back.

Does the hon. minister want to reply to that?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the House for the use of the word "irrelevant". However, I reiterate the point that the contract between the Government of Canada—

The Speaker: Now we are getting back into debate. We had something pointed out, and now I will cut it off.

I want to remind hon. members that when bringing something up, it is to point out what was done, and we will worry about proving it later. It is to show the relevance to see if it is *prima facie* or not.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, during question period, I noted that several MPs and certain ministers were not wearing the headsets provided by the House. I would like to remind them, through you, that they are not being asked to wear them solely on our behalf, but that it is also for their own health, as the headsets protect against the many acoustic bursts, which, despite all efforts, continue to occur.

The Speaker: Indeed, that is very important. I would like to remind members joining us virtually to use the headsets provided by the House.

*Speaker's Ruling**[English]*

The headsets that have been provided by the chamber, by Parliament, will make it so much easier for everyone to understand what they are saying, because they do have a very important message for each and every one. Also, the interpreters get a clearer message when they are trying to interpret. It makes it easier for them. Therefore, out of consideration for the interpreters, please use the headsets that are provided by the chamber.

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I find it strange that the Leader of the Opposition was able to say his point, but I am not able to respond it, and you actually—

The Speaker: I will interrupt the hon. minister.

I apologize to members for not having cut the Leader of the Opposition off sooner, but I thought there might be more there. That was my judgment, and my apologies for that.

* * *

• (1515)

*[Translation]***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you know, today is Thursday and, as per tradition, Thursday is the day we ask a formal question that is essential to our democratic process.

Could my friend opposite, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, give parliamentarians some idea of the upcoming business?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his weekly question.

In passing, I want to point out that things are working well in this hybrid Parliament. We are able to debate and vote, whether in person or via the Internet. I therefore commend all members.

With regard to the legislative calendar, here is the agenda for next week. This afternoon, we will continue with the fourth day of debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

[English]

On Friday, tomorrow, we will start debate on Bill C-3, the judges training legislation.

On Monday and Tuesday of next week, we will have days five and six of the Speech from the Throne debate, respectively.

We will then continue with the judges training bill on Wednesday and Thursday, if necessary.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

PROVISION OF DOCUMENTS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on September 24, 2020, by the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes concerning the

redacted documents provided by the government in response to an order adopted by the Standing Committee on Finance during the previous session.

The member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes alleges that the government is in contempt of Parliament because it did not respect the order from the Standing Committee on Finance. He said that on July 7, 2020, during the previous session, the committee adopted an order requiring the government to produce documents and that any redaction in these documents be done by the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel based on the guidelines set out in the order. The member claims that the documents were apparently redacted by departments before being sent to the committee. As evidence, the member cited correspondence addressed to the committee from the law clerk.

[Translation]

The member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes also argued that the government tarnished the reputation and dignity of the law clerk by publicly stating that it was he who had redacted the documents, as specified in the committee's order.

The member said that exceptional circumstances justified the Chair's ruling on this matter despite the absence of a report from the Standing Committee on Finance, given that the committee had not yet been constituted at the beginning of this parliamentary session.

[English]

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons responded that the government respected the motion from the Standing Committee on Finance and provided exactly the information requested, on time. He explained that the only things excluded were matters of cabinet confidence and national security, as required by the motion and by statute. The parliamentary secretary added that the committee can meet to transact business as of next week and that, in the absence of a report from the committee, it would be difficult for the Speaker to make a determination as to whether the committee's order was respected.

After the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes brought this matter to my attention, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby and the member for La Prairie, as well as the parliamentary secretary, made subsequent interventions.

[Translation]

In explaining this ruling, it is important to understand the sequence of events that led to the question before the Speaker.

On July 7, the Standing Committee on Finance adopted a motion ordering the government to produce certain papers related to WE Charity and ME to WE, by no later than August 8.

Once the documents were received by the committee clerk, they were sent to the law clerk and parliamentary counsel for redaction in compliance with the committee's order.

• (1520)

[English]

In a letter dated August 18 to the committee clerk, the law clerk explained that his office had redacted from the documents information related to the public servants involved in the matter. The same letter also mentioned that additional redactions had been made by government departments to protect cabinet confidence and other information covered by the Privacy Act and the Access to Information Act. The letter noted that certain redactions had been made by the departments on grounds not contemplated by the committee's order and that it was for the committee to determine if it was satisfied with the redactions.

[Translation]

The redacted documents were released to committee members on August 18, the same day that Parliament was prorogued. As a consequence, the committee could not sit and could not review the documents or report to the House.

[English]

As of today, it is not possible to know whether the committee is satisfied with these documents as provided to it. The new session is now under way. The committee, which has control over the interpretation of its order, has an opportunity to examine the documents and decide what to do with them. On September 23, the House adopted an order setting out a specific procedure to re-establish committees, including the Standing Committee on Finance.

Given these facts and circumstances, it is my view that this is a matter for the committee to consider. If it believes that its privileges have been breached or has any other concern with respect to the situation, it can report to the House.

For these reasons, the Chair cannot find that there is a *prima facie* question of privilege.

[Translation]

I thank the members for their attention.

[English]

RESPONSE BY PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO ORDER PAPER
QUESTION—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on September 24, 2020, by the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes concerning the government's response to written question no. 443, tabled during the first session of this Parliament.

During his intervention, the member argued that the details of the government's response with respect to written question no. 443 are not consistent with information published in an article by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. The member also explained that he had received clarifications from the National Capital Commission regarding the differences between the responses to the written question and those provided to the federation. He felt that these clarifications show “wilful muddying of language” on the government's part. In his opinion, “the government, by the very act of attempting to portray these two requests as different, has shown an attempt to

The Address

deliberately mislead the House with its written response and is therefore in contempt of the House.”

In response, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons argued that the information obtained by the member and by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation covers different periods. The parliamentary secretary also suggested that the figures obtained were misread and miscalculated. The parliamentary secretary feels that this is a dispute over facts.

[Translation]

In his intervention, the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes rightfully mentioned the three criteria used to determine that the House has been deliberately misled, the first being to determine whether a statement made in the House is, in fact, misleading.

With regard to written questions, the simple fact that the Speaker must rule on whether the response is misleading *de facto* comes back to a decision on the content of the response. And yet, the Speaker is not able to rule on the accuracy of the government's response to questions, oral or written.

We have numerous precedents on this matter. The third edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, at page 529, could not be clearer, when it states: “There are no provisions in the rules for the Speaker to review government responses to questions.”

• (1525)

[English]

In this case, the Chair cannot conclude that there is a *prima facie* question of privilege.

[Translation]

I thank the members for their attention.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[Translation]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, and of the amendment.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I thought of you when I was preparing the notes for my speech, because I am sure that when you ran for politics for the first time, it was to serve.

I think everyone in the House is here to serve, according to their values and their convictions, and with an openness to doubt, which is always a very healthy intellectual experience.

One of my convictions, perhaps the most important one in politics, is a people's right to self-determination. A nation is better at serving itself. A nation is better at serving its seniors. A nation is better at serving its business owners, farmers, artists, fishers, students, environment and researchers. It also holds all the power. It has the characteristics of sovereignty.

The Address

I think that a people starts out sovereign. It then chooses what it will do with that sovereignty: only more power for some, but all the power for others. That is true if the nation is not deprived of its rights. Since today is October 1, my thoughts go out to our Catalan friends, who were denied their independence three years ago today.

Canada is not the worst country in the world. Quebec is not yet a country, and it would not be the best of countries, but it would be ours. I am confident that the day after a positive vote by Quebecers, if not the same evening or even within a few minutes, Ottawa would call Quebec City and ask to stay friends. Of course, Quebec City would say yes, because we would stay close. In the meantime, since Quebec is not a country today, we are doing the best we can in the system we are stuck with.

I assume that that is what the Prime Minister is doing. Clearly we do not serve the same masters. What divides us is also quite clear: interference in the health care sector at the expense of Quebec and the provinces; marked differences in support to seniors, with the government suddenly deciding to start discriminating based on age; the claim of a green stimulus package, which, when we look closely, actually contains support for the oil industry in the west; and broken promises to farmers. There are many other examples.

The Bloc Québécois went through its own process. It developed a truly green recovery plan. It toured Quebec, first virtually, then in person. What we put forward, and anyone can check this for themselves, is much clearer and more precise than the government's throne speech. What is in our plan is what Quebecers chose. This was not a partisan exercise. Our goal is not to suggest that the people who participated in the process support the Bloc Québécois. Now the Bloc is taking action.

In a way, this is the Bloc Québécois's own inaugural speech, a speech for our own republic, which would not displease us. We recognize that we are an opposition party. We make proposals. If Quebec listens to them and supports them, they will be very hard to ignore. It will be hard to start ignoring Quebec again, to ignore our only national parliament, the National Assembly of Quebec.

Our proposal and the throne speech differ in many respects. There are intrinsic differences, of course. There is the fact that the Bloc Québécois does not believe in the monarchy—more on that later. There is the fact that we condemn the government's decision to prorogue as well as its throne speech and solemn message to the nation, neither of which contained anything of substance. We deplore the Prime Minister's heritage, which is one of centralization. We deplore Canada's love for John A. Macdonald at a time when we condemn racism on a daily basis.

● (1530)

We condemn the colonial legacy. After all, the conquest remains unfinished.

The provinces asked for an increase to health transfers to bring the total federal share of health care funding to 35%. No one, not in Quebec or in the provinces, asked for the federal government to interfere. The government arrogantly responded that it was better than the provinces, that Quebec is just Quebec and the provinces are just the provinces. Canada claims to be better than us.

Can anyone name one thing that a Canadian can do that a Quebecker cannot? The federal government just has more money because of its Constitution, which, after all, is a legacy. Canada can cut the transfers. Canada is richer because of our own money.

The government has mentioned sending in the army. October 2020 marks the 50th anniversary of the October crisis. Canada in 1970, the Canada of the then Prime Minister, sent in the army, claiming an insurrection to overturn, they said, the Government of Quebec. It was a mighty insurrection of fewer than 40 militants.

I am against all forms of violence. We are against all forms of violence. The imprisonment of 500 Quebeckers was violent. The questioning of thousands of others was violent. I am waiting for the condemnation of that violence too. Where are the apologies to the 500 Quebec families?

No one is asking for an apology to the FLQ cells, not even the son of Paul Rose, Félix, who is a very talented filmmaker and does Quebec proud.

The FLQ cells were merely a pretext. We are demanding an apology for the Prime Minister of Canada's decision to temporarily turn Quebec into a military state. You cannot imagine how proud the 32 sovereignist members are to rise in the Parliament of Canada 50 years after the October Crisis, during which a large element meant to suppress us.

Where are the apologies to the Acadians who were deported? Where are the apologies to Louis Riel and the Métis, while John A. Macdonald continues to be celebrated? Among whited sepulchres, apologies are reserved for non-francophones. After all, the Prime Minister runs Her Majesty's government, and the conquest is not yet complete.

This modern style of colonialism can take many forms. Quebec wants to increase the use of French at work. The Liberals claim to do better, but their version of better is to set the French language back. Quebec wants to make federally regulated businesses subject to Bill 101. I challenge the government to refrain from opposing it.

Quebec is demanding that the federal government respect its jurisdictions. The NDP is not Quebec. The Conservatives are not Quebec. The Bloc Québécois is not Quebec. Only Quebec can speak for Quebec. Bloc members have no other allegiance.

The Bloc Québécois moved an amendment calling for the government to respect Quebec's jurisdiction over health care, to increase health transfers and to improve the lives of our seniors. After publicly saying they would support it—or at least they did in French—the NDP and the Conservatives voted against the Bloc Québécois's amendment. All those who voted against the amendment should do some soul searching.

The Address

• (1535)

I urge the government to tread very carefully before continuing to challenge Quebec. I cannot keep from mentioning the inevitable, the unavoidable and the shameful. I want to believe that Parliament is ashamed of what Canada's indigenous peoples are going through. We have to tell ourselves that, when it comes to the first nations, which are nations, we are one Parliament. The Prime Minister of Canada speaks for all those who are represented by this Parliament. For the time being, we should be ashamed to even face the first nations, especially this week and today.

I warn the government not to give in to the temptation to take away our privileges again with the help of the NDP, a party in trouble, and once again shut down Parliament. The NDP has chosen uncertain friends and allies in order to stay alive. The Bloc Québécois will vote against the Speech from the Throne. If this Parliament has any courage, the days of the current government are numbered. If some of us had courage, the hours of this government would be numbered.

[*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 love the province of Quebec and the people of Quebec as I love my home province of Manitoba. My heritage goes back, on both my mother's and father's sides, to the province of Quebec.

We live in a great Confederation that truly values the importance of social programs, such as health care. It is so important, whether one is the leader of the Bloc or the MP for Winnipeg North, that we understand the importance of health care to all people in our great nation. Not only do provinces have a role in administration, they also want to ensure there is some consistency in health care services across our country. Something may be done a little better in one region than in another. There is a role for a national government. The leader of the Bloc talked about values. The core of my values is how wonderful our nation is, and Quebec is part of that.

Would the leader of the Bloc not recognize that, whether one lives in Quebec or Manitoba, the values we have jointly far outweigh the benefits of any province going on its own?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, if Canada, Quebec and Manitoba have the same values, I would like that question to be put to Franco-Manitobans.

We are not one nation and that is quite revealing. We are a group of nations living in the same territory, and each indigenous nation is as much a nation as are Quebec and Canada.

As a result of the exodus at the beginning of the last century, I probably have relatives in the northeastern U.S. However, that does not make me an American. It makes me someone who wants to be a friend of the Americans—which is particularly hard at times—just as I would want to remain a friend to Canadians after gaining independence, which I hope will happen soon.

The values we have in common will make us work together of our own accord. Canada collaborates with Denmark, a country with

a population of a few million, but that does not mean that Denmark is part of Canada, or vice versa. Good friends are more valuable than difficult bedfellows.

• (1540)

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague's speech was interesting, to say the least. One of the issues he touched upon, and one of the things the government is very proud of, is the idea of self-determination. When it comes to first nations across the country, the Liberals are very good at talking about self-determination. When it comes to individual provinces, such as my province or the province of the speaker before me, it seems that the government has a problem with self-determination.

Could the member further outline his ideas around self-determination for provinces?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, I am sorry. I have the impression that for the government self-determination is like a self-driving car. That is not what it is about. It is the right of a people, of a nation, to define itself. It is up to a nation to state that it is a nation.

There are about 300 Naskapi individuals in northern Quebec. They are a nation, just as the 8.4 million Quebecers are a nation. A nation defines itself. All nations have the right to self-determination. However, in truth, very few of them want that in its entirety. Among all existing nations that are part of a subgroup in a great many countries, I do not know which ones want to be completely independent before establishing alliances by treaty with their counterparts. The European Union is a perfect example, and an encouraging one in some regards. Some only want more powers. The Bretons want to protect their language as do the Corsicans. Self-determination is not the obligation to have independence, it is the right to independence.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, most of Quebec has been in the red zone since midnight last night. That means that all restaurants and cultural venues are now closed for at least 28 days. In the throne speech, the government said that it would help businesses in this type of situation. This afternoon, the Quebec government announced what it was going to do to help businesses.

According to the leader of the Bloc Québécois and hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly, what should the government do to help businesses that will be forced to close for at least 28 days?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, the difference between a BQ-planted question and a Liberal-planted question is that I do not know it is coming and no one wrote down an answer for me.

However, I feel for my colleague from Joliette, because it is in his riding that an indigenous woman died under more than tragic circumstances. Once again, I would like to express my condolences to the Atikamekw community and nation.

The Address

What can the federal government do? In many cases, my first reaction would be to say that it should mind its own business. In this case, we worked together, and we figured that a quick and effective course of action, familiar to businesses and their accountants, would be a tax credit on fixed costs with a limit on spending. All types of fixed costs would be eligible. The tax credit would be broad and could be adjusted to the type of activity and the temporary loss of economic activity specific to each business. It would be part of the federal tax system, and therefore entirely legitimate. I think that is the direction we must go in.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a really quick question for my colleague.

Where I represent there is over 300 years of francophone traditions. Most of the population works to expand that relationship. With over 300 years, they want inclusion. What does the member have to say to those people? Across from Detroit is Pontiac. Windsor West is the oldest European settlement west of Montreal, and we are very proud of that.

What is the member's message? They want to be part of a Confederation, and they also want the francophone culture and community to continue to rise within that jurisdiction.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, they have my unflinching friendship.

There are several types of francophone solidarity. In fact, there are four. There is international solidarity, represented by the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, a leading institution. At the other extreme, there is Quebec, which has a will of its own.

I think that the best thing that could happen to other North American francophones would be a sovereign Quebec. Quebec would be strong and a hub for the francophonie. This takes nothing away from others' choices. That is how we can become best friends with francophones outside Quebec, with whom we have often expressed our solidarity.

At the continental level, to which the hon. member is referring, we are already working to create sustainable, friendly ties with all North American francophones, without institutional constraints. However, the pandemic has slowed us down considerably.

[*English*]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, obviously, the member and I would share a different ideology as it relates to federalism in this country. I am very proud to be a Nova Scotian. I understand he is very proud to be from Quebec. My question to him is twofold.

The member mentioned agriculture in his speech. Will the member not recognize that agriculture was predominant throughout the Speech from the Throne, in terms of our support for supply-managed sectors and the support for regional capacity, which I know is important to members in his own caucus?

I also really want to ask about the oil and gas industry. The member and I would agree on the fact that this industry may play a lesser role in the Canadian economy in the days ahead, but the revenues from the industry have benefited Canadians and Québécois across the country. Why is the member so disparaging of an industry that has been supportive and has provided much benefit to the Quebec people?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, we could talk at length about this particular topic. Let us do ourselves a favour and keep me from getting into the oil issue.

That said, dependence on the export of natural resources, whatever they may be, has a perverse economic effect. That is particularly true for industrial activities, which are in many ways the hallmark of Quebec's economy.

With respect to agriculture, what was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne was extremely vague and general, much like the rest of the topics. These were plans that should have already been implemented, including the payment of compensation to supply-managed farmers.

I will quickly revisit my previous answer. When I spoke of the francophones of North America, I forgot the other great people of America for whom I have deep affection. I am obviously talking about the people of Haiti.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Timmins—James Bay.

I stand here today to talk about the Speech from the Throne and COVID-19, but with a focus on my riding, which is very much connected to the United States and exemplifies some of the challenges our families face with respect to reunification across the globe. Obviously, in Windsor West, before COVID we had an extensive relationship with the United States. That still goes on today, but it is now a little awkward, different and more difficult than ever before. Prior to COVID-19, the area I represent, which is three-fifths of the city of Windsor, had over 40,000 vehicles per day that crossed into the United States, 10,000 trucks and about 30,000 vehicles with family members and friends.

There are all kinds of different relationships, from the professional level to the relationship level that families experience on a regular basis. In fact, we are proud of that. In Windsor, Ontario, when we have our Remembrance Day ceremony, we include the *Star-Spangled Banner* as part of what we sing because we are not only very proud Canadians but also not afraid to express our relationship with our cousins in the United States, and other places in the world, as part of our culture. In fact, we are the fourth most diverse community in all of Canada. We have over 100 ethnocultural-related organizations that are registered and have been working in Windsor for a number of decades.

With COVID-19, we have seen families torn apart. We have seen people unable to be united. We have had a lot of challenges. I want to thank the Minister of Public Safety for talking with me about this as we entered into COVID before the House shut down. I raised the difficulties we face because there are up to 2,000 people who commute across our border as front-line workers, supporting the efforts to fight COVID in the United States. There are doctors, nurses, PSWs—I am a PSW myself—who go over to the United States daily and we have to keep them safe and secure.

The problem we are faced with is this. As COVID has continued to hamper our economy, it has also created challenges for individuals who have loved ones across this globe. Whether it be as simple as in Detroit, Michigan, across from Windsor, or in England or some other commonwealth nation, or even farther than that. The government's response has been nothing short of irresponsible on this. There has been nothing but delay, and it continues to push the issue down the road without any type of support for individuals. That hurts not only the families but I would argue our economy. More importantly it hurts our entire community, our neighbours, all the people in our communities, because we have people who are in limbo.

I guess I take this a little personally in the sense that my aunt married an American. I have representatives of entire populations across Windsor and Essex County who are connected to people from everywhere, from Lebanon to Pakistan to India to China and other places, and there has been no recourse or any supports provided to individuals to work through the COVID issue and provide safety and security in family reunification.

What we are talking about is this. The government's narrow definition of what constitutes a family has prevented that and is flying in the face of the Prime Minister. It has identified direct relatives using an amazingly old and outdated system that does not even take into account the real relationships taking place right now. This affects people from a mental health aspect. It also affects people with respect to connecting, family planning and so forth.

My appeal to the government is for the issue be taken responsibly and moved forward. We have presented several plans to the government. I come from a community that is on the front lines. I started this speech by talking about how many vehicles and people traverse back and forth on a regular basis. We are just as concerned as anyone out there with respect to the spreading of COVID and having the system in the United States impact our community, but it does not take away from our determination to reunite families that need to have a process in place and the necessary supports from the government.

• (1550)

Nobody wants to bring somebody into this country who will get their family members sick, but that does not mean grandparents, parents, cousins, family members, brothers and sisters should be isolated and thrown basically into an abyss month by month, not even knowing when they can reconnect. We can do better than that. We can do better through a full process. We have presented proposals to the government and it has not even responded.

The Address

There is a movement out there, Love is Not Tourism, and there are others who are pushing this issue but they are doing so not just for themselves but also for this country.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I ask members to please lower their discussions in the House so that we can pay attention to what the member is saying.

Please, proceed.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that because I think that my message is one that has not been discussed enough in the House of Commons, and hopefully it will resonate outside of this chamber, and even more so. I believe, again, that it is not just about the individual families who do not have a connection.

I look to Windsor where we have the Costello family. People need to understand how draconian the system is. This is in Windsor where they asked to go to hospice to visit a dying mother, Diane. She has passed away, and my condolences go to the Costello family today. I thank all their family for fighting for this.

They did not have to stop anywhere. They were going from the border eight kilometres to a hospice, and it was originally denied by the government. There would be no interaction anywhere else. Meanwhile, we can drive across British Columbia to Alaska and then head into Alaska and come back, stopping several places, and that is okay, but they could not get permission. We finally did get it, and I thank the government for allowing permission for the family to be together for her dying days, but this should not be a fight. This should be a planning process.

The government needs to wake up to it and acknowledge that this could go on for a long period of time. COVID-19 is going to continue to plague us as citizens, but we cannot fall into always saying no and not doing the hard work necessary to reunite families, whether they be loved ones, fiancés, brothers or sisters. All those types of relationships that are out there, that are connected, can be scrutinized.

There has been a tremendous amount of work done, so nobody is asking for somebody to come willy-nilly into this country and get a free pass. They are actually putting forward their families' high expectations, ensuring coverage, ensuring a plan, ensuring there is going to be follow through and quarantining, all those things. Right now, the government is just saying no, a blanket no. That is not acceptable because this is going to continue to go on. This hurts not only the people directly involved but also our entire community. That is what I am trying to impress upon the system right now.

The Address

We saw the one case I referenced, the Costello family. At that time, I pointed out that a billionaire got into this country, to Toronto, and got through the system. The government's response was to blame CBSA. That is not acceptable. It is not acceptable for our workers to be put on that mantle and have it said that they are the problem. The CBSA workers are actually our front-line heroes. They deal every day with people coming back and forth on the land border, and they also deal with the air and other things. They need direction and support from the government. They just cannot be doing it by themselves.

What we are calling for is a fully accountable process that has been presented to the government. The government is potentially responding now, because it is feeling the pressure. It should not be political pressure.

One case is enough, and it is not acceptable for us to continue to put people in pain by their not knowing their future. It is not good for mental health. It is not good for the workforce. It is not good for the families. All of those are reasons why we can do better.

That is where we are at. We cannot change the past right now. We cannot undo the damage that has been done. What we can do is bring in a fully accountable, credible process for families to be reunited that ensures safety for the public. Surely we can do that. We have to do better. COVID-19 may not be going away for a long period of time. We have direct testing now available. The time has come for us to change, for the government to change, and to reunite families.

• (1555)

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Windsor West is actually my neighbour. Our ridings butt up against each other, so I am very much aware and very much in his camp.

My office has received hundreds of these types of compassionate calls from, for example, cancer victims who cannot see their families and who have days to live, people who have to decide between seeing their loved ones and going to work, and snowbirds who are not quite sure where they are going to live because where they are living, their summer homes, are being closed down.

Would my hon. colleague agree with me that those reaching out to the Minister of Public Safety's office are getting contradictory information, and that, although the CBSA is doing a fantastic job, the people who go to the border are getting a different response than those who are going to the Minister of Public Safety?

• (1600)

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, that is an important question.

I met young woman named Shayla who had stepped forward. People really need to understand that we have been fighting for family reunification, and we brought this issue to the minister months ago. There were several letters, and I am not going to reference them all right now. What it took was me calling Shayla, who came forward in the public realm to discuss the issue her mother had. Her mother was passing away and not able to visit her grandparents, who were in quarantine in Windsor. It took her to coming

forward. That courage and that gift to other people was extraordinary.

The member is quite right, we can have family members who are literally kilometres apart from each other and they cannot be united. That is wrong.

The process has to change. Political direction is required right now, not putting it back to individual officers. We need a real system in place for people right now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am a bit curious. The Parti Québécois proposed an amendment to the throne speech. However, only the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie voted in favour of it. Like the NDP—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The Parti Québécois is not represented in Parliament.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, my apologies. This time, I will be more careful.

In Quebec, the NDP has the reputation of being a centralizing force. I would like to know why my colleague voted against the amendment proposed by the Bloc Québécois.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, the member will sort out where and who his party represents. His party actually voted for the Speech from the Throne last night, so this is hypocrisy. It is just dismissive.

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 listened to what the member was saying. He has a great deal of compassion for a good number of people, as I do. I have experienced first-hand how individuals have wanted to come over.

The compelling issue is to what degree does the member feel we need to continue to listen to the health experts and the civil service, which has done an outstanding job for all Canadians. Does the member believe that we should be overlooking some of the advice of health experts?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for asking this question because it is actually the theme of what the government is trying to do. It is trying to push this issue and say we are against public health because we want families to be reunited.

However, it is the exact opposite, and the parliamentary secretary knows that. His government knows that. The issues that we have brought forward are to protect people, protect the public and reunite families in an accountable way, even more so than what he and his government are allowing, which is for people to get in their car and drive all the way to Alaska, with no accountability.

Meanwhile, people from Michigan cannot visit a cancer patient in Windsor. They cannot go to the room where the cancer patient is dying, travelling door to door and separated from everything else. They cannot just get in their car and go to the spot where they can see their relative.

The parliamentary secretary really needs to get a good grasp of this issue, because he is part of the problem. They could work on this every single day. With immigration cases down, they have lots of public servants who could vet these cases and ensure public safety is number one while families are reunited.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very proud to be participating in this debate from a town in northern Ontario.

COVID-19 plunged Canada into the worst economic and medical crisis in a hundred years. The pandemic disrupted our economy and jeopardized the future of millions of workers. It is essential that Parliament show leadership in this crisis. We need to work together and invest the necessary funds to help our country get through the pandemic safely.

I am very proud to be participating in this debate today and to be discussing the situation in Parliament.

• (1605)

[*English*]

It is really crucial when we are talking about the Speech from the Throne and where we need to go that we frame our role in terms of us being in the worst medical and economic catastrophe in a century. I am on the phone all day with people who are really frightened, and I know that members of every party are as well. People are frightened by the rising numbers of COVID cases. People are still dealing with the catastrophe of long-term care homes, particularly in Ontario and Quebec, and worrying about their aged loved ones.

We need to be putting people front and centre, and we can do this. We can have a very spirited and at times confrontational Parliament, but the focus is to get the services out there and what the best ways to get them out there are. It is one of the reasons the New Democratic Party fought so hard to change the CERB, which the Liberal government was going to drop to \$1,600 a month. We said that would leave over a million Canadians, such as gig workers and contract workers, in a very precarious situation.

This has forced a discussion about the problems of an economic system that for years was dependent on keeping people in contract positions, part-time work and precarious positions in the gig economy. When COVID hit, two million people were not able to pay their rents within two weeks of the lockdown, and we have to change that. Our focus right now has to be getting people through the long winter ahead.

The Speech from the Throne reads like an NDP platform. It reads like everything the NDP has been running on for years. The problem is the Liberals always run on the NDP platform; they just never govern from it. I was a young man with little children when the Liberals started promising child care. I am glad they are promising it again, but will we see it? I am glad the Liberals are promising

The Address

pharmacare, but they have promised it in many forms and never delivered it.

However, this is a minority government. This is our opportunity to put forward negotiations to make things happen, and there is a will right now to move Canada forward to a new normal. It is going to take an enormous investment from the federal government to get this nation through.

I want to speak to two issues. One is very concerning, and one may be very positive for my region in the north. In the midst of the pandemic, we are dealing with the other great pandemic: the opioid crisis. It has been a disaster. I am talking to people in North Bay, Sudbury and Kirkland Lake about it.

Timmins has been hit very hard. Mixed in with the opioid crisis is the homelessness crisis, with upwards of sometimes over a thousand people who are homeless in the Timmins region, a community of 44,000. I congratulate our mayor George Pirie, the people who work at the DSSAB, the mental health workers, the police and those at Living Space in Timmins. They have done an amazing job trying to keep people safe and housed.

I have noticed that the Liberal government has quietly let many of the programs that could have helped die over the last year. A lot of the monies that should have been there for the opioid crisis are not there. There have been great promises for money for homelessness, but the money dried up very quickly. We are hearing positive language from the government, but when will that money be delivered? This winter is going to be a very hard winter in Canada, and I am very concerned about the opioid crisis and the homelessness crisis in our communities in northern Ontario. This is something that is non-partisan. Every single community in the country is facing this disastrous crisis.

We have to be ready to work together to get through this, but that means the Liberal government has to move on from positive words. They think if they say positive words, they get positive results, but that is not how it works. Positive words mean action. Action means we have to get the money out now to address the opioid and homelessness crisis.

I was very pleased to hear in the Speech from the Throne the commitment on electric cars. That is certainly something that will help manufacturing in southern Ontario. If we are going to talk about a green recovery through a sustainability lens, we have to be saying that, if we are going to put federal investment into these plants, the sources of the raw materials need to have a green lens too. The products that are mined have to have indigenous agreements and they need to move toward sustainability. That will give an enormous advantage to Canada, rather than taking nickel from Indonesia or going to the war zones of Congo for copper and cobalt. We need to say we are going to insist on an environmentally sustainable and indigenous positive resource policy to help manufacture electric vehicles.

The Address

We may have a massive new nickel mine in the Timmins region, and they have already come out front saying they want a whole environmental plan to get to zero emissions. We have the Borden mine in northern Ontario, which is working with zero emissions. They have removed the diesel machines from underground and are going completely electric.

In my community of Cobalt, we have the first cobalt refinery being set up. Cobalt is essential. There is no clean energy future without cobalt, but right now the majority of the world's sources are coming from Congo, which has a horrific record of human rights abuses, child labour and environmental degradation. This also puts us into a geopolitical war with China for who is going to control the cobalt resources and the future of the digital economy. We have an opportunity in Canada to turn that around and say we can do it in an environmentally sustainable way.

One of the things that has to come out of the pandemic is a real discussion about when and how are we actually going to start meeting our targets and meeting an environmentally sustainable future so that we are making investments and creating the jobs that are important here. This is something we need to be doing now, because the government is making the investments to get us through the pandemic, but this has to be for a long-term vision.

At the end of the day, our focus right now is about working people who have been completely upended by the crisis, including people I know who were in the gig economy and people who worked in the service sector.

I am very, very concerned about the rising numbers of COVID and going into new lockdowns. We see Quebec just moved into the red zone. If restaurants start to close, many of them will not reopen. That is the reality. We need to be addressing the potential economic catastrophe if we do not get the numbers in check.

For this, the federal government can play a huge role. This is why the NDP pushed for sick leave benefits, something that allows less protected workers to actually be able to take time off, so we can lessen the COVID numbers.

We did something historic this week in putting workers first and making those fundamental changes. I know we stayed up until three in the morning, but I want to say how proud I was that the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives supported the New Democratic Party's efforts and we voted unanimously.

We in the New Democratic Party will continue the tough negotiations to keep the focus on getting people through the pandemic, so people can look to the federal government and say that Canada is doing their part and not giving in to the kind of horrific political chaos we are seeing south of the border. We are also seeing this in other countries that are being plunged into much worse conditions. We need to stay focused at this time.

I thank the Liberals for stealing so many great new ideas from the New Democrats in the Speech from the Throne. I am going to make their lives a living hell, at times, to make sure they live up to those ideas. That is my job as a member in the honourable opposition, but I think we can come out of this Parliament with something better for Canadians and a reason to believe.

• (1610)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed and listened to my hon. colleague's remarks quite intently. Of course, he comes from a riding and a part of the country where the natural resource sector is extremely important. He referenced some of that in his speech. Coming from Kings—Hants here in Nova Scotia, I know that those natural resources are extremely important, whether it is agriculture or the forestry sector, and they are important to the Canadian economy.

Could the member speak to the section of the Speech from the Throne where our government put forward a vision of working with natural resource industries to get them competitive for a low-carbon economy? I have to assume that accords with his ideology and speaks to the constituents in his riding.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, what we really need to do is get serious about lowering emissions. I remember talking with Stéphane Dion in 2005. He talked about voluntary emissions standards and how those would get us to meet our Kyoto targets. Our emissions standards have jumped, even tripled and quadrupled, ever since then. We need real, clear commitments.

In terms of forestry, we have been hammered in the softwood lumber dispute by unfair American practices. These have not created more American jobs, they have created opportunities for our European competitors. Imagine that: the Netherlands is able to ship wood to the United States because we are being blocked from our natural markets.

I encourage the Liberal government to stand up for our industries, stand up for agriculture and make sure that the trade policies are not punitive, because we can compete. I think we can compete in a much more environmentally sustainable way. We are going to have to. That is the future. We have to be environmentally sustainable.

• (1615)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, my constituents were very disappointed and distraught about the usurpation of democracy with the order in council that the Prime Minister put forward to ban many handguns and guns across the country. They have repeatedly spoken to me about the issue. They say it is undemocratic, and they are also concerned about what the criteria are for banning firearms across the country. They see this as a property rights issue.

I wonder what the member's constituents have been telling him about the undemocratic use of an order in council to ban firearms.

The Address

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I come from a region with lots of guns. I am a registered gun owner myself. Very few people I know have AR-15s, or military assault weapons, but when I am asked about it, I say, “You know who came up with this idea about using cabinet to make decisions on gun policy? That was Stephen Harper.”

Stephen Harper came up with that scheme. I remember at the time thinking that it was going to come back to bite the Conservatives. When a Liberal government came in, it would not have to take this through Parliament. It would not need a vote.

If my Conservative colleague is upset about undemocratic measures with regard to gun owners and their AR-15s, or other military weapons, he should ask his colleagues why Stephen Harper thought it was such a bright idea to shift gun policy from the RCMP, which I think is in a better position to manage it than cabinet. That is a good question I think he could ask his colleagues.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I heard my colleague say that he has been waiting a long time for a day care system. If he were in Quebec, he would have had his wish, since Quebec is a leader in this area. Quebec also has a drug insurance plan that could have enhanced coverage if a federal program were implemented and Quebec had the right to opt out with full compensation.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the right to opt out with full compensation for these programs.

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

The NDP believes that it is essential that we support asymmetrical federalism, for example in the case of a day care system. Quebec is the model for the program. I like that. For the NDP, if Quebec has a program, the federal government should transfer the funds to support that program, but it is also essential that Quebec have jurisdiction over the program and that it implement its own plan based on its own objectives. It is that simple.

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (FedNor), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kitchener Centre today.

I am pleased to provide an address on the 150th Speech from the Throne today to MPs in the House of Commons, those participating virtually, the Canadian people and in particular my fantastic constituents watching in the great riding of Sault Ste. Marie. It is located in the centre of Canada at the heart of the Great Lakes, on the border of the United States, in the traditional territory of the Ojibwa people of Garden River and Batchawana, as well as of the Métis people.

I want to begin by recognizing and thanking our front-line and essential workers who are looking after our health and safety, putting food on our tables and making sure our economy's supply chains continue to operate. This includes my wife, Lisa, who is a health care worker, so thanks to my wife as well.

This is my first time to address the House virtually. I would also like to thank my staff who have been working with me around the clock, seven days a week, looking after the good people of the Soo during these unprecedented times. I also want to give a shout-out to all my family, friends and supporters who have been supporting me as I work to help Canadians. They are my rock. They are my everything.

To overcome the significant challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic poses for all of us, we need all levels of government, every sector of our economy and indeed every Canadian to act in solidarity and work together. We have been in lockstep in our fight against COVID-19 in the Soo since the beginning. The people of Sault Ste. Marie have been unwavering in their commitment to each other and looking out for their families, friends and neighbours. It has been an honour working with Mayor Provenzano and his council; Chief Sayers, Chief Rickard and their councils; MPs and MPPs from all parties and the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, local labour groups, and various private and public-sector businesses and organizations. #WeAreInThisTogether

I have been told that our health unit has some of the lowest numbers of COVID cases in Ontario, a testament to that mantra. I am confident that the vigilance and sacrifice of individuals and communities across Canada, coupled with the expertise and diligence of medical professionals working hard on a vaccine and caring for patients, will see Canada through this challenging time.

Our approach to beating this pandemic and the impacts it has had on our economy is centred on four pillars that were outlined recently in the Speech from the Throne. First, we are working to protect the health of Canadians, particularly the most vulnerable. To help protect seniors, we will work with parliamentarians on Criminal Code amendments to penalize those who neglect the seniors under their care. We are going to work with provinces and territories to set new national standards for long-term care so that seniors get the best support possible.

We are going to take additional actions to help people stay in their homes longer. We are also going to increase old age security, once a senior turns age 75, and boost the Canada pension plan survivor benefits. We are going to ensure, as well, that our health care system serves Canadians even better. We are going to ensure that everyone has access to a family doctor or a primary care team, expand capacity of delivery for virtual health care, continue to address the opioid epidemic and further increase access to mental health care.

The Address

We are going to accelerate to achieve national universal pharmaceutical through a rare disease strategy to help Canadian families save money on high-cost drugs, and establish a national formulary to keep drug prices low. Working with the provinces and territories, we will move forward without delay, bringing forward a new disability inclusion plan to help Canadians with disabilities gain access to programs and benefits. This plan is also going to be welcome. We are also building a plan to end chronic homelessness for good in Canada. As such, I was pleased to announce recently two affordable housing initiatives in the Soo, which repurpose two old schools.

Our second pillar basically says we have Canadians' backs. That expression seems to have been coined at the gates of Algoma Steel here in Sault Ste. Marie, when the Prime Minister was here speaking to steelworkers. We fought really hard against the two American tariffs on steel and aluminum, and won. That was our mantra: We have your back. Now it is a rallying cry for all workers in Canada during these unprecedented times.

I was pleased to see a commitment of creating one million jobs in the Speech from the Throne, and we will get there by using a number of tools in our economic toolbox. Extremely important tools in that box are the regional economic development agencies like FedNor, which I proudly serve as parliamentary secretary. From the get-go, our RDAs have been there for communities, businesses and organizations from coast to coast to coast.

• (1620)

We introduced the regional relief and recovery fund, an almost \$1 billion fund, to help those who need that extra help. In Northern Ontario that fund was split between FedNor and Community Futures development corporations, and I have been proud to announce a number of supports on behalf of the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (FedNor) that go hand in glove with the funding from the CFDCs. These are supporting communities, small businesses, tourism, agriculture, IT, indigenous, manufacturing and green initiatives all across Northern Ontario, from areas of Kenora, Thunder Bay, Elliot Lake, Sudbury, Timmins, North Bay, Parry Sound and, of course, Sault Ste. Marie.

We are going to create direct investments in the social sector and infrastructure, immediately train and skill up workers, and create incentives for employers to hire and retain workers. We are going to extend the Canada emergency wage subsidy through to next summer, so workers can remain on payrolls. We are going to create jobs for young Canadians by significantly scaling up the youth employment strategy. We are strengthening the middle class and will continue building long-term competitiveness with clean growth.

This is great news for Sault Ste. Marie, as when I was on city council I seconded a resolution declaring us the alternative energy capital of North America. That is why I was very pleased to see that we are launching a new fund to attract investments in making zero-emission products and cutting the corporate tax rate in half for those companies to create jobs and make Canada a world leader in clean technology.

We are immediately bringing forward a plan to exceed Canada's 2030 climate goals, and we are going to legislate Canada's goals of net-zero emissions by 2050. We are creating thousands of jobs

retrofitting homes and buildings, which cuts energy costs for Canadians, families and businesses. We are going to invest in reducing the impact of climate-related disasters like floods and wildfires to make communities safer and more resilient. We are helping deliver more transit and active transit options, and we are going to create a new Canada water agency to keep our water safe, clean and well managed and continue to grow Canada's ocean economy.

Finally, we will accomplish this while we advance gender equality, fight systemic racism and injustices, work toward reconciliation with indigenous people, protect the environment, welcome immigrants and uphold our two official languages.

In my riding we have been doing some really amazing things as we work toward reconciliation, in a nation-to-nation way, these past years. We worked with the survivors of the residential school at Algoma University to build the Anishinaabek Discovery Centre in support of taking back Shingwauk Hall, but more work is ahead of us and we are committed to that. I want to acknowledge the work that the African Caribbean Canadian Association of Northern Ontario is doing here in the Soo, along with its allies in fighting systemic racism.

To support the social and political gains that women and gender-diverse Canadians have fought so hard to secure, our government is creating an action plan for women in the economy, to help more women get back into the workforce. To ensure this plan is guided by a feminist, intersectional response, it will be led by a team of experts whose diverse voices will ensure that we build back our economy in a more inclusive way.

The pandemic has likewise brought to light the need for affordable child care. Parents are needing to work fewer hours or are quitting their jobs entirely to take care of their kids. That is a challenge. That is why we will be making a significant, long-term, sustained investment to create a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. We will also be subsidizing before- and after-school program costs to ensure no family is left behind.

The Address

Canada and the world continue to face the ongoing threat of this global pandemic. Throughout this challenging year, Canadians have proven to be resilient. Our country's success is because of its people. We are neighbours helping neighbours, small businesses supporting communities, armed forces protecting our most vulnerable and front-line workers keeping our families healthy and safe. From the very beginning, we have worked hard to keep everyone safe and healthy and ensured Canadians had the support they needed to get through this crisis. We immediately took action with historic programs like the CERB and Canada's emergency wage subsidy to help Canadians pay their bills and help businesses keep workers on the payroll.

We are also working with the provinces and territories to help Canadians, including by providing funding for communities, public transit, secure child care spaces and personal protective equipment. In this challenging time, we are there for Canadians, and as we look toward the future, we will continue to protect the health of Canadians and do what it takes to support Canadians through this crisis.

• (1625)

Together, we will work to build a Canada that is more resilient, healthier and safer, a Canada that is more fair and inclusive and one that is clean and competitive. We will do what it takes to protect—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry, but time is up.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Jonquière.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a quick question.

Yesterday, the hon. member for Malpeque said that Canadian taxpayers were not Quebec's ATM. That might raise eyebrows among those who know a thing or two about Canadian politics. I am thinking, for example, of the \$17 billion invested to purchase a pipeline and of the \$10 billion in subsidies to the automobile industry in 2008. When the forestry industry fell on hard times, it did not get support from the Canadian government. I am also thinking about the repeated cuts to health care, which weakened Quebec's health care system. In my opinion, the words of the member for Malpeque are a bit rich.

Does my colleague believe that Canadian taxpayers are indeed Quebec's ATM?

• (1630)

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Sheehan: Madam Speaker, I can say, first of all, that our hearts in Sault Ste. Marie are with the people of Quebec as the second wave of this pandemic is hitting various places in Canada, in particular, in Quebec and Ontario. We are going to be there to support all Canadians from coast to coast and we will continue to work with members to make sure that they are supported. The cost of inaction would be enormous.

Canada has done a significant job in supporting Canadians and, quite frankly, I think that we have done a better job than a lot of other countries because of the supports and the quick action that we have taken.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to remind my hon. colleague that he left out persons with disabilities, seniors, veterans and students. Many people have been left out. I also include failing to reach climate targets. I know the hon. member spoke about the Liberals' bold climate action plan, but I would remind the hon. member that their plan is not even consistent with commitments they made in the Paris accord. Young people, in particular, throughout the country, have heard the promises by the government and they have a very firm position that the current and future governments must meet climate targets.

Is the government willing to shift its plan, be honest and do what needs to be done to meet climate targets?

Mr. Terry Sheehan: Madam Speaker, I do not know if my microphone was working correctly, but I think many people heard me speak about the supports for seniors, people facing the challenge of homelessness and youth. There were a number of things in the Speech from the Throne that I touched on regarding people in very challenging situations who this pandemic has hit hard and that the supports we have made have been substantial.

As it relates to the environment, I touched on a number of initiatives that are going to help, including hitting the 2050 and 2030 goals that will achieve what we need to make a better future for not only our youth but everyone. I would ask the member to please review the tape and she will hear my points in depth.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have had the opportunity to tour Sault Ste. Marie a couple of times. It is on my way home and I have driven through it. One of the times I was there, I toured the tube facility in town, which I think employs over 1,000 people, and 85% of the product it produces ends up in Grand Prairie, Alberta.

One of things mentioned in the Speech from the Throne is that the government wants to phase out the oil patch. If its phases out the oil patch, 1,000 jobs will be lost in Sault Ste. Marie. Does the member support that initiative?

Mr. Terry Sheehan: Madam Speaker, I have supported Tenaris tubes and the hundreds of workers. I have worked with both the union and management. We invested \$16 million in Tenaris tubes to continue its good work and support it. I look forward to continuing to work with Tenaris. Fighting those American 232 tariffs absolutely helped the company 100%, so yes we are there for them.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my constituents for their faith and trust in me and their continual hard work in advancing our community. It is a great privilege for me to rise today and speak of our government's plan to build a stronger and more resilient Canada.

The Address

Over the course of this year, we have faced unprecedented new challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was only a little over six months ago that our new reality came crashing into our lives, and yet in that time Canadians have been able to radically retool our economy to help ensure that we can all continue to put food on the table and keep a roof over our heads while still staying safe from COVID-19.

We can all agree that the world today is drastically different than the one we lived in at the beginning of 2020. The ability of Canadians to not only clearly recognize the threat posed by COVID-19 but also take action at a grassroots level, to mobilize and face it head-on shows how adaptable Canadians are. Benjamin Franklin once said that out of adversity comes opportunity, and we will find that the throne speech embodies this sentiment.

While COVID-19 is the greatest challenge our generation has yet faced, it is not the greatest challenge we will face. Climate change is a threat that we have known about for decades. The scientific consensus is clear: We must keep global warming below 1.5 degrees if we are to avoid the worst effects of climate change, and to do that we must take bold action now. We must apply the same decisiveness and determination that we had in the face of a pandemic to climate change, and for that we need a big plan.

I am very pleased to say that our government has the plan today, and with the help of Canadians across this country we can implement it and build a brighter future for our children, where they no longer live with climate change casting a cloud over their futures. Through policies such as retrofitting homes and other buildings to be more energy-efficient and building new clean energy infrastructure, not only are we investing in protecting our environment, but we are investing in the economy of the future and creating well-paying, middle-class jobs for Canadians when they need them the most. By taking the same all-hands-on-deck approach to climate change that we took for dealing with the pandemic, we can meet our climate goals and build a more prosperous country.

Global markets are already recognizing the great opportunity created by climate action. Investors are abandoning fossil fuels in favour of renewables. Businesses and individuals are switching to electric vehicles and Canadians are reducing their energy cost by retrofitting their homes. The World Bank estimated that climate action will create \$30 trillion in new investment opportunities by 2030, and we will help Canadians take advantage of that market.

We are going to make zero-emissions vehicles more affordable for Canadians and invest in new charging infrastructure so that Canadians coast to coast to coast can reach their destination in electric cars. We do not want Canadians just using zero-emissions vehicles, we want to put them to work in building them here in Canada also. Here in Canada, we have the rich natural resources, like copper and nickel, that are needed for zero-emissions vehicles as well as a skilled workforce who can build them.

We are going to create a new fund to attract investment in this technology right here in Canada, and we are going to cut the corporate tax rate in half for those companies that create jobs building clean technology. With these supports, I know that Canada can become a global leader in clean technology, and we will ensure that

Canada is the most competitive country in the world for clean technology companies.

We know that this plan will work because it is already working. Recently, Ford announced that it is investing \$1.8 billion to produce new fully battery electric vehicles right here in Canada. Industry is recognizing that the future is green, and we are going to make sure that Canada is there, leading the world in this transition to a green economy.

Electric vehicles are important in decarbonizing our economy, but in order to truly maximize their potential, we need to ensure that the energy used to fill their batteries is generated from non-emitting and renewable sources. The energy sector will play a key part in our national effort to build a green economy, and the federal government will be there to support it.

Initiatives like the clean power fund will not only help increase our clean energy-generating capacity, but also build the infrastructure to get the energy from where it is produced to where it is consumed.

● (1635)

Projects like the Atlantic loop will be key in transporting clean electricity throughout the Atlantic region, and we want to be there to help them do it. Clean energy production is absolutely vital to building a prosperous and sustainable future. We will ensure that Canada is a world leader, not only building it here but exporting the technology around the world. Clean energy is essential for our future, but it alone will not be enough to meet our climate commitments and avert the worst effects of climate change.

During this pandemic, Canadians across the country have been reminded of the incredible value of the natural world. Whether they were exploring our rich forests and conservation areas or safely socializing with their friends in public parks, natural areas have provided a great deal of value to those who would otherwise have been stuck inside their homes.

More than just providing a venue for human enjoyment, our natural world is vital to maintaining the health of our planet. Biodiversity loss has been identified as one of the key contributors to the rise of new infectious diseases, like COVID-19. If we are to prevent another disease outbreak like this from happening in the future, it is imperative that we halt the alarming trend of biodiversity loss and extinctions that are rippling throughout Canada and the world.

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That is why we are committed to expanding our protected areas so that a quarter of our land mass and a quarter of our oceans are protected in the next five years. In addition to that, we need to make sure that the natural world is more accessible to Canadians. The federal government will work with municipalities to expand urban parks and create healthier cities where all Canadians will have access to the natural beauty Canada has to offer.

In doing this, we will be creating good jobs for Canadians while protecting and enhancing these natural areas, including the planting of two billion trees to sequester carbon and create healthy ecosystems. Tree planting alone is projected to create 3,000 new jobs, where Canadians can make a positive change in their environment every single day.

Creating new parks and expanding our urban forest will have concrete and tangible effects on the livability of our cities, but there is still much more that we can do to make them work for regular Canadians.

We will continue to make our investments in public transit projects, like the successful ION light rail in my riding of Kitchener Centre, and expand active transit infrastructure so more people could ride their bikes to work.

We will help Canadians retrofit their homes and businesses to be more energy efficient, to save on energy costs and to help slash the emissions that come from our built environment.

Every single Canadian in our country will have a part to play in our green transition, and every single Canadian will share in the opportunities it creates. Thirty trillion dollars' worth of opportunity is there, waiting to be earned. We want to ensure that Canadians are there to take advantage of it.

The COVID-19 crisis has already shown us that we have the capacity to turn adversity into opportunity, and now we will show the world that we can apply that same determination and resiliency to the greatest existential crisis of our generation, the threat of irreversible climate change.

As we strive against COVID-19 today, so, too, must we continue to fight for the next generation of Canadians. Rarely in history is a nation called to face a challenge of such immense proportions. Rarely in history is the resiliency and the courage of the people tested in a way that will determine our future. Yet, I know we are committed to meeting our destiny with grace, strength, determination and resolve.

We can and we will get through this together, and we shall lead the world. Our collective destiny depends on it.

• (1640)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, what I heard from the member in his speech when he talked about the environment was talk about businesses versus capturing emissions. I think what I heard from him is that he would agree that if a business can capture all its emissions, then we want to support that. We want to capture the emissions, and he would not support businesses that do not capture the emissions.

The member talked about the great technology that we have in Canada. In particular, he talked about technology such as carbon

capture and storage. I am interested to hear from the member on this, and whether in fact he could speak on behalf of his party. When there is an industry in carbon capture and storage, and it is there, and we have the President of Norway talking about how it needs to be advanced into European countries, and for the benefit of the world, would the member stand up here today and say that he would support moving towards carbon capture and storage, and the great benefits it provides?

• (1645)

Mr. Raj Saini: Madam Speaker, climate change is not a partisan issue, it is not a Canadian issue and it is not a North American issue. It is an issue facing the whole world. If Norway, the European Union or other countries, including the United States, have ideas and advantages, we can consider them.

The member talked about carbon sequestration. I can appreciate that, because in the United States right now there are tax benefits for companies that capture carbon for sequestration. In working together, I think this is something we should look at. However, no technology should be left behind, because this is not a partisan issue. This is an issue that the entire world is facing.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Kitchener Centre. We all really appreciated his speech. The only problem is that the government does not seem to be walking the talk. I would like to get his opinion. He spoke with great pride about the environment, which is very important to the Bloc Québécois as well.

First, how is it that the government promised to plant two billion trees but did not plant a single one?

Second, does he feel bad at all about interfering in jurisdictions that fall exclusively to the provinces? I will not list every little thing, but some examples would be family doctors, day care services and urban parks.

[English]

Mr. Raj Saini: Madam Speaker, over the last six months, the government has concentrated on fighting this pandemic and supporting Canadians and businesses. However, this pandemic has revealed a certain fragility in society and, more importantly, some of the weaknesses we have. Right now, it is very important and very clear that as the world moves forward, as we build back better and look at what is happening in Germany and the European Union, we recognize that the environment has to be the centre point and hallmark of how we build that back together.

I appreciate the hon. member's comments on the environment. It is very important, and I hope that he will work with us to make sure that we reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to hear my hon. colleague say that climate change is a non-partisan issue, because it should be.

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I can tell him that the people in my riding of Vancouver Kingsway, particularly young people, are deeply concerned about the future of our planet. In fact, I would say that the climate crisis is probably the most foundational, existential issue facing them and their future. I therefore think it behooves all of us, particularly the government, to make it the number one issue we are facing. After all, if we do not have a healthy planet, it is hard to imagine how we can have a functioning society.

The member mentioned the planting of trees. Last fall, the Liberals promised to plant two billion trees and, of course, we all know today that they have not planted any. The NDP Government of British Columbia, just this year alone since the spring, managed to plant 300 million trees.

I am just wondering if the member could explain to the House and Canadians how it is a provincial government can plant 300 million trees and his government cannot meet the commitment it made to plant two billion trees. What went wrong?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, right now we are dealing with one of the most unprecedented challenges that has ever faced the world or Canada. I appreciate the hon. member's comments on the environment, and I can assure him that we will look for his support to make sure that we implement our environmental agenda.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise on behalf of the good people of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola. I plan on sharing my time with the member for Edmonton Centre.

Before I begin my comments today, I note that why we are here absolutely cannot be overlooked. At a time when regular Parliament was already adjourned, the Prime Minister wanted to shut down the few parliamentary committees that were meeting. Why did he want to shut them down? It was because the committees heard evidence that clearly did not reconcile with things the Prime Minister and one of his ministers had told Canadians. The cover-up on this continues, which is truly shameful, and here we are with what I view as an absolute embarrassment of a throne speech. However, before I get to that point, let me preface my comments by mentioning what troubles me so greatly about the Prime Minister.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

He has no moral qualms about looking Canadians in the eye and making promises he has no intention of keeping. The Prime Minister is prepared to promise almost anything he thinks young people want to hear. He does not appear to care about making all kinds of empty promises to Canadians.

How can we forget his promise to not prorogue Parliament or introduce omnibus budget bills?

[*English*]

I could spend my entire speech listing the many broken promises of the Prime Minister. Sadly, he repackages a Liberal Party greatest hits list of broken promises and recycles them, again and again, into his throne speeches. To me, that is wrong on every level, and I would like to think that it is non-partisan to be so greatly troubled

by a leader who has no regard for the value of his word to Canadians.

Let me provide a small example. In my riding, along with many others in Canada, we are potentially losing our automated 24-hour VHF radio weather warning service. Let us forget that the Prime Minister boasts that now is not the time for austerity as he looks to cut these services to Canadians. The justification for this proposed cut is that we can get the same information from our smart phones. That might make sense, or at least it is an argument, but unfortunately there is a problem. In my riding, there are still rural communities and recreational areas with no wireless service whatsoever. It is insulting to them to learn of this news, because these rural communities in many cases are the ones that most depend on the VHF weather service because they do not have wireless service. This is despite the fact that for five years now the Prime Minister has been promising to deliver wireless connectivity to rural areas.

In fact, in this throne speech, this always-broken promise is recycled: "The Government will accelerate the connectivity timelines and ambitions of the Universal Broadband Fund to ensure that all Canadians, no matter where they live, have access to high-speed internet." It has been the same failed promise for over five years. Nothing happens. Very few faces change in the Prime Minister's tired cabinet of underperformers. What about the promise to cut cellphone bills by 25%? That did not even make it into the throne speech.

[*Translation*]

It is hard to believe that yet another promise to Canadians was not kept. This brings me to another important criticism of the throne speech.

The members who were in the House in previous Parliaments know that, at the end of the day, there is a limited number of bills that can be passed. That is a reality that all governments have had to accept.

Instead of setting a realistic agenda, the government included other promises in the throne speech that it knows full well it cannot keep.

[*English*]

In other words, the throne speech is intentionally drafted in such a way that it has an element of failure built right into it. It is not unlike being at the restaurant Tucker's Marketplace here in Ottawa and loading up a plate with every food choice possible knowing full well there will be more food on the plate than anyone could ever possibly eat. What happens to a person in this scenario? We all know a person who does this. They focus on things that appeal most to them and others will be left behind. In other words, they prioritize what is most important. This is perhaps the greatest failure of the throne speech, because if everything is a priority, nothing is a priority at all, in effect. I am reminded of the classic Liberal leader candidate debate and the words of Stéphane Dion, who famously said, "Do you think it's easy to set priorities?"

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

The throne speech really took a page from Stéphane Dion's play book, as it really did not target any specific priorities. What we got instead was a real buzzword salad, including the Prime Minister's new favourite expression: build back better. What does that really mean?

Austerity is another popular word at the moment. I do not think it means what the Prime Minister claims it means. The problem with this style of throne speech is that it inevitably leads to broken promises. It has only increased cynicism about Canadian politics. Let us not forget that cynicism used to be something the Prime Minister also claimed to care about.

[*English*]

After all, it was the Prime Minister who said, “Canadians are tired of the cynicism and mistrust that has characterized federal politics for far too long.” Of course, that was back in 2015. Flash forward to today, and now he drafts throne speeches that he knows full well his legislative agenda cannot and will not accomplish. Why do it? In this case, we know that cover had to be provided for the WE scheme.

[*Translation*]

Let us step back for a moment. No one made the Prime Minister promise that he would not prorogue Parliament. No one made him promise not to use omnibus budget bills. The Prime Minister decided on his own to make those promises. This brings to mind his throne speech. The Prime Minister could have written a Speech from the Throne that identified his government's priorities, and those priorities could have been realistically tailored to legislative agendas.

[*English*]

Instead we get an exceptionally long hodgepodge of “liberology” with no clear priorities. What happened to better is always possible? Why does this throne speech give us so many of the same promises and buzzwords? Canadians need a bold and new vision.

[*Translation*]

We needed new ideas and clear direction on what will be actually accomplished. Even more importantly, we need to know how it will be accomplished. Perhaps these expectations are too high for a throne speech. The Speech from the Throne is considered to be of great importance, but the Prime Minister broke his promise to not prorogue Parliament. The Prime Minister set those high expectations himself.

[*English*]

Although I understand that not everyone can publicly agree, I suspect we all know that this throne speech was a failure. It is just a cover for the WE scandal.

I have one other point to make before I close. There is something in the throne speech that I do agree with, as I like to close on a positive. It is a comment from the throne speech: “Canada has the resources—from nickel to copper—needed for these clean technolo-

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gies. This—combined with Canadian expertise—is Canada's competitive edge.” On this point, I agree.

[*Translation*]

It is a refreshing change to see the Liberal government recognize the importance of mining and the natural resources sector to the Canadian economy. How can that truly play a role in the development of new technologies to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change?

I have one more point to raise.

[*English*]

Where exactly do the Liberals want to see these mines located? More often than not, when a resource project is proposed, the usual opponents come out in opposition, and all too often the Liberal government sits in silence and looks the other way. That is not leadership.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Before we move to questions and comments, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Fredericton, Fisheries and Oceans.

• (1700)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at the very beginning of his speech, the hon. member contended that he was facing a smorgasbord of priorities, yet I read only four: to fight the pandemic, to support people in business, to build back better and to stand up for who we are.

Does the hon. member not believe that this is a healthy meal, as opposed to an all-you-can-eat buffet?

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, the member just described in 30 seconds what took 55 minutes and 17 pages. What I said here is true. This is where the government piled up ideas from Liberals past, Liberals present and Liberals future.

There is only so much time in a minority government. The Liberals have many of the same people around the cabinet table. They could not get it done in the last Parliament with a majority, so how will they get all these things done this time in a minority government? I do not know.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his French, which is very good.

He talked about transportation electrification and the development of green technology. He is right that this is an important avenue for the future. My riding includes part of the port of Montreal, where about 2,500 trucks drive around emitting lots of greenhouse gas and noise. We came up with a proposal for electric trucks. There is a lot of new technology in that field, and electric heavy-duty trucks are now in production.

The Address

The government has incentives for electric cars. Can it offer incentives for electric trucks? Quebec is already doing it. That would enable the Port of Montreal and other businesses to choose clean trucks.

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, there are two copper mines in my area and I support what they do. They do it with excellence and they also bring money into Canada that would not normally be here with respect to investment and ongoing resource development. That is really important.

Before we talk about extending certain tax treatment, the same that is being done right now with electric vehicles, the government said that for three years, \$100 million a year would go toward subsidizing companies that switched to electric cars. First, we do not have a business case. The Liberals have spent 80% of that budget in one year. We know the adoption of it is up, but are we taking vehicles off the road or are we giving wealthy Canadian families a third or fourth vehicle to trot around in, while still having other cars burning other sources of fuel? Is there a valid business case? Are we seeing people removing a combustion engine from the road and going to an electric vehicle? We should not just be subsidizing rich people.

We could go toward a lot of priorities, but any recovery effort we make should be as broad as possible and we should always remember it is the taxpayers who want to see good value for money. We should not just jump to the next stage without considering if we are doing well with the programs we already have.

[Translation]

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

After the throne speech, the first piece of legislation that we examined and voted on was the former Bill C-2, which was amended following negotiations with the NDP. Our party was able to improve two things, namely the Canada recovery benefit, which we increased from \$400 to \$500, and sick leave.

My Conservative colleague voted in favour of a Liberal bill that was improved by the NDP. When did he see the light?

• (1705)

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, the member probably did not have the opportunity to hear my speech when we debated that bill.

The Conservative Party will not stand in the way of Canadians who need the benefits. However, with all due respect to this place, we come here to represent our constituents and when the government prorogues Parliament, it denies its own members and ours, whether it be the Bloc, the NDP, or Conservative, the ability to represent our constituents. We had a scheduled sitting on August 22 when we could have debated this. There are a number of things in that bill—

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

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am proud to stand again in the House and represent the

great citizens of Edmonton Centre. I am also proud that our leader has given me a new portfolio, which is the shadow minister for innovation, science and industry. I am excited to be part of that and to be part of what will be a future government.

It has been a great honour to serve for the past eight months, particularly to represent small businesses, and advocate for better policies to help those small businesses. I and my colleagues have made numerous recommendations to the Liberals. Some they listened to and some they did not. I do appreciate the ones that the government did listen to, because these small businesses certainly needed our help during these challenging times.

Small businesses are unique, but when the economy was shut down, only essential businesses were allowed to stay open. It is an interesting term, “essential businesses”, because every small business out there feels like it is essential. These people their blood, sweat and tears into their businesses. To tell them that they are not essential is painful. The very least we can do is try to support them and try to ensure they have a fighting chance to succeed.

Unfortunately, the good work that we were doing at committee, particularly at the finance committee, was put to a stop. We started to make some progress on a variety of issues. Then we uncovered that the way the government was sending out some of these programs, like the WE program, was full of issues. Unfortunately, that resulted in Parliament being prorogued, which is really damning.

As a member of Parliament, I understand that we will have to adapt and change and that obstacles will get in our way in doing this job. COVID-19 is, without a doubt, the most significant issue that a generation will see. It is very important that we craft policies to get us through this. Unfortunately, a lot of the policies we have seen may have helped, but in many areas they have not helped.

The government took six weeks, took a little time out to try to craft a new Speech from the Throne. Unfortunately, it is more like recycled messages. There is a lot to unpack from the Liberal Speech from the Throne, after the Liberals took their hiatus, and I want to highlight a few of the topics they covered.

Finally, the Liberals start to talk about health and testing, and rapid testing. We have had six months to get this right and they are still talking about it. Just in the last couple of days, it looks like we might be making some small progress.

There is this wild assertion that somehow when the government takes on debt, it is not the debt of the people. It is an amazing comment to make. That debt belongs to the people. There is only one taxpayer. Also, they say “one million jobs”. Frankly, if the government could just get out of the way, get these businesses back operating, they will produce the jobs. Government does not produce the jobs; the private sector produces them.

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However, the expansion of the CEBA really raises my hair. The government is going to expand something that it has not even fixed. We have been asking the government for months and months to fix the program and allow small businesses that use a personal account to have access to the program. Get it fixed and get it right.

Despite all these promises and all the things the Liberals said they were going to do, we would think we would have outstanding performance. Lo and behold, we pretty much have the highest spending among the G7 countries and the highest unemployment. How does that correlate to good programs? That tells me that other countries have got it better than us and we need to adjust. We need to stop the buzzwords, platitudes and get the programs that actually get the job done.

What this speech felt like for me was something like the first speech I heard in this place. I had used the term a “big old nothing burger”. To me, Throne speech two may have improved the recipe a little, maybe added a bit of meat or even a tomato, but, no. What we got was a recycled, stale-bread, list of old promises and the Liberals branded it under “A Stronger and More Resilient Canada”.

• (1710)

There has been a lot of spending, a lot of talk on spending, but very little about how we will create the revenue to get us out of this mess. The throne speech made no mention on how we would increase exports and market share. There was virtually no mention of the energy and resource sector, which has been a driver of economic growth for the country.

Nothing spoke about the western alienation that is currently happening, particularly in my great province. We have yet to see a budget from the government. When I came here, I expected that would be the first thing we would see from the government, a budget and a road map toward recovery, and we have seen neither.

I could ramble on about a whole handful of promises that are made in the throne speech, but I want to focus on a couple of things, particularly something the Liberals have been claiming they have been rapidly accelerating for five years now.

Since 2015, apparently the top Liberal priority has been to connect incredibly patient Canadians with high-speed broadband, both in urban and rural areas. This fever pitch for connectivity has only been exacerbated because of COVID-19. Students, teachers, small business people, all kinds of folks have needed the Internet to carry on in their daily lives.

What do we have? In 2016, we had the \$500-million connect to innovate program; the CRTC's \$750-million broadband fund; accelerated investment in 2018; and another announcement today. There are a lot of announcements for money, but little in announcements for actual action. In fact, the minister today said that soon people would have better connectivity. We need to get this right.

There is the 5G program and the delay of the spectrum auction. Those things have been held up, and we are not getting the results we need. There are innovative solutions out there. There is the potential for new providers to come into this marketplace and provide some solutions. All they need is for the government to get out of the way, give some approvals and ensure it happens.

What I heard in the Speech from the Throne was not a story about how we can grow again, not a story about how we can get the economy going, not a story about how we are going to create new jobs, not growing Canada and not growing our economy. That is why I will be voting no. There is no vision. It is a bunch of recycled promises.

I do have confidence, though, in the human spirit and the ability of businesses and the private sector to grow. I do have confidence that they can overcome the challenges that we have today. We have great innovators and great businesses. They can do it if we let them do their jobs.

Unfortunately, Canada fell out of the top 10 ranking of the world's most competitive economies and Canada has fallen nearly to the bottom of its peer group on innovation, ranking 13 out of 16 peer countries by The Conference Board of Canada. Global Innovation Index ranks Canada 16th out of 20 countries. This is not acceptable. This is a country that should lead, not follow, and it is unfortunate we have not had the policies to get this done.

Therefore, it is time to get busy. It is time to get off the platitudes. It is time to talk about policies that will unleash the private sector by reducing regulation, encouraging investment and allowing Canada to be competitive again. We have a great country that has incredible potential. We have great people who want to succeed and I want them to succeed, but we need policies that support this. Unfortunately, the government is on a trail that does anything but that.

Let us get busy, let us make our country go again and let us get it right.

• (1715)

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to go specifically to the member's recommendations and comments on rural Internet. As he will surely recall, I brought forward Motion No. 208 in the last session, which was agreed to unanimously by the House. I want to ask one specific question about rural Internet because it bears mentioning.

The Address

Prior to Liberals being elected in 2015, not a single private residence in rural Canada was hooked up to Internet, thanks to investments by the federal government. Why? Because the previous Conservative government did not invest a red cent in doing that. Therefore, we find ourselves in a very deep hole in Canada, in part because the previous administration, led by Prime Minister Harper, did absolutely nothing, except to hook up libraries, hotels and fire halls. Therefore, we needed to go a lot further.

What does the member opposite have to say about the past performance of the Harper administration in hooking up rural Canadians to the Internet?

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Speaker, I hear this constantly in this place. The member can refer back to five or 10 years ago. That is not the solution to the problem. Pointing fingers back to some other time is not the solution. We have the opportunity to move now. From my speech, the member across is fully aware that the Liberals have had six years. There is lots of capital. They have put money into it, but the money is not going to work.

There are innovators out there who want to be able to participate. I mentioned in a question today that Starlink is interested in coming into the Canadian marketplace. What does it need? It needs its licences approved. It has not asked for a dime. Let us get it done.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, Canada is currently in the midst of the worst health crisis the world has ever seen.

Various Conservative governments cut the indexation of health transfers to 3%, which means that, in a few years, the federal government will be providing only 18 cents for every dollar. The provinces and Quebec have formed a united front and are asking the federal government to make up for lost ground by providing \$28 billion, which means that the provinces would be receiving 35 cents for every dollar spent on health care instead of 18 cents. We need to go back to a 6% escalator.

In question period, the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord said that his party was in favour of stable, predictable transfers. However, they were stable and predictable at 3%.

I want to know what his party thinks about the united front presented by Quebec and the provinces. Does his party agree with it?

[*English*]

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Speaker, certainly we believe in stable funding. Provinces have to understand what the funding looks like for health care. Unfortunately, with the Liberal government, it is up and down and we never know where it is going to go. We are not in government. It is not our decision to make, but I can assure the member across that our leader has suggested there will be stable funding for health care.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I have a question about the amendment we are voting on this evening that was put forward by the Conservative Party, specifically the new policy toward China and what we are going to do about the Canada-China FIPA. This is no ordinary FIPA, like many of the FIPAs we have signed with other countries. Instead of a one-year

get-out clause, there are 31 years for state-owned corporations to be invested in this country.

This idea of investing in the oil sands, building pipelines and being able to rip and ship raw resources out of this country, and to then have state-owned corporations be able to challenge any blocking of that by making Canadians pay, tooth and nail, billions of dollars in compensation, was brought forward in an order in council by the Harper cabinet. We cannot block Huawei on national security grounds based on the Canada-China FIPA, so I am wondering, with this new policy that we are thinking about, how we are going to deal with this incredibly anti-democratic and lopsided agreement the Harper government has locked this country into.

• (1720)

Mr. James Cumming: Certainly you have heard from our leader that we understand—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the member to speak through the Chair.

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Speaker, our leader has been quite clear that Communist China and the tactics it is using are unacceptable. A Conservative government would stand up to those countries, particularly Communist China, and stand up to the actions that—

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

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

I rise today in the House; that is how I intended to open my statement. I thought about changing that phrase because I am saying these words from my riding here in Kitchener—Conestoga, but I do say them because I am in the House of Commons. Due to the work and co-operation of all parties, I am pleased that the House of Commons has unanimous support for hybrid sittings and voting in Parliament. For my constituents, that means that whether I am working for them and casting votes in Ottawa or from Kitchener—Conestoga, I hope they know their voices have been and continue to be represented.

I assure constituents that protecting the health and safety of Canadians, their jobs and our economy is my top priority. I value their ideas and I look forward to the conversations we will have and to being there for my constituents. I am honoured to continue our dialogue. It is one of the things that motivates me to work hard for everyone.

The Address

Co-operation from all parties and all levels of government is what Canadians expect of their elected officials. It is certainly what I endeavour to work toward because co-operation and collaboration will help us get through these times. I understand that once debates start there will be disagreements and that is what debate is about. That is healthy for our discussions. However, I implore all members here and elected officials of all levels of government, as Canadians, let us strive to talk to each other instead of yelling past each other.

I want to thank all the front-line and essential workers who work hard to keep us safe. I was humbled to meet many as my staff and I enacted a “feeding the front lines” initiative in our riding, delivering food and expressing thanks to our first responders. I want to thank all nurses, health care workers and front-line staff, and let them know that we are grateful for their hard work and the tireless sacrifices they have made. They are keeping our community safe and they are appreciated.

Usually, we would be attending events, fairs, festivals and other gatherings. It has always been a meaningful way for us to be a part of our communities. However, now gatherings are different. I am finding new ways to stay engaged with the people of Kitchener—Conestoga. I attend virtual and socially distanced events. I enjoy checking up and socializing with seniors online through conversations and music.

Whether it is stopping in and checking up on neighbourhood stores or visiting and supporting local farmers and vendors at our markets, these occasions have demonstrated to me the resilience of our community. I will continue to support our local businesses through visits, phone calls and video chats to make sure they have access to the economic recovery plans they need.

To keep our community informed and to address questions and hear from constituents, since March, I have been hosting virtual town hall meetings. We just had our 17th virtual town hall a few nights ago. It has been an important way for me to keep connected with our community. I have hosted town halls with our regional chair, all the mayors in Kitchener—Conestoga, our police chief and more. Topics have included a virtual Eid, discussions with members from our LGBTQ+ community, a family violence panel, and racism and diversity conversations with our Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth.

It is conversations like those and the one-on-one chats with neighbours in our communities that allow me the privilege of taking the ideas I hear in Kitchener—Conestoga and bringing them to Ottawa. Our government listened to those ideas shared by me and by many others from across Canada. Our ideas were brought forward last week in the Speech from the Throne as we laid out our government's plans to help Canadians. As we fight this pandemic, we will continue to support people and businesses.

My riding of Kitchener—Conestoga is full of talented artists, creators and those working in our cultural industries. They are the major drivers of our economy and add greatly to our society and our lives. In Canada, we recognize that the cultural sector is a force for developing our communities and our identity. It was our artists that we turned to for connection during our isolation. The music we

listened to, the books we read and the shows we watched all helped us feel connected.

Organizations and workers in the arts, culture and sports sectors were among the hardest hit. Cancellations, closures and uncertainty still exist. I am proud to say that our government has been there from the beginning for our artists and we will continue to be there for them. Programs like the wage subsidy, Canada emergency response benefit and now the Canada recovery benefit will continue to be there for our artists, just like they are there for us.

Conversations in support of equality and inclusion are essential as well, especially at a time when we are challenged by a global pandemic and heightened injustices. Diversity and inclusion are the building blocks of Canadian identity and a source of social and economic strength. As we celebrate progress, we must also commit to the work that still needs to be done. Discrimination still exists, and as long as it does, we must always stand up and speak up.

• (1725)

In my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga, I have heard from concerned citizens and community leaders who shared their emotional stories and are turning to our government to lead the way to a more inclusive society. Racism and discrimination can be difficult to discuss and will be even more difficult to overcome, but we must have these conversations. We cannot remain silent. We must take action and do what is necessary, even when it is difficult. That is what Canadians do. Now is the time to seize these opportunities and work to fix these inequalities.

We need to continue to provide more support to women and we need to work to close the gender wage gap, providing equal pay for work of equal value. Pay equity is not just the right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do because when people are treated fairly and given an equal opportunity to succeed, we all win.

We need to continue to support our youth, a generation who wants to be able to create positive change for themselves, their country and their world. They are the leaders of tomorrow and they are the leaders of today. At this time, I want to give a shout-out to the Kitchener-Conestoga Youth Council and thank them for their energy and constant inspiration.

We need to continue to take every action we can with financial, social and health support for our seniors. We must also continue to work tirelessly on reconciliation with indigenous peoples. We will keep supporting our farmers and food producers, who are essential in providing us with quality, affordable food in stores and on kitchen tables. In Kitchener—Conestoga, we have a proud heritage of a very vibrant agriculture and agri-food industry. We know the agriculture sector has been hard hit by COVID-19, and we have taken steps to provide support.

The Address

We have an opportunity to accelerate the work needed to protect our environment. I look forward to working together and to meeting those challenges to make a difference, because what is good for the environment can also be good for our economy.

Canada is communities supporting communities and neighbours helping neighbours, and in that spirit, we open up our hearts to others. I have seen first-hand the resilience of our communities as we persevere. Local thrift stores in my riding are full of donations and food banks are receiving support from individuals and families, including produce donated from our local farmers. Local businesses are volunteering to make masks and hand sanitizer to support front-line workers and local care homes. These are just a few of the countless stories that continue to inspire me.

Simple acts of kindness, from children writing encouraging words in sidewalk chalk to neighbours helping to support each other, are all woven into the fabric of what it means to be compassionate and what it means to be Canadian. That is the message that keeps me going and humbles me as I serve my community of Kitchener—Conestoga and serve my country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the intervenor mentioned small business and, in particular, farmers and food producers. We know there are still a lot of gaps within the existing programs, especially for farmers and food producers. The way a lot of the programs are structured make them not applicable. In the throne speech, under small business, is a list of existing programs with no further details on how they might be expanded and no listing of any new programs.

I am wondering if the member can elaborate on what it looks like for small business, agriculture and food producers, with new programs or expanding existing programs.

• (1730)

Mr. Tim Louis: Madam Speaker, I am proud to say that when I first came to Ottawa I was asked which committees I wanted to sit on, and I asked to sit on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food to represent my constituents of Kitchener—Conestoga, which has a large agriculture sector. I was given the honour to sit on that committee.

I have to say that there has been amazing co-operation across party lines. It seems that everyone realizes that after the health of our population, protecting our food security and food supply is important. The agriculture sector is really the backbone of our community. I am proud to say we are working together. We are working on improving the business risk management programs. We are also working on processing. There is a processing plant in my riding, and we are making sure products can safely get to markets as well.

We have invested more in AgriRecovery, given money to food banks and given money to the nutrition north program. A lot of the programs, like CERB, the wage subsidy program and the emergency business account, also apply to our smaller farmers, so I was happy they were able to take advantage of those programs. More work needs to be done and we will be there to continue to support our agriculture sector, which feeds us.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Liberals have talked a lot about health. We also know that Quebec and all the provinces are calling for health transfers right now as we go through the COVID-19 crisis.

It is incredible to think that the federal government used to fund 50% of health costs. After many cuts, it now funds no more than 22%.

How can my colleague justify the decision not to increase health transfers and instead use that money to interfere in Quebec's jurisdiction?

[English]

Mr. Tim Louis: Mr. Speaker, that was the first question I have ever received in French, so I was trying to listen to the translation as well because I just started taking French lessons. I would not be able to answer in French, but, thankfully, an interpreter is going to help.

When I speak to Canadians in my riding, as I am sure the member speaks to Canadians in his, I hear that we need to work together. All levels of government need to work together and I know that the federal government has met with premiers 17 or 18 times. There is that level of co-operation. People on the ground just care about their health, their safety, their jobs and the economy. They want to make sure that all levels of government are working together, federal, provincial and municipal, and working well.

I know through the safe restart agreement we have injected \$19 billion to support the provinces right away. I know we will continue to have those dialogues on how we can make sure provinces have all the resources they need to play their part and keep Canadians safe.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have heard from my constituents how important the programs were that we rolled out to keep them safe and provide funding to them as they faced unemployment. I wonder if the member can speak to how his constituents benefited from the programs that we have rolled out since March.

Mr. Tim Louis: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her advocacy.

The Address

I would like to speak about the arts community because until the election in 2019 I was a full-time musician and a self-employed artist. Most of my friends still are in that arts sector and there are people who are affected, including members of the Stratford Symphony Orchestra, the Drayton theatre and the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. All of these groups wanted to get back to work and they needed support right away. So many of them were self-employed and just trying to make a difference.

The wage subsidy and the CERB were two lifelines to help the artists I know, who just wanted to get back to work and contribute to society. They are very appreciative to have that specific support, so I hope we can continue to support those industries: the arts, hospitality and the tourism industry, which is particularly hard hit.

• (1735)

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 must compliment the member for Kitchener—Conestoga, I am quite impressed with everything he has said. Just listening to him provide his reply to the throne speech, we can tell he has the pulse of his community that he represents and is a very strong advocate.

What comes to my mind right away in listening to my colleague is one of the things that Prime Minister requests of the caucus. I suspect other parties have their own ways of trying to provide input to their leadership. However, in our caucus there is this feeling that when we listen to what our constituents say and we take that information and share amongst our colleagues, in particular ensuring that it gets up to those individuals who are making the changes, developing the programs, we can really have a positive impact on what is taking place today.

I really appreciate the comments from the member. Like many of my caucus colleagues, I know there has been a number of virtual town halls conducted, along with reaching out into the communities, listening to what business has to say, and being there for our constituents day in and day out.

For members of Parliament, it is not a Monday to Friday, nine-to-five type of job. It is a seven days a week job. As we witnessed just the other day, sometimes it can be fairly late, even going into the next morning, and it is not just for votes. We listen to our constituents and try to serve them in the best ways we can.

COVID-19 has in fact changed things. For me, personally, for 30 years I have been going to a local restaurant on a weekly basis to meet with constituents. It is something I am known for within my riding. I cannot do that anymore. In the last few weeks, I have not been able to go there because I want to promote being safe, and I want to provide for physical distancing. I lose that aspect.

However, through this process, I have learned something else. It is called Zoom, these video conferences that have been taking place. Now I will often meet with constituents through videoconferencing. We have videoconferencing, we use our telephones more, and so on. Offices might be taking appointments as opposed to having walk-in traffic. Things have changed. We have all had to adjust.

Some industries, some businesses have been more challenged than other businesses and industries.

The impact on Canadian society has been significant, as it has been around the world. A year ago at this time no one was talking about COVID-19. We were in the midst of an election. There was not one word about a pandemic. How quickly things have changed. When we stop and think about it, and I have referenced this in the past, it came down to the government working and doing its consultations, making the decisions to shut things down. From virtually nothing, dozens of programs were developed in order to support Canadians.

Imagine being in an industry where the shutdown of the Canadian economy to the degree in which it was shut down meant becoming unemployed, or being an individual who was already finding it difficult to meet their needs, and looking forward, eight months ago, to the pandemic. We were talking about a first wave. Some countries in the world did not avoid the curve. Their numbers went up fast, in days and weeks.

Working with our partners in provinces and territories, municipalities, endless non-profit organizations out there, as well as private individuals getting engaged in fighting COVID-19, we were able to stay under the curve and that was supported in many different ways.

• (1740)

At the national level, we developed programs like CERB, which helped just under nine million Canadians in every region of our country. We provided support to businesses by coming up with a program for wage subsidies, so those employees would not lose their jobs; they would be able to continue on. It helped tens of thousands of employees across this country, literally saving businesses from going bankrupt. We identified specific areas where we needed to provide additional support.

Today is National Seniors Day. It is a great day to recognize and share some love with a senior. That is a group that we recognized when we gave the top-up, for everyone on OAS, of \$300, and for the poorest of our seniors, we added another \$200 to it.

As I say, it is one of many different programs that were developed. The federal government has played a very strong role in this pandemic. In fact, if members take a look at my province of Manitoba, I suspect what they will find is that 90% of the actual dollars of support come from Ottawa, with the balance coming in from the province. We have recognized just how important health is to Canadians. We have committed literally hundreds of millions of dollars in just the province of Manitoba, to provide that additional support.

The Address

When it came time to say to Canada that we needed to shut things down and get control over what was taking place, Canadians responded in a very positive fashion. It was really encouraging. We are in the second wave. We are now in a better position for the second wave as a direct result of the many actions that were taken months ago. Because the education curve that is required is nowhere near as steep, we know the types of things that are important to do. We have learned from some of the science that has come forward since the beginning. At the very beginning, health experts were not saying that we had to wear masks, but today we know health experts are saying we do have to wear masks. That has helped us through the second wave.

We know how important testing is, and that is why we came out with the \$19-billion safe restart program with the provinces. Members can imagine a national government working with all the different provinces and territories and developing a \$19-billion program that enabled us to work together to make sure that we are protecting the health and well-being of Canadians as we try to get the economy going. For the province of Manitoba, that money allowed for 3,000 tests a day, instead of 1,000 tests.

The Prime Minister announced yesterday that we are now moving forward on the faster testing mechanisms that are finally there. I think it is important that we respect the fact that throughout this process we have been listening to Canadians and our health experts, we have been working with our first-class civil service, the best civil service in the world, and we have been making a difference. Collectively, premiers of all political stripes and members of this House of all political stripes have been able to contribute. It is making a difference.

• (1745)

Lives have been saved and Canadians are healthier as a direct result, but the job is not done. That is why we had to bring in legislation, and what a vote of confidence that was. There was unanimous support. Conservatives, New Democrats and Greens all voted in favour of that legislation.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I note the member's enthusiasm for the government's Speech from the Throne, seeing as this is his second time rising in the House to support it. I wonder if that may be an indication of his colleagues' distinct lack of enthusiasm, seeing that none of his other colleagues seemed to be willing to rise and speak in support of the Speech from the Throne. However, I digress. I have a more serious question for the member.

The Speech from the Throne mentioned that the government was not only going to bring forward measures to meet its Paris commitments, but in fact bring forward measures to exceed them. I find that highly surprising because the fact is that emissions have been rising for each year that the government has been in office, from 708 megatonnes in 2016 to 716 megatonnes in 2017, to 729 megatonnes in 2018, the last year for which data is available, data that the government itself released on April 15 of this year.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I might not necessarily be the best person to ask regarding those types of targets. I suspect if he were to ask that question of the Minister of Environment, the hon. member would be quite happy with the response he would get.

I have more confidence in this government hitting the targets than the previous Harper administration.

I look at the tangibles, as my constituents want to see something tangible. For example, the throne speech announces banning single-use plastics. That is something we can all relate to and see as a positive thing. In the throne speech, there are a number of initiatives, like encouraging consumers to buy electric cars and providing supports to do so. There are all sorts of positive things for our environment in the throne speech.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, our colleague from Malpeque told us that Canadian taxpayers are not an ATM for Quebec. That raised a few eyebrows and made me think of something. The Speech from the Throne mentions the environment, but there is absolutely nothing on the forestry industry, not a single word.

When we look carefully at the federal government's finances for the period from 2017 to 2020, we see that roughly \$22 billion was spent on the oil industry, but only \$827 million was spent on the forestry industry. Are Canadian taxpayers an ATM for the oil industry?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the difference between the Conservatives and the government of the day, and the Bloc and the government of the day, is that Liberals believe in the potential of all regions of Canada. We are there to support them in any way we can. That is one of the reasons we have regional economic development committees that have real, tangible powers. They have the finances to help diversify and support our communities. Whether in Quebec, Alberta, Manitoba or Ontario, these economic development agencies make a real, tangible difference. I see that as a positive thing. We support all regions of our country.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech.

One of his Liberal colleagues said that his party steals many of its ideas from the NDP. Our party is happy when the government steals our ideas. We would be even happier if the government actually implemented them. The government does not dare steal some of the NDP's good ideas.

Why is the government not implementing a tax on the ultra-rich? Why does the government not want to eliminate tax havens? Why does it not tax Web giants that are making a profit but not paying their share to fund our social programs?

The Address

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it was interesting when the member for Timmins—James Bay, an NDP member of Parliament, said that the throne speech is the NDP election platform. Do not get me wrong, I appreciate the support from the NDP. There are a lot of socially progressive things within the throne speech, and no one owns a good idea. I am glad the NDP supports a lot of the initiatives that are within the throne speech. There is nothing wrong with that. I suspect even the Conservatives support different aspects of the throne speech.

The other night we were surprised when NDP members voted to support Bill C-4, which is really a vote of confidence for the Government of Canada as to how we are managing through this pandemic.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be here to see you and my colleagues as well. I will be splitting my time with my good friend from Lac-Saint-Louis.

I want to start by acknowledging that we are gathered here on the traditional unceded lands of the Algonquin people.

I am going to keep my response to the Speech from the Throne to one specific issue: that of racism. I know there are many aspects of the throne speech that I would like to speak to, including long-term care as well as others, but I believe that the pandemic has heightened the discussion around racism and I want to focus my energies on that. I want to acknowledge the work of the Canadian parliamentary Black caucus and its advocacy, as well as the enormous number of young people who have more or less been on the streets for the last several months. I am so inspired by seeing a resurgence of the civil rights movement in our lifetime, and I want to thank them for their enormous work.

There are three aspects to racism and how to tackle it and how to, I would even dare to say, eliminate it. There are three components that I want to talk about.

First is the idea of eliminating the systemic barriers for people to achieve their truest and fullest potential.

Second is making sure that we equalize the playing field. We should have equal support and an equal starting point so that everyone can be the best that they are able to be.

Finally, it is the idea of empowering individuals to climb greater heights and get to a point of self-determination where they can control their destiny.

In Canada and in many parts of the world, this is not so simple. I know the Leader of the Opposition yesterday spoke about how his party and its first leader, Sir John A. Macdonald, founded Canada. From his perspective he may be correct, but it is a fundamentally flawed understanding of the history of this country. When we talk about, for example, the Indian Act, and how the Indian Act has disenfranchised first nations people across this country, separated them from their lands, their families, their livelihoods and their traditional ways of life, and saw them lose their language and their culture, this is systemic.

We saw the effects of residential schools, and heard a very moving statement yesterday by my good and dear friend from Winnipeg Centre about her experience with residential schools vis-à-vis her partner, Romeo Saganash, who is a former member of Parliament. We cannot even start to comprehend the depth of hatred that one must have had in order to develop laws of this nature.

We know about the forced relocation of Inuit and the killing of sled dogs. We know about the execution of Louis Riel. These are, again, moments in time.

One would think that the COVID pandemic is colour blind, that COVID-19 is a virus that does not see colour and does not discriminate based on one's identity. However, we know that is incorrect. We have excellent statistics from the United States and the United Kingdom, and some statistics from Canada are emerging. Public Health Ontario, for example, has said that people in the most ethnically diverse neighbourhoods had rates of getting COVID-19 three times higher than those in the least diverse neighbourhoods.

● (1755)

In Ottawa, 66% of those local COVID-19 patients were racialized, whereas they constitute only 54% of the population. In Toronto, for example, a staggering 83% of COVID-19 cases between May and July were racialized people, even though they only constitute 52% of the population. According to the same data, Black people have the highest share of COVID-19 cases, 21%, while, to put it into perspective, they constitute 10% of the population in Toronto, for example.

COVID-19 has demonstrated the racialized outcomes that we see in many other aspects of our systems. Let me just illustrate the many disturbing images we have seen with respect to racism in the past several months. I do not think that this House has enough time for us to go through them case by case, or through the number of outrageous things that we have seen in our social media, as well as the enormous pain that people face each and every day trying to address this.

George Floyd was the initial spark. I think we can agree that his death was a spark for all of us. He was a 46-year-old Black man in Minneapolis who was killed by the police. We have seen since that time an enormous number of cases that have come forward.

We saw, with disgust, the videos of the way that Chief Allan Adam was roughed up by Canada's police service, the RCMP. He is the chief of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, a nation that we are trying to build a nation-to-nation relationship with. It is offensive to the core.

I still do not have the heart to see the video of the way that Joyce Echaquan was treated in Joliette. I have read about it. I have read many articles about it. I still have not seen the video. The way that she was mistreated should offend every single Canadian. There are more cases.

We know that Mohamed-Aslim Zafis was a 58-year-old Muslim man who was killed at the International Muslim Organization mosque. He was a caretaker there and he was killed on September 12 by a neo-Nazi in an Islamophobic attack.

The Address

Mona Wang, Ejaz Choudry and Regis Korchinski-Paquet all died during wellness checks.

We know that many incidents motivated by hate take place across the country.

Today, we are at a crossroads in the world, but we are also at a crossroads in Canada. This is the time for us to recommit and, as the Prime Minister said in the throne speech, to redouble our efforts to address the root causes of racism. It is not going to be easy and it is not going to be overnight, but it needs to be coordinated and it needs to be an all-out Canadian effort. It needs to start by acknowledging that systemic racism is there. That is not up for discussion.

It is about ensuring that our laws, for example on mandatory minimum sentences, are changed. It is about ensuring that we have an equal playing field when it comes to the criminal justice system. It is about ensuring that we continue on the path toward reconciliation, ensuring that we bring into law the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. For far too long, we have avoided these conversations, but it is important that we take bold steps today and build on the many things that we have done in the past, including the national anti-racism strategy.

That is not enough. We need to continue on this path. I hope my colleagues across the aisle will continue to work with us on this, to ensure that we are able to build a country that will work toward eliminating and empowering and equalizing matters for Canada's indigenous people, as well as Black and other racialized minorities.

• (1800)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing I remember well from the 2015 election is that the Liberals promised to end the boil water advisories on reserves. It has been five years since that election and we still have boil water advisories across the country.

When are the Liberals planning to end the boil water advisories across the country?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, we were very clear that our target is 2021 and we are working toward that target. I am very confident we will be able to meet that target.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask a question about that as well. As the saying goes, “well done is better than well said”. It is good to have kind words for racialized people, people who face discrimination, but it is even better to take concrete action.

I too would like to know what the government plans to do about drinking water. At the very least, given that a “fault confessed is half redressed”, can my colleague admit that the Liberals have failed to keep their promise in the last five years by not providing clean drinking water?

[*English*]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to debate about water here, because we all realize the need to ensure that every community has clean drinking water. Our government, since 2015, has taken very important steps and has invested unprecedented

amounts of money to ensure there is clean drinking water in every single community. That is part of the solution.

We also need to ensure that we bring forward legislation on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We need to make sure that the gaps we see in all other social determinants of health are closed as well. As the throne speech said, we also want to make sure that in health care, we have legislation that is codeveloped by indigenous partners so we can have proper health care for all in this country.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his speech. I know he does really great work and advocates for his constituents well.

An organization, Colour of Poverty—Colour of Change, has approached me. I know there is a national anti-racism strategy, but they are asking for a federal anti-racism act that would build a legislative foundation for the anti-racism secretariat, with dedicated and sustainable funding and support.

Would my hon. colleague across the way be in support of something like that?

• (1805)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I know of the Colour of Poverty organization. I was there when it was founded about 20 years ago. I have worked with them for many years, including in my previous role when developing an anti-racism strategy. They have come up with some great ideas. Our solutions, which are part of the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth's portfolio, include direct support to organizations like the Colour of Poverty.

I know my colleague is working very hard to advance issues of race equality, and I look forward to working with her on this issue.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by commending the member of Parliament for Scarborough—Rouge Park, as well as the parliamentary secretary, for addressing this very important issue.

Our Prime Minister has acknowledged systemic racism is real and is present in every segment of society. I would like to hear from the member about some of the work he did in his previous role.

How do we change our path forward as we build back better and be consciously more inclusive? Whether it comes to the appointments process or building capacity, some of the work he did laid the foundation for what my team and I now have the privilege of continuing to work upon. How are we doing things differently to improve conditions and ensure that every individual is able to realize their potential?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for those comments.

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This takes an all-of-government approach. This is not something that can be done by one individual or one ministry. The fact that we now have a ministry and Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth is a very important foundation for making sure we have an all-of-government approach on all matters that I talked about.

Racism is not something we can dissect to say that if we do this or that, it will go away. Change includes addressing the root causes, such as poverty, housing and basic income. Those things require all arms of government to come together not only to ensure that we address the root causes, but to empower and build racialized communities.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak on the subject of the throne speech. Looking around makes me think of how much things have changed since February and March, when this pandemic hit, and how we have had to adjust our ways with the need to be cautious.

I would not call this pandemic an adjustment, annoyance or inconvenience, although it is all of those things and we feel them every day. It is not an economic shock like we had in the 1970s with the rising price of oil. A more apt word for what we are living through is “disruption”. By that I mean that this pandemic is going to cause transformational change in our society in the same way that World War II caused transformational change. We know that World War II was followed by a baby boom, economic and technological development, mass production, television, the expansion of the suburbs, a new consumer culture that drove the economy, the birth of the youth culture and the quest for the moon. This is a pivotal moment in history, the same way that World War II was a pivotal moment in history.

[*Translation*]

We are at a crossroads, and I cannot predict what the long-term effects of this pandemic will be. I am no Alvin Toffler, author of the well-known book *Future Shock*, but I have a few ideas that I think are realistic.

For example, I think that we are now going to put a higher priority on family, community and neighbours. We are going to take better care of our seniors. Perhaps there will be more interest in medical and other health care professions.

Perhaps we will also be more aware of the benefits of nature. We took going out for walks for granted, but all of a sudden we realized that we might not always be able to do that and that we had to pay attention. We now take great pleasure in taking a walk in a park and enjoying the freedom that we always took for granted before.

Perhaps we will see the social safety net in a different light, because we realized how much we have to help one another. We give each other that help through social programs like the ones our government announced over the course of this pandemic. Perhaps we will also realize how easy it is to get into financial difficulty. Even if everything is going well for us in life, all of a sudden we might find ourselves in a serious financial difficulties through no fault of our own. In some ways, we are moving to a new society.

• (1810)

[*English*]

The throne speech and Bill C-4 recognize that we are at a transformational moment. They seek to ensure that Canadians are not left behind by this transformation and, in fact, evolve with it, through the support measures that are required to ensure that we can maintain our standard of living and can continue to have a productive economy. There are investments in, for example, green technologies and even blue technologies, as the throne speech did mention water, a topic that I have been interested in for quite a while.

The throne speech is visionary in the sense that there is a short-term component and a long-term component. It announced a series of goals and objectives that are intended to bring us into this new era with all the right policies in all the right areas.

World War II had grave fiscal consequences. In a similar way, this pandemic has changed the financial picture for governments, not only here in Canada but around the world. For sure, Canadians are concerned about the fiscal impacts of this pandemic. I speak to constituents who ask me about the deficit and the debt. However, I think it is important that we put these things in perspective, not to minimize or discount them, but to ensure that we have an enlightened and informed discussion on the best path forward.

We will have a projected deficit in 2021. We said that it was going to be \$343 billion, but the PBO disagreed and said that it would be \$328 billion. Members cannot accuse the government of fudging numbers.

Coming out of World War II, the debt-to-GDP ratio was 100% and the deficit-to-GDP ratio was 21%. Today, the PBO forecasts that the debt-to-GDP ratio will be under 50%. What was the debt-to-GDP ratio at the end of the Mulroney Conservative era? It was 66%, so we absolutely need to put things in perspective.

We know there is a rule that has been taught to us by indigenous peoples. It is the seven generation rule and it generally applies to decisions that impact the environment. The rule says that if we pose an action that impacts the environment, we should think of the next seven generations to see how that decision will impact the environment for the next seven generations. I think we should apply this to our financial decisions as well.

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How will the financial decisions we are making today impact future generations? We talk a lot about future generations in the context of the budget deficit. Let us think for a moment. What if we had not taken the measures that we took? What would that have meant for future generations? What would that have meant for the young person who could not get their career started, who could not find a job, who could not earn money to pay for their education? Those young people would form what we might call a lost generation. We are very fortunate that we are at a time in history when interest rates are very low and, if interest rates remain low and the growth rate exceeds interest rates, we will be able to bring down the deficit.

I would like to quote from Michael Smart in an article in *The Globe and Mail*, who talks about the relationship between economic growth rates and interest rates:

After major economic depressions in our past, economic growth exceeded interest rates for decades at a stretch, allowing past governments to gradually reduce the debt without undue hardship for Canadians. In fact, in historical terms, the fiscal crisis of the late 1980s and early 1990s was an aberration—the only period since 1900 when interest rates exceeded growth rates for an extended period.

I know that on the other side of the House members try to paint a picture of doom and gloom and say we are on the cusp of financial ruin, but who do we believe? Do we believe a political party that is creating a narrative for the purpose of political gain, or do we believe those who are invested in the economy, who have invested billions of dollars in the economy and who watch the government's moves very closely? At the first sign of bad economic policy, they will abandon markets and give us a lower credit ratings. Do we listen to them, or do we listen to the Conservative opposition?

Let us hear what those who have invested in the economy and keep a close eye on economic decisions by governments are saying about Canada. This was in *Bloomberg News*, and I will quote what Standard and Poors said:

While fiscal and debt metrics will worsen due to the size of the unprecedented government response, we believe that the government's use of its policy flexibility will likely help the economy and labour market to recover. The largely temporary deviation of the government's fiscal profile does not offset Canada's structural credit strengths, in our view.

I rest my case.

• (1815)

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the throne speech refers to creating one million jobs. One of the methods stated in the throne speech is to extend or expand the wage subsidy. It also went on to say that it will work with businesses to meet their needs. It seems there will be some changes that will be happening.

Today, I received a communication from a local business owner wondering what that means. It is really important that business owners can plan.

What does that mean and what does that look like? Business owners need to have certainty now. Also, how is that creating jobs? The way it works is that it helps to subsidize the wages of workers. How is that actually creating jobs?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, there are two points here. This is a throne speech. There will be a budget and these policy proposals will be fleshed out.

One of the strengths of the government's response to this pandemic is that it listens. It listens to opposition parties and stakeholders, and it adjusts policies to make sure they fit the needs, so I am anticipating some very positive news with respect to the wage subsidy.

The wage subsidy prevents employees from leaving. It prevents a break in the relationship between employers and employees. It allows a company to be set for a resumption of economic activities, so it preserves jobs and allows companies to then grow and create jobs, whereas they might go bankrupt if they lost all their employees—

• (1820)

The Deputy Speaker: We will continue with questions and comments.

The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague did not say much about seniors. Over the past few days, we have heard the Liberals say that seniors are a priority, since they have suffered the most during the crisis. Meanwhile, we have been suggesting a way to help seniors since at least the last election. We have been calling for old age security to be increased by \$110 a month.

In 1975, the OAS was worth 20% of the average salary. Today, it is worth 13% of the average salary. At this rate, millennials will get 8% of the average salary. An increase of \$110 a month would bring it back up a few percentage points. The OAS would be worth 15% of the average salary. Then there would be indexing.

If seniors are a priority to the Liberals, why not increase old age security starting at age 65?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question.

Making seniors a priority means intervening in many different ways. For example, it means protecting seniors in long-term care centres. It means increasing the old age security pension. That is for sure.

It is a multi-pronged approach. In a crisis situation, protecting the health of seniors is worth a lot.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for your work on the Great Lakes during COVID-19. We made some progress and I appreciate the support you provided.

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My question for my colleague is this: Does he support the current government's program for family reunification related to COVID-19? It is a simple question. Does he support what is taking place right now, or does he believe it needs to be changed to allow for more family reunification with accountability?

I see the parliamentary secretary is now talking to the member and providing some coaching.

I ask the member what his thoughts are. Is he for the actual policy right now, or should it be changed?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member, I have interacted with many constituents who are suffering because they cannot see loved ones, whether it be fiancés, boyfriends or girlfriends. I think that ideally, yes, we would obviously like there to be more movement across borders. I have a lot of faith in the government and the minister with respect to consulting public health officials and trying to craft policy that will help the situation and not cause us to slide backward, which would bring about worse consequences than the situations we are facing now. I hope that a way can be found to reunify more families. I know, for example, with respect to—

The Deputy Speaker: We will have to leave it at that. The time has expired.

We will now go to resuming debate.

The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with my colleague from Red Deer—Mountain View.

I am very pleased to be here today as the Conservative Party's new public services and procurement critic and very happy to have this opportunity to reply to the throne speech.

I was very pleased to be with my leader, the member for Durham, yesterday during his response to the throne speech. His reply was nearly an hour long and was very heartfelt. He was down to earth, as we say back home. I am sure Canadians will pick up on the difference in terms of vision between the current Prime Minister, the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, and the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada.

I could spend my time today talking about the government's gaffes, its bad management, its duplicity and, according to some, its corruption. We could also talk about how badly its female cabinet ministers have been treated, its ethical breaches and its bungled border management. The Prime Minister tends to be dictatorial in managing his team and in his approach to Canadian politics.

What bothers me the most is that so many of his cabinet ministers refuse to say anything. They are like statues; they say nothing, turn a blind eye and let their Prime Minister do as he pleases. Of course, it is easy to criticize and I could go on all night. We have five years of experience behind us. Early on, the Liberals lamented the fact that the Conservatives had been in power for 10 years, but the Liberal record for the last five years is far more complicated and bleak than anything the Liberals could say about us.

Today I want to talk about our position on the Speech from the Throne, our vision for Canada and the positive proposals we would like to put forward. What we are proposing to Canadians is an agenda and vision that are realistic, honest and transparent. The word “transparent” is very often misused on the Liberal side. The Conservatives are going to make sure that that word becomes meaningful once again.

As my leader said, the dangerous and ideologically driven economic decisions made by this government over the past five years have resulted in the decline of Canada's competitiveness. We will restore Canadians' trust by working with small businesses, major industries, innovators and not-for-profits to help move this country forward. We will establish a financial plan to balance the budget in a way that is prudent and compassionate towards the disadvantaged. On the one hand, we must look after the most vulnerable and, on the other, we must get Canada's finances back on track.

Financial visions are often diametrically opposed. Those on the far left will bust the budget to give more to everyone, even if it means ending up in the red. At the other end of the spectrum, those on the far right will tighten the screws as much as possible. However, it is possible to strike a balance, and that is the Conservative approach. We must be compassionate and take care of the most vulnerable while properly managing our finances. We must avoid spending and creating pointless programs purely as an illusion. We must deal with real life, not the abstract. We want to be compassionate, but we must also think about everything that is happening and the deficits.

Everyone agrees that the spending and investments associated with COVID-19 were necessary. We supported the various measures taken to help Canadians.

Let us forget COVID-19 for a moment. As of January 2020, the Liberals had been in power for four years and had added \$100 billion to Canada's debt. That is a problem. Who is supposed to pay for that? Money does not grow on trees. Taxpayers will have to pay back these deficits through taxes. Of course, with the pandemic, the deficit is becoming even bigger.

We need to show compassion for taxpayers. We must always consider the people who pay for all the government's spending. Take young people, for example. My kids are teenagers. My daughter wants to do some things, my son wants to do others. What does the future look like in the next 10, 20 or 30 years? We certainly need to think about it. We have a duty and responsibility to do so. Every government should make this a standard priority. It will be the priority of a Conservative government.

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• (1825)

When it comes to taxes in Canada, there is a problem: it is very complicated. There are lots of tax rules. People who have the means or know tax experts and lawyers find ways to pay less tax, but workers and small business owners who do not have the resources keep on paying taxes. They do not know how the system works because it is too complicated. The next Conservative government will simplify the Income Tax Act.

We will also take a look at barriers to interprovincial trade, which have been preventing free trade within Canada for too long. We negotiate free trade agreements with other countries, yet selling Quebec products in British Columbia and vice versa is difficult. That makes no sense. We need to remove interprovincial barriers. Our confederation is supposed to include an economic union, and we will make sure Canada can operate that way. A confederation is the number one place where things should be done intelligently.

Canada must never again be caught off guard by a crisis like COVID-19. We need to have a domestic stockpile of personal protective equipment, key essentials and medicines. These items are important for any country to have, and Canada must always be prepared. This is an important lesson, and we have taken note. There is no question that one of the next Conservative government's priorities will be to ensure that Canada has all the essentials it needs and does not have to rely on other countries.

Rapid response capacity is important. Recently we saw that some countries were able to approve saliva tests quickly, while in Canada, it is going to take months. That is not normal. Health Canada and every government department need to take a hard look at their operations in order to speed up the process. The response has to be rapid and immediate. We cannot allow the bureaucracy to prevent Canada from getting out of this crisis faster than another country. We have to overcome these problems.

We also have to think about protecting the food supply. Canada has a cold climate. Foods like fruits and vegetables often have to be imported, except in the summer. We need to find ways to develop structures that will enable us to have greenhouses where we can grow food year-round. All essential products should come from Canada as much as possible.

When it comes to foreign investment, Canada must protect itself. Certain countries and foreign corporations have their sights on our land, our mines and our high-tech companies. We need to make sure that Canadian interests are protected first and foremost. National security checks are important to ensure that we do not let any part of Canada get into the hands of malicious foreign actors.

The Conservative government was in office during the great recession and crisis of 2008-09. The Harper government faced the crisis, and most importantly, it was able to overcome it. Yes, we had to make the necessary investments. Those investments often went against basic Conservative principles, but it was the right thing to do. The Conservative government then got Canada back to a balanced budget. Actually, I would remind the House that Canada returned to a balanced budget in time for the 2015 election.

• (1830)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the member opposite. I served with him on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in a previous session.

However, I want to ask him a question. Hundreds, if not thousands, of his constituents received the support of the Canada emergency response benefit, CERB. What does he think of that initiative? Is the member in favour of something like the CERB? Does he think it was a good idea?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, I spoke about the deficits racked up by the Liberal government during its first four years in office, but I said that we approved of initiatives like the CERB.

Could we have done better? Would we have used a different model? Yes, and we even proposed a different model, particularly for the CERB, which created a serious problem. We talked about it in debate before the CERB took effect.

It is important to point out that the Conservative Party has always been ready to help Canadians in the fight against COVID-19.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague for his appointment as shadow minister for public services and procurement.

In his speech, he talked a lot about honesty, transparency and taxpayers. I would like to hear what he has to say about the Bloc Québécois' proposal because, as a result of the CERB, there are going to be a lot of problems come tax time.

I am not talking about the cheaters who made false claims. I am talking about the people who filed a claim for the CERB in good faith and who are going to have trouble making ends meet at the end of the month. They were barely getting by during the pandemic. Putting money aside to pay back the CERB will be extremely difficult for them.

What does my colleague think about our proposal to offer an eight-month grace period to try to help these people who are struggling and who will need help to get through the crisis?

• (1835)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Earlier I mentioned compassion. We are capable of compassion. Some people like to label the Conservatives as being cold and heartless, but that is entirely untrue.

Some CERB recipients were not able to save money to pay their taxes or did not know that they would have to pay taxes. A lot of things can happen, and these people will have problems.

I certainly do not feel sorry for people who accessed the CERB even though they knew that they were not entitled. However, I am open to some sort of grace period for people who have problems, for whatever reason.

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

It was not surprising to hear him talk about public debt. The Conservatives often forget to talk about how we could increase revenue by reducing inequality.

I want to talk to him about another kind of debt, though. He spoke about children and the future. I want to talk about environmental debt. The Conservatives are not doing much, aside from tossing billions of dollars at new pipelines and subsidizing fossil fuels, even though there is no future in fossil fuel energy.

If he wants to listen to children and youth, I would remind him that 500,000 people, half a million Quebeckers, took to the streets of Montreal last year, demanding real action on sustainable development and the climate crisis.

If he wants to listen to youth, he should also talk about the environmental debt.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, and I would remind him that, in the last election campaign, the Conservative Party had the most detailed environmental platform. It was even more detailed than that of the Green Party.

They keep bringing up oil and Alberta. However, as far as I know, 95% or more of Canadians still drive a gas-powered vehicle, and Canada still has to import oil from other countries.

As long as there are cars, planes and boats, which will not be fuelled by electricity anytime soon, we will need oil. Why not source it in our own country, from our own natural resources?

Of course, this does not prevent us from developing other resources and tools to be more environmentally friendly. That is why we are proposing to export Canadian know-how. There are countries that need our help reducing their environmental footprint.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate with the hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View, I will let him know there are only six minutes remaining in the time for Government Orders today. I will interrupt him when we get close to that time in the usual way.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to stand in the House today to speak on behalf of my constituents of Red Deer—Mountain View.

When we look at how this pandemic has affected countries around the world, we can take some comfort that despite the hardships endured by so many of our fellow Canadians, we did not ex-

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perience the horror stories of overwhelming hospitalizations that were initially expected based on the realities of many European nations and some large U.S. cities. That being said, there are still many heart-wrenching stories, especially of seniors and those in institutionalized care who have suffered immensely.

On a personal note, I have been notified of many constituents whose last days were marked by isolation and whose loving families had to postpone or vastly limit their celebrations of life. To let their names live on in Hansard, let me name just a few neighbours: Betty Howell; Daryl “Dude” Hughes and Loretta Moran; lifelong 4-H ambassador, Bob Boulton; former teaching colleague, Ed Tessman; my niece, Roselie (Moore) Engman, who sadly had to hear of her husband Andy’s death through her hospital room window a few months prior to her own passing; my wife’s cousin Betty Wood; and my dear friend, Bob Clark, former legislator, teacher and sports builder, who I will specifically honour at a later date. To their memories and to the well-being of all my constituents, I humbly speak on their behalf.

More than a month ago, the Prime Minister chose to hide from yet another ethical scandal by completely shutting down Parliament. All the great work that the committees were doing to get to the bottom of the WE scandal came to an end, as did the work of all other committees, including the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, of which I was a member. We have just spent a few days debating the Liberal government’s latest attempt to correct its mistakes. There is no question that because of the actions of the government, many Canadians are in need of the financial support, which the three new programs we recently debated will deliver.

I will turn my attention now to the Speech from the Throne.

What we heard in the Speech from the Throne cannot be called a plan at all. What we have heard is a lot of recycled promises and a continued failure to address the needs of my community as well as the needs of hundreds of communities across Alberta and right across Canada. What we have heard is a self-serving political agenda that will bankrupt Canadians for generations to come, with spiralling debt and no commitment or viable ideas about returning to a balanced budget.

The Liberal government’s Speech from the Throne completely ignores our resource sector, our critical importing farming sector, our retail and service sector and our manufacturing sector, all of which account for millions of Canadian jobs and contribute billions of dollars to our economic growth.

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In my riding of Red Deer—Mountain View, farmers and ranchers remain a linchpin of our economy, as they do in countless numbers of other communities across Canada. Across Canada, the agriculture and agri-food system normally employs more than two million people, which accounts for about 12% of total Canadian employment.

How does the Liberal government acknowledge this fact? Quite simply, it does not. The Speech from the Throne has about 7,000 words. In all, the word “agriculture” was hardly mentioned at all. In fact, the word “Alberta” is only mentioned once. Is it any wonder that the vast majority of people living in western Canada and Alberta, in particular, feel alienated by the Liberal government?

As the Liberal government builds its biased bluster from the Speech from the Throne, there is merely one line which references farmers and producers being key partners in the fight against climate change. What could this mean? We have to look elsewhere to find the answers to that question. What it apparently means is the Liberal government's additional crippling taxes. What we will find from the Liberal government is a proposal to further cripple the sector as well as businesses across Canada by imposing another tax on top of the Liberal government's ill-conceived carbon tax. The new tax that will be hitting Canadians is the clean fuel standard.

The last thing Canadian farmers and ranchers need is yet another tax that will increase their costs. We have already seen the devastating effects of the Liberal government's first carbon tax on farm incomes. The truth is that Canada's farmers, ranchers and processors have for years demonstrated an ability to deliver meaningful reductions in emissions and safeguards for the environment through adoption of new technologies, education and innovative management practices, but the government has ignored these efforts. It ignores the science and the facts in favour of pursuing an agenda to further its own political ambition at the expense of hard-working Canadians.

• (1840)

The Conservatives know that climate change needs to be addressed, but increasing taxes is no solution. The Liberal government's Speech from the Throne is silent on a number of other important topics as well. There is no mention of the important role the energy sector is playing to help reduce carbon emissions. In fact, there is no mention of the words “oil” and “gas” anywhere in the Liberal government's Speech from the Throne. This is despite the fact that oil and gas companies are normally responsible for more than 10% of Canada's GDP and are normally the largest private investors in the Canadian economy and the largest investors in Canadian clean technology to produce the most valuable export.

I realize my time is getting short, so in closing I would like to note, as many economists and senior financial experts have also noted, that the Liberal government has completely abandoned its fiscal anchors and Canada's economic ship is adrift. In fact, the Liberal government's sky-high taxes, wasteful spending and massive deficits put Canada in an increasingly weak position before the pandemic had arrived. It is no wonder that friends and allies who are watching the Liberal government perform are wondering what happened to this once responsible and respected nation.

The truth is that Canada did not reach our current level of borrowing due solely to COVID-19 and the recession; it is a spending problem. If we are going to get Canada back on its feet, we need to put the Liberal health crisis opportunism aside, eliminate the barriers to our wealth-building oil and gas industries, eliminate uncompetitive programs that make agriculture and manufacturing difficult and unleash the power of true innovation in all sectors of our economy, not just the chosen few.

The Conservatives know that creating the groundwork for a solid recovery will make caring for Canadians now and in the future something we can all be proud of.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:43 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the amendment now before the House.

• (1845)

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.

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

And one or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: The question is as follows. Shall I dispense with the reading of the amendment?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to House*]

• (2000)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 7*)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Aboulttaif | 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 |

The Address

Dreeshen
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Gallant
Genuis
Godin
Gray
Harder
Jeneroux
Kent
Kmic
Kurek
Lake
Lehoux
Liepert
Lobb
Maguire
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Rayes
Reid
Rood
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Scheer
Seeback
Shin
Sloan
Steinley
Stubbs
Tochor
Van Popta
Vidal
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Wong
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Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Hallan
Jansen
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kusie
Lawrence
Lewis (Essex)
Lloyd
MacKenzie
Mazier
McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore
Morrison
Nater
Patzner
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Ruff
Saroya
Schmale
Shields
Shipley
Soroka
Strahl
Sweet
Uppal
Vecchio
Viersen
Wagantall
Waugh
Williamson
Yurdiga

Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Fry
Garrison
Gazan
Gill
Green
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Jaczek
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Lightbound
Longfield
MacGregor
Maloney
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Ng
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Qaqqaq
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota (Brampton North)
Sajjan
Sangha
Savard-Tremblay
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Spengemann
Tabbara
Thériault
Trudeau
Turnbull
van Koevorden
Vandenbeld

Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Garneau
Gaudreau
Gerretsen
Gould
Guilbeault
Harris
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Larouche
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lemire
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Manly
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès
Michaud
Monsef
Murray
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
Petipas Taylor
Powlowski
Qualtrough
Regan
Rodriguez
Romanado
Saini
Samson
Sara
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Tassi
Therrien
Trudel
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vaughan

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Members

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Bains
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bergeron
Bessette
Bittle
Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boudrias
Bratina
Brunelle-Duceppe
Casey
Chagger
Champoux
Chen
Cormier
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
Desilets

Amos
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bagnell
Baker
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bérubé
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Cannings
Chabot
Champagne
Charbonneau
Collins
Dabrusin
Davies
Desbiens
Dhaliwal

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| Weiler | Wilkinson |
| Wilson-Raybould | Yip |
| Young | Zahid |
| Zann | Zuberi — 208 |

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was Orange Shirt Day, a day that honours residential school survivors, a day that reflects our attempts as a country to erase indigenous peoples, and for what purpose? It was to have access to the resources of this land unhindered, because our colonial government signed treaties they seemingly had no intention of following.

Canada underestimated the strength and resilience of indigenous peoples, and continues to do so. Indigenous peoples have had to fight for their lives, for recognition and for rights. It is a matter of survival. Five of the poorest postal codes in Canada are in New Brunswick first nation communities, and some Nova Scotia communities are not far behind.

The livelihood fishery in St. Marys Bay is not a large fishing operation. It is a collection of individuals exercising their right to provide for their families and lift themselves from poverty. I read the article from *The Guardian* that the Minister of Fisheries shared today, which honours October 1 as Mi'kmaq Treaty Day. I respect the words that she shared, although they do seem to come a bit late considering how long this conflict has been going on.

She stated that she grew up in a generation that was never taught about the history of indigenous peoples. It was not until she became a member of Parliament that she came to see the huge, unsettling gaps in her education, including the legal and cultural significance of treaties, and her obligation as a Canadian to uphold them. I commend her for being brave enough to admit that she began to learn about indigenous history so late in her life. This is important, and I truly believe that a severe lack of understanding and education is at the root of the current dispute.

In 1760, the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik and Passamaquoddy signed a peace and friendship treaty with the British Crown. It was recognized as an international treaty between two sovereign nations, and is upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada as being legitimate.

On September 17, 1999, the Supreme Court of Canada acquitted Mi'kmaq Donald Marshall Jr. of three charges relating to federal fishing regulations. Marshall's legal team argued that he had the right to sell fish to make a living under the peace and friendship treaties. Here is where the moderate livelihood comes into the picture. Marshall's ruling stated:

The accused's treaty rights are limited to securing "necessaries" (which should be construed in the modern context as equivalent to a moderate livelihood), and do not extend to the open-ended accumulation of wealth.... Catch limits that could reasonably be expected to produce a moderate livelihood for individual Mi'kmaq families at present-day standards can be established by regulation and enforced without violating the treaty right.

This begs the following questions: Did the Supreme Court of Canada mean indigenous peoples have the right to fish with no regulations, under DFO regulations or under their own regulations? What does a "moderate livelihood" look like in 1999 or 2020?

I would argue that a treaty right is a designate of a sovereign nation, and to extend the right without the ability to self-govern is not appropriate. Indigenous communities and leaders must take the lead in determining the definition of a livelihood fishery with the support of the federal government rather than the intervention. To begin to set monetary limits on a livelihood fishery, through definition, is problematic.

A policy drawn by the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik and Passamaquoddy describes a commitment to conservation as the first priority for the indigenous fishery. The policy also specifies a commitment to education and peaceful coexistence with Canadians. It is as follows:

Mi'kmaq [and Wolastoqiyik] people will exercise control of all fisheries resources within traditional tribal territories.

Any fisheries policy must protect and promote fishing rights recognized within relevant treaties and laws.

Mi'kmaq and [Wolastoqiyik] leaders will not enter into fishing agreements that appear to abrogate or derogate from Treaty or Aboriginal rights, recognized in applicable treaties or are protected by law. Such treaties and laws express Mi'kmaq and [Wolastoqiyik] responsibilities and intentions to assert full control over all fisheries resources within traditional tribal territories.

In 2017, Fisheries and Oceans Canada began to negotiate time-limited rights reconciliation agreements on fisheries, signing two such agreements in 2019. While these agreements seem to be in good faith, there is no formal mechanism for negotiation for indigenous peoples. The unfairness on display continues an uneven relationship and ignores self-governance and sovereignty on unceded lands. Indigenous chiefs have the capacity and the knowledge to advocate for their nations and negotiate with the government.

I ask that the minister immediately convene a discussion table founded on respect and recognition that allows for these conversations to continue. I would also add that non-indigenous fishermen must be given a voice. As frustrations boil over, the situation in St. Marys Bay will only get worse.

• (2005)

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thanks to my hon. colleague for the very thoughtful presentation she just gave. Let me be clear. No relationship is more important to Canada than our relationship with indigenous peoples. Our government is working to build a nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship based on respect, partnership and recognition of rights. We are fully committed to working in collaboration with first nations to implement their treaty right to fish in pursuit of a moderate livelihood.

Since the landmark Supreme Court of Canada Marshall decision in 1999, which affirmed these treaty rights, the path toward implementation has had successes and setbacks. Over the years, the department has launched several programs and made investments to address the rights of Mi'kmaq and Maliseet communities in Atlantic Canada and Quebec, beginning with the Marshall response initiative.

Subsequent programs, like the Atlantic integrated commercial fisheries initiative, continue to this day to provide funding and support to Marshall communities to build the capacity of their commercial fishing enterprises and to strengthen community economic self-sufficiency.

Last year we signed rights and reconciliation agreements with three first nation communities, but there are challenges. Recent events surrounding Nova Scotia's fisheries have brought these issues to the forefront. I want to stress, first and foremost, that our government's priority remains the safety of everyone involved and lowering all tensions on the water for a calm resolution to this impasse. This has to be a common objective for all.

It is also this government's commitment to work collaboratively and respectfully with first nation communities to fully implement their treaty rights. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans speaks directly and regularly with first nations leadership and industry representatives. I think we can all agree that reconciliation is a Canadian imperative and it is important, especially on this being Treaty Day in Nova Scotia, for each of us to acknowledge that we have a role to play.

The issues surrounding this fishery are long-standing and deeply personal to all involved. The only way to resolve them is through a respectful and collaborative dialogue. We know that we need to do things differently and work in partnership with first nations to launch a fishery where members of the community can earn a moderate livelihood. This fishery must be viable, sustainable and have the tools it needs to succeed so that this fishery can be a resource for generations to come.

• (2010)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, I am sad that this issue has led to blatant displays of racism, threats and intimidation. Traditional ceremony has been mocked. There are social media posts about the need to re-establish residential schools, and signs in the woods of New Brunswick saying, "save a moose, shoot an Indian."

I have heard from fishermen that there is a lot of anger, a lot of frustration, but the majority of people are not racist and they are

Adjournment Proceedings

just fed up over a perceived threat to the sustainability of the fishery. I understand the uncertainty of our economy, the fluctuation of our natural resources and the stressful cycle of fishing season and unemployment.

I understand the concern around conservation, but none of this can override the behaviours exhibited throughout this dispute. These are the questions and concerns that must be raised with government. As the lead federal agency for aquaculture development, and consistent with its departmental mandate, DFO must act and discharge its responsibilities in a manner that adheres to the policy principles, including addressing issues of public concern in a fair and transparent manner, communicating with Canadians and respecting constitutionally protected aboriginal and treaty rights.

Today is Mi'kmaq Treaty Day. How fitting that we are here to discuss this topic of such historical relevance on a day meant to remind all of Canada that we are all treaty people under the treaty covenant of law among sovereign nations. In Digby there were celebrations at the wharf, cultural displays and ceremonies where the Mi'kmaq and Acadian flags flew together as they should.

My work today is to ensure peace and prosperity for all, as the treaty originally intended.

Woliwon, we'lalin.

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, we as a government are fully committed to working in collaboration with first nations to implement their treaty right to fish in pursuit of a moderate livelihood. The Marshall decision was the trigger for many departmental programs and initiatives that have been implemented over the years. These programs have provided fisheries-related training and increased employment in Mi'kmaq and Maliseet communities, especially for women. They have also put licences, vessels and gear in the hands of these communities to help build their fisheries.

We have been negotiating with Marshall groups since 2017 to collaborate on the articulation of their rights through the Rights and Reconciliation Agreements, but there have been challenges. Recent events surrounding Nova Scotia's fisheries have brought these to the forefront. We remain strongly committed to working collaboratively and respectfully with first nation communities to implement treaty rights.

The issues surrounding this fishery are long-standing and deeply personal to everyone involved. The only way to resolve this impasse is through respectful and collaborative dialogue, much like we saw from the hon. member opposite today.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[Translation]*

The Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House

stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:13 p.m.)

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