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Thursday, November 26, 2020

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 26, 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-13, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (single event sport betting).

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first and second reports of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

The committee has considered the main estimates, 2020-21, and reports the same. It has also considered the supplementary estimates (B), 2020-21, and reports the same.

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-256, Act to amend the Income Tax Act (donations involving private corporation shares or real estate).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I stand today proud to table my very first private member's bill. The bill would help charities across Canada access up to \$200 million a year in additional donations.

Throughout the pandemic, charities have continued to step up and provide much-needed services to those in need, including food banks and homeless shelters. However, right now across Canada, donations are down and Canadian charities are struggling to raise much-needed funds during this pandemic.

The bill would help charities by waiving the capital gains tax on an arm's-length sale of private shares or real estate when the proceeds of that sale are donated to a charity. This change would allow these kinds of donations to receive tax treatment similar to what public shares currently receive when donated to a charity. This common-sense and much-needed legislation would help struggling charities and give Canadians greater opportunities to give back.

I hope all members in the House will support this timely and important bill.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise virtually to present a petition that comes from a number of my constituents. It relates to the Trans Mountain pipeline. The petitioners point out that billions of dollars more will need to be spent to complete building this pipeline, which increasingly does not even have an economic case.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to abide by the commitment to stop subsidizing fossil fuels, halt construction immediately and not spend any further public funds on the Trans Mountain pipeline.

• (1010)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on an issue that is close to the heart of the constituents of my riding of Davenport.

Today I am tabling e-petition 2616. This petition was started by a passionate environmentalist, Domenica Tambasco, who is also a physician and who turns out to be someone I went to high school with. She very much recognizes the direct links between the health of Canada's population and the health of Canada's environment, two things that we know are inextricably linked.

Privilege

This petition calls on the Government of Canada to introduce legislation to enshrine an environmental bill of rights and responsibilities into Canadian law, recognizing the vital role of the environment as a determinant of health.

I want to thank Domenica for her advocacy, and I hereby table her petition in this chamber on her behalf.

HERRING FISHERY

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to table a petition today on behalf of residents from Denman Island and Hornby Island in the Salish Sea. It is timely, especially since a new report cites that only 26% of Canada's wild fish population can be considered healthy, which is down a full 8% since 2017.

The petitioners note the announcement by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans that the Pacific herring population dropped by approximately a third from 2016 to 2019. The forecast for 2020 is 58,000 tonnes, down from 129,000 tonnes in 2016. Herring is the basis of the food web that supports wild Pacific salmon, killer whales, humpback whales, cod, halibut, seabirds and other independent species.

The petitioners call upon the government to suspend the 2020 Salish Sea herring fishery until a whole-of-ecosystem plan is developed to fairly compensate local fishers for economic losses and ensure that decisions are made with full participation of first nations and local communities.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition in support of Bill S-204, a bill that seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

The bill would make it a criminal offence for a Canadian to go abroad to receive an organ that had been harvested from an unwilling person. It would also amend immigration law to create a mechanism by which someone could be deemed inadmissible to Canada if that person had been involved in organ harvesting and trafficking.

A bill like this almost passed in the last Parliament, but we ran out of time at the end. The petitioners are hoping that this Parliament will be the one that finally gets the job done.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

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, if a revised response to Question No. 97, originally tabled on November 16, 2020, could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 97—**Mr. Arnold Viersen:**

With regard to flights on government aircraft for personal and non-governmental business by the Prime Minister and his family, and by ministers and their families, since January 1, 2016: (a) what are the details of all such flights, including the (i) date, (ii) origin, (iii) destination, (iv) names of passengers, excluding security detail; and (b) for each flight, what was the total amount reimbursed to the government by each passenger?

(Return tabled)

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ORDER PAPER QUESTION NO. 97—RESPONSE BY MINISTER

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the tabling of the revised response to Order Paper Question No. 97.

With the encouragement of my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, my department has reviewed the original response to see if a correction was warranted. The original response was subject to administrative errors, which have now been corrected in the revised response that was just tabled. I would like to give the House a brief explanation as to how this occurred.

The information requested is not centrally tracked by my department. An attempt was made to verify the accuracy of the information in the allotted time, but it required a cross-government document search and manual record collection. As a result, in the process of addressing the inaccuracies in the original response to Question No. 97, a manual search was undertaken to verify and confirm the information that is contained in the revised response that has now been tabled.

I wish to apologize to the member for Peace River—Westlock for any inconvenience in receiving the information requested. I can assure members of the House that this was an honest administrative oversight that has now been corrected with the revised response. I have asked my officials to review how flight information is collected and released to ensure a better record-management system going forward.

The Speaker: I want to make a brief statement in relation to the question of privilege raised by the member for Peace River—Westlock on November 18, 2020.

In similar situations where members have raised complaints about responses to written questions, my predecessors have maintained that these cases are more a matter of debate. In my own recent ruling of October 1, 2020, I reiterated that the Speaker is not empowered to rule on the content of the government's response to written questions.

• (1015)

[*Translation*]

That being said, the Chair recognizes that it is important that members have complete and accurate information so that they can perform their duties and represent their constituents, which the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader acknowledged in his speech on Tuesday.

[*English*]

To that end, the Chair notes that a revised response to Question No. 97 has just been tabled, and in light of the subsequent comments by the minister, I consider the matter closed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CANADIAN NET-ZERO EMISSIONS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed from November 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-12, an act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to speak in support of Bill C-12, which was presented in the House yesterday. I am very much in support of our government's commitment to making Canada a net-zero nation by 2050, because the urgency to act on the global climate crisis is real and the challenge of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions is also an opportunity to build back our economy more competitively, more sustainably and more inclusively. Attracting investments and creating jobs will benefit all Canadians.

While the global pandemic has turned much of our world upside down, it has not changed our resolve to build a clean energy future and to make sure we are putting people at the heart of this transition. This is what I would like to focus on with my time today. Before I do that, I also want to say I will be sharing my time with the member for Sherbrooke. I look forward to hearing her comments.

Climate change may be measured in tonnes of greenhouse gases emitted or saved, but it is lived by families and communities. A just transition is where the importance of climate change and government policy positively intersects with the lives and livelihoods of all Canadians.

That is particularly true for those who have been especially hard hit by COVID-19 and the recession: women, youth, indigenous communities, immigrants, racialized people, people with disabilities, rural communities and northern communities, where I live. It

Government Orders

is also true for so many workers and communities that are directly affected by the rapid transformation of the global energy sector, which is why creating good, well-paying jobs in the low-carbon economy is essential.

It is essential that we build a sustainable and prosperous future for Canada and all Canadians. How do we do that? This is the question that lingers in the minds of many who support the initiatives we have introduced around climate change. How can we do more? How do we play a larger role?

A key starting place is to ensure workers have the right skills to succeed in the clean growth economy. As most know, I am a huge supporter of alternate energy development, but I am also a big supporter of the resource development sector in Canada, especially the mining industry. I know many of these companies are working hard to invest properly to ensure they have a clean growth economy. They are looking at alternatives for fuelling and powering their operations and reducing their carbon footprints.

For example, we are working with communities and workers who have been affected by the phasing out of coal-fired electricity, with meaningful action to diversify their economies and create new jobs. One way we are doing this is with \$185 million in new federal funding to support coal-dependent communities, including \$35 million for skills development and economic diversification.

Our government not only set targets and adapted a vigorous agenda around clean energy and climate change, but it is making the investments available so people, communities and companies can move forward in Canada to ensure that these happen.

The remainder of some \$150 million within the Government of Canada is now earmarked for new infrastructure projects, and so far this year we have invested more than \$22 million in 36 projects across Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. This funding has supported economic diversification initiatives in Leduc and Hanna, Alberta; a solar installation training program at Southeast College in Estevan, Saskatchewan; and similar projects in Atlantic Canada.

• (1020)

Right here in my hometown of Mary's Harbour, we are developing alternate energy to support and reduce the use of diesel generation in rural communities like the one I live in. This year, with a partnership from the federal government, we are the first remote community in Labrador to be able to combine hydro power and solar power to supplement, and reduce our dependency on, diesel and reduce our carbon footprint.

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We are looking forward to doing projects like this in all communities that have become entirely dependent on diesel and move them off diesel dependency. This would include projects like the Glencore smelter and the Trevali closure diversification initiative in northern New Brunswick. We helped Ignite Labs in Nova Scotia, and we also announced that we were moving forward with the Atlantic loop. The Atlantic loop will connect surplus clean power to regions that are moving away from coal. It is a classic win-win that makes electricity more affordable as we create new jobs for workers and their communities.

I live in a region in Labrador that is one of the largest generators of hydro power. The Atlantic loop provides an opportunity for us to continue to fuel the economy with clean energy through massive development projects, such as those at Gull Island.

We are looking forward to the opportunities this provides, not just for Newfoundland and Labrador and Atlantic Canada, but for all Canadians. We see it as a real win-win situation and are happy that the Government of Canada, our government, is moving forward with the Atlantic loop.

That is just one example of how we are putting people at the heart of this energy transition. [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

• (1025)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member's time is up. I know there have been some technical issues, but there is time for questions and comments and I am sure she will be able to add anything during that time.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I hesitated to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary, but I think her speech demonstrated the lack of good Internet in her community. There were many gaps. I would ask if the clerks at the table would consider allowing her to provide her full remarks so the gaps could be replaced in the Hansard, because we missed quite a lot of what she had to say.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the hon. member. I do not think there would be any opposition to the parliamentary secretary tabling her speech so it can be included in the Hansard.

Is it agreed the hon. member can table her speech so it can be properly reflected in the Hansard?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Accordingly, the balance of the speech as tabled is as follows*]

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Energy efficiency is another example. By working with Canadians to retrofit their homes with better windows, appliances and insulation, and with smarter grids and building codes, they are seeing the benefits of the energy transition in their own homes. The benefits include lower monthly utility bills and more comfortable homes, all while creating thousands of good jobs and dramatically reducing our emissions.

Here is a theme I keep coming back to: creating good, green jobs as we drive environmental performance. That has been central to

our government's economic response to COVID-19, including more than \$1.7 billion to help clean up orphan and inactive oil and gas wells in Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. This investment is helping as many as 10,000 hard-working Canadians to find ways to put their skills to use, while demonstrating Canadian leadership on climate change and environmental stewardship.

For the same reason, we have announced a new \$750-million emissions reduction fund, \$320 million to assist the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore industry and \$100 million for the Clean Resource Innovation Network. This funding will help make Canada's oil and gas sector the cleanest in the world, so that good energy jobs are also green energy jobs and so that our move toward a net-zero economy leaves no one behind.

We recognize the vital role that Canada's petroleum sector plays here at home and around the world. We are investing in these communities to help them achieve their net-zero targets while ensuring their long-term success. We also recognize the need to nurture talent in the oil and gas sector. We are working with industry, provinces and territories to transform this key pillar of Canada's economy. Further, we are making other generational investments to bring together economic growth and environmental protection. This includes new funding for smart grids, carbon capture and storage, and the next wave of batteries, made right here in Canada.

We are creating good jobs in wind and solar energy, and emerging sources of clean energy such as tidal and geothermal. We have put together a made-in-Canada action plan for small modular reactors and a strategy for Canada to become a global leader in the clean production of hydrogen. We will drive the clean growth economy by making zero-emissions vehicles more affordable and investing in more charging stations across the country.

We are setting a clear course for our net-zero future that enlists all Canadians. We have been incorporating indigenous knowledge and engaging meaningfully on how we review major energy projects, as well as supporting indigenous participation in and ownership of these projects. This fair and just transition will be smart and inclusive.

Our recent Speech from the Throne doubled down on our promise to exceed our Paris commitments by the end of this decade and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. It also launched our campaign to create over one million jobs, restoring employment to pre-pandemic levels and higher. We are ensuring Canadians have good jobs they can rely on, particularly those hit hardest by the global pandemic. We are making direct investments in the social sector and infrastructure, providing immediate training to quickly skill up workers and offering incentives for employers to hire and retain workers.

We are aware that to be successful, our climate plan must put all Canadians, and all communities, at the heart of our efforts. Indeed the Throne Speech was clear on this. It stated:

Canada cannot reach net zero without the know-how of the energy sector, and the innovative ideas of all Canadians, including people in places like British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

This pledge to empower all Canadians includes getting more women working as employees and executives in the energy sector. We simply cannot afford to leave half of our workforce on the sidelines as we embrace a future built on innovation, ingenuity and imagination. Studies show that energy companies that have diverse leadership are more innovative and profitable. We can and should do better. We are taking action to advance gender equality through the Equal by 30 campaign. We are promoting women in the energy sector at various international bodies such as the G7, the Clean Energy Ministerial and elsewhere, not just because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is the smart thing to do. It is just good business. To date, more than 150 companies, governments and organizations have signed on to the Equal by 30 campaign. They are making important commitments towards equal pay, equal opportunities and equal leadership for women.

While we are proud of our record of engaging and including Canadians in this fundamental transformation of our energy systems, we know that there is still more to do. We are prepared to do the heavy lifting to achieve net-zero emissions, grow our national economy and realize a clean energy future that leaves no one behind. Canadians ask no more and they deserve no less.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments, the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to get a few comments from the parliamentary secretary on pricing. This government appears to be making affordable energy seem costly, and thereby give the illusion that its policy is somehow affordable.

Let us talk about the Atlantic loop. We all know the hydro coming online in Labrador is going to be very expensive compared with the alternatives. The government has proposed sharing that very expensive power with the rest of Atlantic Canada.

Could the member talk about her government's plan to ensure ratepayers throughout Atlantic Canada, and in my home province of New Brunswick in particular, do not get socked with high prices because of the government's policy and being forced to buy power through the Atlantic loop?

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Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, substituting power under the Atlantic loop does not necessarily mean using power that is already available through Muskrat Falls, which he quotes as higher-priced power. It includes the opportunity to develop additional power sources, whether in Labrador, other parts of Atlantic Canada or central Canada. Those are the things that will be considered. The Atlantic loop is about replacing [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] affordability of that power to citizens.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the government representative a question about the targets, which are not included in Bill C-12.

Immediately following the Paris Agreement in 2016, the first ministers met and issued what is known as the Vancouver declaration on clean growth and climate change, which states, and I quote:

First Ministers commit to:

Implement GHG mitigation policies in support of meeting or exceeding Canada's 2030 target of a 30% reduction below 2005 levels of emissions, including specific provincial and territorial targets and objectives;

Why is there nothing in the bill about specific targets and objectives?

[*English*]

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, I got most of my colleague's question. I apologize if I miss the mark here, because it did cut in and out.

I think as a government we have demonstrated we are prepared to do the heavy lifting to achieve net-zero emissions by 2030. We have launched a campaign to do so. To date, we have already had more than 150 companies [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. We will continue to improve on those as we go.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will go to the next question and comment, and then I will make a statement. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased that we are discussing moving towards a massive reduction of carbon emissions. It is necessary.

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My concern is that I have been in the House since the days when Stéphane Dion was telling us about the great plan for Kyoto. Year in and year out, emissions rose under Stephen Harper and under the Liberal government.

When I see the Prime Minister reach out to Joe Biden and say that he is promoting Keystone XL, I ask myself how serious the government is if it is promoting a dead-dog project like Keystone XL that is going to massively increase our greenhouse gas emissions and sending the message to the Americans that we are not serious.

When is the government going to get serious on moving off the oil sands and moving to a clear, credible transition?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, I must apologize. I actually lost the whole system during the middle of the member's question. I sincerely apologize.

I would say to him that I know this is an issue that he is very concerned about, around climate change. We would certainly expect the member's support on this bill, as he has championed many of the things included in this bill in the past.

Again, I apologize, and I appreciate the intervention by the Leader of the Green Party, in supporting me in improving my Internet access here in Labrador. We are well on the road to trying to do that, but as members know, it is a long—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Since the member did not hear my question, I think it would only be fair that I get a chance to repeat the question. That way, we would get it very clearly on the record, the lack of action from the Liberal government on Keystone XL.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is not a point of order. It is actually a point of debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Labrador for his speech.

With the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act, the government is introducing a bill that will help fight the extreme risks associated with climate change.

The science is clear. Human activity is causing unprecedented changes in the Earth's climate. Climate change poses serious threats to the health and safety of humans, to the environment, including biodiversity, and to economic growth.

Canada's climate is warming twice as fast as the rest of the planet's. In our northern regions, it is warming three times faster. We can see the effects of that warming in many parts of Canada, and they will only intensify over time.

These changes have many consequences. For example, scientists expect higher average precipitation in most of Canada. The availability of fresh water is changing, and the likelihood of water short-

ages in the summer is growing. A warmer climate will intensify some extreme weather conditions, such as heat waves and floods.

Canadians are already feeling the effects of climate change and extreme weather events, including the increasing intensity and frequency of flooding, storms, fires, coastal erosion, extreme heat events, melting permafrost and rising sea levels.

These effects pose a significant risk to the safety, health and well-being of all Canadians, our communities, our economy and our natural environment. It is important to ensure that Canadians are protected against the risks associated with climate change.

Reaching net zero by 2050 is vitally important to mitigating the risks of climate change, not only for Canada but on a global scale. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that meeting that target is essential if we want to limit global temperature increases to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and reduce the risks associated with climate change.

Limiting the temperature increase to 1.5°C is especially important because it will have a considerable impact on the effects of climate change on all fronts, compared to a potential global temperature increase of 2°C.

Limiting warming to 1.5°C would give us additional options to adapt to the effects of climate change. When Canada ratified the Paris Agreement, it committed to setting and communicating its ambitious national objectives and undertaking ambitious national measures to mitigate climate change in order to meet them.

I would like to remind members that the Paris Agreement seeks to strengthen efforts to hold the increase in the average global temperature to well below 2°C and, if possible, to limit it to 1.5°C. Currently, Canada's nationally determined contribution, communicated in accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is its target of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. The government is determined to meet this target, and even exceed it.

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The government has also committed to developing a plan to set Canada on a path to achieve a prosperous net-zero-emissions future by 2050, supported by public participation, including provincial and territorial governments as well as expert advice. Canadians know full well that climate change threatens their health, their way of life and the planet. They want climate action now, and that is what the government will continue to do by immediately introducing a plan that will enable Canada to exceed its 2030 climate targets and legislation that will aim for net-zero emissions by 2050.

Before the government can reach its net-zero targets, it must first engage in a process that takes into account the considerations of the populations most affected by climate change. Although Canada's indigenous peoples and northern communities are exceptionally resilient, they are also particularly vulnerable because of such factors as their remoteness and inaccessibility, the cold climate, aging and ineffective infrastructure, and reliance on diesel-based systems to generate electricity and heat homes.

• (1035)

That is why the government is determined to move forward with the approach based on the recognition of rights reflected by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 and by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In fact, the government will introduce a bill to implement the declaration by the end of the year.

The government is also committed to strengthening its collaboration with Canada's indigenous peoples when it comes to climate mitigation measures. This commitment builds on existing initiatives. The government is contributing financially and collaborating on first nations, Métis and Inuit projects to monitor climate change in indigenous communities, build resilient infrastructure, prepare and implement climate change adaptation strategic plans or even develop green energy options that will help reduce dependence on diesel.

The plan to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 would also contribute to making the Canadian economy more resilient, more inclusive and more competitive. With a view to creating a stronger and resilient Canada in the wake of this pandemic, climate action will be the cornerstone of our plan to support and create one million jobs across the country.

Regardless of the global challenges associated with the current pandemic, climate change continues to worsen, and there is little doubt that 2020 will be one of the warmest years on record.

It is important to recognize that climate change is a global problem that requires an immediate response from all governments in Canada, as well as from industry, non-governmental organizations and Canadians.

However, the government recognizes the important collective and individual efforts that have already been made and wants to support this momentum to mitigate climate change. For example, as of 2024, the Société de transport de Sherbrooke will be using new electric buses with a view to completely replacing its bus fleet to make it green. I congratulate the municipal council and Marc Denault, chair of the STS board of directors, for this initiative.

I also want to mention the important work of the Conseil régional de l'environnement de l'Estrie and of Jacinthe Caron, whom I have met several times. They are behind several green projects including the Embarque Estrie platform, which identifies public and active transportation options in the region on a web map. This type of initiative shows that it is possible to make a collective contribution to climate change mitigation and to work together.

Furthermore, not too long ago, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change jointly announced a \$100-million investment in the clean resource innovation network to support research and development projects that advance the environmental and economic performance of the oil and gas sector.

Working across government will be an important part of our efforts to mitigate climate change. That is why the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act provides for consultations with federal ministers having duties and functions relating to the measures that may be taken to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction targets.

The Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act will further our efforts to mitigate climate change by setting national climate change mitigation targets based on the best available science and by promoting transparency and accountability in relation to achieving those targets. Concretely, this bill will create a legally binding process to set and achieve climate targets, and require assessment reports, climate plans and examinations by the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development.

This bill will help Canada achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 and meet our international climate change mitigation commitments.

• (1040)

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, listening to both the hon. member's speech and the speeches of some of her colleagues, the way they talk about our energy industry is troubling. I am proud to represent a region of this country that has world-class energy producers. Those hard-working women and men have contributed greatly to Canada's economy. They have world-class environmental protections and the most ethically produced energy in the world, so I take issue with the fact that the government continues to attack Canadian energy, oil and gas.

My question is simple. Does the member acknowledge that Canada already has the most ethically and environmentally produced energy in the world?

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• (1045)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, I respect my colleague's concern.

[*Translation*]

As we have said from the beginning, we cannot achieve net-zero emissions without the energy sector's ingenuity and know-how. A number of Canadian oil and gas companies have already committed to net-zero emissions, and they are innovating to meet that challenge.

Canadians, industry, international markets and oil and gas companies know that achieving net-zero emissions is good for our economy and our environment, and we are taking action to get there.

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

I am sure she is committed to fighting climate change, but I have my doubts about her government, just as I did during last night's emergency debate on the French language, which I watched. There were a lot of good intentions and fine words. The government says that it is going to take action and that it is going to do this or that, but nothing much actually gets done.

One of the key promises the Liberal government made a year ago was to plant two billion trees. We saw the Prime Minister taking selfies with Greta Thunberg and that sort of thing. Things were really going to get moving. Two billion trees is a lot, but I would imagine that a lot of trees can be planted in a year.

My question is simple. Since the Liberal Party was elected, how many trees have been planted in Canada, and how many of those were planted in Quebec?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

For years now, ever since 2015, our government has been taking concrete action to protect the environment. Some of those measures include eliminating single-use plastics, buying hybrid buses, which I talked about in my speech, installing more charging stations, increasing protected areas from 13% to 25%, making significant investments in green infrastructure and introducing measures to encourage businesses to invest in clean energy.

Those are all concrete actions our government has taken over the past few years, and that is what we will continue to do.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, climate change is the number one issue for people across this planet. The people of my riding, especially indigenous and young people, were expecting the government to take real action in this bill. The government does not even have a milestone target for 2025. They have nothing, so there will be no accountability, or even a progress report, until 2028. The environmental commissioner currently does not have enough resources to do the regular work and is not truly independent.

Does the member agree that the environmental commissioner should be an independent officer, like the official languages commissioner?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

It is true that there is no 2025 target, but the Paris Agreement is structured around 2030, as are provincial plans, including British Columbia's and Quebec's, and the whole world's plans.

Bill C-12 provides for greater accountability and transparency by introducing an obligation to set a target and develop an emissions reduction plan, both of which must be tabled in Parliament within six months of the act coming into force. There are also legally binding procedures that require the current government and future governments to set national climate targets.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to participate in the debate on Bill C-12, a bill that does absolutely nothing for the environment. By way of analogy, I want to explain a little about what the bill actually does and what it does not do.

In 2015, Stephen Harper passed balanced budget legislation as part of the budget. The idea was that he would put in place a law that would require the government to, in most situations, run a balanced budget. That was a good idea and one that was advanced by many fiscal Conservatives who believed on principle that if there were a law in place requiring governments to run balanced budgets, they would be much more likely to balance budgets going forward.

The problem was that in 2016 the Liberals came in. Every time a budget is passed, a new law is also passed. Therefore, what did they do? They repealed the balanced budget law.

In my province of Alberta we had a balanced budget law in place that was actually repealed by another premier of that same political stripe. The idea is certainly desirable, that we might have legislation in place that would bind the actions of future governments. It might have some rhetorical impact, but it only goes so far, insofar as a subsequent government, or maybe even a subsequent group of people from the same party, could repeal or slightly amend the legislation in order to allow them to continue on the course they are on.

The parliamentary secretary is reminding me that I am splitting my time with the member for Edmonton Riverbend. I want to thank the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader for being so helpful all the time. I look forward to further feedback from him as we go.

It was at least credible as an exercise for a government that was already running a balanced budget to put in place balanced budget legislation. Imagine how absurd it would be if today we had a government that was not running a balanced budget and had no intention of running a balanced budget, putting in place legislation to require a government in 2040 to run a balanced budget.

That would be a little silly. It would demonstrably be an excuse for not having a plan. It would be putting in place legislation to bind a future government to have a plan that it does not currently have, recognizing full well that the future government could repeal the law that required it to have a plan, or at least extend it.

This brings me then to Bill C-12, a bill that does not present a plan for action for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is simply a framework by which the government would put in place a plan that it would be expected to follow by achieving certain targets at certain distant points in the future.

I have no problem supporting a bill that calls on government to act, to put in place targets and act on those targets in response to future events as we move forward. However, it should not escape members of the House that we have yet another case in another important policy area where, instead of putting forward an action plan, the government is choosing symbolism. It is choosing statement over substance.

The Liberal government has been in place for five years and we still do not have anything like a serious environmental plan. Instead, what we see from the government are warm words, attempts to demonstrate its feeling and solidarity and aspirations for distant dates. What frustrates me about the issue of the environment is that we have serious challenges in terms of our environment. They require a serious response, a response that understands the opportunities and the trade-offs, and that makes choices today about how we move forward toward the realization of targets that have been put in place.

Imposing new taxes is not going to cut it. That is the Liberals' approach. When they are talking about action, they are talking about putting in place new taxes. The new taxes on Canadian industry and Canadian activity only is simply going to chase jobs and opportunity beyond our borders. If the Liberals succeed, as it seems they are intent on doing, in shutting down our energy sector, those investments will still happen. Global demand for energy is going up. People need energy.

• (1050)

The question is not if we can shut off our use of energy. The question is if we can find ways of producing energy and delivering energy that are more efficient and more effective. Can we provide that quality of life to people around the world who require an increase in the use of energy, but do it in a way that reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

If we recognize that the problem is not going to be solved by reducing the use of energy, and that it is only going to be solved, generally speaking, by increasing the efficiency of energy production, that should push us not only to lead in the production of energy that is clean, efficient and effective, but also to lead in a way that recognizes the existing technology.

It is great to talk about wind, solar and other alternative sources of energy, but we have to recognize as well where the existing technology is today and how we can make concrete, meaningful improvements to the use of existing technology that providing energy to people right now to meet their energy needs.

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That is why I believe that a real environmental plan should be pro-Canadian and pro-Canadian energy. We should encourage the development of Canadian energy, and we should also encourage our energy sector to continue on the road they are on, in terms of improving efficiency, improving effectiveness and delivering more energy to more people in an efficient way.

We have colleagues in this House from all other parties who, frankly, attack the development of pipelines, who attack efforts to find new markets for Canadian energy. We know, by and large, that the issue for them is not really about the transportation. It is generally about wanting to shut down the production of that energy, but they do not think about what will replace Canadian energy if we shut it down. It is going to be energy from other countries.

A member from the NDP was just attacking the Keystone XL project. We have had other members attack other projects in this place. It was the Liberal government that imposed arbitrary regulations, which killed the Energy East pipeline project. We have politicians from all parties, aside from the Conservatives, who are attacking energy projects, but they do not think about what the alternative would be. Should the United States be importing more energy resources from Venezuela, which has lower environmental standards and lower labour standards?

• (1055)

[*Translation*]

Should Quebec be importing more oil from Saudi Arabia?

[*English*]

Should we be taking more energy resources from outside of Canada? I would like Alberta to be able to supply Quebec with more of its energy. Of course, the Bloc is not going to like that, because it would be great for national unity if Alberta energy were fuelling Quebec's energy needs.

The fact is, though, that more Canadian energy, cleaner Canadian energy with continually improving innovation and standards, would be good for the environment, not bad for the environment. It would reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

We can do even better than that. We can make Canada a super power in terms of the development of clean energy technology. We can incentivize the development of new technology and then export that technology around the world. We can meet our environmental obligations by helping developing countries access the technology that we have here, helping them access it to address environmental challenges that are both local to those places, but also global.

This is our contribution. This would be a great vision for environmental improvement and economic development, not to shut down our energy sector, but to mobilize and unleash our energy sector as an engine for technological development that can actually respond to the challenges of climate change and other environmental challenges that we see around the world. That is the real vision for the environment and the economy that has been lacking from this government. It would prefer to send signals and demonstrate its interest, without actually taking action.

Government Orders

Can we achieve the targets in Bill C-12? Can we get to net zero by 2050? I believe we can, but we will only get there, not by putting in place legislation that merely sets out targets, but by supporting and unleashing the development of our energy sector as a clean energy hub for the world. That is what we need from the government.

We need a government that truly understands the importance of addressing our environmental challenges and supporting our workers through pro-Canadian energy approach. That is not what we have from the government. That is what we need going forward.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member said we have no plan. I would like to ask the member this. If he and his party are going to try to make the case during this debate that we have no plan, why have they spent so much energy, effort and passion contradicting, voting against and denying the many items in our plan that are now reducing greenhouse gases?

• (1100)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, there is no plan. All the government talks about is using the environmental challenges we face as an excuse to raise taxes and shut down Canadian energy. Of course, Conservatives are opposed to those things, not only because they are bad for our economy but because they do not help us achieve our environmental objectives.

I will remind the member that Stephen Harper was the first and I believe the only prime minister in history to put in place a plan that reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Some members would like us to have done more and to do more going forward, but I will take that record against Liberal increases in greenhouse gas emissions any day of the week.

Liberals do not understand that the solution is not shutting down Canadian energy and higher taxes. It is, rather, unleashing our economy to pursue that potential that is going to allow us, together, to respond to these environmental challenges.

[*Translation*]

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

Since he loves talking about Alberta and the oil industry so much, I have a question for him about that. CBC reported recently that thousands of jobs were lost in Alberta because oil prices fell by about 30% in March. With that in mind, I would like to know whether he still thinks it is a promising industry that will help us reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and achieve net zero one day.

I would also like to take this opportunity to ask him why he and his party refuse to support energy transition measures by investing in green technologies that could help create green jobs in his province and for his constituents. When I say “green technologies”, I am not talking about oil. In fact, if I may comment briefly on the Keystone XL pipeline, I would remind him that even the Americans do not want it. President-elect Joe Biden has been quite clear on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is an important question to respond to: What is the future potential of the energy sector in Canada? It is important for the member to know that while there is an economic impact, no doubt, of fluctuations in the oil price, investors understand that oil prices go up and oil prices go down and investments are significantly informed by an assessment of the long-term confidence they can have in that market. That is why, even when oil prices have been low, we have seen significant investments made in the energy sector in other jurisdictions.

We have a particular challenge here in Canada and that has to do with market access. It has to do with the fact that there are great energy projects that make it most of the way through the process, but then Liberal MPs publicly lobby cabinet to kill those projects and they are not able to proceed.

We have a challenge in Canada facing the energy sector, but it is not a problem of price because the price is always fluctuating and decisions are made on long-term horizons. The problem we have is politics. I have been told by ambassadors that Canada is seen as a country with political risk when it comes to investment in the sector. It is not a technical problem. It is a political problem.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member and his Conservative colleagues have said they are worried about how much getting to net zero will cost, but the costs of meeting our targets and stopping dangerous climate change are so much lower than the costs of missing these targets. In fact, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy has projected that by 2050 and in the years leading up to 2050, it will cost between \$21 billion and \$43 billion a year. Wildfires, flooding and extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and intensity, and people are worried about their kids and their future but also about the present impacts of climate change.

Does the member agree that the climate crisis poses a serious threat to our environment, our health and our economy?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is very important to be clear about the areas on which we agree and the areas on which we disagree. Conservatives agree that we should work toward that 2050 net-zero target, but the difference between our parties is that New Democrats seem to believe that the way to get there is to shut down highly productive parts of our economy and simply allow that energy to be produced in less clean, less effective ways in other parts of the world.

Conservatives do not believe that we should get to net zero by shutting down our economy. We believe we should work toward that goal by technological improvement through things like carbon capture and storage and green technologies that can work within and in concert with our energy sector to address the challenges we face, while providing people all over the world with the energy that they vitally need.

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• (1105)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to join members from beautiful Edmonton Riverbend, albeit it is a little snowy here today.

I am pleased to participate in the debate to speak to Bill C-12. I want to start specifically by addressing how bills like this impact my home province of Alberta.

Most Canadians are aware of how tough the times have been here in Alberta over the past several years. Thousands upon thousands of jobs have been lost in the energy sector and my city of Edmonton has an unemployment rate of over 12%. Calgary is about the same. These two cities already had some of the highest unemployment rates in the country before the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has made the situation even worse. Unfortunately, many businesses will not reopen and many Albertans will have no jobs to return to after the pandemic is over.

Why have times been so tough for Alberta? Federal government legislation that appeared designed to decimate the energy industry and rapidly deplete the oil and gas industry has been introduced. Bill C-69 overhauled federal environmental assessment processes for construction projects, effectively deterring investment in Alberta. Bill C-48 bars oil tankers from loading at ports in northern B.C., making it impossible to export Alberta oil to new markets. On top of all that, we suffered through a regulatory attack like no other from the Notley NDP government, which really set us back decades. Just as all this was occurring, the government announced a new clean fuel standard, which is yet another blow to Alberta.

Honestly, it will be impossible for Alberta to fully recover, with yet more regulation that makes our province unattractive to investors. Our leading-edge energy industry will not be competitive against other countries if we have so many regulations tacked on by the federal government.

To help counteract this attack, the Alberta government just launched a natural gas strategy that would see the province become a leader in hydrogen production and liquefied natural gas for export. Natural gas will be regulated under the clean fuel standard. No other jurisdiction in the world is applying this type of standard to liquefied natural gas. However, the clean fuel standard will once again exacerbate the economic depression, as reported by Canadians for Affordable Energy, which estimates this standard will cause 30,000 job losses nationally and at least \$20 billion of capital will leave Canada. Alberta will disproportionately experience this loss, but all Canada will be impacted.

I agree with my colleagues across the aisle that it is well intentioned to strive toward net-zero emissions. However, we do differ on how to get there. Harnessing the energy sector and its talent is, in my opinion, key to meeting that target. We must include energy industry stakeholders when developing any environmental plans. From what we have been hearing initially on Bill C-12, the government has failed to do just that.

At the end of the day, climate change is a global problem that requires a global solution. For decades more, the world will continue to use oil and gas. The question then becomes as to whether energy will come from democratic countries like Canada with strong envi-

ronmental protections or from dictatorships with no environmental protections or respect for human rights.

Domestic energy production, including oil and gas, is an important part of making our country more self-reliant and more resilient in the future. In today's world, we cannot afford to become reliant on energy from any other countries and, quite honestly, we have no need to. Getting to net-zero emissions in the energy industry requires a plan, not just a plan to have a plan. What we see here is a mission to develop a plan in the future and the government's plan is already being poked full of holes. The focus could have been on harnessing energy and the use of technologies from sources such as nuclear and wind carbon capture, with the government providing incentives similar to those that were used to stimulate the early development of the oil sands. Many governments have a long record of practical and successful environmental initiatives.

Under our previous Conservative government, Canada successfully tackled acid rain, expanded national parks and removed dangerous chemicals from the biosphere. We must persevere on our shared environment for future generations without sacrificing the jobs Canadians need today or damaging the economic engine that helps fund our vital social programs.

Our recent report from the Canada Energy Regulator found that, even with policies in place to curb emissions, oil and gas will still make up two-thirds of energy sources in 2050. This report also found that there will be increased demand for natural gas, which I mentioned before as a fuel that will become more heavily regulated under the clean fuel standard. This is again a deterrent for investors in foreign markets. We have an opportunity to help with emissions globally, by being part of the switch from coal-fired plants in Asia and other parts of the world to natural gas, a much cleaner form of energy.

• (1110)

Exporting our natural gas, technology and talent to other parts of the world will go a long way in the fight against climate change. Removing coal-fired plants makes a huge dent in emissions globally. We all agree everyone has a role to play in tackling climate change and Canada is no exception, but aggressively regulating our energy industry when there is still known demand for its products is short-sighted.

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We can do more good globally by using our technologies in oil and gas to help tackle climate change both abroad and in Canada than by abruptly shutting it down. Natural gas is a huge opportunity for Canada to be a world player in other markets. More excessive regulation by the federal government not only hinders this opportunity but threatens the livelihoods of many Canadian families.

The bill before us would set targets to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050. This is a laudable goal and I want to be clear it is one I fully support, but it is once again a big shiny object over here being used to distract Canadians when the government cannot be clear on what the vision of its plan is to get there.

Is this a bill to strike a 12-person committee? If it is, then be honest and tell us that. Do not promise this is a visionary piece of legislation that requires three ministers to walk across an open field that some communications person somewhere decided would make good optics to distract the Canadian public.

We see the government continue to make new environmental commitments, while still failing to meet its previous climate promises. The government's own projections show it is not even close to meeting its current commitments, yet it is setting new targets that are higher and even further into the future. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Canada is on track to significantly miss its 2030 emissions commitments. What about the two billion trees promised in the last election? I have not seen a single tree planted by these guys. Actually, there is not even a plan to plant a tree, let alone a budget to do it.

I, for one, would really like to work with my colleagues across the aisle to produce a comprehensive plan to tackle greenhouse gas emissions and to meet net-zero emissions by 2050. I have kids and I desperately want their future to include a safe and healthy environment. It is hard to support the government when it delivers an optical illusion of a plan that continues to include more regulations and taxes that hurt our economy by deterring investment in Canada. Life has become more expensive for Canadians as a result. Eventually Canadians are going to ask, "At what cost?"

I truly believe here in Canada we can develop a plan that harnesses the technology and brainpower of our energy industry to help other countries transition to energy sources that are much less harmful to the environment. We can make Canada and Canadian energy independent instead of importing oil from countries with brutal regimes and human rights abuses. We can remove regulations and red tape, and at the same time make Canada more attractive for international investment.

I am here and fully on board with achieving a net-zero goal. We can do this by creating a comprehensive plan and policies. We simply need the government to work with us in opposition as opposed to continually pretending to the world it cares without any necessary targets required. I plead to the government to please consider working with us, especially at the environment committee, to strengthen the bill so we get it right for all Canadians.

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, on the day the bill was released, the member for Edmon-

ton Riverbend tweeted a question on Twitter asking if net zero was achievable by 2050. Then we listen to the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, and it seems to me there is a lack of commitment to be able to achieve that net-zero target.

I am wondering if my friend from across the way can provide his thoughts on whether the Conservative Party would be committed to hitting the target of zero emissions by 2050.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Speaker, through you to the parliamentary secretary, forgive me for consulting with my constituents on certain questions that are before the House.

Obviously my personal view is that we can certainly get to net zero, but it is working with the opposition. It is not going through with a photo op of walking across a field pretending this is something that is visionary. There is no plan here.

We are hearing over and over again in Alberta that this, on top of everything else that has already been put on us, is just so debilitating to jobs and the economy. We have already suffered through Bill C-69 and Bill C-48, the clean fuel standards and now this: a plan to have a plan. Again, I want to make sure we get this right. I am more than prepared to work with the government to do that, but we need to do it and we need to it soon.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I salute my colleague who sits with me on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

I must say that I do not agree with several elements of his speech, including the idea of continuing to develop fossil fuels. We must free ourselves from our dependency on fossil fuels, because we have other resources at our disposal.

According to Climate Transparency, Canada has the highest per capita GHG emissions of any G20 country. We must act. Someone once said, "I would put my money on the sun and solar energy. What a source of power! I hope we do not have to wait until oil and coal run out before we tackle that." This was Thomas Edison speaking in 1931. We are just 90 years behind.

We have a variety of energy sources in Canada, and we should quickly look to using biomass, wind, solar, geothermal and other types of energy. What does my colleague think of that?

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Speaker, I share a lot of time together with my colleague at the environment committee. It is nice to see her.

Industry is already onside. It is not this adversarial relationship, which I think a lot of people across the country envision it to be. The energy sector is not pushing back against provinces like Quebec and environmental groups. It is essentially working toward this target already.

I will share a quote. Cenovus Energy said, “Cenovus’s long-term ambition is to reach net zero emissions by 2050.”

Canadian Natural Resources Limited says, “With a strong commitment to reducing GHG emissions, our long-term aspirational target is net zero emissions in our oil sands operations.”

To say that the oil and gas sector in my province is the problem and that it ignores everything else is completely false. It certainly has been working at this for a very long time, ensuring we get this right.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives say that they are worried about how much getting to net zero will cost. We have heard projections that right now it is costing \$5 billion a year, in wild fires, in flooding, in the various impacts of climate change. The predictions have indicated that it will be \$21 billion to \$43 billion a year by year 2050. That means we are running huge deficits for the future.

Does my colleague not agree that it is fiscally irresponsible for us to not take action now to tackle climate change?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Speaker, I would advise him and the New Democratic Party to look at the costs already. I quoted the unemployment numbers in my city. It is at 12%. Twelve per cent of the people we run into in my city are unemployed. This is a heavy energy sector. A lot of people who live here work up in Fort McMurray. Calgary is much the same. We are seeing more and more of this already because of the last five years of increased regulation by the Liberal government.

It is frustrating, because we want to do more. However, we certainly need to work together to get this right.

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 will be sharing my time with the member for Halifax.

I have a number of thoughts that I would like to share with the House in regard to Bill C-12, noting that the government’s first priority and focus continues to be on the pandemic. There should be no doubt about that.

It has been interesting as we have been dealing with legislation over the last couple of weeks and today. Once again, we are bringing forward somewhat historic legislation, this time dealing with a very important issue related to the environment, of which I know Canadians, as a whole, would be very supportive. I am absolutely confident of that fact. However, when we look back at the legislative agenda and the types of legislation we have brought forward. I find interesting to witness some of the voting that takes place.

For example, related to the pandemic, we had the wage loss and rent assistance program legislation, which was critically important. It received the unanimous support in the House and was passed. It was considered in committee, it went through third reading, was sent to the Senate and received royal assent. That is good news for small businesses in all regions of our country.

Then we have this legislation, Bill C-12. It seems there are different attitudes on this bill. In listening to the Conservative critic, I believe the Conservative Party will support the legislation going to committee. On the other hand, it was interesting hearing the former leader of the Green Party say that she would not be supporting the legislation. The NDP and the Bloc will support the legislation going to committee at least.

Therefore, on the surface, it seems that we recognize the value and the importance of this legislation. It was really quite encouraging when the minister indicated to all members of the House, like other ministers, that if the opposition wanted to be constructive and work collaboratively with the government, the government was very open to ideas and ways to make the legislation even better.

However, let us be very clear. If we look at the last federal election, the leader of the Liberal Party, today’s Prime Minister, indicated that we wanted to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 and that we would bring in a legislative framework that would allow that to happen. Bill C-12 is yet another fulfillment of that election commitment. As I said, I believe Canadians would be very supportive of this.

This is an important issue, if members think of carbon and what it does to our atmosphere. Reference has been made to two ways we can deal with it, such as carbon capture and storage. Incredible companies and individuals have looked at ways technology could advance the capture and storage of carbon. Another way is through nature, such as tree planting. I would encourage my colleagues across the way to stay tuned. They will hear more about tree planting going forward. I have had the opportunity to participate in tree planting ceremonies or activities in the last year.

Net zero by 2050 is achievable. This legislation allows us to set that framework in which we will see regulations. It would create a very important advisory body, which would include individuals of stature, to look at achieving net-zero emissions. It would provide the current government, and hopefully future governments, the opportunity to ensure we stay on target.

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• (1120)

Yesterday, during the debate, I heard a Conservative member say that we had to ensure someone from the oil and gas industry would be on that board. The Conservative Party said that it was an absolute necessity; it was not an option. Then the NDP critic said absolutely not, that there should not be executive members from the industry on that board. That was the essence of what she said.

This is not new. Often we get extreme positions coming from the New Democrats and the Conservatives that are completely opposite. What they do not necessarily realize is that the best way to secure the economic development we desire collectively is to recognize the importance of the environment. If we work with stakeholders, we can achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

I would encourage both members who spoke on behalf of their respective parties to read what the minister clearly indicated; and that is that we will have levels of expertise on that advisory group, which will include industry representation.

I asked a question of the previous Conservative member about a tweet yesterday. It was from the member for Edmonton Riverbend. We introduced the legislation and the member planted a seed of doubt by asking if it was even achievable. I then listen to the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. From a Conservative perspective, no doubt it was a great speech. For those who want net-zero emissions by 2050, not so.

In fact, we should all be concerned about what the member said in his speech. He said that it was no problem. Heaven forbid the Conservatives form the next government. They could wipe out the legislation through their budget. The member has somewhat implied this, that they do not have to live up to the legislation the Liberals are putting into law today. After all, a future Conservative government could incorporate the wiping out of this legislation in a future Conservative budget bill. That raises a few red flags.

The Conservative Party needs to tell Canadians exactly what its intent is. Will the Conservatives stand by this legislation? Based on what I have heard, I am not convinced the official opposition is committed to net-zero emissions by 2050.

The Conservatives are already planning ways to get out of the legislation. The critic has said that the Conservatives have a number of changes they would like to make. We look forward to seeing those amendments once it gets to committee stage.

We have targets, the first one being in 2030. Within the next six months, we will see how achievable it is. Once we get to 2030, every five years after that it will be renewed. Therefore, there is a high sense of accountability. Those annual reports from the advisory body will also ensure there is more accountability and transparency. Unlike the Conservative Party, this government takes the issue seriously.

• (1125)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do want to remind the hon. members that when someone has the floor, to please hold their thoughts and wait to ask questions later. A lot of heckling was going on, and that is unacceptable.

Questions and comments; the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg for his lucid thoughts today.

He mentioned the accountability and transparency of the government. We have asked for details on its carbon tax. The member for Carleton called it the carbon tax cover-up. The government has never given any of them.

The member continues to talk about how much action the Liberals have taken. With the bill, they are going to create an advisory board to help guide the minister. Have they been basing all their decisions on just their own input?

Oil and gas includes B.C. LNG and includes coprocessing. Will the member commit to pushing the minister to ensure there is a place for industry, with a significant role, on the advisory panel?

• (1130)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member made reference to the price on pollution and I would like to throw that example back at him. In the first five years, we had a pan-Canadian approach. We worked with provinces and ultimately put into place a price on pollution. Only the national Conservative Party of Canada was outright against a price on pollution. Shame on them for not recognizing it.

In our first mandate, we also emphasized the importance of public transit and a phasing out of coal. The Conservatives are consistently found wanting when it comes to dealing sincerely and genuinely with our environment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-12 follows the classic Liberal pattern. It is not an action plan; it is an intention plan. I have long had the intention of exercising, but I have not done it. It is important to be aware of the difference.

The bill talks about requiring the setting of national targets. It does not talk about setting a national target of 30% by 2050 compared to 2005 levels, as the Bloc Québécois has proposed.

Our colleague also mentioned carbon capture. Over the past four years, the government has invested \$24 billion to support the oil and gas sector, but during the same period, it has invested just \$950 million to support the forestry industry, which is the best industry for capturing carbon.

I repeat, this bill is not an action plan; it is an intention plan.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is not being fair regarding what the legislation is ultimately doing. At the end of the day, with this legislation we are putting together an advisory body. We are putting into legislation a law that would ultimately ensure that we head toward our target of net zero by 2050. I see that as a positive thing. I suspect it is one of the reasons the Bloc, from what I understand, is supporting the legislation.

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We are hopeful that we will continue to get support from the Bloc and other parties once we get into committee, where we will be open to ideas. However, the false impression that the bill is not of substance is, I think, a real stretch.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member across the way mentioned that the last question was not fair. I am curious if he thinks it is fair to Canadians to put off climate accountability for 10 years.

The Liberals are saying they are putting in five-year milestones, but for some reason they left out 2025. The world's top scientists are saying the next decade is the most important if we want to avoid catastrophic climate change, so why are the Liberals leaving out the most important years?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we should be careful when we use the word “hypothetically”, but, hypothetically, if we had said 2025 the member would have said, “Well, why not 2022?” There is never, ever any pleasing the New Democrats.

At the end of the day, this is a reasonable target. We are talking about 2050. Within the next six months we will have a well-established strategy going forward. Once we hit 2030, it will be every five years afterward. The bill would create an advisory body that will ensure there is an annual report, which also includes a higher sense of accountability.

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I come to this esteemed chamber from Halifax, the heart of our great nation's maritime coast, Canada's ocean city and my hometown.

We are a city shaped by the ocean. Our jagged coastline cuts into the Atlantic where surf-pounding shores are home to a proud people whose livelihoods for generations have relied on those deep blue waters. Along my riding's shoreline, there is cove after cove, including Ferguson's Cove, Herring Cove, Fairview Cove, Portuguese Cove, Duncan's Cove, Sandy Cove, and on and on, and the great Halifax Harbour and Bedford Basin. Each one is unique in its own way, but they are brought together by a shared identity as coastal communities.

In my time as a member of Parliament, I have spent untold hours in these communities, knocking on doors or attending the many festivals and neighbourhood events, like the famous swordfish supper in Sambro. However, in recent years, with greater frequency, there is another reason I travel to these communities, and it is one that brings me no joy at all. In what has become a troubling routine, I find myself putting on my rain jacket and boots and heading out to these communities to survey the wreckage from the latest hurricane and the damage to my constituents' homes, fish shacks, wharves and boats.

In 2019, following Hurricane Dorian, I remember standing on a bridge in Herring Cove alongside constituents as we watched a detached roof float by us. The storm surge from that hurricane had compromised the breakwater protecting the cove and had lifted whole fish shacks from their resting places, smashing them against the rocky shoreline. We watched as one family climbed onto the splintered wood of their now unanchored fish shack, floating in the cove, to collect what few belongings remained.

Last week, I met with a group of constituents in Ketch Harbour to discuss the ongoing efforts to rebuild the community wharf that was destroyed in the same hurricane, more than a year ago. It was a devastating blow to a community that relied on that wharf as its town square. Earlier that summer, my daughter and I had enjoyed ice cream cones purchased from a makeshift ice cream stand on the wharf, with the proceeds funding the local community hall. However, the wharf is gone, at least for now.

I could tell story after story about how extreme weather events have impacted my city and constituents. I know my colleagues in the House understand this experience too, for many have taken on the same heartbreaking routine in their own communities, whether it is helping to mobilize volunteers to sandbag shorelines against 100-year floods now occurring nearly every year, or working to protect whole towns, forests and national parks from raging climate fires. The stories of devastation go on and on.

The science is clear: Climate change is escalating the severity and frequency of these severe weather events. For a coastal riding like mine, it is a flashing red alarm and all hands on deck. We are in a crisis, and we must act urgently to reduce emissions, fight climate change and protect our communities. At its core, that is the matter before the House today with Bill C-12.

Hurricane Dorian hit Halifax just days before the 2019 election, and in that electoral race, our party, the Liberal Party, released its plan to continue our work to fight climate change. In our first mandate, we enacted the strongest climate plan of any government in Canadian history, as the moment required, with over 50 measures, including pricing carbon pollution, phasing out coal, protecting nature, investing in renewables and putting a climate lens on government-funded infrastructure, a measure quite personal for me. It was born out of a private member's motion I had passed in my first year as a member of Parliament, Motion No. 45.

We turned the tide of inaction after 10 years under the Conservatives. Still, we recognized at the end of our first mandate that we needed to go further, and faster. Time, after all, is not on our side.

Today, as we debate Bill C-12 at second reading, we are carrying out one of the key promises we made to Canadians in 2019 when they looked at our record and plan and elected our Liberal government to do what is necessary to fight climate change again.

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Included in our platform was a promise to exceed Canada's 2030 emissions goals, while setting legally binding, five-year milestones to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act, is a key step in ensuring that we reach that target, fulfill our promise and get to net zero by 2050.

I would like to speak about the measures within Bill C-12.

The act would require that national targets and plans for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada be put in place with the target of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050. It would further require that the government make available, for the public to see and assess, its planning and progress toward those stated targets.

● (1135)

The act would require the government to establish its 2030 target within six months of the act's coming into effect, along with its emission reduction plan, and by 2027, the government would be required to publish its first progress report under the act. From there, in 2035, 2040 and 2045, the government would be required to set targets and provide its plan to get there by the subsequent five-year milestone.

The act would include a number of important accountability measures that impose consequences on any government that does not achieve its target. In such a scenario, the act requires that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change will provide an assessment report to Canadians that includes the reason why, in their view, Canada failed to meet its target and a description of the steps the government is taking or will take to address the failure to achieve the target.

In recognizing the important role of Parliament and officers of Parliament, the act would also require the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, supported by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, to examine and report on the government's implementation of the measures it includes in its plan to reach its targets. Further, input from Canadians is essential to climate accountability, and to this end the act establishes an independent net-zero advisory body, a group of up to 15 experts from across the country in fields such as business, labour, indigenous knowledge and clean technology. It will include environmental leaders. This advisory body would provide advice in an annual public report, and an official government response would be required.

The purpose of the bill is to provide accountability and transparency to Canadians as their federal government, today and in the future, works to reduce emissions and fight climate change. It is what Canadians want and it is what we owe Canadians as we face one of the most urgent crises of our lifetimes.

I would like to speak briefly now to the current state of climate politics in Canada.

When I consider the massive challenge before us, I am troubled by the degree to which politicization of the issue of climate change has led to gridlock, inconsistency and inaction across governments as far back as the 1990s. This trend is not unique to the federal government or to Canada, but it is one that we must overcome.

Action on climate should not be political. It should not be ideological. It should be based on science, based on evidence and based

on all of us as parliamentarians looking out for the well-being of the people we represent in this place.

I think about the constituents I mentioned earlier, those I stood with on the bridge in Herring Cove following Hurricane Dorian. They did not care if I was a Liberal, Conservative, New Democrat or Green. They wanted to know what I was going to do as their representative in this place to help them, stop this crisis, fight climate change and protect our environment for future generations.

I believe the legislation we are discussing today, Bill C-12, will hold all governments accountable regardless of political stripe, accountable to Parliament and accountable to Canadians, today and in the future. I look forward to debate on the bill here and at committee, and I will remain hopeful that all members will come together in the interests of the people they represent to act and act now.

● (1140)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague very carefully. Of course, he comes from a very beautiful part of the country and he described it eloquently.

My one concern is that the government is typically very good with words and symbolism. I am going to give a specific example. One would think that if we commit to planting a certain number of trees, it is not actually that difficult a task to do. The provinces do this in Canada every year.

If you promise to plant trees and cannot actually follow through, how can Canadians ever trust you in something that is so much more difficult to do and more complex? We have a little cynicism as we listen to the debate today, so maybe you can tell us what is so difficult about following through with your commitment to plant trees.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. member to address the questions and comments through the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, going back to the 2015 election cycle, I note the Liberal Party promised that if Canadians sent them here to be their government, we would take the most dramatic action on climate change the country has ever seen, and this is just what we did.

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There are plenty of reasons to believe we will follow through on our commitments. We provided \$28 billion to support urban transit, \$26 billion in green infrastructure, investments in smart grids and green vehicles, a \$2-billion low-carbon economy fund, \$1.5 billion for the oceans protection plan, over \$1 billion for nature conservancy and protection of biodiversity, and over \$2 billion to support clean technology in Canada. I could go on and on; the list is pages long.

There are plenty of reasons for Canadians to understand that we will follow through on our commitments.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is clear that all of us, or almost all of us, agree that Bill C-12 has some interesting elements.

However, I do have one concern. I think it is insane to put off the targets until 2050 or use 2050 as a deadline. Things are changing and moving so fast, and 2050 is 30 years away. If we do the math, 30 years from now, Canada will probably have gone through 12 to 15 successive Liberal or Conservative governments. Obviously, we will be independent by then, but I am referring to them.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about this. Climate change is the number one global priority. We talk about it constantly, and there will be more bills. How can we even consider such a long-term mission? We are talking about 30 years. I cannot buy that.

[*English*]

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, I think the member is asking if it is possible for Canada to hit this target. Of course it is not going to be easy, but we can and will achieve it. We are going to be working with Canadians across the country. It is what they expect and have asked of all of us.

The target is, as he said, 30 years into the future. I would tell him to look at the progress we have made on some of the things that I have already listed: clean power, action on the environment and on habitat. We are going to be drawing on the experience and expertise of Canadians across the country to make this happen, and we are very confident that we can do it.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the number one location in the world for a solar economy is south central Alberta. When I was in Edmonton, I met with energy workers who were frustrated because they are being sold down the river by the ideology of the Jason Kenney government. We see large international investors walking away from Alberta because of a lack of commitment.

The energy workers I met with are retraining themselves for a clean energy future. They asked me where the government is, both federal and provincial, with the huge opportunities there are to retool the economy in the west. Jason Kenney is not going to do it, we know that. The question is: Where is the federal government on the investments we need to start building solar and wind energy projects in the west?

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, as the member knows, a number of Canadian oil and gas companies have already made commitments to net-zero emissions, including Enbridge, Suncor and Shell. They are innovating. They are rising to the challenge right in the very heart of Alberta. That is why we heard in the throne speech that this government will be undertaking the largest upscaling and rescaling of the Canadian workforce that we have ever seen, investing more in that effort than has ever been invested before.

The truth is that we cannot get to net zero without the ingenuity and know-how of Canada's energy sector and its very smart workers.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Regina—Lewvan.

Bill C-12, which we are discussing, purports to improve transparency and accountability as the government moves towards a net-zero target by the year 2050, which of course is 30 years down the road.

Before I get into the details of the bill, I just want to say that we, as Conservatives, acknowledge that Canadians love their environment and love their open spaces. As a father of four daughters, when I was a little younger, I spent a ton of time walking mountain ridges, hiking through valleys and on our lakes and rivers. We have done it all through beautiful British Columbia. We love our environment. I want to preserve that environment, not only for my daughters but for my grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

I believe Canadians are responsible. They want a responsible approach to protecting our environment while not sacrificing our long-term prosperity and the jobs that prosperity creates. As we move forward with a net-zero project, we want to make sure that it is our own environmental plan: a Canadian plan, driven by Canadian stakeholders and Canadian citizens, not by activist groups that in many cases are funded by foreign sources. We want this to be a homegrown solution.

When I talk about solutions, this is a global problem that calls for a global solution. The Liberal government has always been focused inward. It asks what we are doing in Canada, not what can we do for the world. We have all kinds of opportunities to solve that global problem.

Let me get back to the legislation itself and highlight three important elements within it. First, the legislation would require current and future federal governments to establish a framework to get Canada to net zero carbon emissions. Let us be clear, this framework is not an action plan and it certainly does not identify any additional tools that the government might use in reaching its 2050 target.

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What does it mean to be net zero? I am going to try to briefly summarize what that is. It is a situation where the greenhouse gases that are caused by humans are balanced, or offset, by human intervention to remove the carbon from our environment. There are many different ways we could do that. Perhaps the most obvious is to plant a tree or trees, because trees sequester carbon dioxide and store that carbon within their trunks and branches. That is a simple situation that every Canadian would understand.

However, Canada has many other areas where it is a world leader. Carbon sequestration can take place in things such as zero-till farming. Our farmers are leaders in this area of reducing tillage to make sure that we are not emitting more carbon than we absolutely have to.

We have some wonderful examples of carbon capture and sequestration, or CCS as it is called, in Canada, such as the Boundary Dam project in Saskatchewan, and Carbon Engineering in Squamish, British Columbia, close to where I live and where I often ski.

These are opportunities for Canadian companies that have found a way of extracting carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, or from emissions, and reusing it. They are repurposing that carbon in other ways. For example, in Squamish, Carbon Engineering simply sucks the carbon dioxide out of the air. The company adds hydrogen and creates a new fuel. It is the cleanest fuel, and it can be used in something as simple as a car.

Clean fuels. Canadian innovation. That is something we do not hear a lot about from the Liberals. All they talk about is taxing. They make plans but those plans never materialize. The Liberals have had five years.

• (1150)

Canada is also a leader in such things as hydrogen and nuclear technology. I am talking about 21st-century nuclear technology: modular nuclear technology that is safe to use. There is tremendous potential in that area.

The second thing this legislation does is call for the creation of an outside 15-member advisory board. Where have we heard that before? Let us remember the great electoral reform project that the Prime Minister touted in 2015 during the election. The 2015 election was going to be the last time we were going to have elections under the first past the post system. He established a committee that was supposed to consult with Canadians, but the fix was in because he already had a preferred method that was going to favour Liberals. When the committee brought in the information that it had received from key stakeholders, he realized it was not going the way he thought it would, so he dropped the whole thing and fired his minister. That is what we get from the current Liberal government.

That is my fear. That is why I am skeptical about this legislation and especially this 15-member advisory board. Who is going to be on that board? Why will the Liberals not tell us? Will there be industry leaders on that board? Will the oil and gas industry be represented? Will they appoint members who are not married to the Liberal Party or insiders, such as Gerald Butts' friends, for example? Are they the ones who are going to populate this board? If so, this is going to turn into another disaster like electoral reform.

The second question I have on that particular issue is, why did the government not table a framework and a plan back in 2015? The government has had five years to table a plan to move forward to provide Canadians with the tools they need so that we can reduce our emissions across Canada. There is a very easy answer to that question. It is because the government has failed to meet the targets that the Liberals themselves set at the Paris climate conference.

I was at that conference. I joined the Canadian delegation. I wanted to see what was going on there. The Liberal government had taken the Stephen Harper targets, which were going to be the floor, and the moment they got back from Paris the Liberals were going to ratchet up those targets. What happened is that we still have the same targets. There was no intention of making the targets stricter. Today we know from virtually every organization that is credible, including the IPCC, the Auditor General of Canada, the Climate Change Commissioner and even the government itself, that it is far from meeting the Paris targets that were set for 2030. What makes Canadians believe that the current Liberal government is going to meet its 2050 targets?

Why is the Prime Minister making another promise that we know he will never be around to fulfill? That is the question Canadians should be asking themselves.

Conservatives in the House support this legislation. It is not because we trust the Liberals: we expect they are going to monkey around with this, as they normally do. However, this legislation is intended to increase transparency and accountability as Canada moves forward with its 2050 targets.

This is the problem with transparency and accountability. As my colleagues in the House will remember when the government was first elected in 2015, the government provided mandate letters for every minister, then and since, that say the Prime Minister expects them to raise the bar on openness, transparency and honesty. It is baked right into those mandate letters. I refresh myself by reading them from time to time. I want to make sure that the Prime Minister actually did that, because what we have today is the most unethical government our country has ever seen.

The Prime Minister himself, on three occasions, has been charged with violating or is alleged to have violated the ethics laws of Canada. Twice, he has been convicted. There is a third case pending, and we expect he will be convicted on that one as well.

• (1155)

He is the first Prime Minister in Canadian history to whom this has happened. It is an ethical failure. How can we expect the Liberal government to fulfill its commitments to transparency and accountability in this legislation, Bill C-12? If Canadians are watching this today, they are going to start scratching their heads and asking themselves how many times the Prime Minister has promised and not delivered. He has become the chief promise breaker of this country. It is a sad reflection on our country.

Some have described this legislation as a “nothing burger”, as there is really nothing to it, just like *Seinfeld*, but I will conclude by saying this: We support this legislation—

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• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have already allowed additional time for the member. Maybe he will be able to add more through questions and comments.

Continuing with questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad to speak today in the House. I have a couple of comments and two questions in particular.

The hon. member spoke to how he loves to take walks, appreciates nature and wants to protect our environment for future generations. My first question is this: Why has he and the Conservative Party of Canada voted against every single measure we have put in place to meet the challenges of climate change, such as a price on carbon pollution, a budget that put in place record investments in public transportation and others?

The second question is with respect to the balance he would like to achieve of protecting the environment and supporting the economy. How does the hon. member reconcile the Conservative Party's opposition to this bill and many others, and its approach toward companies like Shell, which has recently come forward with its own 2050 goals and milestones, and the many industries that are stepping up to meet the challenge every day?

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, is the parliamentary secretary reading off talking points? He obviously did not listen to my speech. Although I am a skeptic, we are supporting this legislation.

To get back to the parliamentary secretary's first question as to why we have voted against the government's legislation, it is because its environment legislation is invariably tied to more taxes for Canadians, such as the carbon tax and the clean fuel standard. The list goes on, and this will continue. Canadians should prepare themselves because under a Liberal government there will be more taxes placed on their shoulders. That is why we do not support the legislation. It is deeply flawed.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I grew up surrounded by nature. There were mountains, lakes, rivers and forests as far as the eye could see. The environment has been one of my chief concerns since I was a little girl. However, growing up in a remote community meant that we could not be as environmentally responsible as we wanted to. When we were very young, we learned how important it was to take care of the environment for future generations. There was the Kyoto protocol in 2005 and the Paris Agreement in 2016. We have a duty to take care of our environment because we are only borrowing it from our children, yet we are putting off our responsibility until 2050.

Can my hon. colleague tell me what measures could be introduced quickly, well before 2050, to truly make the environment a top priority for the sake of future generations?

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for that excellent question, which I take seriously. I also do not want to pre-

empt our new leader from coming up with a climate plan that makes sense and does not impose a massive tax burden on Canadians.

We intend to come forward with a plan that is committed to our 2030 targets. We aspire to also get to net zero by 2050. We are supporting the legislation, but we will build a climate policy that respects the provinces and territories, focuses on making industry pay, not consumers and ordinary Canadians, and includes market-based principles to incentivize positive economic and environmental change in Canada.

I hope that answers the member's question.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know wildfires, flooding and drought are having huge impacts right across our country, especially for wild Pacific salmon, which my colleague cares deeply about.

Right now we are running huge environmental deficits to future generations. We need real action, urgent action. There is no real accountability with this bill when it comes to a milestone target, and 2030 is too far out. We will not even be able to check in until 2028 to see how we are doing.

Does my colleague agree we should be having a milestone target of 2025 so we can measure where the government is? Also, what recommendations does he have beyond just technology? Does he not see the sense of urgency that we need to take on so we are not leaving huge deficits to future generations?

• (1205)

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I share a province, a beautiful province, and we both share a deep concern for the declining wild salmon populations on the west coast. From time to time, we get to work together in moving forward with policies that are hopefully going to make a difference there for the salmon.

With respect to there being no accountability, he is absolutely right. This legislation purports to establish accountability and transparency measures, but in fact there is nothing in the government's history that would indicate it is prepared to actually follow through on that.

On whether to set a target for 2025, the government did not even meet its 2020 target, and it is way off its 2030 target. It is missing it by a country mile. Why would we set another target? We want to see action and results.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to start off with a quote from George Bernard Shaw: "We are made wise not by the recollection of our past but by the responsibility for our future." I think that is a timely comment as we are talking about a bill that is not going to take effect until 2050.

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I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-12, the important issue of climate change and how we must rise to meet the challenge of the country. I want to take this important time to point out some things about Canadian energy producers and why our industry can be a part of the solution to climate change, not a contributor to the world problem.

First off, we cannot talk about climate change without acknowledging that this is truly a global issue. The atmosphere cannot distinguish between two sides of a political border or even opposite sides of the planet. Environmental policy abroad impacts us here at home, and vice versa. When it comes to the planet, all of humanity is interconnected, whether we like it or not.

There is no question that Canada must do its part to fight climate change through increasing the use of renewable resources, employing Saskatchewan's innovative carbon capture and storage technology, expanding our use of nuclear power generation and using new technology to make our existing infrastructure greener and more efficient. I am confident that we can, should and will be leaders in the fight on climate change.

I will say once again that climate change occurs, and human activity influences this. However, our strategy must always keep the global nature of this problem in mind. Canada is not an island and cannot assume that rivals, or even allies, will follow our lead. We need to work with countries from around the world collaboratively to find ways that Canada can minimize environmental impact in the short term while investing in long-term solutions.

When we measure the total life-cycle emissions of liquefied natural gas and coal based on extraction, production, shipping and burning, liquefied natural gas burns roughly 40% cleaner than coal. If Canada were to expand its production capacity and increase LNG exports to developing countries currently using coal to bring electricity to underdeveloped regions, we would be taking a huge step forward, a concrete step in reducing emissions in the short term.

China currently has a coal-fired electrical generating capacity four times larger than the United States' and plans to increase that number by over 25% in the coming years. If only a quarter of China's coal-fired plants transitioned to liquefied natural gas, it would result in emission reductions of around 750 megatonnes per year, based on current levels. For reference, Canada's total emissions in 2019 were 729 megatonnes.

The old saying "perfect is the enemy of the good" comes to mind here. While this government repeatedly fails to meet its emissions reduction targets, our energy industry, which is a world leader in environmental sustainability, continues to be crippled by regulations like Bill C-48, Bill C-69 and the ineffective job-killing carbon tax.

Instead of leading a global strategy to reduce emissions based on research and development, technological innovation, and finding economically viable climate solutions, the Liberal government has reduced Canada's ability to compete and receive a market share with countries with zero track record when it comes to fighting global emissions.

Canada needs to strive toward energy independence, create a business environment that mobilizes green innovation in the private

sector and export those green innovations around the world. Shutting down energy production in Canada would do nothing to impact the behaviour of countries whose entire economies relies on oil production. If anything, it would drive up global oil prices due to decreased supply and create even more incentive for oil production abroad.

Until we have long-term renewable energy solutions that are economically viable, natural resources such as oil and natural gas will continue to be a part of our way of life. It is not a matter of choice, but a matter of necessity. None of this is to say that it is acceptable to sit back and do nothing about this issue.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle often scapegoat Conservatives as people who are indifferent about the environment or claim that we do not care about our children's future. Nothing could be further from the truth. We care, and we also want to work hard to bring our climate crisis under control.

We need to find solutions to these problems to guarantee the future of my three children, James, Sinclair and Nixon, alongside that of every child in Canada. We want them to grow up on a healthy planet.

• (1210)

We need to reduce global emissions to avoid reaching the point of no return. I also know that Canada cannot sabotage our own industries as the rest of the world sits back. We cannot be the only country making drastic changes to our energy production capacity, and we cannot assume that we are setting an example for others. Currently, I cannot think of a single country that is looking to emulate Canada's emission reduction strategy and hamper its own ability to grow its economy.

If Canada wants to be a world leader in the fight against climate change, what we do to change our share of global emissions is not enough. We must invest in economically viable green energy solutions that we can export to the rest of the world. Canada has been behind countless green energy innovations. We have been an example to the world.

One source of Canada's climate innovation is the careful management of our vast boreal forest spread across the country. Canada's network of forests is massive at over 347 million hectares, or 9% of the world's total forest area. Canadians continue to plant hundreds of millions of trees every year without the help of the federal government.

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Canada's forest industry alone plants an additional 600 million trees every year, making its commercial activities sustainable for generations to come. Canadian energy companies are doing their part as well. Syncrude has planted 11 million trees, Suncor has planted 8.9 million trees, and the faster forests initiative has planted over five million trees, just to name a few.

Using forests as a natural climate solution is about keeping thriving forest ecosystems alive. Around 70% of carbon in the forest is stored within soil and debris on the forest floor. I know the government has set a target to plant two billion trees, but they have planted zero. Even on Father's Day, my wife asked me to plant five trees in our backyard, so I am doing more than our federal government.

Alongside capturing and storing carbon emissions, our forests are also home to another solution: biofuels. Canada exported 498.3 million dollars' worth of wood pellets in 2019, a solid renewable biofuel that grows back and recaptures the carbon that it emits when the biomass is burned.

I also want to talk about carbon capture and storage solutions. As a Saskatchewan MP, I am proud of the innovations we have made and are leading on this technological front. As an innovator and pioneer, Saskatchewan is proud of our carbon capture. Experts agree that carbon capture and storage is a solution that simply works.

Dr. Julio Friedmann, a senior research scholar at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, says that when industrial facilities implement variations of this solution, they see emission reductions of between 55% to 90%. About 300 million tonnes of CO₂ is captured from large-scale carbon capture, utilization and storage facilities every year. The technology is effective and could lead to real world emission reductions in the short term if we embrace it. The downside is that currently 70% of this is done in North America when it should be done throughout the world.

These are just a few examples of solutions that can drive economic activity, create jobs and act as long-term investments in emissions reductions. None of them involve new taxes, energy austerity or hurt our economy. In fact, all of the solutions I have raised would create new jobs and increase economic activity, instead of dampening it.

I believe in green innovation and I believe in clean technology, but I also know that shutting down Canadian oil and gas production would do nothing to change the course of history. The only way that Canada can have a meaningful impact on this issue is the same way we changed health care forever, through the development of revolutionary technologies like insulin and pacemakers. Both of these inventions saved millions of lives around the world and would have never been possible without Canadian ingenuity and perseverance.

We can meet these ambitious targets. I have unlimited faith in the sheer intelligence and capability of Canadians, but I also know that if we are not focused on solutions, we cannot be embraced by the rest of the world. It will be too little, too late, and our contributions will be in vain. We need the rest of the world to join us in our commitment to reducing emissions.

Net-zero emissions does not mean net-zero growth in the oil and gas industry, the agricultural industry and the manufacturing indus-

try. We need to continue to rely on those very important sectors in our community.

● (1215)

For every step taken, we must take into account Canada's existing obligations to provide secure energy to all of our global customers.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to questions and comments, I want to make an observation that today's motion before the House is garnering, as one might imagine, great interest by hon. members, both here in the House and tuning in on Zoom. For that reason, I am going to ask members to keep their interventions to no more than about 45 seconds, both for questions and responses, so that we can at least have three questions in a five-minute period. We will try to do that to make sure that we are not pushing the time limits of other members who wish to participate in the debate today and in other days ahead.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke at great length about innovation and Liberals wholeheartedly agree that innovation will play a key role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, in addition to that, we have had top experts in the world, both in the scientific and economic fields, talk about the need to put a price on carbon pollution, to invest in public transportation and subsidies for electric vehicles and so forth, all of the things that my hon. colleague and the Conservative Party of Canada voted against.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague perhaps has a peer-reviewed study or some form of information that we are not aware of that would show that the only way to achieving net zero or reducing GHGs is by simply investing in innovation.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I hope my hon. colleague did not have me on mute, because last time he said we were opposing the bill and had not listened to the speech by the member from B.C. who said we would support it.

A lot of times we have looked at the targets brought forward by the government and said we were not going to meet them. Conservatives have good ideas. We have an environmental plan that does not just tax Canadians, like the Liberals enjoy doing, increasing taxes every year. The carbon tax increases every April 1. It is the worst April Fool's Day joke in the country.

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Conservatives continue to bring forward positive investments in innovation and technology to make sure we can meet our climate targets. Liberals are not even going to meet the targets they have made for 2030, so I will take no lessons from them.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the part of my colleague's speech on workers. Indeed, there will be no change if we do not think about workers.

However, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said in 2018 that we needed to leave 80% of fossil fuels in the ground if we wanted to meet the Paris Agreement targets. What does my colleague think of that? When he talks about exporting our energy resources can he move on to something other than fossil fuels?

• (1220)

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I talked about biomass and wood pellets and naturally renewable fuels. I am extremely proud that my province is working hard to meet the target of 50% renewable energy for all of our power sources by 2030. We can all set targets.

Also, there is renewable energy that we can export from Manitoba, which is hydro, and hydroelectricity from Quebec. There are many options. I do not believe we need to leave 80% of our fossil fuels in the ground. That would absolutely damage our economy and would bear poorly for future generations in terms of having secure jobs in this country.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member said that the Conservatives have a climate plan, but in 2019, when they received grades on their election platform and climate policies, they got a D in emissions reductions.

This bill, which I hear the Conservatives are planning to support at least being sent to committee, does not have adequate accountability measures built in. I am wondering if the member agrees that we need to strengthen the advisory body, but also make the environment commissioner independent so that the Liberal government and future governments are actually going to be accountable to Canadians.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, one thing I can say is that she will not have to worry about the commissioner because the NDP will never be in government, first of all, but I am looking forward to the opportunity to maybe have discussions around what the commissioner should or should not be.

When they talk about a D for our climate plan in 2019, our climate plan was very good going forward. I have talked to groups across Saskatchewan and the country. They say that only 60% of Canadians voted for a climate plan. I do not believe that is true. I believe 100% of Canadians voted for a climate plan, because the Conservatives have one. I am looking forward to the next campaign to deliver an amazing environmental plan for Canadians from coast to coast.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, in 2009, the Harper government agreed to the Copenhagen targets to reduce emissions by 17% from 2005 levels by this year. Eight provinces and all of the territories, representing 85% of the popula-

tion, met that target. However, two provinces actually increased their greenhouse gases to wipe out all of those other gains. They were Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Now British Columbia is joining with fracking the northeast to export LNG and it is going to blow its target right out of the water as well. I would like to know what the plan is. What happened to the Harper plan to meet those targets?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I fear that while many of my colleagues may have the video on when they are on Zoom, it might be on mute. I would really like to repeat my first comment: We are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future.

I think my Green colleague should keep that in mind.

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

[*Translation*]

This is a watershed moment in the history of Canada and the world. We know that, to deal with climate change, we must transform our communities and industries and this transformation comes with incredible potential for growth. We are on the eve of a financial and global economic realignment and we must act now to provide Canadian businesses a long-term competitive advantage and ensure that the use of smart and clean technologies increase in a draconian way immediately.

Canadian industries will have to make important decisions that will affect several generations, decisions on investments in assets that will last for decades much like the consequences of their emissions.

Our plan is simple. We are supporting Canadian industry and investing in the cleanest solutions that generate the least amount of emissions possible and at the same time establishing a clear legal framework through Bill C-12 to set national targets and develop plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Canada in order to achieve net-zero emissions within 25 years.

Net-zero emissions is not just a plan for protecting the environment and managing climate change, it is also a plan for building a cleaner and more competitive economy.

Bill C-12 proposes the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act, which will force the current and future federal governments to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. In doing so, we will be binding our government and all the ones that will follow. By imposing accountability, both politically and legally, we will earn the trust of Canadians and our industries in achieving net zero within 25 years.

It was precisely to hold Canadian governments accountable for climate change that I got involved in federal politics in 2015, leaving behind a career as an environmental lawyer.

At the core of this legislation is the requirement that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change establish the initial 2030 target and an emissions reduction plan within six months of the act's coming into force. I would be surprised if it takes that long. Both documents must be tabled in Parliament. A progress report must also be tabled by 2027. That is accountability.

The act requires the tabling and publication of targets, plans, progress reports and assessment reports. That is accountability. The legislation stipulates the content of milestone year plans, progress reports and assessment reports. That is more accountability.

It is important to note that, in the event that a target is not achieved, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, after consulting with the other ministers, will be required to include two elements in the assessment report: the reasons why Canada failed to meet the target and a description of the actions that the Government of Canada is taking or will take to address the failure to achieve the target.

In addition to the strong parliamentary accountability mechanisms mentioned earlier, the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, supported by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, will have to examine and report on the Government of Canada's implementation of the measures aimed at mitigating climate change within five years of the coming into force of this act and every five years thereafter.

• (1225)

For each of the baseline years 2035, 2040 and 2045, a target must be set and an emissions reduction plan established at least five years in advance of each of these baseline years. The target and the emissions reduction plan must be consistent with the purpose of the act, which requires that the establishment of national greenhouse gas reduction targets be based on the best available science, the objective of achieving net zero in Canada within 25 years and Canada's international climate change mitigation commitments.

[*English*]

We are talking here about accountability. We are talking about a series of measures that would hold Canadian governments, this government and future governments, to account. We have never before had such legislation in Canada. It is high time we pass the bill. It would be good for Canada. It would bring confidence to our industries, which know the world is heading toward net zero and that their competitive advantage will be augmented by investments now in efficiency in net-zero technologies.

We would be sending, through Bill C-12, a clear signal to Canadians, first and foremost, that climate change is real, climate change is a crisis and that it deserves action right now. It deserves the accountability of all governments, this government and future governments. We are also sending signals to industry and to the provinces about the seriousness with which we take this issue.

We will be sending a signal to the whole world that Canada will not fall victim to what Mark Carney has described as “the tragedy

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of the horizon”. Just because something is far off does not mean it will not hit us right between the eyes. It is already. My riding of Pontiac had massive floods in 2017 and in 2019. We are already paying the price.

The bill contains the word “must”, 27 times by my count, in association with an action by a minister or some agent of government. Canadian environmental law is replete with discretionary provisions, meaning responsible ministers can quite often make decisions as they see fit and are not imposed an obligation at all times. The bill would impose 27 “the minister must”.

That is so important and should give Canadians a great deal of confidence. It means we will not just be generating political accountability through the bill, not only will we require the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Minister of Finance come before the House and account for the targets, the plans and the progress, but we will be enabling the public, if those duties are not fulfilled by those ministers, to bring the government to court. They will have the opportunity to do so. Therefore, there would be judicial accountability and political accountability.

It is not only in our environmental self-interest, it is in our economic self-interest. Our government has absolute commitment to achieving net zero by 2050. I look forward to the day when the Conservative Party of Canada gets on board and agrees that this has to be done. I look forward to constructive contributions from members opposite in all opposition parties. We know a bill can be improved and we know there are expectations on the part of Canadians that we will collaborate to make a great bill even better, which is what will happen through the committee process.

I look forward to the discussion with my hon. colleagues.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before moving on to questions and comments, I want to repeat my instructions regarding the time allocated to each member.

Because today's motion is garnering a lot of interest, I am going to ask that members keep their interventions to no more than 45 seconds so that we can have three questions in a five-minute period.

We will now return to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

[*English*]

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot agree more that accountability is the key in this endeavour.

To that end, since the Prime Minister announced the promise to plant two billion trees, how many trees has his government actually planted? I would just like the number, please.

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Mr. William Amos: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member is aware that we are governing through a pandemic and our focus right now is on dealing with pandemic matters. However, I think what he is trying to point out is that it matters to Canadians that governments follow through on their commitments, and that goes without saying. It matters also that civil society be engaged and work with government toward the objectives that are set out by the government.

I would like to point out some of the comments, for example, by Shell Canada in relation to Bill C-12. It said, “Shell’s ambition is to become a net-zero emissions energy business by 2050 or sooner, in step with society. We applaud the Government of Canada’s action today, and look forward to working with them and doing our part to help Canada achieve this goal.”

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

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

He and I discussed Bill C-215, my bill on climate accountability. He told me that it was not the opposition's job to introduce bills like that but the government's. However, it seems his government completely missed the boat in the case of Bill C-12, because the government is not taking its responsibilities. The bill lacks accountability and transparency. His government promised to raise the 2030 target, which is not only the Paris Agreement target but also the target set by Stephen Harper's Conservative government. Let us not forget that.

Can the member tell me the real reason why the Liberals did not enshrine the 2030 target in the act? Is it because they already know they are not going to meet it?

Mr. William Amos: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. Let me be very clear: I have never discouraged her from introducing a bill. I think that it is important to have discussions. However, it is reasonable for a government that is serious about climate change to introduce its own bill.

The Centre québécois du droit de l’environnement, for its part, wrote that Bill C-12, “on net-zero accountability, is a significant and necessary step forward”.

The David Suzuki Foundation said that “This climate legislation could be game-changing. It promises to be a foundation for Canada’s path to meeting climate goals, domestically and internationally. Moving forward with climate accountability is exactly what the climate emergency calls for.” I could go on.

This legislation lays a solid foundation, and we will work with the Bloc Québécois to make any necessary improvements.

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the “tragedy of the horizon” and said that we needed climate action now. That is ironic, given the bill would not only put off climate accountability for the next decade, but it would also put off actually creating a climate plan for six months and would give another three-month window. That is after royal assent. It would probably be up to a year before we would see a climate plan.

How does the member justify using quotes about the “tragedy of the horizon” when this is exactly what the bill is?

Mr. William Amos: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my learned colleague, it is disingenuous to suggest that this bill is not all about establishing a clear process, with rigid timelines, that make it very clear to Canadians that the government will have to come back to Parliament with targets, with plans and have those plans evaluated and developed with independent expertise. Canadians have been asking for that. We committed to doing this in the election and we are delivering it.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the member talked about certainty. Over the last half decade, the Canadian industry has had everything but that.

Implicitly, the member, time and time again throughout his speech, talked about the need for certainty, the need to have plans, targets and whatnot. However, the entire premise of his speech forgets the fact that the Liberals have been government for five years and the Canadian energy industry has suffered, which has resulted in untold job losses and a significant impact on the livelihoods of Canadians.

Mr. William Amos: Mr. Speaker, I obviously disagree with the member's statement.

It is important to point out that much of Canada's business and industry is behind the net-zero target and the certainty this bill would provide. I would cite Goldy Hyder of the Business Council of Canada, “Transparency around net-zero emissions targets is essential, business leaders agree”—

The Deputy Speaker: We are over time at this point. We will now go to resuming debate, the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak to Bill C-12, an act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050, as it is officially known. I like to call it the climate action accountability bill.

I really am very happy, because this is the kind of legislation I have been waiting for ever since I was elected, just over five years ago. This bill does not go far enough as far as accountability is concerned, as I will mention later, but it is a good first step. We could strengthen that with amendments when it goes to committee.

This bill requires that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change sets greenhouse gas emission targets at five-year intervals starting in 2030 and ending, of course, in 2050 with the goal of net zero. I will say right now that I think this is the bill's greatest flaw. Science tells us that the coming decade, from now until 2030, is the most critical time for action on climate change. Now is the time when we have to be bold. Now is the time when we have to make sure we are not just kicking this down the road any longer.

Why is there not a goal for 2025? The Liberals have been in power for five years and have been talking the talk about climate action all that time, yet we have gotten nowhere on emissions reductions. In five years, the least they could have figured out is where we should be by 2025. That is the number one criticism of the bill. We need a 2025 target.

We also need a truly independent climate accountability officer whose only job is to monitor government action and effect. The environmental commissioner has other important topics that should be dealt with and is underfunded already on that front.

The advisory body this bill calls for should have a real specific role in setting targets, and the targets should not be set based on what the government feels is achievable without rocking any boats. They should be targets based on science and what we must do.

Another reason I am happy that this bill is finally coming forward is that Jack Layton tabled a similar bill in 2006. That is right, 14 years ago. That bill actually passed through the House of Commons, thanks to the fact that we were in a minority government at the time. People often think of minority government as not accomplishing anything, but the fact is that most of the good lasting actions by Canadian governments have come during minority Parliaments. That is another reason why we should embrace proportional representation in our electoral system, as they do in New Zealand and many other countries, but I digress.

Unfortunately Jack's bill was killed by the Conservatives in the Senate, an all too common example of anti-democratic action by that unelected body. I witnessed the same fate when my private member's bill was killed in the Senate last year, along with many others, as a handful of Conservative senators sought to stop Romeo Saganash's bill on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Happily, I hear there is a movement to change Senate rules so that private members' bills cannot be summarily stopped by a few unelected senators, but I digress once again.

I ran for office five years ago because friends and colleagues told me they felt we needed more scientists in the House of Commons. It is indeed an honour and privilege to be here. When Canada went to the Paris talks in 2015, shortly after that election, I was proud of the commitments we made there. However, I was deeply disappointed the following spring when MPs were literally instructed by the Liberal government to go back to their ridings to find out what we should do to meet those Paris targets.

We knew what we had to do. We had a long list of necessary actions to decarbonize our energy systems, electrify our transportation, retrofit our buildings to become energy efficient, and on and on. We knew we had precious little time to do it. Instead, we were told to spend six months or more talking to our constituents. I did

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that. I held town halls on climate change. The overwhelming message at those town halls was that we have to get on to it. People wanted to know why we were asking them, because we knew what we had to do and that we should just do our job.

I will not go into the litany of past commitments and broken promises by both Liberal and Conservative governments on climate action. It is clear that even the best intentions are stifled when the going gets tough. What the Liberal government did commit to at Paris was to use the old Harper climate target of bringing emissions down to 511 megatonnes by 2030. When it made that commitment, our emissions were at 720 megatonnes. By 2018, three years later, they had risen to 729 megatonnes. We are going in the wrong direction.

The Conservatives often give the excuse that Canada should not act on climate change, because we are a small country when it comes to population and there are much bigger contributors to global emissions.

• (1240)

The fact is we are the worst emitter on a per capita basis, and the rest of the world notices what Canada does or does not do.

A couple of years ago, I travelled to Argentina with the then Minister of Natural Resources for a G20 meeting on energy. The topic was energy transitions toward a cleaner, more flexible and transparent system. I was impressed by the presentations from countries such as Germany, Japan, the U.K. and China. They talked about bold action over the coming decade.

The U.K. minister, in particular, had a memorable way of summarizing his country's actions. First, was "walk the walk", meaning legislate the targets and have accountability. At last we have something like that here. Second was, "put your money where your mouth is" and make significant investments now in clean energy transition. Finally was, "have your cake and eat it too", meaning reap the benefits of the good jobs that are created by those investments.

What did Canada say at that meeting? Our Minister of Natural Resources stood up and said that they probably heard we just bought a pipeline, and spent the rest of his time explaining why that was necessary, in some Orwellian way. One could almost hear the face-palms in the room. The only thing that kept us from being at the bottom of the heap in that G20 meeting was the fact that the Americans were there, talking about clean coal.

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We found out this week, from the Canada Energy Regulator, of all places, that those pipelines, the Trans Mountain expansion, will not be necessary; nor will Keystone XL. It turns out that if we are serious about meeting our climate targets, which this legislation would signal we are, we will not need either of those projects to handle oil exports.

There are many things in this bill that I like, beyond the fact that the government is admitting that politicians are bad at keeping promises without some external body looking over their shoulder and carrying some sort of stick. The Liberals are acknowledging in print that we must limit global temperature increase to 1.5°C, and that we are almost there so we have to work fast. The bill does reference the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the first step we must take in any transition to a clean energy future.

The Prime Minister recently said of the lack of a 2025 target, “ultimately the accountability for government’s actions or inactions is from Canadians themselves”. These are not the words of a climate leader. They are the words of a climate follower.

We will support this bill at second reading, but the Liberals must work with us to strengthen the accountability provisions by creating a 2025 target and a more independent commissioner dedicated to this job. Canadians expect nothing less than this, and not just Canadians. Let us remember that the world is watching and expecting Canada to do the right thing. My granddaughter in New Zealand will thank us.

• (1245)

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 was listening to my colleague’s speech. He is being fairly critical of the government and the former government. One of the things that came across my mind is this: Would he level the same sort of criticism at the New Democrats in British Columbia? We have to remember the single greatest public-private investment was in LNG. That is a significant investment. It goes against everything that the member has just said. I wonder if he would state very clearly that he opposes that particular project.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I do not like the fracking of natural gas. There are projects that the NDP government in B.C. has moved ahead with because the projects were very far advanced, when the NDP took office three and a half years ago. I do not agree with everything that government does, but I support it, in that the New Democrats have the best climate action plan of any government on the continent and I am confident that they will lead the country in those actions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Every week, I see him in the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, where we study the forestry industry. In this regard, since we studied this issue in the resources standing committee, we know that the forestry industry is probably one of the best sectors for fighting climate change. Unfortunately, when it comes to natural re-

sources, both the Liberal government and the Conservative Party are stubbornly committed to investing in the oil and gas industry.

Would my colleague agree with me that it would be an excellent start to provide better support to the forestry industry in the fight against climate change?

• (1250)

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I agree forestry is well placed to help us in our battle with climate change. The fact is often pointed out that the forests are sequestering carbon. What I would like to see and what we are studying right now at committee, is to find out exactly what best practices forestry can use to make sure that we are maximizing that benefit that forests can provide. We can do all sorts of things poorly, but we want to find out what forestry can do to help us, to help the trees meet our climate targets.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I asked the question to the Liberal government outlining the need to make sure that industry, particularly our energy sector, is concerned. The member was asked about LNG. The member says he does not support fracking. It is kind of rich for the NDP to say it does not want those who are actually putting forward the capital, who are actually doing what it takes. For example, Teck Frontier had the support of first nations and it was to be a net-zero project. LNG has the capacity to displace dirty coal sources and supply British Columbians with jobs. The member’s community of Penticton has WestJet service from Calgary because of the investments of oil and gas workers and people who were investing in the wineries of the South Okanagan, which are very good.

Why does the member believe that oil and gas is dirty, or its workers or managers are not fit to be on the advisory board?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, the NDP is in favour of hearing from workers in the oil and gas sector in that advisory capacity. We are more concerned about hearing from CEOs or executives of oil and gas companies because frankly the reason that we are here today is that the push-back from the oil and gas sector has delayed and delayed our actions on climate change. We will need that oil and gas for years to come, but we need to move to cleaner fuels and cleaner energy. We need people on that board who will say “this is what we have to do and must do this”, not “we cannot do this”.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Centre.

I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-12, an act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050. As I understand the legislation, there are generally five main objectives: one, require the government to produce three specific reports, namely an emissions reductions plan, a progress report and an assessment report with respect to future emissions goals, to be tabled in Parliament; two, provide for public participation; three, establish an advisory board to reach zero emissions; four, write a fourth report on financial implications through Finance Canada; and five, write a fifth report to be tabled every five years by the environment commissioner.

I will say at the outset that I am generally in favour of more accountability and transparency and support the spirit of this legislation, but it does seem overly bureaucratic. In addition, it raises a number of red flags regarding the actions of the government as they relate to public accountability on environmental reporting and its progress to date.

In 2016, I worked as a political aide for the hon. member for Abbotsford. It was a new Parliament and there was general agreement that those on the environment committee wanted to work together for the well-being of Canada. This collaboration led to a June 2016 report entitled “Federal Sustainability for Future Generations—A Report Following an Assessment of the Federal Sustainable Development Act”. It received unanimous support.

The purpose of the report was to address the gaps in the Federal Sustainable Development Act outlined by former environment commissioner Julie Gelfand, who described the law as “a jigsaw puzzle without the benefit of the picture on the box.” The commissioner noted that the reporting required under the law gave readers a sense of progress, but “sufficient information was not included to provide a fair presentation of the progress being made”.

The committee wrote that the legislation did not meet expectations and there was general agreement by stakeholders that it lacked the enforcement necessary to improve how the government addressed environmental sustainability. The committee members recommended expanding the definition of “sustainability” in the act to include not just environmental considerations, but also thorough considerations of economic and social factors. Understanding sustainability more broadly would be instrumental in applying goals and targets that factored into all aspects of our government decision-making.

Some of the other considerations included enabling a whole-of-government approach to sustainability; assigning responsibilities to central agencies of the federal government; considering Canada's commitment to sustainable development internationally; considering short-, medium- and long-term targets; ensuring that the government respond to them; and setting additional measures for improving enforceability. The report was tabled in June 2016.

One year later, Bill C-57, an act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act, was tabled by the member for Ottawa Centre. In her speech, she highlighted that the committee was instrumental in her approach to the bill. She thanked committee members and noted that this legislation would make Canada one of the greenest countries in the world, that sustainable development was at

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the forefront of the government's considerations, that it was about meeting the needs of future generations without compromising the present and that it would expand the definition of “sustainable development” to three core pillars: economic, social and environmental.

All in all, Bill C-57 and the original law, the Federal Sustainable Development Act, would mean a few things. The government would need to write a series of reports. There would be parliamentary oversight and regular reporting. It would set targets and strategies on sustainable development in line with these reports. There would be an expanded advisory board to improve public participation and hear from first nations. Sustainability would be a whole-of-government matter, and the environment commissioner would be required to review progress and report on whether the government was meeting its targets and doing what it said it would do.

● (1255)

Upon review of the 2019 report entitled “Achieving a Sustainable Future”, as required under the Federal Sustainable Development Act, the government outlined 13 main goals: effective action on climate change, greening government, clean growth, modern and resilient infrastructure, clean energy, healthy coasts and oceans, pristine lakes and rivers, sustainably managed lands and forests, healthy wildlife populations, clean water, sustainable food, connecting with nature and safe communities. All in all, this is a pretty comprehensive set of goals and targets.

We could argue that net-zero emissions cannot even be considered unless there is real and concrete action on at least 12 of the 13 existing targets in the federal sustainability report and, consequently, the act. I cannot think of many Canadians who would have a problem with the Government of Canada pursuing any of these objectives in a reasonable fashion.

However, here is the major problem. As of November 2, the Government of Canada has still not brought into force Bill C-57, which brings forward needed improvements to the government's approach on sustainability. The issues the environment committee sought to address in 2016 still exist. The environment commissioner outlined them in detail, noting the jigsaw puzzle without a picture on the box. The majority of environmentalists in our country also saw them as something wrong with the legislation.

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Nothing the member for Ottawa Centre said on Bill C-57 in 2017 about creating the greenest environment has even been operationalized, and given that the minister has come before Parliament with a suite of new bureaucratic measures that would invariably duplicate existing objectives passed within Bill C-57 and are contained within the Federal Sustainable Development Act and its report, I cannot but be skeptical about this approach. Why not try to address some of the tangible things we can do to improve our environment today toward a net-zero future, as outlined in the existing and stated goals, which are already subject to Governor in Council review, thorough parliamentary oversight and consideration by the Auditor General and by extension the environment commissioner?

For example, Canada's regulatory framework under the Motor Vehicle Safety Act needs to be updated for new battery technology. What about the 13 goals, particularly clean growth and effective action on climate change? The Canadian Environmental Protection Act has not been substantially updated since its introduction by the Conservatives. We could do dozens of things there to improve product standards, help vulnerable populations and update our air quality monitoring systems.

Let us think about safe communities. We could plant a billion trees and reduce our environmental footprint. Let us think about conservation, clean water and healthy wildlife populations. We could work with like-minded countries to sign international agreements that would allow Canada to share our technological expertise. Let us think about effective action on climate change. We are still trying to operationalize those aspects of the Paris accord.

We could continue so much work on protecting habitats and, subsequently, species at risk. We could work more closely with our first nations brothers and sisters to take meaningful action to protect wild salmon and conserve the remaining spawning habitats along the Fraser River. We could even develop an economic plan to incentivize investors in strategic areas like modern agricultural techniques, systems software and satellite technology to reduce our environmental footprint. We could help companies like Carbon Engineering scale its technology in Canada.

What I see in the legislation before us is simply another example of Liberals talking a really good game yet doing next to nothing to make real progress right now. Is the government trying to make everyone laugh by requiring Finance Canada to write a report on risks and opportunities? It will not even commit to a 2021 budget. What a farce. The Parliamentary Budget Officer says the government lacks accountability and is not updating our public accounts and information on how the government is spending money.

What would have been more beneficial for our country and for the Minister of Environment to consider doing would be something like the following. He should bring into force an updated Federal Sustainable Development Act, and include within it an updated strategy with five actions every year the government could take during its mandate to move toward a sustainable future so it would be subject to the review of the environment commissioner. We could give Canadians certainty about the actions being taken and the consequences of such actions in real time.

• (1300)

We could set a standard for excellence today both in transparency and accountability, which are sorely lacking in the government and this legislation, and finally get to work and actually do something.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon for that excellent summary, especially of the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

Quite frankly, the record of the Liberal government is one of failure with respect to the environment. I harken back to a time when the Conservatives really cared about the environment. They expanded national parks and eliminated acid rain, thanks to Brian Mulroney, and did so many other things, such as shutting down coal-fired electricity generation.

The Federal Sustainable Development Act was a comprehensive piece of legislation that was modified by the current Liberal government. Does the member remember who introduced that act? What impact has it had in shaping our environment in Canada?

• (1305)

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, the Federal Sustainable Development Act was supported comprehensively by former Conservative environment minister John Baird.

To the point made earlier by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the Conservatives supported the Federal Sustainable Development Act update in Bill C-57 in the last Parliament. For the member to say the Conservatives do not care about the environment and do not want the government to improve accountability on environmental reporting is completely false. He should refer back to Bill C-57, which has still not been enacted and put into force by the government.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have seen right-leaning Conservative governments in the U.K., Germany, Poland and Japan all working toward a just transition and moving toward clean energy. In fact, the European president has said, “The European Green Deal is not just a necessity: it will be a driver of new economic opportunities.” They have done this by taking real action to phase out high-intensity fossil fuels.

Why are the Conservatives not jumping on board? This is an opportunity for a just transition for workers. Instead, they continue to promote an agenda that will leave us with huge economic and environmental deficits.

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I am in complete disagreement with the member's characterization of the Conservative Party of Canada.

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In my speech, I outlined concrete things the Government of Canada could be doing right now. For Canada to be a leader on the environment, we need to address some of our competitive disadvantages, update the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and do things that will allow Canadians, our businesses and our private sectors to take meaningful action to improve the environment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to come back to a sentence my colleague said, when he wondered why we are not taking concrete action right now to improve our environment.

I was a little surprised. When it comes to the environment, the concrete action that can be taken is generally based on the fairly simple polluter-pays principle. Everyone in the environmental field agrees on that.

However, every time that there is mention of a carbon tax, the Conservative Party is always up in arms. I would therefore really like to understand what my colleague thinks is the concrete action that can be taken to support the environment.

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, in 2017, my riding suffered massive forest fires. My constituents heard about the government's plan to plant a billion trees to protect the Bonaparte River, yet it has taken zero action. They would like to see concrete actions right now. Why does the government not move on that right now? Also, the first nation forestry companies would love to have some support from the federal government to improve our watershed. That is one concrete action the government could take.

With respect to a carbon tax, let me point out that the NDP exempted the carbon tax for the investment in natural gas production in British Columbia, as did the federal Liberals. Let us be real. The carbon tax is not competitive and, when push comes to shove, they do not even apply it where they really want to see investment.

• (1310)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are here today to talk about Bill C-12, an act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050.

I am happy to discuss the bill, because it is such an important matter for this country going forward.

My first challenge with the bill is why the government needs to include words like “transparency” and “accountability” in a piece of legislation. These principles should be part of all government legislation and all government action. Unfortunately, that is the way this government sees things or demonstrates its actions. In fact, these actions are about anything but transparency or accountability.

It is important to go back to what the Paris Agreement is. The COP21, the conference of the parties to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held the carbon levels were supposed to reach above pre-industrial levels to two degrees by the year 2050. We are doing our utmost to hit that. This requires, obviously, world action including Canada.

Planetary warming is going to happen around the world, and we need to contribute to making sure that we get everybody on the same page of reducing planetary warming. There are 7.5 billion people who live on the planet, and that would rise perceptually to 9 billion by 2050. All of these people emit carbon. All of these carbon-emitting entities depend upon carbon-based activities, including agriculture, livestock, heat and energy to fulfill their lives, which is the first tier of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

I have been in the House for just over a year. I was elected in Calgary Centre partly to give voice to some reasonable voices in the energy industry in Canada and actually show how we could move forward on this file without submerging ourselves, as a country, and making sure we move forward with common sense.

Interestingly, when we look at all the energy industries in Canada and the associations that represent them, they are all fully on board with getting to net zero by 2050. It is part of all of their advertisements and governance charters going forward. They are also the industry, people should remember, that pays the most taxes in Canada and that contributes the most to exports for a balance of payments, which is significant for this country.

Also, whenever we buy fuel, we think about what fuel means in Canada, which is getting from place to place and getting our goods from place to place, including our food and clothes. That is where 45% of the cost of the input from petroleum products goes right back into the government's pocket: what we call “economic rent.” When we compare, dollar to dollar, which energy source is more efficient, which is costing more and which is contributing more, we need to level the field. We need to understand that if we did away with oil and gas, which is what I am hearing some of the members in the House say, we would effectively be doing away with not only a very important industry to Canada, but a very important tax base to Canada. We would then have to replace that with taxation from Canadians generally, and the government would find another way to tax Canadians. However, let us look at that contribution and make sure that it is considered in this discussion.

The Liberal government continues to fail on the environment file. The Liberals have yet to come up with a plan that works, because they do not really understand energy, and I do not mean just fossil fuel energy. I mean all energy: the contributions to energy, how energy is produced and what the effects of producing energy are. There is always an effect to producing energy, even if it is in storage, whether it is hydro or uranium. There is an effect, no matter the sort of energy we get our power from.

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We talked about listening to the science, yet in my short time here, I am challenged to find a member on the government bench who actually understands science. Please guide me.

• (1315)

At the same time, the government ignores the multitude of scientists who have provided significant input on this file. I recall the task force for resilient recovery. In the midst of a pandemic, Gerry Butts and his rent-seeking friends jammed an agenda forward. Canada was suffering a pandemic. Is this transparency? Is this accountability? Do not let a good crisis go to waste.

Gerry Butts had a lot of success. He camouflaged a \$107-billion speculative program, at least, into a \$49.9-billion talking point that was largely reflected in the throne speech. This is not a talking point. This is Canada's environment. This is Canada's future we are talking about. The task force said "it is time to go big", which means playing roulette and betting Canada's future on red 36. Canadians deserve better stewards of their future.

In reading the task force report and then reading the government's throne speech, one notices that the paraphrasing in the throne speech is astounding. These reports had the same author. Who paid them? Who will pay them? Will it be the 15 advisers in this legislation? Not one of the task force members was a scientist, which is interesting. The report is littered with the moralistic right-speak of public policy experts: people who are interested in their own agenda, which is often their own financial agenda.

Perhaps we should look at the 15-member advisory board that is proposed in this legislation. A potential path forward that the government should consider, in my opinion, is for 15 advisers to be appointed to the Minister of Environment. Perhaps the government could commit to appointing 15 people who actually represent the 15 sectors that contribute to Canada's economy. There are enough public policy experts in the bowels of every government department. We do not have to hire others and get their input on what they should already have from their officials. We do not need more public policy experts. Bring in the economy's real experts: those who are contributing to Canada.

While we are talking about transparency, it is timely to discuss the regulation currently being constructed by Environment and Climate Change Canada: its so-called Clean Fuel Standard. In effect, it is a hidden carbon tax on Canada's productive industries. It is inequitably applied. The industry is waiting, once again, to see how the government may exempt them. A little influence in the government never hurt.

It is about picking winners and losers. It is not about transparency and definitely not about accountability. It is not about Canada's environment. It reminds me of the manufacturer's sale tax from years ago that had to be cancelled in the 1980s because industries left Canada. Industries still produced goods for Canadians elsewhere, but jobs and taxes left Canada. Everything left Canada, and it is what we now call carbon leakage because there was the same production and Canadians still bought the same goods that were produced elsewhere. This is an example we do not want to repeat.

There is a lot that has to happen in the energy industry. There is a lot that we need to make sure gets better, and we need to continue

to reduce carbon. I am hopeful this bill gets us part of the way there. I am hopeful the government will start taking this file seriously.

To this point, all I have heard is partisan shouting out of that side and blaming past governments for what they did not do. It is the Liberals' turn to step forward and move this file forward. We are trying to work with them.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the interests of putting partisanship aside and in the interests of science, the IPCC said the world needs to get to net zero by 2050, and 45% below 2010 levels by 2030.

Does the member agree with the IPCC's science?

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, the IPCC has its own scientific explanations. We have to look at what that means. Every party I know has committed to going forward with meeting net zero and getting toward it as quickly as possible. If it happens by 2049 or 2051, moving in that direction is exactly what we need to continue to do.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

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

However, I find it rather odd to hear him say that oil is good because when people go to the grocery store, they send money to the government. Based on available figures, the federal government has invested \$70 billion in fossil fuels over the last 40 years, including \$19 billion in the last four years, and \$2 billion this spring.

Sooner or later, we are going to have to transition away from oil. Even in Quebec, the Legault government just passed legislation to prohibit the sale of gas-powered vehicles by 2035. Does my colleague agree that, if we want to curb greenhouse gases, sooner or later we will have to transition away from fossil fuels? If so, what date does he propose?

[*English*]

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, I have noticed that many jurisdictions around the world are moving toward banning the sale of new internal combustion engine vehicles by 2030, 2040 or 2050. That is part of the transition we talk about.

The other part of that transition looks at the actual environmental benefit of what is replacing internal combustion engines. People have to look at the full-cycle cost, and the full-cycle CO₂ cost, of replacing internal combustion engines. Eventually, we have to get to the actual math, which is part of the science, that asks why we are shifting but our CO₂ footprint is actually increasing.

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I am going to challenge the member who asked the question to look at the actual consumer rebate of \$13,000 in Quebec, once the subsidies are removed, for an electric vehicle. What does that mean to the public, but what does it also mean to the environment to have a whole bunch of inefficient electric vehicles being produced, along with their batteries, and along with the pollution effects from those industries? That is the challenge we have, going forward.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the world's top scientists are telling us that we must dramatically reduce our emissions by 2030 if we want to avoid the worst consequences of severe climate change. The IPCC has been very clear that we need to stabilize global temperature to 1.5°C if we want to avoid the catastrophic issue that is facing us. We need to go beyond Stephen Harper's targets. Right now, the government has a milestone target of 2030. That means the next progress report will not be until 2028.

I am hoping my colleague agrees with me, that we need to listen to science and we need to set a much stronger target than 2030.

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, the issue around 2030 and, actually, 2040 and 2050, is that they are interesting dates. Let us recognize that each one of these targets is politically set: 1.5°C is a political number, 2°C is a political number and 2030 is a nice, round political number. Is it going to be worse from now until 2025 than it will be from 2025 until 2030? All of these are dancing on the head of a pin, as far as what is worse and what the measures are.

The whole point is to start getting to better solutions. That means more efficient energy for this country.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, to my hon. friend from Calgary Centre, I think it is terribly important to disagree as forcefully as possible with the notion that 1.5°C is a political target, as 1.5°C has emerged from the intense work of thousands of scientists globally in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which was commissioned by governments to find out exactly what the difference is, in terms of impacts, between a 1.5°C global average temperature increase and a 2°C increase. Both of those figures are embedded in the Paris Agreement. They are critical to ensure human civilization survives. That is not hyperbole. That is science. The member for Beaches—East York had it just right. If we do not achieve 45% reductions globally by 2030, we cannot have a prayer of reaching net zero.

I ask my hon. colleague for Calgary Centre to reconsider what he calls science and what he calls politics.

• (1325)

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry the member misunderstood my statement. The number arrived at is 1.5°C, but if we get to 1.49°C, I am saying that is actually better. This is not a line in the sand. That is my point to the member. I hope she takes it in the spirit it was intended. The number 2°C was decided on in the 1992 accord as what we needed to get to, and we needed to make sure in 2015 that we had methods for getting there.

In all good spirits, I am certain the member did not mean to misinterpret my remarks to say it was political or non-scientific. They are numbers that people can attach themselves to. If we get to 2.01°C versus 2°C, or we go to 1.98°C or to 1.49°C versus 1.5°C, I think we are still talking about those numbers. They are not lines in

the sand. I appreciate the member correcting me on the misuse of the phrase.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the virtual House today to participate in this extremely important debate on Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act.

Before I get into my remarks today, I would like to notify you that I would like to share my time with the hon. member for Beaches—East York, who will make a speech after me.

As I said, it is my pleasure to participate in this important debate. It is a topic that is extremely important. It has been important to me throughout my entire life. It is something my constituents care about and remind me of all of the time and this legislation as proposed provides an accountability framework. It certainly does not provide the content of a plan for moving forward. It really defines a framework for accountability and that is a positive step forward.

Canada and countries around the world are facing unprecedented economic, environmental and social challenges, which are all occurring at the same time. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant loss and uncertainty in Canada. Almost half of households lost work at the peak of the pandemic, impacting the ability of families to pay rent and put food on the table.

Responding to the pandemic and ensuring that Canadians can move forward into a recovery phase that ensures there are good jobs and a solid plan for a strong, resilient, competitive and sustainable economy matters more than ever. We need a road map for the future, one that takes into account our current reality but also where we want the world to be in 10, 20 and 30 years from now.

What we know is that the world is changing. Countries are responding to the fallout from the pandemic, but many are doing so in a way that takes into account the equally urgent crisis of climate change. In some respects, the current public health crisis pales in comparison to the larger and impending crisis that will see the effects of human activity, which has harmed our natural world for generations, leading to the alteration of weather patterns, mass extinctions, the loss of biodiversity and even the collapse of ecosystems, which ultimately threatens the habitability of our planet.

The science is very clear that we face a catastrophic future if we do not dramatically alter the amount of pollution we are putting into the atmosphere. I learned recently of a remarkable independent film called *The Magnitude of all Things*, and that film masterfully depicts a phenomena called climate grief, which is the loss we are all feeling from the destruction of our home.

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The science is clear that we need to bend the curve on GHG emissions now and achieve net-zero emissions globally by 2050. Countries around the world are responding to this imperative and they are also moving to take advantage of the clean growth opportunities that will come with it. Those are significant and Canada has enormous advantages, ranging from our vast natural resources to our skilled population, our commitment to research, our innovation and our entrepreneurial spirit. We need to seize the opportunity now. We need to do our part to demonstrate our commitment to the rest of the world.

From forest fires and floods to melting permafrost and coastal erosion, Canadians are experiencing the impacts of climate change every single day. Our climate is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world. In the north, warming is nearly three times as fast. The effects of warming are already evident in many parts of Canada and are projected to intensify in the near future. We can see this with wilder weather and seasons and lots of flooding. There is much evidence of these weather patterns changing.

In December 2015, at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Canada played a leadership role in reaching a historic agreement to address climate change. Canada was also one of the first countries to ratify the Paris Agreement and help push it over the threshold to bring it into force in October 2016.

Through the Paris Agreement, we committed to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. The goal of the Paris Agreement is to limit global temperature increase to well below 2°C and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. Following the adoption of the Paris Agreement, Canada developed the first climate change plan in our history to include joint and individual commitments by federal-provincial-territorial governments and to have been developed with input from indigenous peoples, businesses, non-governmental organizations and Canadians from across the country.

● (1330)

The pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change was adopted in December of 2016, and this was a huge step forward. In fact, one of the reasons I got into politics in the last federal election was that great work. The pan-Canadian framework outlines over 15 concrete measures to reduce carbon pollution, help us adapt and become more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate, spur clean-technology solutions and create good jobs that contribute to a stronger economy.

Between 2005 and 2019 the federal government invested \$60 billion to drive down greenhouse gas emissions, generate clean technologies, help Canadians and communities to adapt to the changing climate, and protect the environment. Carbon pollution pricing systems are in place in all provinces and territories, and we have introduced regulations to reduce methane emissions in the oil and gas sector and to improve emissions standards for light- and heavy-duty vehicles.

As we work to phase out coal-fired electricity by 2030, we have worked with communities and workers affected by the transition to a low-carbon economy. We are developing net-zero energy-ready building codes to be adopted by 2030 for new buildings, and we

have adopted a climate lens to ensure that future climate impacts are considered and addressed in federally funded infrastructure projects. To ensure Canadians have access to climate science and information, we established the Canadian Centre for Climate Services.

Our plan is working. Our most recent projections show a widespread decline in projected emissions across the economy. The policies and measures now in place, including those introduced in 2019, are projected to reduce emissions by 227 million tonnes by 2030. However, we know that a great deal of work remains to be done. The 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change also invited the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to prepare a special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways. I have that report here, and I have been reviewing it.

In 2018, the special report on “Global Warming of 1.5°C” by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that global emissions must reach carbon neutrality by around 2050 to limit warming to 1.5°C. There are clear benefits to limiting global temperature increases to that level. The IPCC's report made it clear that, to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, an aggressive and long-term commitment to action is needed. Every bit of warming matters, and this is why it is urgent to take action now. Increasing ambition is what science tells us is needed to address climate change, and it is built into the Paris Agreement.

We are currently working on strengthening existing and introducing new greenhouse gas emission reduction measures, which will allow us to exceed our current 2030 target. On top of that, we know that we need to look to the longer term, which is why we committed to enshrining, in legislation, the government's goal to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. Along with this system of five-year targets, emissions reduction plans, progress reports and assessment reports are key enabling components of our work to achieve a net-zero emissions economy by 2050.

Our government has committed to implement a number of new measures to help us reach these ambitious targets, while creating a million new jobs and growing the economy. This includes a commitment to plant two billion trees to help sequester carbon, retrofitting 1.5 million homes to improve energy efficiency and save Canadians money on their energy bills, making it easier for Canadians to purchase and drive zero-emission vehicles, and supporting northern, remote and indigenous communities as they transition from diesel to renewable energy systems.

These measures and more, which the government plans to announce soon, will help put Canada on a path to a strong zero-emissions economy, one that is inclusive for all Canadians.

I am going to stop there. I had a few more remarks, but I understand that my time is limited. I will stop there, but I am thankful for this opportunity.

• (1335)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how can the Liberals claim that this bill offers more transparency and accountability when his government has not been transparent whatsoever on the costs of their carbon tax and whom, ultimately, that costs? The member for Carleton calls it the “carbon tax cover-up”.

Would the member be open to seeing amendments at committee stage toward ensuring that socio-economic and fiscal impacts as a part of any action plan should be included so consumers know exactly who is paying the bill, in what part of the region and in what sectors?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I always find the hon. member's questions helpful in clarifying where the government stands. This framework for accountability does provide numerous points in time, such as monitoring, an advisory board or advisory function. There are reporting requirements. Many aspects of the legislation provide a container for accountability on our plans, targets and reporting on progress. We can continue to evaluate our progress toward defined targets. We really need this to ensure that any governments that come into power are bound to climate targets and take this crisis seriously.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I must say that a lot of what the member for Whitby said in his speech was music to my ears. He is obviously aware of all the damage that global warming is doing to the environment and human health.

However, since he talked about two billion trees, if we overlook the fact that that none of them have been planted yet, those trees would reduce greenhouse gases by 30 megatonnes by 2030, while the Trans Mountain project with its barrels of oil would increase greenhouse gases by 620 megatonnes by 2030. I get the impression that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question comes up often in some of the debates on this topic. I understand that this is a challenging issue that requires a full-court press from all stakeholders at all levels of government. It requires us to transition entire industries and move toward essentially all of us changing the way we live, purchase, govern and do business. Every part of our existence is going to have to change for us to fully address and get to net zero—

• (1340)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this debate and discussion is so vitally important. Where I am feeling somewhat cynical is that I was elected 16 years ago when

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Stéphane Dion brought in his bill that would have clear targets and Canada would meet them. He even names his little dog, Kyoto, after the program. Year in and year out the emissions continued to rise, and emissions are predicted to continue to rise in the oil and gas sector.

The Prime Minister is pushing Joe Biden to move on the Keystone XL pipeline, while the Liberals put \$12.6 billion into Trans Mountain. How can they expect Canadians to take them seriously, that they actually will get to net zero, when they continue to subsidize the industry to such a massive extent?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I share my hon. colleague's concerns.

The way I look at it is we are attacking this problem from many different angles at the same time. It is not as simple as saying we can cut off support immediately just as, to the same degree, we cannot phase out single-use plastics overnight. There are times, transition, stages and phases of this work. We have to be respectful of workers in the oil and gas industry and those industries just as much as we need to support all other aspects of this problem that need to be addressed.

Our government has stepped up and provided a really holistic plan with some very ambitious targets. I think the—

The Deputy Speaker: We are going to take one more question and response.

The hon. member for Fredericton.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, for the record, I agree that this should not be a partisan issue. I do not want to feel like a little green mosquito, just trying to pick away at this. I want the government to succeed. I want to be excited by climate legislation.

However, with all due respect, this is not it for me. The member talked about the catastrophic changes we are facing and the grief that we are feeling because of this. Is 10 years before we start looking at actual accountability an adequate response to this?

I think about the youth who are constantly contacting my office and the ways they are feeling about this. They are looking to the government to be bold and to provide really concrete actions today.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, in no way do I think the hon. member is a green mosquito. I honestly feel like she is a partner on an issue about which we all feel passionately. I really value her perspective.

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It is a point well taken. I have heard from numerous other members that they are looking for a target to be set for 2025. Bills in the House only get stronger through debate. I value that perspective and I see your point. Hopefully as we move forward, as the points are debated, we will move to improve the bill even more.

I am quite excited about it. It is a step forward, for sure, but I understand your concerns.

The Deputy Speaker: I would just remind hon. members to direct their comments to the Chair. Using the third person works very well for the House, as members know.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we live through these difficult times and face the COVID crisis, we have to direct our energies to the crisis in front of us. However, we cannot forget about the climate crisis that looms large. We have to bring that same sense of effort and determination to address it.

When thinking about addressing that crisis, I look at it through three lenses: ambition, accountability and action.

The bill before us, Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act, is about accountability but also about ambition. I want to start with what is very good in the legislation on ambition, which is the commitment to net zero by 2050.

In the last Parliament, I was lucky to join two other colleagues from the Green Party and the NDP to call for a climate emergency debate in the wake of the IPCC report on 1.5°C. I introduced a bill on net zero by 2050 in the House. I was very happy to see that in our platform and the throne speech. Now it is realized as a commitment in this legislation.

In the purpose clause, the legislation says the purpose is “to promote transparency and accountability...in support of achieving net-zero emissions in Canada by 2050”. Importantly, in the preamble, the IPCC is explicitly cited. The IPCC concluded, “achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 is key to keeping the rise in the global-mean temperature to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and minimizing climate-change related risks.”

Of course, 2050 is a long time away, so we need to turn that long-term ambition into short-term practical action and we do so in the course of the legislation by way of five-year milestone targets. That is important. We talked about carbon budgets in our platform. It is important for everyone in the House to support the bill going to committee. When it gets to committee, I am certainly interested in hearing from experts about the difference between the carbon budget process and the milestone process that our government has proposed. It is very important that we not just talk about net zero by 2050, but look at shorter-term milestones and targets as well. That is an important ambition.

When it comes to accountability, it is important to highlight a series of positive measures in the legislation.

We first see progress reporting, a requirement of one progress report per milestone at least two years before the milestone. We see a requirement to table assessment reports and an important requirement for the government to table an emissions reduction plan in

Parliament to tell the public how we will meet these shorter-term targets and get to net zero by 2050.

We also see a requirement for an expert advisory body that is to not only advise the minister but report annually to the minister and the minister must respond in a public fashion. These are important accountability mechanisms. We see a requirement for annual reports from the finance minister on how the government is taking key measures to manage financial climate risks.

Last, we see a requirement for an independent environmental commissioner tasked with examining and reporting on our progress and holding us to account if we fail to meet the necessary progress.

I started with the positives, but let me speak to some of the challenges. Before I get to the challenges, when I speak of accountability ambition and action, this is not an action plan. For anyone looking at this plan, saying we are speaking about the importance of climate change and asking where the action is, this is not the action plan. We have seen significant action over the last five years, and I can get into the details of that. We have seen projected 2030 emissions between 2016 and 2019 go down 25% because of the policies we put in place, but this is fundamentally about accountability and brings with it a commitment to greater ambition.

It also kicks the can down the road too far. I mentioned turning that longer-term ambition into short-term action. While this is a very strong framework for accountability, there is a significant “but”. That is because this act, as structured, provides the first milestone target as 2030. What this means is that the first progress report would not be required until no later than December 31, 2027.

Clearly, we need a more urgent and credible reporting timeline to meet the act's goal of transparency and accountability. There are a few ways of answering this challenge, in my view. A number of environmental organizations and colleagues have proposed that we move up the first milestone from 2030 to 2025. This would mean that an initial progress report would be required by the end of 2022, and there is some sense in this. Very smart environmental advocates have called for this solution to address the challenge that I have described.

● (1345)

There is another way of addressing this challenge, though. When we look at science-based ambition, we have a 2050 target in this bill, a net-zero, science-based target from the IPCC, and we could have a science-based 2030 target in this bill as well.

What does a science-based 2030 target mean? We talk about net zero by 2050, but the IPCC also tells us that, on that pathway to one and a half degrees, the world needs to be 45% below 2010 levels by 2030. What does that mean in a Canadian context? In 2010, our emissions were 691 megatonnes, and 45% below that is 380. That should be our minimum target.

If we look to the Paris Agreement and the fact we are a highly developed country, we might argue credibly that we actually ought to go further. At a minimum, on the science, the target for 2030 should be 380 megatonnes. If we establish that target in a science-based and serious way, then in the course of this act, we could provide for earlier progress reports.

I would certainly be comfortable with a strong science-based 2030 target. If we do not have a 2025 target, but a strong science-based 2030 target, I would certainly be comfortable with earlier progress reports in 2030, 2025, 2027. With those, this would be a very strong bill.

I have heard from other advocates that we could strengthen the advisory body's role in setting targets and in progress reporting. We could better ensure its independence. I have seen suggestions to require the minister to consider expert advice when setting targets. There are reasonable questions about capacity issues in the environmental commissioner's office to do this serious work.

This is the framework we are looking to. In the U.K., as an example, the climate change committee that was established through legislation in 2008 has great resources. We need to ensure any independent body standing up to do the accountability job has the necessary resources to do that job effectively.

As I mentioned previously, the difference between milestone targets and carbon budgets has also been raised with me. All these considerations will rightly be addressed by experts at committee, and I sincerely hope we see proposals from all parties and constructive work at the environment committee to improve this bill. It is a strong framework but it absolutely does need to be improved.

To close, I just want to emphasize that accountability and ambition are important, but at all times we must be guided by science. Our ambition must be set by science and this accountability act should be as robust as possible. Then of course everything depends upon serious climate action.

I know there are questions about impacts on the economy. This bill, in the preamble, recognizes the importance for the economy to move toward a clean transition, but this is really about jobs as much as it is about climate action for our kids.

We have made significant progress since 2015, so let us, united across party lines, build on that progress. Let us bring, as I say, the same determination and scale of response to the climate crisis that we have brought to the COVID crisis.

• (1350)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was initially concerned my friend's speech would contain unqualified praise for the government, but he stayed on brand and offered some criticisms. I appreciate that.

One of the frustrations for me in our debates about climate change is that we spend relatively so much more time talking about targets than about the action that will allow us to move toward those targets. We had a big discussion about which targets are appropriate for what year, but we also have to make decisions based on immediate actions and trade-offs.

Government Orders

He alluded to some of that, but I would like to ask him specific questions in that context. What does he think about supporting the deployment of greater nuclear technology? What does he think about supporting carbon capture and storage within the energy sector? Also, what does he think about doing more to support the development and export of natural gas as an alternative to the continuing use of coal in other countries around the world in conditions that are not up to the level even of coal use here in Canada?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, speaking from Ontario, there is absolutely a continued role for nuclear, but new investments in nuclear, looking at the math, do not seem particularly cost effective.

When it comes to carbon capture and storage, every plan I have seen includes it, but there is no sense of the science behind what that means and how we actually realize it. At the moment, there is no credible plan for carbon capture and storage at scale to get us to where we need to get.

In answer to my friend on the question about action versus ambition, of course we need both. I mentioned we have had significant action over the last five years and that we need more of it, but we also need the right level of ambition. The machinery of government moves slowly and it moves toward an end goal. If we do not get the goal right, then all of that work will have been for naught.

As a baseball player for much of my life, if I am told it is a five-inning game or a nine-inning game, I manage my bullpen differently, so let us get the innings right.

• (1355)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when I was a teacher, I often saw students who had problems and knew the solutions, but could not solve their problems because they did not know how to go about implementing the solution.

This bill is a step in the right direction, but it does not identify how the objectives will be achieved.

Is there a concrete, down-to-earth action plan to go with this bill?

[*English*]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, this is not an action plan, nor should it be construed as one. When we talk about ambition, accountability and action, this is an accountability bill that sets out important ambitions that will require the government to act, but it should not be construed as an action plan.

Statements by Members

I mentioned the U.K. We know that since it established its Climate Change Act 2008, which stood up an accountability framework, it has moved much more quickly than we have. Accountability matters.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems from the member's words that he cares deeply about addressing the climate crisis, so it is confusing to me that he would stand behind a bill that puts off accountability for 10 years.

What is also confusing is that the member said this is not a climate action plan. Where is the government's climate action plan? This bill gives the government an additional nine months after royal assent to create that plan, yet in its throne speech it said it would table a climate action plan to exceed 2030 targets immediately.

In what definition of "immediately" does it take a year to get this kind of action plan? How does the member stand behind the Liberal government and its inaction?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, this is a frustrating question in some respects in that it suggests there has been no action. The actual numbers in the report from Environment Canada show that in early 2016, projected 2030 emissions were 815 megatonnes. If we fast-forward to early 2019, that same report is showing it at 592 megatonnes. It is absolutely not where we need to get, but for the first time in my lifetime we have a government that has acted in a serious way on the most important issue of our time.

To suggest that we need to stand where we are and do no more is wrong, but to suggest there has been inaction is equally wrong. Yes, we need to do more. I mentioned we need to improve this bill, but of course I stand behind it at second reading. I am asking for it to be improved at committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague seems quite enthusiastic. He talks about the government's commitments and actions.

There is a group in Quebec called Mothers Step In. These are mothers and grandmothers who are very worried about climate change and rightly so. They even have a manifesto calling on the federal government to adopt a coherent plan to help meet targets and enshrine them in the bill on climate.

The government has good targets, but if it is so certain it will achieve them then why not include them in the bill as this group is asking for?

[*English*]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, there is a target in the bill. It is net zero by 2050. As I articulated in my response, I think we should have the big numbers we see from the IPCC of 2030 and 2050 as the timelines, and then five-year commitments in the interim. Having a science-based 2030 target established in this legislation is absolutely something I would support.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians prepare to buy holiday gifts for their family and friends, I urge them to think local, shop local and support the local small businesses that support our communities.

For some people, tomorrow is Black Friday; for others, it is Buy Nothing Day. I urge everyone to buy nothing from Amazon this holiday season. During this pandemic, Amazon earned massive profits, but it does not pay fair wages, and it has not paid its fair share of taxes in Canada or anywhere else. That is why I am adding my voice to those of the Progressive International coalition in saying it is time to make Amazon pay.

After the shopping mayhem is over, what I really want people to think about is Giving Tuesday. The non-profit sector provides valuable services to our communities. They deserve our support, now more than ever. I hope people will open their hearts and their wallets to help their favourite non-profit continue their important work.

* * *

● (1400)

WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE MUSEUM

Ms. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently visited the Archaeology Alive exhibit at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum, winner of the 2020 Ontario Museum Association Award of Excellence in exhibitions. The exhibit focuses on the Jean-Baptiste Lainé site, a remarkable late 16th century indigenous community of 1,700 people that was situated in what is now in my riding of Markham—Stouffville.

The exhibit was developed collaboratively with the Huron-Wendat Nation of Wendake, Quebec.

[*Translation*]

I thank the Huron-Wendat Nation for its knowledge and dedication to this exhibit.

[*English*]

Working with indigenous communities will ensure that their histories are shared, so we will have a better understanding of the central role of indigenous peoples in Canada's history.

I send my congratulations to Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum staff and curator, Krista Rauchenstein. I had an amazing tour of the exhibit.

DESNETHÉ—MISSINIPPI—CHURCHILL RIVER

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, Saskatchewan held municipal elections. Local leaders play a vital role in providing critical services to our communities.

Today I would like to recognize some from my riding: Jim Krushelnitzky of Pierceland and Gordon Stomp from Air Ronge will not be returning as mayors, after serving their communities for decades.

A few of the newly elected leaders in my riding are: Mayors Colin Ratushniak of La Ronge, David Krawetz of Big River, Joe Fike of Goodsoil, Julie Baschuk of Air Ronge, and Reeve Harvey Harriott of the Rural Municipality of Meadow Lake.

Some returning mayors are: Merlin Seymour of Meadow Lake, Duane Favel of Île-à-la-Crosse, Nick Daigneault of Beauval, Rod Fisher of Debden, Bruce Fidler of Creighton and Carl Lentowicz of Denare Beach.

There are so many more I would like to honour, and I appreciate everyone who put their name forward. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with all of them on behalf of northern Saskatchewan.

* * *

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the COVID-19 second wave hits, it is more important than ever that Canadians take action to protect themselves, their loved ones and their neighbours.

We know the drill: We wash our hands, practice physical distancing and wear a mask. However, we can do more, we can be smart. The COVID Alert app works. It tells us when we have been close to someone who has tested positive. We can then get tested quickly and break the cycle of infection.

Some 5.4 million Canadians have already done so. They know their privacy is secure and their health is protected. It will only be truly effective if everyone is connected.

Recently, I initiated a friendly challenge with the great member of Parliament for Milton to see which of our ridings could get the most COVID Alert app downloads. We have already had a lot of success, and of course, Don Valley West is going to win.

I want to now encourage all my colleagues from both sides of the House to find creative and fun ways to promote the COVID Alert app. We do not often have the chance to save lives.

* * *

[Translation]

GHISLAIN ROY

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I want to acknowledge the involvement and dedication of Ghislain Roy who on October 28 received the Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec award of excellence in volunteering.

Statements by Members

Since 2014, Mr. Roy has been the president of the Fondation Héritage whose mission is to create permanent funding to ensure the conservation of the St. Teresa of Avila cathedral in Amos.

Our cathedral needs major maintenance and restoration work costing millions of dollars. With a dedicated team, Mr. Roy has already obtained financial commitments to the tune of \$1.8 million of which \$600,000 comes directly from the community. The Roman-Byzantine architecture of Amos' cathedral makes it unique in North America.

We must acknowledge our heritage and work on keeping our monuments in place. Our grandparents, and my great-uncles in fact, worked on building the cathedral just a century ago. Now we need a financial contribution from the federal government.

At this point, I can only express my sincere disappointment that Ottawa has not responded to the many appeals from Ghislain Roy and his team. That must change now.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

HOUSING

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I strongly believe that housing is a fundamental human right. This week, we announced the members of the national housing council who will help us ensure the best way for Canadians to access that right. The people most in need of access to that right are those experiencing homelessness. With winter approaching, this is a top concern for residents of Davenport and Toronto.

For too long, governments have tried to manage the problem, and we have failed. It has long been time we move from managing to eliminating the problem. In our throne speech we promised to immediately and urgently eliminate chronic homelessness in Canada. We have started on that promise with a \$1-billion investment in the creation of rapid housing, while continuing to protect the homeless further made vulnerable by COVID. Since the pandemic began, we have invested \$157 million in the reaching home program, \$200 million for food banks and \$100 million for women's shelters.

In government, we will work for a future where housing is guaranteed as a right and all Canadians have access to affordable housing.

*Statements by Members***AGRICULTURE AND MENTAL HEALTH**

Mr. Earl Dreesen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the incidence of mental health problems in Canada's agriculture sector is reaching crisis proportions. Farmers, ranchers, producers and their families are increasingly experiencing high levels of stress, depression and even suicidal thoughts.

In May 2019, my Conservative colleagues and I from the Standing Committee on Agriculture issued a supplementary report on this issue called "Mental Health: A Priority for Our Farmers". Stakeholders said that all levels of government need to act quickly, and many organizations, primarily spearheaded by female farm entrepreneurs, have been working hard ever since.

I am also proud of the Chicken Farmers of Canada, which has just completed its two-month mental illness awareness campaign. Although its campaign ends this Friday, this issue needs to remain top of mind for all of us. We must continue to generate even more public awareness and thoughtful discussion.

Together, we can all work to tackle the tragic rise of mental health illness within Canada's vital agriculture sector.

* * *

[Translation]

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS IN BROME—
MISSISQUOI**

Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to acknowledge the community organizations in Brome—Missisquoi for their hard work throughout the pandemic. Our caregivers centre, youth centres and volunteer centres all managed to quickly adapt to the new reality and continue their essential work.

Our food banks redoubled their efforts after many people lost their jobs and needed to turn to food banks to feed their families. More than ever, our mental health centres are supporting people to help them through this difficult time.

The additional workload has made things difficult. During my meetings with organizations in my region, I learned that many of them are now stretched to the limit in terms of resources and volunteers. As the holiday season approaches, I encourage everyone to lend a hand by donating food, money or time.

In closing, I want to thank all the staff, stakeholders and volunteers of the organizations in my region for their resilience and their dedication to our community. They are making a real difference.

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EGMONT

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the privileges of being the member for Egmont is representing the vibrant Acadian regions of Évangéline and West Prince. These communities have built much of their rich history by preserving their culture and language.

I am proud to be part of a government that has done so much to support this major contribution. My family, especially my grand-

mother, is directly descended from the first Acadians to have settled in my homeland. That makes me proud.

As an MP, I am continuing to perfect my French. I am told that I am the first member for Egmont to have delivered a statement in the House entirely in French in a long time. I would like to thank my teacher, Therese Evraire.

* * *

[English]

INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to congratulate Saskatchewan entrepreneur Murad Al-Katib for being selected CEO "Innovator of the Year" by The Globe and Mail for his incredible innovations in crop proteins.

Known affectionately at home as the "lentil king", Murad's company AGT Food exports its products to over 100 nations and has 29 manufacturing plants in five different countries. Murad and AGT have also donated enough food parcels to feed around 15 million people in Iraq, Syria and other countries.

Whether he is in the boardroom or coaching football, Murad has the heart of a champion. He strives for excellence in everything he does and it shows in the business he has built. Murad and AGT Food continue to showcase not only the potential of Saskatchewan agriculture but the power of Saskatchewan entrepreneurship.

I would ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Mr. Al-Katib on this notable accomplishment and thank AGT Food for its excellent contribution to Canada's agricultural industry.

* * *

● (1410)

HOUSING

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have heard repeatedly from constituents and organizations like Mainstay Housing and Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust about the dire need for affordable housing.

During the pandemic, the need to isolate safely is critical, yet COVID-19 has exposed inequalities. Those who are marginalized do not have the luxury of safely isolating indoors, so tented encampments have popped up in Toronto, including in my community.

To address this quickly, we have launched the rapid housing initiative. It is a \$1-billion program that will quickly build 3,000 new permanent affordable housing units with \$203 million dedicated to Toronto alone. Importantly, the RHI is targeted at the most vulnerable, people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The program will rapidly develop new modular housing, convert non-residential buildings and rehabilitate buildings that are abandoned or in disrepair.

Personally, I have already commenced the work to ensure that the RHI will include saving and expanding rooming houses in Parkdale—High Park, which help so many in my community stay safely housed. Housing is a basic human right. Each of us deserves a safe and affordable place to call home.

* * *

COVID-19 VACCINE ACCESS

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on August 24, Professor Attaran wrote in Maclean's that the Liberals were dithering on vaccine procurement. He predicted that the vaccine would be coming to Canada months late.

Two days later, I attended a Zoom meeting, hosted by the Liberal member for Guelph, for afternoon tea and spirits and a conversation with COVID-19 experts. The panellists included Ashleigh Tuite, Jeannette Comeau and Doug Manuel, who are at the top of the field. What better opportunity for me to find out if the professor was right? I asked moderator Tara Bingham from AstraZeneca a pointed question: Had Canada prepurchased any vaccine doses for Canadians from her company?

She hesitated and then replied that she was not a panellist so she would call me later. My heart sank. No answer said it all.

The Liberals knew that Canada was at the back of the line three months ago. The Prime Minister says we will not get a vaccine in December like everyone else because we have no manufacturing capacity. That is utter nonsense. Canadians will not get a vaccine anytime soon because he failed Canadians again.

* * *

VICTIMS' RIGHTS

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week is Victims and Survivors of Crime Week. The Conservative Party has always stood for the rights of victims, highlighted by the passing of the Victims Bill of Rights during our time in government. My advocacy on this issue has been inspired by my constituent Lisa Freeman, whose father was murdered in 1991.

The current government has continually failed to address the concerns of victims, especially during COVID-19. Repeatedly, victims' rights advocates have had to push the government to ensure victims and their families are included in the Parole Board process. All victims and their families are asking for is not to be revictimized by the system that is supposed to protect them, while luxuries such as in-person visits have been allowed for convicted murderers and rapists. These are very simple changes to make.

Conservatives will continue to advocate for victims and their families until the government finally takes meaningful action.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is not delivering the goods on many fronts.

Several examples come to mind, including pharmacare and the fight against climate change, but, today, I would like to draw the attention of the House to a very straightforward issue: direct services to the public.

It is appalling. People are spending hours on the phone, but nobody is there to answer their questions. We are living in uncertain times. A bunch of programs have been introduced, but their criteria are not always clear. Canadians have the right to get clear answers to their valid questions.

The Department of Immigration is plagued by the same paralysis. People have been waiting for months for answers to their questions about family reunification, regular status for essential workers, foreign students or permanent residence applications. This government is disrespecting Canadians. This has to change. It needs to allocate the necessary resources to serve the public properly.

* * *

• (1415)

FRED SASAKAMOOSE

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday we learned that Fred Sasakamoose, the first indigenous hockey player to play in the National Hockey League, had died of COVID-19 at the age of 86.

During his hockey career, Fred Sasakamoose, a member of the Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation, played 11 games with the Chicago Blackhawks during the 1953-54 season. He also played for the Moose Jaw Canucks, the Kamloops Chiefs and the Chicoutimi Saguenéens.

After leaving hockey, Mr. Sasakamoose got involved in indigenous affairs, serving as chief of the Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation. He also focused on promoting sports for indigenous youth and received the Order of Canada in 2018.

On behalf of myself and the Bloc Québécois, I would like to offer my sincere condolences to his family and friends.

*Oral Questions**[English]***HOLODOMOR MEMORIAL DAY**

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from 1932 to 1933, the world witnessed one of the worst atrocities ever committed. Over the course of 15 months, several million Ukrainians were slowly starved to death by communist dictator Joseph Stalin and his brutal regime in what is known as the Holodomor.

Ukrainians who were living on some of the most fertile lands in Europe were robbed of all their food by Stalin and his thugs. This included their garden produce, livestock, poultry and crops. In one sadistic policy, the Soviets weaponized food and created a man-made famine. What was the crime? They were Ukrainian patriots, proud of their language, culture and faith. Stalin said that the death of one person is a tragedy, but the death of a million is a statistic. We must never allow Stalin's sad words to ring true.

This Saturday, on national Holodomor Memorial Day, we remember every man, woman and child who perished in the Holodomor and honour the survivors of this genocide.

Vichnaya Pamyat. May their memories be eternal.

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GIRL GUIDES OF CANADA

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, I attended a very special meeting of the 595th Brownies; the 70th, 93rd, 104th, 145th and 292nd Guides; and the 90th and 695th Pathfinders and Rangers as they prepared for their women in politics badge and the Canada cord, with excellent questions.

I hope the girls and young women know they are smart and talented, can accomplish anything they dream and will do things we cannot even imagine. I hope they know how proud I am of them and know that politicians are there to serve them, that the House recognizes their service in their communities and that if they choose a life of politics there is absolutely a place for them.

I would like to thank the troop leaders for the skills they teach and the inspiration they provide, because when the world seems hard, these leaders remind their troops that the opportunities are endless.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[English]***HEALTH**

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister could not answer whether the government negotiated the right to manufacture vaccines here in Canada. At committee, the head of the Public Health Agency suggested the government did not do that.

Let us try this one more time. Did the government negotiate the right to manufacture vaccines here in Canada, yes or no?

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Mr. Speak-

er, when this pandemic began, as we all know, Canada had no viable manufacturing capacity suitable for a COVID-19 vaccine. Underinvestment in vaccine production capacity began decades ago, in the previous century, and we realized right away that we had to invest in our flexible domestic production and ramp up our facilities, which is exactly what we did.

Rest assured that when a vaccine is ready and approved, we will be one of the first countries to get doses from the manufacturers of Canada's vaccine portfolio.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know there is no plan when the Minister of Health is here and not answering questions on a pandemic. It is rubbish. In fact, "rubbish" was the word one of the experts used for the government's answer to vaccine manufacturing. The National Research Council has a facility in Montreal that could manufacture millions of vaccines.

We know that most of the world will receive the vaccine before Canadians do. Why did the Prime Minister negotiate deals to put Canada at the back of the line for COVID-19 vaccines?

● (1420)

The Speaker: Before we go to the Minister of Health, I want to remind hon. members that we are not to state whether someone is present or not. It is part of the rules, and I am here to enforce them.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite fails to understand that Canada is the country best positioned, with more doses of vaccine per capita than anywhere else in the world. In fact, we have seven leading candidates that we have procured, and three of them are under regulatory review. We are the only country that is reviewing all three leading candidates right now.

If the member will not listen to me, how about the president of Moderna? He said, "Canada is certainly one of the first countries to have an agreement with us, and will be serviced very quickly."

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the robust portfolio they talk about ensures that Canadians will have the most vaccines in 2023.

Last night, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs gave three answers to the same question about when vaccines would be arriving. First it was January. Then he said it was sometime in 2021. Then it was the first quarter. In one interview, Canadians saw that the Liberal government has no plan when it comes to a vaccine rollout for Canadians.

Oral Questions

The question to the minister is simple: On what exact date will the vaccine for Canadians be here?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is trying to confuse Canadians right now.

We know here on this side of the House that we have worked incredibly hard as a government to procure seven leading vaccines, more per capita than any other country in the world. In fact, three of them are under regulatory review right now. We are the only country in the world to have those three being simultaneously reviewed.

I have to say that the future looks bright for Canadians. I am proud of the work of my colleagues to make this happen.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thousands of businesses have shut down during the pandemic. Many Canadians have lost their jobs. When Canadians heard the good news about a vaccine, they started to feel hopeful again, but this government has no plan for the vaccine and is last in line to receive them.

My question is simple: When will Canadians get their vaccines?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is one of the best countries positioned to receive the most doses per capita than any other country in the world. In fact, three of the leading candidates are under regulatory review right now. We are the only country in the world that is reviewing the three leading candidates.

When the president of Moderna, one of those three candidates, says, "Canada is certainly one of the first countries to have an agreement with us, and will be serviced very quickly", that should give Canadians the confidence that we are doing the job and we are getting it done.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): First to review, last to receive, Mr. Speaker. That is the record of the Liberal government.

[*Translation*]

On October 23, the health ministers of Quebec and Ontario wrote a letter to the federal government regarding a plan for the vaccines. They did not get a response. More than two billion people around the world will get the vaccine before us.

Why will Canada get the vaccine after many other countries?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is fishing, and quite clumsily at that. He is misleading Canadians, and I think he is going about it rather awkwardly.

Members know full well that Canada has agreements with seven of the companies that are producing the vaccine. We have the best portfolio in the world and the largest number of vaccine doses.

We will be there. When the vaccine is ready, Canada will be ready.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the Government of Quebec is trying to plan for the COVID-19 vaccine, it has yet to hear anything from Ottawa. It was not until this week, in November, that the federal government said that we would not have a vaccine before or after Christmas. Come on. Quebeckers have been making huge sacrifices for eight months now. They are anxiously awaiting the vaccine, and they deserve to get information.

When, exactly, will they have the vaccine? Will it be in March, in July or in 2028? When?

• (1425)

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always said that we will work incredibly hard to ensure all Canadians have access to the vaccine. That is exactly what we have done on this side of the House. We have focused on what matters, which is ensuring we have well-placed purchase agreements with manufacturers, leading candidates, three of them under regulatory review. We are the first in the world to have all three of those candidates simultaneously seeking approval from Health Canada.

As the member opposite knows, I work closely with Minister Dubé in Quebec. I will continue to ensure that he is fully informed and participates in the plan to deploy vaccines to Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Émile de Girardin once said, "Governing means looking ahead." I believe the government members have no idea what that means. We have been waiting for months.

The federal government should have closed the borders quickly to halt the spread of the virus. It did not. It should have approved rapid testing to prevent the second wave. It did not. It should have increased health transfers so that Quebec could take care of sick Quebeckers. It did not. It should have obtained vaccines as a priority. It did not. This government deserves a big fat "F" for this monumental failure.

Will it at least have the decency to answer the Government of Quebec? When will we have a vaccine?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only "F" our government deserves for its pandemic response is an "F" for "fantastic".

Members must understand that we are talking and negotiating with the Government of Quebec on a regular basis. The Prime Minister will be speaking with the Premier of Quebec this evening. Moreover, as we mentioned earlier, we have agreements with the seven vaccine manufacturers. They are being reviewed by Health Canada. When the vaccines are ready, Canada will be ready.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister blamed the Conservatives for the fact that Canada could no longer produce vaccines. It is not a surprise for anyone that Conservatives let down Canadians when it came to health care, but what does the Prime Minister have to say about 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and this year? Why is the Prime Minister making Canadians wait for a vaccine?

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in contrast to the other side, our government has been aggressively pursuing new bio-manufacturing capacity. We have taken serious action since well before the pandemic.

In our first mandate, we restored the ability for ISED to invest in life sciences, which had been pulled back by the previous government. We have accelerated our investments significantly since the pandemic, with major investments in our manufacturing capacity, Medicago, the National Research Council in Montreal. We are on our way to building a beautiful portfolio of vaccines. It will be delivered when Health Canada says they are ready.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are right in the middle of the second wave of COVID-19.

People are afraid, but the vaccine announcements gave them a little hope. Now, however, the government is not sharing its plan with us. What is the plan for the vaccine rollout? When will we have the vaccines? What is the actual plan?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have the best portfolio in the world, more doses per capita than any other country, three of the leading vaccines under regulatory review, expedited, working in partnership with the Americans and the European Union, so we can share our data and approve those vaccines even more quickly. We have a plan.

We are working with provinces and territories at all levels. Let me remind the member opposite that they are actually experts at immunization. Every single year they deploy immunization, as is their health care responsibilities. We will be there to support them, including by providing the vaccines.

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*[Translation]***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing of substance behind the government's talk of a white paper.

The Liberals have been promising official languages reform for five years now. Let the record show that nothing has been done and nothing is being done. What has it been doing for the past five years? A little of this and a little of that. A unanimous motion was adopted calling on the Minister of Official Languages to introduce a bill to modernize official languages.

We want to know if she intends to do that.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague wants to know what we have been doing for the past five years.

We have repaired the damage done by the Harper government and cleaned house with respect to official languages. That being said, the Conservatives' current strategy clearly involves courting Bloc votes. They are motivated purely by political interest, because none of it is in line with their values and none of it will ever be actioned.

Yesterday, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, speaking on behalf of the NDP, even pointed out that every time a Conservative government takes power in Ottawa or the provinces, they suppress francophone rights.

• (1430)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I suspect that there is some bickering going on in the Liberal caucus.

First, there is the member for Mount Royal, who has never tried to hide his opposition to protecting the French language with Bill 101. Then, there is the member for Saint-Laurent, who denies that French is on the decline in Montreal. Then, there is the Quebec president of the Liberal Party of Canada, who has been liking all kinds of tweets disputing that French is on the decline.

The minister is losing the game. By delaying the modernization of the act, she is giving in to pressure and waving a white flag, masked as a white paper. Why will the minister not stand firm against pressure from the Liberal machine and introduce a bill before Christmas?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are no surprises.

We announced in the throne speech that we would introduce a bill to modernize the Official Languages Act.

However, our objective is to bring in some broader linguistic reform, because the French language is a minority language in Canada. We are the first government to acknowledge that since this is a minority language, we must do more to protect and promote it.

That is what we must do, not only across the country, as we have been doing for the past 50 years, but also in Quebec, in particular. That is what we will do.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot even tell us when she will introduce her modernization bill, but she is trying to lecture everyone here in the House.

Oral Questions

I am going to give her the opportunity to take a leap of faith and express her real desire to defend the French language. The Government of Quebec and the parties in the National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion calling on the federal government to apply Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses in Quebec.

I am giving the minister the opportunity to clearly state in the House for all Quebecers to hear that she agrees with the Government of Quebec's request. Does she agree, yes or no?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that our government recognizes the importance of the legacy of Bill 101.

As the member for Ahuntsic-Cartierville, I see it every day when I meet with the families of newcomers whose children speak to me in French. I am pleased to see the high schools in my riding filled with people from around the world who speak the common language of Quebec, French.

Under the circumstances, we will of course continue to work with the Government of Quebec. My conversations with my counterpart in Quebec, Simon Jolin-Barrette, are ongoing. I look forward to the introduction of his bill. As for us, we will do our work and reform the Official Languages Act.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a difference between signing a contract for a vaccine and when the average person in Canada will actually receive it.

This week, we have heard from the Americans that in December they are going to vaccinate 20 million of their people and in January 30 million, which means by the middle of January, the Americans will have vaccinated the equivalent of the entirety of the population of Canada.

I know the minister will say that she has a big portfolio. Will 33-plus million Canadians be vaccinated at the same time that 33-plus million Americans are?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that, in fact, we do have the biggest portfolio per capita in the world. We do have a plan with the provinces and territories. We are working incredibly hard, including with our American and European counterparts, to make sure we are able to deliver vaccines to Canadians.

We are going to stay focused on that goal. We are not going to sow division among Canadians. We are going to ensure we work together to protect Canadians and move forward. We will get through this together.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about working with the provinces, but hours ago the Ontario health minister said that province is no longer expecting the delivery of any vaccine in early 2021. On Friday, the government tabled projections that showed that roughly 2,000 per month will die of COVID as we move forward.

In April, will the minister have to stand here and apologize to the families of 8,000 Canadians for the fact that they died because she could not roll this vaccine out?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what will help save Canadians lives is if the member opposite and the Leader of the Opposition stop their members from sharing fake and dangerous news like the members for Lethbridge and Carleton. We will stay focused on saving the lives of Canadians instead of spreading conspiracy theories.

In fact, the member for Calgary Nose Hill is focused on keeping us together, rather than pitting us apart because the virus thrives on us working at opposite ends. We need to work together. We need to stay together. We need to support provinces, territories and Canadians. That is exactly what this government has done since day one.

• (1435)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that answer, when Canadians are looking for a plan on when they are going to get a vaccine, will be remembered as desperate political flailing. The question I asked is one that is on the minds of every Canadian. It is at the heart of the mental health crisis in this country. It is at the heart of jobs lost in this country. It is at the heart of separated families in this country.

I ask again, I beg the minister, when is she going to tell Canadians when they are going to produce a vaccine and give it to Canadians? Will she have to stand here in April and apologize to the families of 8,000 dead Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my heart goes out to all Canadians who have lost a loved one to COVID-19. Our hearts break for them, I will tell members that we are going to continue to work day and night to protect Canadians from contracting COVID-19 and spreading COVID-19. The vaccines, indeed, are a light at the end of the tunnel, and we are working across government to make sure that we have access to the vaccines and we can deploy them.

In the meantime, I call on all Canadians to do everything we can together because we know that collective action is going to protect our lives.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we all thought we would have to put up with bloody COVID-19 for another few weeks. The media were reporting that pharmaceutical companies had discovered a vaccine and that it would be here in January at the latest.

Quebec is already buying freezers to store the vaccine doses that Ottawa promised. There is just one little problem: The Prime Minister forgot to mention that he has no clue when we will get the vaccine.

Does the Prime Minister understand that reserving vaccine doses is all well and good, but what we need to know is when they will be here?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to work very hard with Quebec.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

The fact that Quebec is actually procuring the materials it will need to store in particular the Pfizer vaccine is good news. It means we are all working together. It means provinces and territories are working with the federal government on a deployment plan that will ensure we have what we need in place to help all Canadians, including Quebecers, get access to these vaccines.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec wrote to the Minister of Health on October 23 to ask for an update on the vaccines.

Not only did Quebec never get a response, but the Prime Minister half-heartedly told us a month later that there has been a slight setback and that the vaccines will not get here on time. What a complete mess. Quebec will be vaccinating people, not Ottawa. Quebec is introducing lockdown measures to protect Quebecers, not Ottawa.

When will we have a specific date for the vaccine?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc may not like this, but there is good co-operation between Ottawa and Quebec. It might instead prefer us to be at odds with each other, but that is not the case. We are working to procure the requisite refrigerators as well as syringes. We are working to procure and distribute the vaccines, because it is the responsible thing to do.

When the vaccines will be ready, so will Canada.

• (1440)

Mrs. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): What a complete mess, Mr. Speaker. The federal government has been suggesting for months now that we will soon be able to vaccinate those most vulnerable. This week, we learned that is not true. Seniors have been asked to make sacrifices for the past eight months.

Things may have gotten a little easier for us, but not for people 70 and over. They were asked to not go outside or see their loved ones for the past eight months. After eight months, this week's news that the vaccine will not be ready for December or January is devastating.

When can we expect the vaccine? We owe seniors an answer. When?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite does not realize that, in fact, Quebec and Canada are working hand in glove to make sure that we are ready to deploy vaccines when they become available. The officials are working at their level, ministers of health meet on a weekly basis, and people are planning.

That is exactly why Quebec is moving to procure the kinds of devices it needs and we are also procuring, by the way, devices for provinces and territories; and, we are purchasing the vaccines and we will deliver them to provinces at no cost. That is true collaboration. We will be there for the people of Quebec.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how can anyone believe anything that the minister and this government say?

The Quebec health minister, Christian Dub , never heard a peep in response to the infamous letter he sent to the federal health minister. Minister Dub  turned to the media this week to express his frustration about the lack of communication.

We were just told that the ministers meet on a weekly basis, and so do the bureaucrats. Why does the Quebec health minister need to write a letter and tell the media that he has received no reply? This is not working; no one believes it.

Can the minister confirm that immediately after question period she will pick up the phone and call Christian Dub ?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Minister Dub  and I have had a conversation, and we have spoken. Minister Dub  is a participant at the health ministers meeting, which meets every single week to confirm the work that our officials are doing together to ensure that we can deploy the vaccine when it arrives and to talk about a number of other pressing measures.

I will be there for Minister Dub , as I was for Minister McCann beforehand. We will continue to be there for the people of Quebec and we will work hand in glove.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, will the minister be able to explain to Minister Dub , who has ensured that all the necessary infrastructure is in place to be ready to vaccinate Quebecers, why we will not have any vaccines and, if there are any, that it will be in very limited quantities for a small number of Quebecers?

Why do Quebecers and Canadians have to wait nearly a year to be vaccinated? Will the minister explain that to Minister Dub  in their next conversation?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite notes, we have the best vaccine portfolio in the world, with the most per capita doses available to Canadians. In fact, three of the promising candidates are under regulatory review right now, expedited review I might say.

We are working with Americans and with the European Union to share data so that we can very quickly review the safety data. As soon as the vaccines are safe, we will be deploying them with Quebecers and with all provinces and territories.

Oral Questions

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Australian airline Qantas declared this week that international travellers will be required to prove they have been vaccinated against COVID-19 before they are permitted to fly. If other airlines follow suit, thousands of Canadian families will continue to be separated from their loved ones abroad while other countries with vaccines, like the U.S. and U.K., are able to get back to normal.

The Liberals have no rollout plan for vaccine distribution. Canadians are completely in the dark about this. Now, Canadians could be locked out of international travel because of Liberal mismanagement. I have a simple question: What is the date that vaccines will be available to Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have told the member opposite and the House, in fact, Canada has one of the best portfolios in the world with seven promising candidates; more doses per capita than any other country; three of the promising candidates under regulatory review; and a deployment plan that is being built with provinces and territories, which, by the way, have expertise in immunization and are trusted partners in delivering on their responsibilities in health care.

We will be there together to get Canadians through this. There is a light at the end of the tunnel and I would encourage members opposite to be on team Canada.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on August 31, the Prime Minister said the National Research Council would be able to produce hundreds of thousands of vaccine doses starting in November and millions by the end of this year. Now, not 90 days later, he says Canada has no capacity to produce vaccines at all. Health officials also confirm the government failed to negotiate the right to produce vaccines in Canada as other countries have done. This means Canadians will have to wait for vaccines.

Can the Prime Minister explain his blatant reversal, and why he did not negotiate the right to produce vaccines in Canada?

• (1445)

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians understand that before this pandemic began, Canada had no biomanufacturing capacity that was suitable for a COVID-19 vaccine.

We are not going to be taking lessons from the opposition on this, certainly not from the Conservatives, because they sold out our industry at the time. The fabled crown jewel Connaught Laboratories, in the 1980s, went bye-bye and so did so many others.

It is because of these problems, even through the 2000s, when investments in the life sciences were taken away from ISED. We have had to recover territory over time, and these investments that we are making right now are only going to help as we bring forward our vaccine portfolio to the benefit of all Canadians.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are in the middle of the COVID-19 second wave. Young people across the country are once again feeling the brunt of

its economic impacts. New Democrats successfully passed a motion this week calling on the government to re-establish a moratorium on interest on student loans. This would help struggling students who are facing economic hardships.

When will the government introduce that moratorium, when will it provide the support students need and when will it turn its words into action?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout the pandemic, we have put in place significant measures to support students. Our government will continue to make significant investments in students and young Canadians.

To help students get through this difficult time, we put in place a six-month moratorium on student loan payments, helping over a million young Canadians. For students who began resuming their repayment, we put in place measures to help them with their loans. Under the repayment assistance plan, borrowers only pay what they can afford and only start repaying their loans when they earn at least \$25,000 per year. We have also doubled Canada student grants and will continue to be there for students.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, our government has been there to support Canadian workers. More recently, we have transitioned from emergency supports to a more flexible EI system and a suite of recovery benefits for Canadians who are not eligible for EI, are sick, are self-isolating or need to provide care for a child, family member or dependent. Now that we are in the midst of the second wave, some jurisdictions have already announced an extended winter break for students to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Can the minister confirm that parents who cannot work because they must care for a child or family member will be supported through the Canada recovery caregiving benefit?

Oral Questions

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes. In situations where schools are closed for an extended period of time due to COVID-19, workers who have to take care of a child under the age of 12 or a family member who needs supervised care would, of course, be able to receive the Canada recovery caregiving benefit. It is there to support workers: \$500 a week for 26 weeks.

We will be there for parents, we are there for workers and we will continue to be there for Canadians.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tempers are flaring in the Commons today because we are in the second wave of a pandemic, people are getting sick, businesses are struggling and Canadians are seeing millions of citizens of other countries getting vaccines in the coming days and weeks, yet the government will not even answer a question on when we will see them in Canada. The Liberals talk about a team Canada approach, but when we asked in January about flights from China, they called us intolerant. When we asked about masks, they said masks were not important. When we pushed for rapid tests, they blamed the provinces. Now, when we ask about vaccines, they say they are reviewing, not receiving.

When are Canadians going to see the first vaccines?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our main goal is to get safe and effective vaccines to every Canadian. We are currently in line with Japan, New Zealand, Australia and the EU for vaccine delivery and, in fact, we have secured a contract with Moderna, one of the most promising candidates, while the U.K. only secured its agreement last week.

We have the most diverse portfolio in the world. We are working very closely with Health Canada, in terms of the regulatory process, and when a vaccine is ready, we will be ready, too.

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• (1450)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the government's message on China is confusing.

The minister was at committee this week and delivered two contradictory messages. The Canadian Press reported the government has already put in place a new framework on China, while the National Post reported that the government has not put in place a new framework. If we cannot figure it out and the media cannot figure it out, then how on earth is China, or anyone else, supposed to figure it out? To be effective, Canada must act in a rational and predictable way. The Liberal policy on China is anything but that.

When will the government get its act together and develop a clear, coherent policy on China?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to answer this question again. I think the member asked me that question, and I am sure he listened to me when I testified.

It is very simple. We are going to be firm and smart. We have been firm and smart when it comes to asking for the release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor and obtaining consular access. We have been firm and smart when it comes to the Uighurs and asking China to uphold its international human rights obligations. We have been firm and smart when it comes to Hong Kong, and we are going to continue to be firm and smart. That is Canadian policy when it comes to China.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a ridiculous response that was. "Firm and smart" seems to mean doing absolutely nothing, and maybe on a good day sending thoughts and prayers to the victims of the regime.

On the issue of foreign interference and elite capture, John McCallum told us at committee that he cannot divulge the names of clients, but if the government were to bring in a foreign agents registry, he would find a way to do that. I want to ask the government to do John McCallum a favour and give him the opportunity to disclose the names of his clients by bringing in a foreign agents registry.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said at committee, reports of harassment and intimidation of individuals in Canada are deeply troubling, and allegations of such acts being carried out by foreign agents are taken very seriously.

Chinese government representatives in Canada, like all foreign government representatives in Canada, have a duty under international law to respect the laws and regulations of Canada.

As we have said, the safety and security of Canadians is paramount. We will take all appropriate measures to protect their safety.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is lagging behind our trusted allies and being soft on China, and failing to stand up for pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong.

The limited Liberal economic immigration program for Hong Kong excludes pro-democracy activists, like 24-year-old Joshua Wong. He is facing a five-year prison sentence for unlawful assembly, which is an equivalent crime in Canada, however it is widely understood that these prison sentences and charges on pro-democracy activists are politically motivated and influenced by the Communist Party of China.

Oral Questions

Will pro-democracy activists like Joshua be barred entry into Canada, yes or no?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to suggest that Canada is not being tough when it comes to Hong Kong does not bear with any facts.

In fact, Canada was the first country in the world to suspend our extradition treaty, to suspend exports of sensitive equipment, to impose new measures on travelling and to introduce immigration measures complementary to those of our Five Eyes partners.

We will continue to be at the forefront of the response. We will continue to be firm and smart when it comes to responding to the imposition of national security law in Hong Kong.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last night was a first in the House of Commons. Four hours of emergency debate on the status of the French language in Montreal is unprecedented for the federal government.

There was four hours of fine speeches on the importance of Quebec's national language, but how many solid proposals were made by the government? None.

French has to be the language of work and the common language of all Quebecers. That is why the Bloc Québécois is introducing two bills.

Why is this government unable to say that it will support us?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague. We had a very nice evening yesterday. We expressed our love for French. It was nice to see and it was very inspiring. I think that we are sending the right message to Quebecers and Canadians across the country.

The Bloc Québécois's current strategy is to be confrontational. They are creating a scenario where there has to be an enemy or an antagonist. However, the reality is that we all agree.

We agree on protecting the French fact in Quebec and across the country and we will work together on achieving our common goal.

● (1455)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is the problem. Everyone is giving speeches on the importance of the French language, but who wants to do something about it?

This requires strong messaging. In Quebec, things happen in French. That is why an adequate knowledge of French must be a condition for citizenship. It is our common language. That is why Bill 101 must apply to federally regulated businesses. It is our language of work. These are two longstanding and concrete Bloc Québécois proposals.

Will the Liberals finally take action to counter the decline of French in Montreal?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we should ask ourselves who in the House can take action to counter the decline of French across Quebec and Canada.

The reality is that we are there and we will take action. I just want to reassure my colleague. We will do it properly, of course, and together with Quebecers, Canadians and all francophones in the country because this issue is just too important. We have a historic opportunity and we must seize it.

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[English]

HEALTH

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the health committee, Dr. Tam admitted that because of a lack of access to testing and delays in results, the COVID app is not effective. In fact, only 5% of Ontario coronavirus cases used the COVID Alert app to report their infection. Clearly, the \$10-million Liberal COVID app is not a silver bullet. To ensure the app is effective, Dr. Tam said absolutely access and rapid turnaround are important.

When will the health minister provide Dr. Tam the tools she needs? When will she ensure and provide rapid and home-based testing to all Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite is slightly confused about who provides testing in this country. Canada does not provide the testing. It is solely within the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories, which have the responsibility for providing health care to Canadians.

Here is what we are providing. We are providing the tools the provinces and territories need: well over five million rapid tests since the beginning of October for the provinces and territories, personal protective equipment procurement and a variety of other tools and medical devices the provinces and territories need. We are going to continue to be there.

In terms of the COVID Alert app, I would encourage all members to download it to encourage the members in their constituencies to download the app. Certainly the more Canadians who use it the more useful it will be.

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AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CBC recently reported that Nav Canada is considering closing the air traffic control tower at the Regina International Airport. This plan would reduce safety, reduce flights and reduce the economic recovery in my home province.

Oral Questions

My question for the Minister of Transport is simple. Will he provide Nav Canada with the funding needed to keep the air traffic control tower open, or will he continue with this mean-spirited cut to our province? Why do the Liberals treat western Canadians as second-class citizens all the time?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague that when NavCan does an examination of service needs across the country, it does so with safety in mind. I also want to reassure him that Transport Canada will also be examining any proposed plans.

The reality of course is that the number of aircraft in the air has diminished drastically in the past few months, and an organization like NavCan has a responsibility to make sure it has the proper service-level needs. That is exactly what it is doing at this time.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, various news outlets are reporting that Nav Canada is planning to shut down the air traffic control towers at airports in Regina, Windsor, Prince George, Whitehorse, Fort McMurray and Sault Ste. Marie. Air traffic control towers provide vital real-time information to pilots about weather conditions and runway traffic, the loss of which would put the safety of Canadians at risk.

Will the government commit today that there will be no closures of air traffic control towers?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, NavCan is our air traffic controller and has a worldwide reputation for safety. It is, in fact, an enviable record of safety.

As my hon. colleague will probably know, about two-thirds of the number of aircraft that were flying in 2019 are no longer able to fly because of the COVID pandemic, so the number of aircraft in the air has been considerably reduced.

NavCan has a responsibility to evaluate service-level needs across the country, and Transport Canada will be there to oversee it.

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● (1500)

[Translation]

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week the government launched calls for proposals for three programs: the Black entrepreneurship program; the community support, multiculturalism, and anti-racism initiatives program; and the supporting Black Canadian communities initiative.

I am pleased that my government has introduced these measures to help Black communities in particular combat discrimination.

Could the Minister of Small Business talk about why these programs are important?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Black entrepreneurs contribute significantly to our communities and our Canadian economy.

This week, I announced the launch of two of the three pillars of this unprecedented program. The call for proposals has been launched.

We recognize that systemic racism exists in the business world and that we must combat it. We are proud to implement this important program.

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[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, \$16 billion is the amount that Canadians did not receive last year as a result of the discount for our most valuable export product: Canadian oil. This is the result of bad decisions and a constrained pipeline infrastructure to deliver environmentally produced Canadian oil to key markets.

Can the government tell the House its plans to coordinate with the new U.S. administration so that long-planned and existing pipelines can provide the most environmental solution to U.S. refineries?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the past years, we have approved Line 3, with 7,000 jobs created. For Keystone XL, our support is unwavering, with 1,500 jobs created. We are building LNG Canada, with thousands of jobs. We got TMX approved and are getting it built, with 5,600 jobs created so far. We approved NGTL 2021, with thousands of jobs. Orphaned and inactive wells got a \$1.7-billion investment, with thousands of jobs created. With the wage subsidy, more than 60,000 resource workers stayed on the job in the pandemic.

That is our record of supporting the oil and gas workers.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister strongly hinted he will block the proposed Fort McMurray to Alaska railway. The Alaska to Alberta railway trade corridor will create new markets for Canadian products, including in oil and gas, mineral extraction, agriculture and food security in the north.

Does the Minister of Infrastructure agree with the Prime Minister's musings on the A2A railway proposal?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have not yet received an application, and we cannot review an application we do not have.

This government supports good projects, and we know they only get built after they have gone through a fair and thorough review process. That is how our government approved TMX and the Line 3 replacement pipeline, creating thousands of jobs.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been seven months since the worst mass murder in Canadian history sadly took place in my province of Nova Scotia. The families of victims continue to call for information on this tragic event. The report of the inquiry is only due in 2022, and in the meantime, families are having to fight and beg the government for answers.

This week marks the 15th federal Victims and Survivors of Crime Week. Will the Minister of Public Safety commit to providing an update to the families before Christmas and respect their right to information, as protected by the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights?

• (1505)

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to take steps toward creating a criminal justice system that treats victims and survivors of crime with courtesy, compassion and respect. This includes the ongoing implementation of a Canadian victims bill of rights at the federal, provincial and territorial levels. Through the victims fund, we have made more than \$28 million available to provincial and territorial governments and non-governmental organizations to increase awareness and knowledge of victims issues, legislation and services available. It is by working collaboratively at all levels of government that we can continue to empower the resilience of victims and survivors and ensure that their voices are heard.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, natural disasters are increasing in frequency and severity. Flooding continues to be the most costly natural disaster in Canada, causing over \$1 billion in direct damage each year. Water damage goes beyond the destruction of property. It also places an emotional toll on individuals as their homes are destroyed and families are displaced.

Can the Minister of Public Safety update the House on what the government is doing to help Canadians reduce their financial and physical vulnerability to flooding?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Lac-Saint-Louis has quite accurately pointed out, flooding is the most frequent and costly natural disaster in Canada. That is why this week we announced the creation of an interdisciplinary task force on flood insurance and relocation. The task force will examine options to protect homeowners who are at high risk of flooding and examine the viability of a low-cost national flood insurance program. It will also consider options for the potential relocation of residents in areas of the highest risk. Together, we will work to prevent and mitigate the impacts of floods for all Canadians.

Oral Questions

LABOUR

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians are struggling to pay their bills and put food on the table. The pandemic has only made this problem worse, and many people are facing job uncertainty. The Prime Minister promised that by the end of 2020 he would bring fairness to workplaces across Canada, but he continues to side with big business and betray workers.

Canadians deserve to earn a fair wage for the work they do. Will the government commit to its promise to help hundreds of workers by implementing a \$15 federal minimum wage now?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree that hard work deserves a decent wage. We know that good quality jobs are a driver of a strong economy along with people being compensated appropriately.

A \$15 federal minimum wage is a commitment we made during the campaign as well as one that was reaffirmed in my mandate letter. My priority to this pandemic has been the health and safety of workers across the country. We know a successful restart depends on a safe restart. However, I look forward to moving forward on this commitment. I also look forward to the member's support.

* * *

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, a beacon of hope we are holding onto during this pandemic and under the threat of the climate crisis is our confidence in the next generation to be innovative and implement solutions to repair the world they inherit from us. However, we are not adequately providing them with the tools and support they need to achieve this aim.

The average student loan debt in New Brunswick is \$40,000, significantly higher than the national average. How are they supposed to build back better if they start their career at adult life with such a burden on their shoulders?

Students deserve more than a failed summer program and having to pay their loan, while facing such devastating socio-economic uncertainty. What is the government doing now, in a concrete way, to support students through this? At the very least, is the minister in support of suspending the collection of interest—

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really important that we have issues facing youth being raised in the House of Commons. That is exactly why the Prime Minister ensured there was a full voice at the cabinet table. Young people are not only the leaders of tomorrow; they are the leaders of today.

Business of the House

That is why when it came to a response to the pandemic, we put forward a \$9 billion suite of programs. Students will not be left behind. Youths will not be left behind. They are part of a decision-making table. We will continue to raise the right voices.

Right now we have the state of youth report being written and I encourage young people to get involved. Having their say is instrumental as the way we build back even better and consciously more inclusive.

* * *

• (1510)

[Translation]

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the House recognize that the government should respect its promise to supply-managed producers and processors affected by the last three economic agreements by: (a) revealing details without delay related to the compensation that will be paid to dairy, egg, chicken and poultry producers and processors for the duration of the compensation agreements; and (b) budgeting this compensation to make it predictable until the end of the agreement.

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

Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. members' motion will please say nay.

There being no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.
(Motion agreed to)

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as far as I know, under the rules of procedure of the House, members are not allowed to talk on the phone in the chamber. If members look at the recording, they will see that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the veteran member for Winnipeg North, spoke on the phone several times today during question period.

I would like to know whether the rules have changed. If not, the member should be informed that this is not permitted.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the parties were told that it is the only way we can notify people at home that it is their turn to reply.

If the opposition would prefer that ministers who are not here not be allowed to answer questions, it can make that suggestion.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I just want all members to know that I was not informed of the new policy. Maybe that information should be shared with all members of Parliament.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, the House Leader of the Official Opposition is aware of it. We have discussed it.

If there is some other way to proceed or some other technology, I would like to see it, but for now, it is important to the opposition and to democracy to ensure that all ministers, whether they are here or elsewhere, be able to answer all the questions. That means we need some way to ask them to answer, and that is the only one we have at the moment.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition and all parliamentarians, I would like to ask the House leader for the agenda for the remainder of this week and next.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that question was really well put, probably the best question today.

[Translation]

This afternoon, we will continue debate at second reading of Bill C-12 on net-zero emissions. This evening, the committee of the whole will study the votes under Department of Health. Tomorrow and Monday, we will be debating Bill C-7 on medical assistance in dying.

[English]

We hope to complete third reading of Bill C-7 on Monday to give the Senate enough time to pass the bill before the court-imposed deadline of December 18.

On Monday afternoon, at 4 p.m., the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance will deliver the fall economic statement in the House of Commons.

Tuesday and Thursday shall be allotted days.

On Wednesday, we will resume debate on Bill C-12, the net-zero legislation.

[Translation]

Lastly, next Friday we will resume debate on Bill C-10, concerning the Broadcasting Act, and Bill C-11, concerning personal information protection.

- (1515)
[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-214—WAYS AND MEANS MOTION—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am ready to rule on a point of order raised on November 3, 2020, by the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader concerning Bill C-214, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (qualifying environmental trust), standing in the name of the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

In his intervention, the parliamentary secretary alleged that the bill should have been preceded by a ways and means motion. He argued that the bill would expand the definition of “qualifying environmental trust” to include a trust maintained for the sole purpose of funding the reclamation of an oil and gas well. As such trusts are taxed, he argued that the bill would extend the tax to a new class of taxpayer and should therefore be ruled out of order.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre argued that his bill would not create a new class of taxpayer, but would merely allow the oil and gas industry to use an existing tax mechanism already in use by the extractive industries. He also argued that an increase in tax revenue would only be incidental and would therefore not normally require a ways and means motion.

Bill C-214 would amend the Income Tax Act to include, in the definition of “qualifying environmental trust”, trusts that are maintained for the sole purpose of funding the reclamation of an oil or gas well operated for the purpose of producing petroleum or natural gas. As the sponsor of the bill noted, such trusts may already be used to fund reclamation activities by other extractive industries, but the act currently prohibits the use in relation to oil and gas wells. The bill's sponsor has argued that such a prohibition is unfair and that his bill seeks to correct the inequity. The Chair's decision, however, must be based not on the worthiness of the bill's policy objective, on which the Chair has no views, but rather on its compliance with our rules.

[Translation]

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, third edition, states at page 906, and I quote:

The House must first adopt a Ways and means motion before a bill which imposes a tax or other charge on the taxpayer can be introduced. Charges on the people, in this context, refer to new taxes, the continuation of an expiring tax, an increase in the rate of an existing tax, or an extension of a tax to a new class of taxpayers.

The question before the Chair is whether Bill C-214 extends a tax to a new class of taxpayers. The tax treatment of qualifying environmental trusts, or QETs, is admittedly quite complex, with a series of offsetting credits and deductions between the trust and the corporation that contributes to it. Generally, such a trust is created by a corporation as it would provide a tax advantage.

[English]

However, this is not a circumstance where the bill proposes a tax reduction or a tax credit. The means by which this advantage is gained is through the creation of a separate and distinct taxpayer, the trust. The bill's sponsor argues that QETs already exist as a class of taxpayers. Indeed they do. At present, however, the Income Tax Act specifically excludes a trust relating to the reclamation of a

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well. This exclusion has been part of the act ever since these sorts of trusts were first introduced in Bill C-59, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act and the Income Tax Application Rules, in 1995, when they were originally known as mining reclamation trusts.

Having been renamed “qualifying environmental trusts” in 1998, the number of eligible industries was expanded to include other extractive industries in 2011 via Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011 and other measures. Each of these bills was preceded by a ways and means motion. While they clearly contained other measures, the Chair believes that such a motion was necessary to expand the various types of industries able to create a QET.

Accordingly, a ways and means motion is necessary. The bill cannot proceed and should be discharged.

Pursuant to Standing Order 92.1, the hon. member for Calgary Centre may substitute a new item in the order of precedence to replace Bill C-214.

I thank hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

- (1520)
[English]

CANADIAN NET-ZERO EMISSIONS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

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

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank my colleagues from all sides of the House for giving me this opportunity to speak today. While I do plan to stick around a little while longer, the uncertainties that we are facing as a nation and, indeed, within the House mean that this could be the last chance I have to physically stand in the House to say farewell.

I must also warn members that I plan to be uncharacteristically non-partisan in my remarks today because, quite frankly, it is not about the politics here; it is about the people.

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Whenever I am asked what it is like to be an MP, I always reply one thing: It is the most challenging, demanding, frustrating, worthwhile thing that I have ever done. There have been a lot of times over the last 16 years where there were ups and downs. I have lost a lot. I lost my husband, my father, my vision temporarily, my appendix and my dear neurotic cat. However, I also gained more than I ever could have imagined: amazing experiences across Canada that only deepened my love for this great country, friendships that will last a lifetime, an undying respect for this institution and for those who serve in it, and a pair of titanium hips.

For some, becoming an MP is not something they always plan to do. Sometimes, it is the issues of the day that really push someone to serve. While the issues and events in 2004 were definitely the tipping point for me, my desire to help those in my community started many years earlier. When I was about nine years old, my mother sat me down on the eve of an election to tell me what democracy was, how important it is and how very lucky we are to have it. I remember that conversation vividly, and I can say that, from then on, I dreamed of having the opportunity to fight for the people at home.

Therefore, to everyone in Haldimand—Norfolk, I cannot thank them enough for making the dreams of that little nine-year-old girl come true.

I have to say it has been a heck of a ride since 2004. From being named agriculture critic during the BSE crisis, serving in former prime minister Stephen Harper's cabinet for all 10 years, to being named the Conservative caucus party liaison and a member of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, every position has come with its own challenges and memories that I treasure.

Some of those include creating the universal child care benefit, promoting and delivering the tobacco transition support program, imposing measures to protect potential human-trafficking victims here in Canada, stickhandling numerous infrastructure projects for Haldimand and Norfolk counties through the bureaucracy, breaking down barriers faced by persons with disabilities, and finally, retiring and replacing the aging Sea King helicopter fleet with the new Cyclones.

Through it all, I have truly been blessed to have amazing people by my side, people who have challenged me to do my best, who have stuck with me through the high times and the low, and who even laugh at my sometimes warped sense of humour, and on a daily basis. While I may have been labelled the toughest bird in cabinet at one point, I am a firm believer that if a person cannot laugh at themselves, they are just not funny enough.

From the very beginning, my parents were my biggest champions. During many elections, my dad would knock on doors with me, and my mom was always working in the campaign office. Thankfully, I still have my mother today. I know Mom will be watching this; I thank her and I love her.

Of course, I also could not have done any of this without my late husband, Senator Doug Finley.

• (1525)

Many people knew Doug as the man who always had a plan F, who was a staunch defender of free speech, who led the Conservative Party to victory in 2006 and 2008 as the national campaign director, and who played a leading role in the 2011 election that resulted in a strong, stable, national Conservative majority government. He was also one of my biggest supporters, both professionally and personally. As far as we can tell, we were the first married couple to sit in both Houses of the Canadian Parliament at the same time.

I would like to thank those in my life who have made it possible for me to still be here today. In no particular order, I thank Marlene and Tom Stackhouse, Sharlene, George Santos, Howard Goode, Wally and Jan Butts, Jeremy and Chelsie McIntee, Frank Parker, Karly Wittet, The Amazing Ali, and the Johns in my life: Nieuwenhuis, Wehrstein, Bracken and Weissenberger.

To those who made my life easier every day, Denis, Jojo, Ann, Jimmy, Mike Fraser, Michou and the indomitable Lynette, they have my heartfelt thanks.

To my former cabinet colleagues, Gerry, Rob, Lisa, Bev and Carol, and to Senator Plett, Ian and Vida, Karen Kinsley, Aly Q., Koolsie, Spiro and Dustin, I am so grateful we are still in touch.

To my former deputy ministers, Dick, Ian and Janice, I thank them for their patience and wisdom.

To my favourite former prime minister, I thank him for the trust he kept placing in me, and placing and placing and placing.

To my current colleagues, Karen, Raquel and John N., it is a great relief to know that they are taking on my pet projects going forward.

Of course, I would not be here today if it were not for the thousands of volunteers and donors over the years who generously supported me and my efforts. I thank them.

To my Conservative family, it has been an absolute pleasure getting to know all of them and working hard with them to help Canadians. It is the values that have kept me blue through and through, the values of hard work, showing respect for other people, looking after one's family, smaller government and lower taxes. That is why I am so excited for the future of the Conservative Party under our new leader and for what my colleagues will continue to do for Canadians.

Most importantly, to the residents of Haldimand—Norfolk, I thank them from the bottom of my heart. I know I am not at all biased when I say that Haldimand—Norfolk truly is the best place to grow up and live. As part of Ontario's south coast, yes, Canada's fourth coast, we have some of the most hard-working, friendly, salt of the earth people, people who know what it means to pull up their socks to get a job done or to help a neighbour. It has been an absolute privilege to be the MP for these amazing people.

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It is time for me to turn a new page. It is time to hit the refresh button. It will soon be time for me to indulge my creative side; to travel, hopefully; to take some courses; and to finally get to my “want to do” list. I am looking forward to this new chapter of my life and what it will bring.

To all those young people out there who have a dream like I had, I urge them to go after it, chase it, pursue it, live it. It might not be easy, but I assure them it is worth it.

I would like to close today with a quote from the hero of that little nine-year-old girl I used to be, Winnie-the-Pooh, who said, “How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.”

● (1530)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this time is normally for questions and comments. I will only comment in this case.

What an honour it is for me, on behalf of my colleagues and on behalf of the Conservative caucus, present and past, to thank the hon. member of Parliament for Haldimand—Norfolk for her tremendous public service and her touching remarks today, which cap her incredible service not just to Haldimand—Norfolk, but to all of Canada.

What an honour it is for me to be a colleague of and to pay tribute to someone I have admired for a great time. As a party activist, as many of us volunteer and take part in politics, I watched her incredible work helping merge the parties. The hon. member was, by half an hour only, I have learned, the second candidate nominated for the newly created modern Conservative Party of Canada.

With her background, not only professionally, with an MBA from Western, but also being bilingual and running a French immersion program for a time and working in the private sector, it was known that, with the hard work of merging the parties and preparing the government in waiting at the time, she would be an important, literally a critical part, of a Conservative government. This was after more than 15 years of Conservatives being in the wilderness, politically, in Canada.

What an incredible record this hon. member had as minister of citizenship and immigration, minister of human resources and skills development, and minister of public works and government services. I am glad she mentioned, after a generation, she gave the RCAF a new Maritime helicopter. I love her even more because of that.

I was a young cadet when that program was cancelled. It had languished and hung out there, and then a strong minister, who always had the service of our men and women and their best interests at heart, finally got that major procurement done and bought the Cyclone. I have been able to fly it. It is a testament to her service to our country and our interests around the world.

She is the last of the titans, the last member of Parliament in our caucus who has served as a member of the government and a member of cabinet at senior levels for every single year in the period of the Harper government. That corporate memory, that knowledge is

something I do not want to lose, and I am in awe of her tremendous contribution to our country.

Her presence on our team is thoughtful, connecting our caucus to our grassroots, and always making people feel welcome. The Christmas lights in her Parliament Hill office often showed how welcoming she is to new people, and her mentoring of many of young members, especially some of our women joining a political career, who are able to look up to someone who had had tremendous success and learn from that.

Then, of course, there is the great love story of the upper and lower houses of Parliament in Canada, which includes a meeting at Rolls-Royce in the private sector. I love that part of it, too.

Doug was in the private sector at Rolls-Royce. They met, and obviously shared a love for Parliament. Then, I, too, think they are the only, or at least the first, husband and wife to serve at the same time in the upper and lower chambers of this great Parliament, and at senior levels, I might add, throughout that period.

That is a legacy. We lost our friend, Senator Doug Finley, but they created a legacy together in the scholarship fund for young people. Once a year, even virtually, the event brings people together to celebrate public service, which we saw today can often be fractious. We need to celebrate and instill that in young people.

The good people of Haldimand—Norfolk have been well served. Her advocacy, to the point of bragging about that region of Ontario being the bread basket and the greenhouse of our province and our country, is something that all MPs should strive to do as champions for their community. When she informed me of her news, she said, right up to the last day, she is going to be working with people in her riding on grassroots petitions and on issues until her last moment.

That exemplifies the type of service the member has given. When we look at the book of wisdom that she is handing on to the next generation, many of them here in the chamber with us, that is a legacy of service that will last for many years.

● (1535)

I am very happy that she has already provided much of that wisdom, introduction and mentoring to Leslyn Lewis, who we hope will join our team from Haldimand—Norfolk, showing that the continuity of public service, of Conservative ideals and principles, will be the hallmark of the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk's career, from the first moment she was elected through to the last day she will spend as an MP.

I will end on this note: As the last of the titans, as someone who was in cabinet and had to defend a Conservative government, often in front of a somewhat hostile press gallery, the member's family motto was “brave in difficulties”. At least that is one of the member's mottos, and she wore it with pride and vigour.

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She was not only brave, she was noble and resolute throughout challenging times, the great recession and the transformation of government. It is a legacy I think all Canadians of all political stripes can be thankful for. I ask all colleagues to show tribute to the member today for her public service.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a tremendous privilege to rise today in the House and speak on behalf of the Liberal caucus and this side of the House. If I may begin by saying that, for the last 16 years, this House has been more thoughtful, richer, more compassionate and more competent because of the member for Haldimand—Norfolk's presence here. It has also been a bit more feisty and fun.

I want to really express the gratitude we have on this side of the House for her collegiality and sense of engagement. Whether she was on this side of the House or that side of the House, one knew they could depend on that member to be fair, to be thorough and to always stand up for what is best in this country.

Six elections are no small feat. If we call a 20% or 25% margin a squeaker, she has had some pretty rough rides. It has been fascinating to watch both her parliamentary career, as well as her government career, and we are richer in Canada because of her time in those people departments, especially. Of course, Public Works and Government Services was important, but the member shone as a minister for people, whether it was at Human Resources and Skills Development, or Citizenship and Immigration. It was in these kinds of places where people's lives changed because of her care and compassion. It was noted.

Sometimes I hated being on that side of the House watching her on this side of the House exercising that care with such grace, competence and love. That really has been an important part of what we need to do in this place and to remember her.

The actions she has made have really made the people of Haldimand—Norfolk know that they were well represented in this place. It is all about bigness in that riding, from the Grand River on one side to Big Creek on the other side and to Long Point on the fourth coast. In Simcoe, Delhi or Port Dover, the people knew they were well represented.

Just this last February the member, whom I want to call by name but I am not going to, for Haldimand—Norfolk called about two of her constituents from Port Dover. They were on the Diamond Princess and needed help getting home. She knew all the details, and showed all the care. It was such a moment of good constituent-care.

As a minister, as a member, as a human being and as a sister in this place, we can only wish her the very best of luck and best wishes as she undertakes this next chapter of her life. I am interested to know what she is going to do with it. I have already told her privately a number of goals I thought she should have.

To the little Girl Guide in Port Dover, who became, through an MBA, a successful business person, and on to be a passionate parliamentarian, competent minister and gracious human being, God-speed, best wishes and much love.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am also pleased to recognize the work and accomplishments of the member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

She has been a member of the House since June 2004. Today, I understand her decision to leave us. She has served the public, served others, for over 16 years. She can be proud of what she has accomplished. If I were her, I would be proud too.

I met my colleague in 2006, when I was the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry and she was a minister. As members have said, she has held a number of cabinet positions. What stands out about her to me is her kindness. She was the kind of minister who was not intimidating at all, so opposition members were not too shy to cross the floor of the House to talk to her about specific files. She was always friendly and attentive to all members who had things they wanted to ask her about.

Today, she gave her speech mostly in English, but I know that Diane, if you will allow me to call her by her name, Madam Speaker, also speaks French and made every effort to do so. Every time I went over to talk to her, she made an effort to listen to me and answer me in my own language, both orally and in writing.

The public does not know that we exchange notes, that is, messages that the pages deliver to ministers. Every time that I, or any of my Bloc colleagues, sent her a written message about a specific matter, she always made sure to answer in French and, above all, to follow up the next day during question period. That is an admirable quality. She was an approachable, empathetic minister. She devoted herself to serving the people we represent. Being a government minister means being the minister of all citizens. She certainly took that to heart.

I also knew her during the period when she sat just over there and her eyes were hurting. She mentioned this in her speech. She stayed on, sitting there. Someone else might have gone on sick leave, but this MP and minister stayed on to carry out her duties while fighting an illness that I am happy to say she overcame.

I know that she never held a grudge against me for the time, right after I was elected in January 2006, when I showed up unannounced at her office with piles of shirts from textile workers. I had organized a big rally for textile workers, and Paul Crête and I went to her office to give her five or six garbage bags full of workers' shirts. She thought it was pretty strange that a young MP would come barging into her office like that to deliver shirts. However, she never held it against me, quite the contrary, in fact. As someone said before, she has a great sense of humour.

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It means a lot to me that the person in the Chair today is a woman, because we welcomed two new female MPs yesterday, which enabled us to reach the magic number of 100 women in the House, out of 338 MPs. It is a magic number. I am sad to see Diane leaving us, because now the number could drop back to 99. I apologize, Madam Speaker. That said, I understand that she needs to take care of herself, her family and her children and take some time to just enjoy life, because it must be said that serving others and being an MP and minister for so long takes up a lot of time.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I hope the next chapter of her life is filled with fun, love and success, and I hope she gets a chance to live life to the fullest.

• (1545)

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise and pay tribute to the member for Haldimand—Norfolk. We are both from the class of 2004. That was six elections ago. Anyone who can hold a riding through six elections, through the ups and downs, shows an extraordinary commitment not just to Parliament, but to their constituents. That is something the member always showed: her dedication to where she came from.

I was thinking back to 2004. In some ways, it seems like such a long time ago. Some things have changed, and some things seem to be similar. In 2004, my hair was dark brown. I notice that the member's hair has not changed at all, so that is extraordinary. I am very, very impressed.

In 2004, the EU was all over the media because it was welcoming new members, not because people were leaving.

We had a pandemic in 2004, but it was the bird flu. I do not even remember what bird flu was. It sounds a lot less threatening than COVID-19, but we survived that.

Also, in 2004, the member and I came in as newbies to Parliament, where the Liberal government was announcing that finally, for the first time, we would have strong, firm commitments on environmental targets and we would meet those targets, so plus ça change: We are back at it.

There was another element, though, in 2004, and that was the BSE crisis. Both the member and I were opposition critics for agriculture, and I remember that crisis. It was an all-hands-on-deck moment. The beef industry and so many families were in such crisis and the member showed a real dedication then. Of course, she went on to government and I did not, but that is all water under the bridge. Somebody will write a biography about what happened to the New Democratic Party someday, but it will not be me.

In that time, I dealt with her on a number of big files because she was the minister of human resources and skills development; she was minister of public works and government services; she had CMHC, I think, and she had citizenship and immigration. Those are all files that really touch people's lives, and they were not necessarily easy files to handle at the time.

I have to say that the member was a pretty tough opponent. She talks about how nice people are from Haldimand—Norfolk. They

do not strike me as tough, but if someone were to get too close into the boards with her, they would get knocked. She would hold her turf. Then I learned that she was from the Hammer. She was born in Hamilton, so now I understand it. I want to pay tribute to the Hamilton side of her because in times of toughness it showed.

One thing also really struck me. When we live our lives in politics in the public eye, our privacy disappears very quickly. The member survived real personal tragedy. She survived difficult health conditions and she came in time and time again, showing incredible dignity and determination. She held her seat and she held her files through all those difficulties. That was an extremely admirable thing to witness as a colleague.

I want to thank her for her service because, at the end of the day, public life should be an honourable profession. It should be something that we aspire to. She aspired to it, she said, as a little girl. I think that is really, really powerful. I remember as a little boy hearing my grandparents argue about politics: about Stanfield, Joe Clark, Ed Broadbent, David Lewis and Pierre Trudeau. The respect that generation had for political leaders of all stripes was really impressive. I worry, in the rising world of toxic politics and the blame game, that we are losing that old-school sense of the dignity of the office, the dignity of the person who comes forward to represent her people. The member always carried her office with incredible dignity. She never reached down. She never used cheap shots. She always presented the facts as she saw them. Sometimes those facts were pretty blunt, but she said them as they had to be said. Also, she went to bat when things needed to be fought for.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party, I want to thank the member for her service to Parliament, to her party, to her constituents and to our nation. I wish her the best. I am not sure, but I am told there is life after Parliament and it is a very great life. I am sure she is going to prove that for us, so I will continue to follow her to see how she charts a new course of life. Thanks very much on behalf of the New Democratic Party.

• (1550)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, what an honour it is for me to be able to add a few words for my dear friend from Haldimand—Norfolk. I am wondering if she knows something that none of the rest of us knows. Her decision that it would be maybe the last time that she could stand in her place to say goodbye makes me wonder what she knows about COVID. What does she know about an election? Maybe it is just better to be safe than sorry, but I really hope this is not the last time she is standing in her place in the House.

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I want to add my voice to those of so many friends who say the obvious, which is that the member for Haldimand—Norfolk is an extraordinary human being. She exhibits real kindness. When I was newly elected in 2011 as an opposition MP and she was a powerful minister, there was never any question that I brought forward that was treated as a partisan matter. It was treated in the spirit in which it was raised, as something important for constituents, something important to answer openly and honestly. She was never one, in question period, to duck or to take a partisan shot when a member asked her something about her portfolio.

Somehow over the years we got to be friends. I want to say publicly, and to the hon. member, she may not know how much I admire her, but I think of how she has overcome things that are heart-breaking, such as losing Doug and various health challenges. She really knows how to tough it out, do her job and constantly show a measure of compassion and kindness to the others around her.

I have memories of the all-party support for measures she took to help people who are visually impaired to access all of our parliamentary documents. We had fun with that one, did we not? I want to say from the bottom of my heart, I hope we do see each other again and not before a great long time passes. I hope we are able, post-COVID, to raise a glass and celebrate an extraordinary career. I thank the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk. I thank her for such kindness. I thank her for her friendship. I thank her for an extraordinary career of public service, and God bless her.

Hon. Diane Finley: Madam Speaker, it does not very often happen that I am at a loss for words as you well know, because you get to hear me mumble here all the time.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank all of the members and speakers today. They have been most generous. I am not sure where the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands got this thing about how I never took partisan shots. Maybe she is mixing me up with someone else.

As I said in my remarks, the most gratifying, worthwhile thing I have ever had the opportunity to do has been to share the lives of my constituents and their concerns with so many members who always stepped up to the plate to help. We have had some challenges, and we still do in the riding. Whenever I was having a tough go, every time I could turn to someone, including my colleague from the Liberals who spoke. Right at the beginning of COVID, I remember the *Diamond* cruise ship was there, and we were working with a couple who were from my home town. The member was such a treat to work with, and his office made sure they took good care of us to do everything we could to help that couple get home safely and soundly.

That is the kind of spirit that we have had here. When push comes to shove, yes we bicker back and forth. Part of that is show-time, right? Then afterwards we meet out back and ask someone if they heard the latest joke, so it is not personal. It is professional. I am going to miss the friendship and fellowship that I have enjoyed here. I am going to miss that and miss members. I am going to miss the fun. I am going to miss the fights, but I am looking forward to the next chapter.

I thank everyone for the kind words. I am overwhelmed by it. Be well. Be well.

• (1555)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All the best.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, it feels funny taking the floor after such an emotional moment.

I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Saint-Jean.

Bill C-12 talks about an action plan. That is the term used. To us, an action plan means measures, tasks, activities, deadlines and the assignment of responsibility in order to carry out a project. Given the importance of the issue it addresses, although we agree with the principle, we feel Bill C-12 needs some work. Members can count on the Bloc Québécois to propose improvements.

We are on the cusp of the fifth anniversary of the Paris Agreement on December 12, and we are discussing Bill C-12. I just had to point out the coincidental numbering that makes me laugh.

Canada can no longer say that it is preparing for a transition. The transition should have started a long time ago, long before the pandemic brought all the world's economies to their knees, long before capitalism was forcibly subdued by the cessation of all commercial activity, long before people finally realized how essential the people, mainly women, who work in health care and education are.

Today we can no longer call it a transition. We need to call it a leap, as Naomi Klein would say. This bill must be able to evolve in order to play the role it should be designed to fill, namely a permanent tool that includes all of the necessary accountability mechanisms in order to guide this government and future governments toward a new economy and a future that all generations can look to with hope.

Bill C-12 appears to have glossed over one element that is central to the democratic process, and that is the sacred principle of the separation of the legislative and executive branches. This issue crops up in several clauses.

First, in clause 20, there is no independent assessment. The minister will be assessing his own government's work. The bill mentions an advisory body. Why not? It is a good idea, except that we soon realize that it will not be playing the role we would expect. The members, who are appointed by the minister, do not have a mandate to advise on short-term goals or interim targets. Their mandate is simply to provide advice with respect to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

The advisory body needs to be independent so it can make recommendations and be heard. As the people who drafted Bill C-12 say, notwithstanding the terminology used at the press conference, an advisory body is not an independent authority.

In our opinion, it is crucial that a real advisory body be set up. It must be made up of independent experts with the powers, abilities and resources to conduct detailed analyses, advise the government on its targets and plans, collaborate on follow-ups and monitor progress.

The other issue is that nothing is binding. There are no consequences for not achieving the targets. If the minister thinks things are not going well, Bill C-12 gives him free rein to change the previously established targets. According to the bill, “The Governor in Council may make regulations for the purposes of this Act, including regulations...amending or specifying the methodology to be used to report”. The targets will be changed and the methodology will stay the same, and Canada will once again present itself as a leader in the fight against climate change.

I would like to talk about clause 24 and the role of the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development. Bill C-12 recommends that the commissioner examine the implementation of the measures aimed at mitigating climate change at least once every five years. I would like to remind the House that the recommendations made by the experts in the commissioner's office are not binding, so the wording seems a little wishy-washy to us.

Currently, the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development is playing the role he is meant to play, and the members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development know what I am talking about. What I mean is that his office deserves respect. He should be commended for the invaluable work he is capable of doing. He should be given powers commensurate with the gravity of the offences, the gravity of the shortfalls and the inaction that his team has noted in many of its investigations.

● (1600)

These experts' recommendations are too often ignored by the government departments and agencies in question. That is why his role needs to be strengthened.

The current state of affairs is nothing less than a hindrance to the application of corrective measures and adjustments to the government's actions on climate, pollution and environmental protection.

Once amended, this bill will be crucial for the future. It is therefore important to genuinely involve the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development by giving him powers that will ensure that follow-up is done properly and that independent experts can contribute to the goals.

The Bloc Québécois has nothing against economic prosperity. I am digressing a little, but I am saying this because many members said in their speeches that the most polluting resource is our hope for future prosperity.

In our opinion, all we have to do is not open the door to lobbyists for a while and instead learn about the current movement. This is not just the Bloc Québécois talking. Big investors unequivocally

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stated in the New York Times this summer that climate change is the greatest systemic threat to the economy.

It is not a trivial matter when investment companies start taking \$1 trillion in assets out of companies associated with fossil fuels. The leader of the Bloc Québécois mentioned the possibility of taking the more than \$12 billion sunk into Trans Mountain and redirecting it to industry in Alberta, because we think that a green shift can mean prosperity for all.

It would be sad if we were to choose, willingly or under some influence, to spend public funds to enrich private companies, like oil and gas companies, which are often foreign owned, to the detriment of the renewable energy sources of the future and innovative projects like the ones under way in Quebec.

Right now, the government is subsidizing polluting industries that are making us sick. Quebec and the provinces then have to use health care funding to heal their residents. Incidentally, we still have not seen an increase in health transfers.

In another vein, why does the government not work with indigenous communities on clean energy infrastructure projects? On November 13, it said that it was going to extend funding for indigenous participation by investing in oil and gas, not in clean energy.

I have a bit of time left, but not enough to quickly list all the measures, practices, subsidies, policies and allocations that are literally undermining the progress we could be making together.

Is there anyone here, whether physically or virtually, who does not believe what the science is telling us about climate change? Is there anyone here who does not see the crystal clear link between the environment and human health? I am reaching out to all members, especially my fellow members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, who are concerned by this worrisome situation. Let us not be divided on this issue.

Bill C-215, tabled by the Bloc Québécois, contains the elements needed to produce solid legislation. The legislation needs to be tangible, with clear accountability and targets.

Canada is now touting multiculturalism and the importance of multilateralism, so it should quickly rectify the embarrassing lack of reference to the Paris Agreement. I say “embarrassing” because the Paris Agreement was signed five years ago. This will force Canada to set a target under that agreement for 2030, which should be included in the bill.

● (1605)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech.

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I am in complete agreement with her. The transition should have started a long time ago. We did start it, but that was followed by 10 years of inaction under the Conservatives.

She is right to say that this bill is not an action plan. It is a framework bill. We presented the first component of the action plan in 2016. It was the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change, which all of the provinces and territories adopted. The minister also announced that this plan will be updated very soon.

I would like to address two points raised by my colleague. She believes the advisory body is insufficient. However, before entering politics, I co-chaired an advisory council on climate change for this government. The council proposed a series of measures, including purchase incentives for electric vehicles and investments in energy efficiency retrofits. A few months after our report was released, those measures were incorporated into the 2019 budget.

The hon. member also said that there is no external evaluation, yet there is an entire section on the role of the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development. This is right in his wheelhouse, since he is responsible for making sure that the government meets its objectives in various areas. Consequently, I am having a bit of difficulty understanding my colleague's questions in this respect.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I agree with some of the things my colleague said. An act is not an action plan, but it needs a binding reduction target. That is the whole purpose of a climate act.

The commissioner of the environment and sustainable development told the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development that the situation is dismal. In 2011, the Department of Transport received a damning report on the safety of hazardous materials. Two years later, in 2013, a train exploded in Lac-Mégantic. It is now 2020, and nothing has been done. The commissioner needs more powers so he can force government departments to follow up on his audits.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, first, the member's own party has a bill, I believe it is Bill C-215, that seeks many of the same things as this bill. Why is the Bloc supporting the Liberal bill over their own member's bill?

Second, it seems strange to me that, in a bill that Liberals like to trumpet as, somehow, being an accountability and transparency bill, there is very little transparency or accountability for the government. In fact, the initial target at 2030 will be the first opportunity. That is more than two majority governments away from today.

I would like to hear her thoughts on both of those themes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. He sits with me on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

We obviously support Bill C-215, and we tabled it before Bill C-12. Our bill contains targets, including interim targets, as well as measures for achieving them, and it ensures transparency with respect to the method of calculating greenhouse gas emissions. These

are all proposals that we will make to ensure that Bill C-12 becomes a real climate act.

• (1610)

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent speech, which showed that you cannot build strength if you do not walk the talk.

Does the member think that the infamous Paris conference was the benchmark for this bill? What is the point of signing that damn document if, at the end of the day, nothing even happens?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I remind the member to watch his language.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

The Paris Agreement was signed on December 12, 2015. All of the countries were required to review their targets after five years. The targets agreed to in 2015 will allow the planet's temperature to rise by 3°C or 4°C by the end of the century. We were not supposed to pass 1.5°C.

Obviously, the countries had to review their targets. With every passing minute that we fail to properly react to the climate crisis, it becomes even more difficult to achieve the Paris targets. That is why I am saying that we do not need a transition. We need to leap. We need to move more quickly.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the government's new bill, Bill C-12, on achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Fortunately, this is a subject that brings people together more than it divides them.

When it comes to climate change, most people agree that we need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions if we, and especially future generations, do not want to hit a wall. We all agree that it is our moral obligation to leave behind a planet that is still habitable for future generations.

Since climate change is an issue that affects everyone, it has brought together many people who would normally not work together. We all have one thing in common, the earth, and we know that there is no planet B. That is what brought about half a million people together to march in the streets of Montreal on September 27, 2019. That is what motivated a large number of women who did not have much in common aside from the fact that they are mothers, to come together and form Mothers Step In, a group that I had the pleasure of meeting with on Monday.

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The goal of reducing greenhouse gas production has even gained widespread acceptance among big oil companies like Shell, which announced a program called “drive carbon neutral” two weeks ago. In short, reducing greenhouse gases is such a worthy goal that it is not surprising that there is such a consensus. However, here is the problem: Too often, when we talk about greenhouse gas reduction and net-zero goals, that is all it is—a goal. As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry once said, a goal without a plan is just a wish.

Let's be clear: We are not against Bill C-12, far from it. Every step in the right direction is welcome. However, we do regret that this bill takes only baby steps and that time is running out. The climate emergency is very real and is a major concern among Canadians. Although Bill C-12 was intended to be resolutely green, we regret that it is actually a little too dangerously beige.

When it comes time to demonstrate political realism, people like to quote Montesquieu, who said that perfect is the enemy of the good. However, climate change is an exception to that quote. We do not have the luxury to be good. We have to be impeccable. We have a duty to succeed. To use the classic expression, we are doomed to nothing short of excellence if we do not want to be doomed at all.

Bill C-12 has good intentions. On the eve of election 2019, the Liberal Party said in their platform that they would “set legally-binding, five-year milestones, based on the advice of the experts and consultations with Canadians, to reach net-zero emissions”. The Liberal Party also said it would “appoint a group of scientists, economists, and experts to recommend the best path to get to net-zero”. Then comes Bill C-12: gone are the binding targets, gone are the follow-up and rigorous evaluation by an independent body.

If between the promise and the bill the commitments have diminished, there is genuine concern that the measures that should result from enforcing the law will also diminish if they are not adequately entrenched in the bill in advance. That is why it is important to point out the flaws of Bill C-12, and I am going to speak about at least four of them.

First, Bill C-12 does not include targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions. The only constraint found in the bill is that the government is required to set new targets every five years. The government can move ahead haphazardly and change its game plan as it goes and as it sees fit. That is concerning because we have seen in the past that this way of doing things does not work.

From the beginning of its mandate, the government has set greenhouse gas reduction targets, but has never managed to meet them. The development of a plan requires anticipating from the beginning the steps required to carry it out. Moreover, to ensure that the plan works, the government must include benchmarks that cannot continually be lowered.

• (1615)

Second, Bill C-12 is essentially a commitment from the government to assess its own performance. This is also not very promising and it shows that the government does not take this seriously. Pursuant to clause 16 of the bill, the minister himself will write a report detailing the reasons why Canada failed to meet its targets, if applicable, and the actions Canada will take to address this failure. I remember, way back when, we used to correct our own or a peer's

schoolwork. We were usually asked to give ourselves or our friends a grade. I do not recall anyone ever failing an assignment under this system. It may be a worthwhile exercise for developing skills to critique one's own work, but it would be a very inappropriate way to grade a final exam before graduation, for example.

I am glad to see that Bill C-12 requires that the reports on the targets, regardless of whether they are met, be tabled in Parliament and made public. This transparency is not inherently bad, but without an independent authority to assess the progress, we can unfortunately expect to see some self-congratulatory grandstanding.

Third, as I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, most people are of a same mind on climate. Quebeckers and many Canadians agree on the notion of an emergency. Everyone knows that tomorrow is already too late and that even today is almost too late.

In recent months, governments, cities and universities in Quebec and Canada have declared a climate emergency. This is not the time to procrastinate. As the saying goes, never leave for tomorrow what you can do today. If we agree on the definition of the term “emergency”, then we must take concrete action very quickly to avoid the serious consequences of climate change. For that reason the government must require that the state respect its own commitments. The law should include a mechanism that will make the government accountable as well as a reporting mechanism.

Fourth, the Liberals unfortunately seem to want to always postpone their targets. Not so long ago, in the throne speech, the government said it was going to introduce a plan that would help Canada exceed its climate targets for 2030. Promises were being made for 2030, but the problem is that 2050 is all they are talking about now.

They promised to raise the target for 2030, but this is not even enshrined in their climate bill. As they say, those who can do more can also do less. If the government is so confident it can achieve net zero by 2050, it should be just as confident it can achieve one of the milestones needed to reach that final goal, namely reducing emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. Therefore, it should not shy away from enshrining this objective in Bill C-12.

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The environment no longer has the luxury of waiting for the government to show its goodwill and fight global warming. It is with this sense of urgency in mind that the Bloc Québécois has introduced a bill on climate accountability. We need legislation that will pave the way towards achieving the objectives that will let us face future generations without feelings of shame or failure. This plan must not be open to change at the whim of the current or future governments.

That element of accountability and predictability is the very purpose of Bill C-215, which was introduced by my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia. I would like to go over the highlights. First, it will integrate Canada's Paris Agreement commitments into domestic law to make them mandatory. It will require the federal government to raise its greenhouse gas reduction targets to the same level as the Paris targets. It will also require Ottawa to lay out a detailed action plan to achieve its targets. It will task the environment commissioner with determining whether the government's efforts will enable it to achieve its targets and with telling the government how to achieve them. Lastly, it will hold the federal government to account in the House if it fails to keep its promises.

Despite its shortcomings, we will support Bill C-12 because we do not want future Canadians to be disappointed in us or to feel that we failed them. We hope the federal government will support our bill in return.

• (1620)

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

We are both concerned about climate change, which has been my pet cause for many years. I attended the first UN Conference of the Parties in 1995. All I am missing is a cane.

I am a little confused. I will quickly read out a few excerpts from the bill, including part of the preamble:

...the Government of Canada is committed to achieving and exceeding the target for 2030 set out in its nationally determined contribution communicated in accordance with the Paris Agreement....

It also mentions the commissioner of the environment in subclause 24(2), which I will read out:

The [commissioner's] report may include recommendations related to improving the effectiveness of the Government of Canada's implementation of the measures with respect to climate change mitigation that it has committed to undertake....

If I understood what my colleague said, she would like to force future governments to meet targets. In a democracy, I do not see how we can force a government that has been duly elected by the people to not change its mind. As an environmentalist, I want all governments to meet the targets, and I believe that we have a collective responsibility to ensure that that happens.

However, how can we enact a law that forces something on people who have a perfectly legitimate democratic right to change their minds?

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, that is exactly what we are hoping for, that this bill will be binding for future governments.

If they decide to amend the bill, they will be the ones to blame. The plan that is presented can be changed at the government's discretion. The commissioner of the environment can make recommendations. What we want is for the commissioner to tell the government whether the targets that will be included in the bill are realistic. That is exactly what we are asking for, and that is what is missing from Bill C-12 right now.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her excellent speech. We all have the same objective, which is to save our planet.

I would like my colleague to talk about the current situation. The government opposite has been in office for five years. I remember that when Parliament was shut down during the first Parliament, when I was the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, we were already talking about the climate emergency.

Today, we are discussing Bill C-12. There is also the Bloc Québécois's Bill C-215. The government is putting things off.

I would like to ask my colleague what she thinks about this inaction. Urgent action is needed. We need to act. Nothing concrete is being done to save our planet.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, past inaction is making it increasingly difficult to reach our targets.

That is why these targets need to be enshrined in legislation and set in advance so we can have a plan for achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

If we fail to do this, we run the risk of making the same mistakes and missing our targets because they were not enshrined in law. Once the targets are enshrined in law, successive governments that want to get around them will bear the odious responsibility of having amended the legislation to do so.

• (1625)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to know what the hon. member thinks about the U.K. carbon budget law, because it binds all governments when they come into power.

The U.K. used to produce 25% more emissions than Canada, and now it produces 45% less emissions. The U.K. reduced emissions by 42% over 1990 levels, while Canadian emissions have increased by 21%. What does the hon. member think of having a binding law like what the U.K. carbon budget law does, so that we can meet our targets?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith for his question.

I do not claim to be an expert on environmental matters. What I do know, however, is that some measures have been proposed, such as Bill C-215, that will allow us to set and achieve realistic targets that will be validated by the commissioner of the environment.

For instance, the commissioner of the environment could recommend various types of legally binding carbon exchanges. This is one thing that could be achieved through the bills we hope will pass.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join the House from my home in Canada's mining capital to talk about a bill that is so important to the future of our region and our economy.

As the member for Sudbury and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, I get to work with all kinds of incredible people in our resource sector. I have heard about the hard days they have gone through and the long hours they work, not just to put food on the table but to benefit all Canadians. I am very proud of the work they are doing in the community and across the country.

I have never heard a worker tell me they were worried about the environment. I wanted to mention that because, in the course of my work with Natural Resources Canada, I have also heard one myth in particular over and over again.

There is a myth that a resource-rich country like Canada cannot be a leader in the fight against climate change, that industries such as mining, forestry and energy hold us back, that they stand in the way of reaching our goal of net-zero emissions, that trying to achieve net zero will kill our industries.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, these are the very industries leading the way. They are investing in innovation and developing new technologies to cut emissions, producing the raw materials for this clean-growth century, and proving to the world that the environment and the economy can indeed go hand in hand, all while creating good, middle-class jobs and advancing indigenous reconciliation.

The mining sector, for example—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons on a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a very quick point of order, I believe the member was going to share his time with the member for Guelph.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Yes, Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member of Parliament for Guelph.

[*Translation*]

As I was saying, the mining sector produces the minerals and metals essential to clean technologies. Our forests are the most sustainably managed in the world and provide the foundation of the emerging bio-economy. Our oil and gas sectors are on their way to placing among the lowest-emitting producers in the world, and major players like Cenovus have committed to achieving net-zero emissions in their operations. They understand that achieving net zero is not a regulatory burden, but an economic necessity at a time

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when our government is making historic investments in renewables such as wind, solar, tidal and geothermal energies.

Natural Resources Canada is supporting all these efforts, with over 900 clean technology projects across the country. In total, we are investing nearly \$1 billion in Canadian clean-tech innovations. The total value of these projects is in fact more than four times that of private sector investments.

• (1630)

[*English*]

Climate change is real. It is an existential threat to our planet, our homes and our way of life. It is a moment that calls for action. The only question is how? How do we continue to meet our needs, power our cities, heat our homes and grow our economy while producing fewer emissions. In particular, with C-12, how do we ensure we are pushing forward all the time toward reaching our goal of net-zero emissions.

Right now, our electricity grid is currently 82% non-emitting. We need to get that to 100% and then rapidly expand the clean supply as we electrify our economy. We do that by promoting transmission connections like the Atlantic loop; continuing to invest in renewables like solar, wind, geothermal and storage; supporting the development of new energy sources; and helping remote communities move off diesel.

We also understand the need to improve the energy efficiency of our homes and offices, factories, schools and hospitals. That means building an inclusive retrofit economy that hires thousands of Canadians across the country, creating a made-in-Canada low-carbon building supply chain and implementing net-zero building codes for new homes.

Finally, we are also investing in emerging areas of energy production. Let me take a few minutes to talk about just one: hydrogen.

Global production in hydrogen is expected to increase at least tenfold in the coming decades, accounting for close to a quarter of all the energy used around the world by 2050, and creating an industry valued at as much as \$11.7 trillion. Canada can and must capture its share. We are ideally positioned to do so. In fact, name any country where hydrogen is being developed and deployed in a significant way, and the odds are that Canadian technology is at the centre of it. The opportunities are as diverse as the country itself.

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In Alberta and Saskatchewan, we can capitalize on our natural gas sectors to produce clean hydrogen with the help of world-leading carbon capture used in storage technologies, lowering the emissions of every ounce of oil we produce. In Newfoundland and Labrador, we can leverage the extra electricity we produce alongside wind and other renewables for clean hydrogen production.

British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec will be able to use waste diversion for increased renewable natural gas production and leverage low-cost hydro power for large-scale clean hydrogen production.

Hydrogen and other low-carbon fuels also offer opportunities to reduce diesel dependency in Canada's north, giving largely indigenous remote and northern communities access to clean energy.

To capture the full range of hydrogen's potential, we are finalizing a national hydrogen strategy, a strategy that will serve as a catalyst for investments and strategic partnerships and make us a top three producer of hydrogen. That is just one example of the incredible opportunities out there.

We could talk about geothermal, tidal, biomass heating, SMRs, but I only have 10 minutes. Therefore, I will leave it at this.

Net zero is an economic opportunity for new jobs with new technologies and energy sources. The market is changing. Investors are making clear choices and putting their money into jurisdictions taking action on climate change. Canadian industry understands the direction markets are moving in and that our industries are following the money. They are already skating to where the puck is going.

Canada as a whole needs to get to net zero. To do that, we need a method for reporting and transparency, so we can achieve a net-zero economy by 2050, a national economy that continues to grow and a clean energy future that leaves no one behind. Canada's natural resources will be central to all of it.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up where the member finished and talk about two things, transparency and accountability.

Let us start with transparency. The Liberal government would not share with the people's representatives when we asked for information about the carbon tax. In fact, the member for Carleton called it the "carbon tax cover-up". The government would not tell us the cost of the carbon tax to the average consumer. It would not tell us about how much it would cost to a wholesaler, etc.

The Liberal government has been completely opaque, despite its promises of transparency.

Second, on accountability, this bill makes a government two full Parliaments, four and a half years-plus from now, accountable for what the Liberal government will do. Could the member explain how this has anything to do with transparency and accountability?

Furthermore, the member talked about the importance of industry and how it would get onside. Why will the Liberals not say that they will ensure our Canadian energy sector will have representation on the advisory council?

I would like to hear the member speak to those three items.

• (1635)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, one of the points the member raised was the price on pollution. In my role as the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, I get to represent Canada among other countries around the world, and we are the envy. They look at Canada and cannot believe that the Canadian government was able to put this forward. A lot of my Green friends also gave us kudos for putting it in and starting this process, which is so key for us in reaching our goals.

The fact is that at every point, the Conservatives tried to stop us. They basically tried to stop any coherent and proper plan to move on the environment and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

It is quite clear that, as we move forward with this plan, certainly with the framework of net zero, we know that a price on pollution is key to all of this as well as many other investments that we need to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, we completely agree with the goals, but there needs to be action and a plan to go with them.

There is still a lot of direct and indirect support for fossil fuels, but I would like to look at something more specific. Greenhouse gas emissions expressed in megatonnes are higher today than they were in 1990 despite years of effort and years of talking about the environment.

When we signed the Kyoto protocol in 2002, the baseline year was 1990. Then Canada withdrew from the protocol. In 2015, the new government set a new greenhouse gas emissions reduction target, but used 2005 as the baseline year. Then it started bragging about a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, even though it moved the goalposts.

What is this if not statistical manipulation by every government and every party combined?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, that is precisely why are proposing this plan and introducing Bill C-12.

This is about framing the discussion. The member said the government needs a plan. The first part of the plan was of course the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change introduced in 2016.

Now it is a matter of providing a framework for the regulations to be followed. When we achieve—

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

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing that really concerns me about the legislation is that we keep seeing the government push things further down the pike. When I think about the national housing strategy, we had a government put forward a plan that said the housing strategy would be delivered within the next 10 years, focusing on a housing crisis in 10 years. The housing crisis is not 10 years away; it is right now. When we look at the environment, it is the same thing.

The environmental crisis is right now. Why does the government persist in not addressing it today?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, we are addressing it today with Bill C-12. We put a price on pollution. We are investing heavily in green transit across the country. We have made a lot of progress in our first mandate, but we know we need to continue.

One of the issues, quite frankly, is that the technology needs to be created as well as we go down this road. We need to work with industry and all stakeholders to make this happen. This will not just happen tomorrow, because the technology does not exist to get to net zero tomorrow. We are working toward that.

• (1640)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Health; the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the time I have been allowed to speak on the floor today. I also thank the member for Sudbury. I remember visiting his riding a few years ago. We were going to SNOLAB to look at innovations in the mining sector. I sat lakeside with him, talking about climate change and his passion for the environment, so I feel that conversation has moved into the House of Commons. I wish I was up in Sudbury at the lake with him right now having the conversation that way, but it is also great to be here today speaking on the record and having an opportunity to participate in this debate on Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act, from my riding here in Guelph.

I would like to start first by recognizing that Guelph is situated on the ancestral homelands of the Anishinabe people, specifically the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Climate change is a key issue for many Guelphites. It goes across party lines. Today, I have seen members of the environment committee, where we have these discussions, all agreeing something needs to be done in the crisis we are facing right now. The legislation in front of us takes us to 2030 in a 10-year increment, then

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goes beyond to 2050 in a 30-year increment to ensure we hit the proper points on the graph now and in the future.

When we are looking at things to help get us to those targets and how we will achieve those targets together, some of the technologies do not exist yet, as the member for Sudbury said. Some of them are accelerating faster than legislation is keeping pace with, such as the move toward electronic vehicles. My constituents in Guelph are really excited to see the banning of single-use plastics, the commitment to plant two billion trees and the work we are doing to conserve our natural spaces. That being said, Guelphites are also challenging me and reminding me that better is always possible.

This legislation gives us some key reference points as we go forward to see how we are doing in the future to see if we are meeting our goals to net zero by 2050. I am proud the government is acknowledging that Canadians want to be bold on climate action now. The government has to continue to deliver on this call to action and act in direct response to it. I have heard from younger constituents, I have held climate change town halls with high school students, I have worked with people at the University of Guelph who are researching, and everyone wants to see action. This legislation is a way of tracking the progress of the actions we are undertaking.

Back in December 2015, I can remember being a new member of Parliament and being so proud of Canada signing, along with 194 other countries, the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement included the goal of limiting a global average temperature rise to well below 2°C to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C over pre-industrial levels.

According to the 2018 special report “Global Warming of 1.5°C” by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, global emissions must reach carbon neutrality by 2050 in order to limit global warming to the 1.5°C goal identified in the Paris Agreement. Reaching carbon neutrality means achieving a state where human-induced carbon emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere are balanced by the removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. Achieving net zero will require a careful calibration to reflect Canada's unique circumstances, including geography, the importance of the traditional resource economy, shared jurisdiction on the environment, and the natural and technical solutions we will bring forward to hit that balance.

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The Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act does just that. It would help us meet our emissions reduction targets, grow the economy and build resilience to a changing climate. It would also enshrine in legislation Canada's commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, which is also a goal of Guelph's city council. To help achieve this goal, emissions reduction targets would be set at five-year intervals for the years 2030, 2035, 2040 and 2045 on a rolling basis, and we have targets going to 2030 to hit our Paris agreements as well that would need to be tabled within six months of this legislation before us today coming into effect.

• (1645)

When we set the target for each of these milestone years, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change must consider the long-term objective of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. In addition, the minister must take into account the best scientific information available, Canada's international commitments with respect to climate change and submissions from interested persons from across the country, including young people in Canada, technical experts and others who want to be part of the conversation. These targets would be set at least five years before the beginning of the next related milestone year, with the exception of 2030, which would be set within nine months after Bill C-12 reaches royal assent.

Bill C-12 would also require the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to develop emissions reduction plans that would outline how the Government of Canada intends to take action to achieve the targets for each of the milestone years and 2050. These plans would contain the relevant greenhouse gas emissions target, a description of the key emissions reduction measures intended to achieve that target, a description of relevant sectoral strategies and a development of emissions reduction strategies for the federal government operations. The plan would also include an explanation of how each of these elements would contribute to Canada achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

To ensure transparency and accountability reflecting the full range of relevant circumstances, these plans would be created in consultation with other federal ministers who have duties or functions relating to the measures that are being taken to achieve the target.

In terms of accountability, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act would require the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to prepare two types of reports: progress reports and assessment reports. Progress reports would be used to provide interim updates on Canada's progress toward achieving the target for the next milestone year. They would contain updates on the progress that has been made toward achieving the relevant target and on the implementation status of federal measures, sectoral strategies and federal government operations strategies outlined in the emissions reduction plan.

Assessment reports are the other type of reports, and they would be used to reflect on the last target, the actions of the government, and whether or not Canada has achieved this target. Assessment reports would contain a summary of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions inventory for the relevant year and a statement on whether Canada achieved its target for that year. They would also assess how the federal government measures relevant sectoral strategies

and the federal government operations emissions reduction strategies described in the relevant emissions reduction plan contributing to Canada's efforts to achieve the target for that year.

I will also add that this would be audited by the office of the Auditor General of Canada through the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development.

Finally, the assessment reports would include any information relating to adjustments that could be made to subsequent emissions reduction plans in order to increase the probability of meeting subsequent national greenhouse gas emissions targets and any other information the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change considers appropriate. Assessment reports would be prepared no later than 30 days after the day on which Canada submits its greenhouse gas emissions inventory report to the United Nations FCCC for every milestone year or to 2050.

What if we miss the target? The accountability of this piece is that if Canada were to fall behind on meeting the targets for the milestone year of 2050, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change at that time would include in the assessment report an explanation of why Canada did not meet the target and a description of any actions the Government of Canada would take to address the target further. That is typical of what we see from reports coming from our Auditor General. This would ensure the transparency and accountability of the government's action for all Canadians, as assessment reports would be made public after they had been tabled with either the House of Senate or both the Senate and the House of Commons. On that note, all original and amended targets, emissions reduction plans as well as progress reports and assessment reports would be tabled in both Houses of Parliament, as I said.

• (1650)

Following the tabling of any target of any of these documents in either House of Parliament, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change must make them available to the public as soon as possible to ensure transparency toward Canadian—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, I must say, I feel like I am watching an episode of *Yes Minister* with that display of bureaucratic doublespeak, hoop jumping and targets. Let me see if I can get this straight. Nine months after this bill receives royal assent, the government is going to establish targets for 2030.

An hon. member: Six months.

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Mr. John Williamson: Sorry, six months after, but it will be set for 2030. Nine years later and then every five years after that they will be set. Today, that is like sitting down and saying we have a budget deficit and we are going to start to balance it in 2030. Forget about the next nine years of work, we will just look far down and try and come up with magical numbers that might look good today. The government could do much to help the environment by simply not cutting down all these trees it will use for all these reports.

What is the purpose of having targets nine years after this bill receives royal assent?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Speaker, I appreciate some parts of the humour the hon. member presented to us. When we look at the targets to 2030 and the targets to 2050, within six to nine months we need to know how we are progressing toward 2030 and then review those targets again within five years to see that we are progressing toward the end result of getting to net zero by 2050.

It is very important to have those interim reports. It is not bureaucracy or doublespeak. It is a good business practice to know whether we are on track within the timelines we are outlining in this bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, there is the climate emergency, but I would say it is more like a pathetic emergency. This bill is missing important pieces of the puzzle.

First, there are no greenhouse gas reduction targets. The government will set its own targets every five years. It already does this, but it is not working. What will it take for the government to change its method?

Second, the government will assess its own performance. It will be giving itself its own gold stars. It will give itself an A+ and say that everything is fine, and then carry on as though there were no emergency. This is a joke. It is not a plan. It takes mechanisms to ensure real accountability. The provisions in this bill are just cosmetic. The commissioner of the environment will not even be able to evaluate the department's action plan—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. Before I recognize the hon. parliamentary secretary, I want to remind the hon. member that any props in the House must be neutral, if possible.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Speaker, just to correct the record, I am not the parliamentary secretary; I am the member for Guelph. I was also referred to as the minister. I appreciate the roles and promotions, but I really appreciate the job I am able to do as the member of Parliament for Guelph.

The method of setting the targets is included within this legislation. The goal, first of all, is to reach our 2030 targets, and those have been agreed on with the 193 nations that are still within the agreement done in Paris. The next target is zero by 2050. We will review those on a regular basis, both through Parliament and through the work of the Auditor General.

The hon. member across the way sits on the public accounts committee with me, and I know we will see the action items for not reaching the targets that have been set—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have time for one last question, from the hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, on June 17, 2019, the Liberal government declared a national climate emergency. The very next day, on June 18, the same government approved the Trans Mountain pipeline, which it bought.

The author of *A Good War: Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency*, Seth Klein, answers what I believe to be a central question regarding the bill. He lists four markers for when we know a government has shifted into emergency mode: It spends what it takes to win, creates new economic institutions to get the job done, shifts from voluntary and incentive-based policies to mandatory measures and tells the truth about the crisis.

Does the hon. member for Guelph believe, after the government declared a climate emergency, that the bill or any action by the Liberal government adequately responds to these critical emergency markers?

• (1655)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Speaker, the shortest answer would be yes. Some of the oil and gas sector companies, such as Enbridge, Suncor and Shell, are also committing to net zero by 2050. The agreement we had for 2030 included the upstream and downstream emissions of the pipeline, but we know we have to do better in our transition.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to talk about the new Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act.

Successive governments have, for too long, kicked the can down the road and treated the climate crisis as though it were a problem for our children's generation. That ends now. We are the first generation to clearly see the impact of climate change and we are the last generation that can stop it. We cannot afford to wait any longer. We cannot saddle our children with the burden of a dying world and a sixth mass-extinction event. We must act now.

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In December 2015, Canada joined 194 other parties in reaching a historic agreement to address climate change, through the Paris Agreement. This historic agreement aimed, at a minimum, to limit the global temperature increase to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to keep the temperature increase to no more than 1.5°C. According to the 2018 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, global emissions must reach carbon neutrality by 2050 to limit warming to the 1.5°C goal in the Paris Agreement.

Despite what some may claim, Canada is uniquely vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Canada is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world, and in the north, warming is occurring nearly three times as fast.

Canadians recognize that we need to act now to avert this crisis, and they will not tolerate any inaction. I know this because in my riding of Kitchener Centre, constituents come to talk to me about climate change more than any other issue. Young Canadians are rightfully frightened by the thought of what their futures will look like if we do not get this under control now, and this is not a debt I am willing to leave them.

I was elected on a promise to get Canada to net zero by 2050, and that is what the bill would achieve. Within six months of the bill's coming into force, the minister would be required to set a new 2030 milestone target that exceeds our commitments under the Paris accord and deliver our comprehensive plan on how we are going to reach it. This is the vital first step toward achieving our 2050 goal of net-zero emissions, and every step of the way, every target and every action will be based on the best science available, as well as input from Canadians of all backgrounds and experiences.

That is why the bill would create an advisory body of 15 experts made up of key stakeholders, including indigenous people and other members of the public, who would provide expert advice to the minister in an annual report. This would ensure that we reach not only our 2030 target, but also every target that comes after it.

These targets will be vital to keeping the government on track, but they are only one piece of the puzzle. Targets need to be followed up with action. Fortunately, our government is already moving ahead on that action to ensure that Canada is at the forefront of the green economy of tomorrow.

The World Bank estimates that climate action will create \$30 trillion in new investment opportunities by 2030, and our government is already making sure that Canadians are the ones who will reap those rewards. Through policies such as retrofitting homes and other buildings to be energy efficient and building new clean-energy infrastructure, not only are we taking action to meet our climate goals, but we are investing in the economy of the future and creating well-paying, middle-class jobs for Canadians.

We are making zero-emission vehicles more affordable for Canadians and investing in new charging infrastructure so that Canadians coast to coast to coast can confidently reach their destination in an electric vehicle. Electric vehicles are important for decarbonizing our economy, but to truly maximize their potential, we need to ensure that the energy used to recharge their batteries is generated from non-emitting and renewable sources.

The energy sector will play a key part in our national effort to reach carbon net zero, and the federal government will be there to support it. Initiatives such as the clean power fund will not only help increase our clean energy-generating capacity, but also build the infrastructure that moves energy from where it is produced to where it is consumed.

Our government knows that we cannot reach net zero without the ingenuity and know-how of the energy sector. Fortunately, the energy sector is already stepping up and embracing this opportunity.

Oil and gas companies such as Enbridge, Suncor and Shell have already made commitments to net-zero emissions, and they are innovating to rise to the challenge. The oil and gas sector has recognized the value behind our approach to legislate accountability and the importance of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050.

The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers has expressed its support for this policy, and so has Shell Canada. It stated, "We applaud the Government of Canada's action...and look forward to working with them and doing our part to help Canada achieve this goal."

• (1700)

Canada's energy sector is onside and recognizes the importance of this legislation. In fact, this legislation has received broad support, not just from the oil and gas industry, but across all sectors of the economy, from major labour organizations such as Unifor, to financial giants like TD Canada Trust, to major business organizations like the Business Council of Canada and the Toronto Region Board of Trade.

Perhaps most importantly, environmental groups have overwhelmingly supported this vital step toward ensuring that we reach net zero by 2050.

Ecojustice wrote:

This legislation is a significant step to put Canada on the course to achieve its emissions targets and sets up Canada to become a global leader.

It is a comprehensive bill that can maintain momentum for climate action when the spotlight is off the federal government.

The David Suzuki Foundation stated:

[*Translation*]

This legislation could be game-changing. It promises to be a foundation for Canada's path to meeting climate goals, domestically and internationally. Moving forward with climate accountability is exactly what the climate emergency calls for.

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[English]

Smart Prosperity Institute said, “This #NetZero law charts a course for Canada’s environmental & economic success. It will help us keep pace with global leaders in tackling climate change & build a roadmap for future competitiveness & jobs in a changing world.”

This support is vitally important for ensuring we are successful in reaching our goal, and that support is possible because we listened to experts.

Our government cannot reach these goals alone. Everyone must come together so that we can achieve net zero. While each individual and business have a role to play in making net zero happen, it is the government that must be held accountable, and the bill does exactly that.

Not only does the bill require the establishment of legally binding targets every five years, it also requires that an emissions-reduction plan, a progress report and an assessment report be tabled in the House of Commons for each five-year milestone. They will be key to ensuring that this government and successive governments remain transparent and accountable to Canadian voters.

Perhaps equally important, in addition to these robust accountability mechanisms, the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, an independent body, must examine and report on the Government of Canada’s progress within five years of this act’s coming into force and every five years thereafter. Enshrining this key oversight into law would ensure that Canadians know if their government is living up to its obligations on climate change and would provide the public with the necessary information to hold us accountable.

The bill is not a plan to make a plan. The bill sets clear priorities, timelines, accountability mechanisms and independent oversight to reach and then exceed our Paris Agreement goals. This vital framework forms the road map to a better Canada and sets us on a trajectory to achieve a clean and prosperous future. However, to achieve that future, we must start today at this key juncture in time.

When future generations look back at the fight against the climate crisis, they will see this as the moment when Canadians decided not to do what is easy, but to do what is right, and when we chose to look to the future, not the past. The actions we take now will define not only our children’s future, but the future of every generation that comes after them.

Never before in history has one generation had as much responsibility for the well-being of all subsequent generations as ours does today, so I call on my hon. colleagues to put aside differences and work together for the good of our planet and all humanity. Not just the future of our country, but the future of our world depends on it.

• (1705)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am from British Columbia and a nascent B.C. LNG industry could put a lot of people to work. It could also help eliminate a lot of coal. There are also some incredible projects, for example, the Teck Frontier mine, which is proposed to be net zero by 2050 and would give tons of jobs to first nations, as well as

Albertans. The energy sector has an incredible role to play, not just for our prosperity and social services today, but also toward the technological improvements that need to happen.

I have asked the minister and many members to support amendments to make sure that the advisory board includes Canadian energy industry representatives. Does the member support that necessary information? They are going to be the ones helping us understand how the industry can transform within some of these restrictions. If they are not there, then we are not going to be able to get to any of the things the member purports to support.

Mr. Raj Saini: Madam Speaker, my hon. friend and I serve together on the environment committee and I always look forward to his interventions.

We can agree on one thing, that the energy sector is going to be extremely vital to reaching net zero. I can even quote Shell Canada, which said, “Shell’s ambition is to become a net-zero emissions energy business by 2050 or sooner, in step with society. We applaud the Government of Canada’s action today, and look forward to working with them and doing our part to help Canada achieve this goal.” I know the energy sector is proud of this bill and we are proud to work with it.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to be really clear. Not a single Canadian government has ever met its target. Now we have a piece of legislation before us that proposes, far in the distance, to get to that target. I have heard some government members in the House today say that technology will take time to roll out. However, I would say that innovation responds to urgency.

I am wondering if the member could share with the House how urgent this actually needs to be to get it done. Is there a real commitment from the government, in 10 years, to get to those targets?

Mr. Raj Saini: Madam Speaker, I agree with her that technology will be extremely important as we face net zero. I come from an area of the country, Kitchener-Waterloo, that is well known for its high-tech industry. I know companies there are working right now, on a daily basis, 24 hours a day, to make sure that we achieve our goals, and more importantly, that we solve this crisis.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the earlier part of the member’s speech, he talked about EVs, electric vehicles. We know that the world is changing in terms of the automobile industry. Last year, it was reported that 7% of all vehicles in the world were electric vehicles. I am wondering if he can expand a bit on how important he sees the electric vehicle revolution being to Canada’s ability to meet the goals that we have set out in this legislation.

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Mr. Raj Saini: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question. I am really happy to answer it because the federal and provincial governments made an investment in the Ford Oakville plant to make electric vehicles. I know right now there is also a rebate that is in place to help Canadians bring down the price of EVs, zero-emission vehicles.

When we look at electric vehicles, we have a tremendous opportunity because right now it is a nascent industry. We have an opportunity to be a global leader. We see countries in Europe that are discussing how they can also electrify their networks, but more importantly, this could be something that Canada could lead in, as it has led in many other areas.

• (1710)

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I am just curious if the hon. member has read the IPCC's special report on 1.5°C from October 2018, because that report specifically found that there is no economic or technological barrier to holding to 1.5°C. We have all the technology we need. What we lack is the political will.

What we need to do is increase our target, get off the Harper target, get onto the Paris target, because we do not have a Paris target—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We need a very brief answer from the member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Raj Saini: Madam Speaker, I believe this bill will hold the government accountable, it will be transparent and it will lead us in the right direction.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak today on Bill C-12, which is legislation that would create transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Climate change is, without a doubt, one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. It is literally an existential crisis. The House already recognized this when, spurred on by the likes of Greta Thunberg in Sweden and so many environmental advocates right here in Canada, we passed a motion in June 2019 declaring a climate emergency, but now it is critical to act and to act quickly on the science that is all around us.

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that public policy, be it in relation to health or the environment, must always be informed by evidence and based on science, and this science is unequivocal. Bodies like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change tell us that climate change is real, it is happening all around us and if we, as national governments, do not act decisively, the damage will be irreversible. That is exactly why we must act now, for our children, for our grandchildren, for the future of this country and indeed, it is not hyperbolic to say, for the future of this planet.

In fact, my view is that Canadians of all ages are actually ahead of us on climate action and climate activism. We saw this clearly when tens of thousands of Canadians took to the streets in September 2019 to participate in climate marches and demonstrations right across the country. We saw this again when Canadians went to the

polls in the last federal election in October 2019, returning our government to power based on a commitment to a more sustainable and greener future, a commitment where we stated we would not only meet but exceed Canada's 2030 emissions reduction goals while setting legally binding, five-year milestones to reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

Today is an important day. This debate is an important debate, because in tabling and debating Bill C-12, we are fulfilling that important campaign commitment. We know how important this issue is to Canadians across the country.

I, personally, as the member for Parkdale—High Park, know how important this issue is to my constituents through the individuals and groups who speak to me constantly about the urgency of acting on climate change. PHP 4 Climate Action, Green 13, Green Parkdale, Greenest City, Roney Reduces, Bloor West Reduces, Humber-side's HEAT and EcoSchools Canada are just a sample of the groups that are vocal about this issue and are advocating on this issue. These are groups that want not only a net-zero emissions future, but who are already taking concrete steps now to change their behaviour and model best practices for others. It is through these types of community-led, grassroots initiatives that I know we can, together, build back better and greener coming out of this pandemic. I thank these community leaders for all of their advocacy and for always prompting and pushing for even greater ambition on climate change.

When I had the opportunity to go COP24 in Katowice, Poland, prior to attending that climate change conference hosted by the UN, I consulted these leaders. I asked for their input and advice about the issues to focus on during my time at COP24, and that help and expertise were invaluable.

I will turn now to Bill C-12 and how it fits into the broader plan to tackle climate change.

This historic piece of legislation will help us meet our net-zero greenhouse gas emissions target by 2050 by imposing a legally binding process for the federal government. Concretely, this means that this government and every future government, regardless of political affiliation, once the bill is passed, will be held accountable when it comes to lowering our greenhouse gas emissions in order to do our part in reaching the overall goal of net zero by 2050.

This type of legislation will be pivotal to put us on the path to meet the overall objective identified in the Paris Agreement, which has been spoken about on many occasions during the course of today's debate, and the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. We have to reach these targets. The stakes of not doing so are simply too high, again, not just for this country but for all countries wanting to meet the 2050 objective, which is an objective that has been agreed to by 120 different nation-states around the planet. In order to do so here, what we are proposing with this legislation is establishing clear milestones to ensure that we are making continued and steady progress.

Bill C-12 would ensure that five-year targets would be set. A progress report and an assessment report would be required for each step. By doing this, we are putting clear measures in place to ensure that the fight against climate change is prioritized and addressed in a transparent manner. We are making sure that if a future government misses a five-year target, it will be held accountable for it by assessing its failure and putting in place a plan to meet its shortfall.

• (1715)

There would be no excuses. The report would explicitly need to mention the reasons why the federal government failed to meet the target, a description of the actions that the government is planning to undertake in order to address the failure, and any other relevant information the minister wished to include.

Further, Bill C-12 also contemplates an advisory body, composed of 15 members, that would be created in order to assist the minister of the environment in achieving net zero emissions by 2050. It would be consulting and engaging with experts, stakeholders, indigenous peoples and the public. Based on these consultations, the advisory body would be providing advice to the government on how to meet its targets.

This is an important measure to keep the Government of Canada focused and on track when it comes to reducing emissions and formulating policy that is informed by science and expertise, as I outlined earlier.

Finally, Bill C-12 would require the minister of finance to publish an annual report that explains how the financial risks and opportunities associated with climate change are being considered by departments and Crown corporations in their decision-making process.

Let us turn to the issue of milestone years and targets. It is something that has been raised by commentators, and on the floor of this Chamber during the context of this debate. Concerns have been raised, mainly, that the first five-year cycle under Bill C-12 commences in 2025, with the first milestone year being 2030. This begs the question of what transpires between now and 2025 under this legislative model. When I reflected on this myself and looked back at the bill, I noted a couple of important points.

Hypothetically we could see passage of this legislation, if Parliament undertook the scrutiny required. The first point is that within six months of this bill coming into force, potentially in the fall of 2021, we could have a tabling of the milestone plan and the target.

Second, the bill stipulates that within five years of coming into force, again, potentially five years from the spring of next year, the commissioner of the environment, in conjunction with the Auditor General, would examine and report on the Government of Canada's implementation of measures aimed at mitigating climate change.

We have also heard a lot about these progress reports. I mentioned them myself earlier in my comments. A progress report must be tabled, and it would form part of the government's scrutiny and the scrutiny of all future levels of government.

The frequency of these types of progress reports is important. That should not be understated. If we were to have a current

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progress report, looking back on what we have accomplished as a Liberal government since we came to power in 2015, I would posit that progress report would be extensive.

Why do I say that? No federal government has done more to fight climate change than the current federal Liberal government. Our very first action in 2015 was to participate in the Paris conference. With 194 parties, we also signed on to and led the Paris Agreement shortly after. As soon as we came into office, we decided to unmuzzle scientists, which prompted one Globe and Mail reporter, Mark Hume, to state, "The Conservatives wanted tight control on the message and didn't trust their own experts to be experts. That has all changed now. [The Prime Minister] has unmuzzled the scientists."

In 2018, we championed the development of an Ocean Plastics Charter following the G7 ministerial meeting on climate change. This charter is now endorsed by 25 governments and 60 businesses and organizations worldwide. It aims to keep our oceans free from plastics.

In 2018, we put a price on carbon pollution. This concrete action is a pillar of our approach to climate action. It applies to individuals and industries. The current price on carbon is \$30 per tonne. By 2022, it will rise to \$50 per tonne, as will the climate action incentive rebate, which allows Canadians the opportunity to take those dollars and invest in greener alternatives in their everyday lives. By putting a price on pollution, we are clearly contributing to lowering emissions.

On October 7 of this year, the Minister of Environment provided more details on our plan to ban harmful single-use plastics. This is an ambitious step toward achieving zero plastic waste.

What is important to underline, as a final comment, is that we also believe fundamentally that the economy and the environment are not dichotomous. This is a false presentation put forward most frequently by members of the official opposition.

The single thing I will point members to is something that has already been raised in the context of today's debate. We are funding battery vehicles: zero-emitting vehicles. Plants are being opened in Oakville and Windsor, by Fiat and Ford, to do just that. It will embrace a just transition and show that we can build toward a sustainable future and keep people employed at the same time.

This bill is part of that broader suite of approaches. It is a critical bill for this generation and future generations. It is one I hope all parliamentarians can get behind.

• (1720)

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am beginning to think, watching the reactions of my hon. colleagues on the other side, that tabling this bill demonstrates they have a wonderful sense of humour.

They are talking about targets in 2030, 10 years from now, to 2050, 30 years from now. There is an old saying an economist once said: Eventually we are all dead. These targets are so far out.

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Let us look at what the Liberals are doing today, and for that I turn to former Liberal MP Dan McTeague, who just put a commentary out. He said that the current targets for 2020, which the Liberal government adopted in 2015, are going to be missed by 99.2%. That is not even close to being serious. Regarding the Paris targets the government has accepted, it is on track today to miss those by at least 15%, and we are still 10 years out.

How can we take all this talk of post-2030 seriously when the government cannot even hit targets today? They are missing them by 99.2%.

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, forgive me if there is a bit of incredulity on this side of the House in the climate activism I am sensing from that member.

In terms of what we have been doing, I listed some of the things, if he was listening to my comments, and I will list more. We put approximately \$60 billion into initiatives such as cleaner infrastructure, public transit and ensuring home retrofits. I mentioned the carbon price, which is the single most important lever, and is appreciated by industry and individuals.

The member's concern would only be valid if no action had been taken to date. I have listed copious examples of what we have done since 2015 to address climate action.

What this bill would do is ensure that not only we, but any future government, would maintain that course, show further ambition and be held accountable to the Canadian people. That is surely an initiative all parliamentarians should be behind.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is incredible to hear Conservatives talk about meeting climate objectives and their new-found desire to do something about climate change.

Not even five or six years ago, Stephen Harper was literally muzzling scientists and telling them they were not allowed to utter the words climate change. Suddenly members on the opposite side of the House are challenging the government for not doing enough to fight climate change.

I am wondering if the member can expand a bit more on where he sees we have actually come in the last five to six years since Stephen Harper was in power.

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, it is an important point. We have come to a stage where the Canadian public and Canadian businesses are behind the same goal. It is unfortunate not all parties are behind the same goal. I think about four out of five parties in this chamber are. The goal is simply that we have to be heading toward a net-zero-emissions future.

I will return to that zero-emission vehicle strategy, because it is not just about opening up plants in Oakville and Windsor that will make zero-emission vehicles. It is also about targets we set as a government. Another part of what we campaigned on was to set a goal that there would no longer be such a thing as an emitting vehicle in this country by 2040.

That is the kind of ambition we need to see. That is the kind of ambition that will be entrenched in this kind of proposal, because the plan to get to that goal will be entrenched as part of the five-

year cyclical objectives and targets that would be established under Bill C-12. Those are the kinds of initiatives we—

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

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, this bill references the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; however, the Liberal government has not actually enforced the UN declaration into law.

Will the Liberals put action behind their words? They are talking a good game about doing that. Will they actually commit to upholding the rights of indigenous people by enforcing and bringing into law the UN declaration?

• (1725)

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I think that is an important question. It is important to inject indigenous perspectives into this discussion. That is something that has informed our approach to the climate throughout, and that will continue for the purposes of Bill C-12.

In direct response to the member for London—Fanshawe, absolutely, we have been crystal clear. It is in the Minister of Justice's mandate letter. He has been public about committing to tabling UN-DRIP legislation as government legislation before the end of this year. That is exactly what we intend to do, and I would note, for her edification, that in the last Parliament it proceeded as a private member's bill, and it was only stopped in the Senate because of opposition from the Conservative Party of Canada.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is very important and great to rise today in the House on Bill C-12, which I have read extensively over the last couple days. It is the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act.

Why is it important to rise? It is because of the opportunity that is ahead of us, the residents in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, the residents here in the province of Ontario, and the residents and all the citizens across Canada, to achieving net zero by 2050.

What are the economic opportunities that we are speaking about? Why is the target of the legislation we have put forward in this House important to families like mine and to kids all over this country? It is because of the economic opportunities that it would create, the families that would benefit from it and a stronger, cleaner and healthier environment, which we all want to have and which should be a non-partisan issue to achieve.

I have read extensively on this topic. Even just yesterday, the Royal Bank of Canada laid out a plan on carbon sequestration with some comments from one of the economists there. I just want to read this out, because this is not a partisan issue, this is about growing the economy. We see this from Conservatives in the U.K. under Boris Johnson and in other places in the world. People are coming together and working together on getting to net zero.

RBC wrote in its report:

As it lays out long-term climate plans, the federal government has an opportunity to write a new chapter in Canadian climate policy: one that acknowledges the importance of the energy sector, encourages abatement across industries, leverages investment from the private sector, and spurs innovation in sectors that contribute the most to our climate challenge.

Yes, we want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Yes, we want to set those targets. The framework that is laid out in Bill C-12 is functional and workable, and within six months of the legislation enactment, a plan would be put forward to continually lower greenhouse gas emissions.

In my research, I saw this week “Canada’s Energy Future 2020”. I encourage all members of Parliament to read it and look through that document. It is about Canada’s energy future and how important it is that we have different sources of energy in this country to continue to power our economy going forward.

There is one company I need to highlight, because it is so important. There is an economic opportunity here in the world, because we are talking about a global economy that our country participates in. It is a global economy that our workers compete in. We need to make sure they have the right skills, training and know-how to compete against the best and the brightest, and we have the best and the brightest in this country.

I think about the Enel Group. Most MPs know my heritage. My parents came from Italy and then immigrated to Canada. Here is a company from my parents’ homeland, which just received the ranking of number one on Bloomberg’s sustainability index. It is a company that is investing in green technologies all over the world.

I will read a comment from earlier this year. I believe it is from January 27. It says, “For the first time, the United Nations Global Compact has galvanized the chief financial officers...of global companies—responsible for investments worth \$14 trillion—by establishing a taskforce to help close the gap in funding a sustainable future.”

That is what we are talking about. We are talking about a conversation for tomorrow. We are talking about our future, and we need to get with it. We need to get this legislation implemented. We need to develop that plan, work with the private sector, the provinces and non-profits to move Canada forward, because the opportunity is there. We have the skills. We have the know-how. We have the resources.

Private Members' Business

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1730)

[English]

HEALTH OF ANIMALS ACT

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC) moved that Bill C-205, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I know that all of us, when we have the opportunity to stand up in this House, are very proud of representing our constituents. I have stood up in this House many times, but I think this is one of the most proud moments I have ever had as a parliamentarian because I have the opportunity to not only to represent my own constituents, but also farmers, ranchers, farm families and processors in this industry across Canada. I am presenting an amendment to the Health of Animals Act, which I am confident that all members in this House will support, as it will protect the mental health of our farm families, but also the integrity of our food supply.

I want to take the members of this House back to just over a year ago when I received a frantic phone call from a farmer in my riding. He was extremely upset. He and his sons had gotten up to check on their turkeys in the morning, but when they walked into their barn they found that dozens of activists and protesters had broken onto their farm and into their barns, demanding the release of their birds.

What made that interesting is that they were free-range turkeys. They were not in cages or mistreated in any way. They were healthy and happy. The only risk to the health of these animals was actually from the protesters who were on that property.

When I left from Ottawa, I went back home to the riding to meet with Mr. Tschetter and his family. He was completely distraught. He had not slept in days. He did not understand why he was targeted. He had done everything he possibly could to take care of his animals because he knows they are his livelihood.

In fact, he had nothing to hide. When he got into his barn that morning and saw 30 or 35 protesters, he invited them to tour his farm. He invited the media, protesters and activists to walk around to see what he had and what his operation entailed.

My bill is really trying to address two things. The first is the mental health of our farmers and farm families, as well as the protection of those families, their workers and the animals they care for. The second is the very important issue of biosecurity on our farms. This is a critical issue as we try to protect our food supply and our supply chain.

What my bill sets out to do is a very simple change. It is an amendment to the Health of Animals Act. I really wanted to make it as simple as possible, so we could get the support of every member in this House.

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The Health of Animals Act, as it currently stands, has control of diseases and toxic substances that may affect animals, and diseases transferred from animals to humans. However, the obligations and prohibitions within the act only deal with the farmer who owns those animals. There are no protections in the act that deal with individuals or organizations who may break into private property and put those animals at risk.

That is really what my private member's bill is trying to address. I did not want to invent something new. I wanted to have something that was specific to the issue that we are dealing with. I also wanted something that was not a one-off on an issue that happened in my own riding, but something that could address the bigger picture of biosecurity on our farms.

I really want to be crystal clear on this to all members in this House. The one thing that this bill is not is a prohibition of protest. Protesting one's view and one's opinion is absolutely anyone's right as a Canadian. We want to uphold that. One's right to protest on public property is absolutely one's right. However, when someone crosses a line by entering or breaking into private property and putting the health of animals and farm families at risk, there have to be consequences.

I think that all of us in this House understand this is not an isolated incident. My staff and I went through media reports and did some research. There have been literally dozens of these types of incidents across the country, touching ridings of every single party in this House, from one coast to the next, in every sector of agriculture. We had 50 protesters at a hog farm in Abbotsford, B.C. We had people trying to forcibly remove animals from a dairy farm in Quebec, and we saw protesters at a pork-breeding facility in Ontario.

As I said, this really sparked an interest in me. This incident in my own riding with the Tschetter family had an impact not only on that family, but also on farm families across my riding. They inundated my office with questions such as these: Are we free game for protesters and activists? Are we not safe on our own farms? Are our animals not protected?

• (1735)

What really struck me with that protest at the farm in Fort Macleod, which is usually quite a quiet little town, was the fact that many of those activists and those protesters had been on a hog farm in Abbotsford one week before.

This is really the crux of my private member's bill. I do not think these protesters quite understand, perhaps through no fault of their own, the consequences of their actions or the very strict biosecurity protocols we have on farms, which are there for very important reasons.

I know that my colleagues in this House understand that no one cares for their animals, their land and their environment more than farmers, ranchers and processors do. I hope that biosecurity is an important aspect of this bill that we can focus on through our debate this evening.

When those protesters are coming onto private property and breaking into barns in areas where they may not fully comprehend

what is at stake, they are posing a very real risk to a critical industry within our country, and this is very real. African swine fever, avian flu, foot-and-mouth disease, and bovine spongiform encephalopathy, BSE, are very real threats to our industry.

Obviously, this has hurt my riding. Almost two decades ago, we had the BSE outbreak in Alberta. That had an impact of between \$6 billion and \$10 billion on our cattle industry in Canada, as the second that BSE was confirmed in central Alberta, more than 40 countries shut their borders to Canadian cattle exports. It was a \$10-billion hit. Most important, 3,000 ranchers went out of business, including many of my constituents and my friends.

I can recall ranchers like Grant Hirsche, who found a little processor, slaughtered his cattle, found a used refrigeration truck and drove up and down Highway 2, trying to sell his beef on the side of the highway just to keep his operation afloat. Thousands of ranchers were not so lucky. Almost 20 years later, we are still trying to rebuild our cattle herd in this country. Twenty years later, the impact of that outbreak is still being felt. Many countries are only now reopening their border to Canadian beef.

In 2004, we had a massive outbreak of avian flu in the Fraser Valley. Almost 300 million animals had to be euthanized. The economic impact of that was more than \$300 million. To this day, we have to be aware of avian flu. There were some positives that came out of that. We have improved surveillance, improved testing and improved quarantine measures, but, most important, we have improved regulations and protocols around biosecurity, which everyone must abide by.

I know many of us in this House who have had an opportunity to tour the farms and ranches in our constituencies or neighbouring constituencies in rural Canada understand. I visited the Kielstra farm, a poultry operation, this summer. I had to put on booties, a lab coat, a hairnet and a face mask. This had nothing to do with COVID. These are the biosecurity protocols on just about every farm in Canada. Many times these protesters and activists just do not understand this.

We have a very big threat facing us right now. I talked about BSE, foot-and-mouth disease and avian flu, but African swine fever is a very real threat as well. There has been an outbreak in China, which has decimated the Chinese hog population. It has spread now through most of Southeast Asia, Central America and many parts of eastern Europe.

Were African swine fever to come here to Canada, the impacts would be profound. The pork industry in Canada is a \$24-billion industry. That is 45,000 jobs from gate to plate. Seventy per cent of the hogs that we raise here in Canada are exported. That is \$4.25 billion.

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• (1740)

If there is an outbreak of African swine fever in Canada, international markets will close. It takes us years, as we learned with BSE, to rebuild that confidence in those export markets to try to regain that global opportunity. The threats of these animal-borne diseases are very real and we cannot take them lightly.

All of us in the House understand the impact COVID-19 has had on our constituencies and certainly on every aspect of every industry in our economy. This is a human-borne virus that has brought our country, and just about every country around the world, to a screeching halt. Imagine what an animal-borne virus could do to Canada's agriculture industry, whether it is hogs, cattle or feathers. It would be devastating.

All of us in the House, if we had an opportunity to walk back in time and do a better job of preparing for the COVID-19 pandemic, for which all of us as parliamentarians take some responsibility, I know we would do that to have a better strategy in place to protect Canadians.

We have that opportunity today to do that with this amendment to the Health of Animals Act, which would protect the health of animals on farm. It would also protect the mental health of our farmers and our farm families. We cannot make the same mistakes we have made in the past. We simply cannot afford an animal-borne disease or virus outbreak on farms or within processing plants across the country.

We have dug ourselves a very deep financial hole as a result of COVID-19 and there are only a few industries that as Canadians we can look to and rely on to help dig us out of that financial hole. Energy would be one; agriculture is the other. If we do not provide agriculture with the resources and the safeguards they need to ensure they are protected, then we leave them vulnerable. I do not think any Canadian would support that.

I was encouraged to read a comment from the Liberal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food the other day, saying there were unacceptable actions of extremist groups protesting on dairy farms. I know it is a concern of hers as well. Strengthening the biosecurity measures for trespassers on farms, ranches and processing plants are something farm groups, commodity groups and processors across the country support. I have been honoured to have their letters, emails and quotes of support from across the country, which is really buoyed our efforts on this private member's bill.

I am confident that the Liberal government as well as my colleagues throughout the House also understand the mental health strain our farm families are under right now and the importance of protecting our food security and food supply, especially now as we try to rebuild and come out of this pandemic. This is no time to put our food supply and food security at risk.

I really want to leave this message very clear with my colleagues. I know the opposition to this private member's bill will be based on this. In no way is the bill a prohibition on protesting. People are more than welcome to protest on public property, on the gravel road, on the highway outside the farm fence, but there has to be a line in the sand. That line is when people cross onto private

property and put the health of a farm family, their workers and their animals at risk.

We must do everything we possibly can to put protections in place for our food security and food supply. As I said, we cannot make the same mistakes we have in the past when it comes to animal-borne diseases that would devastate our agriculture industry. This is an opportunity to be proactive. I look forward to questions and support from my colleagues throughout the House.

• (1745)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague was very passionate and very meaningful in his words. I know this matters a lot not only to his constituents but to many others. I have three quick questions. I know he will not be able to necessarily answer them all, but I want to put them on the record.

He mentioned some of the provinces where these protests had been taking place. Some of those provinces have introduced provincial laws. What are his thoughts on whether this is best handled by the provinces?

Are there any examples of where these protests have led to the biosecurity risk he mentioned in his concerns?

He mentioned that the protesters did not understand. The provisions he has suggested be amended have some aspect of protesters understanding that they are wilfully going into this. Is that a concern for him moving forward?

I would like him to answer those questions, but I have put them on the record for debate.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I will try to go through those questions as quickly as I can. I will answer the member's last question first.

This bill would put tangible consequences for not only the individual who breaks into a property, but also the organizations that often encourage this type of activity, which there is not a law at this time at the provincial level.

He spoke about provinces taking this on. Ontario and Alberta have done something similar. Their amendments and changes are to the Criminal Code. We wanted something overarching across the country. We cannot have consequences in some provinces and not in others. This addresses something across the country. It is not a Criminal Code aspect. We have focused this on the Health of Animals Act.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on December 7, 2019, there was an incident in my riding.

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Thirteen activists broke into the Porgreg pig farm. They occupied the farm for several hours to stage a protest, causing stress to the animals they claimed to be defending. They were completely oblivious to these farmers' reality and how they love their animals in many ways. This protest ultimately caused stress among the animals, leading to the death of several piglets who were crushed by the sows.

This was a very serious incident, which is why, on behalf of the victims of Porgreg farm in my riding, including both the farmers and the dead animals, the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of the bill before us. We are pleased to support it and completely agree with the principle.

That said, there is always the matter of shared jurisdictions. How can we address this issue, given that each province has its own animal welfare legislation?

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is exactly right. I have seen too many of these issues where the activists are showing pictures of dead animals. The Tschetter family is a perfect example. They had some turkeys that had passed away, but they were not dead when the protesters got there. What happens is protesters scare the animals, the animals scurry and often trample over their youth or smaller animals. The fatalities come from that.

I know the protesters have the right reasons at heart. They do not intend to hurt those animals, but, again, it is that misunderstanding of what happens when they go onto those farms. That is why we have proposed an amendment to the Health of Animals Act and not the Criminal Code, so we have something that will address a national viewpoint and not province to province.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing forward the bill for us to consider. He correctly outlined the struggle that exists between the right of people to protest but also the rights of farmers to protect their property.

In the public's demand for greater transparency, does the member have any ideas on how we can build better trust between the public and farmers outside of the scope of the bill?

• (1750)

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, that is a fantastic question and I wish I had an answer to it. I am speaking from the heart when I say this. I respect the member a great deal and I have worked a lot with him at the agriculture committee.

We talk a lot about east versus west, but the biggest issue facing Canada right now is urban versus rural. There is a misunderstanding between urban Canadians and rural Canadians about where their food comes from, how we do it and why we do it. We do it better than anyone else in the world. We have to do a much better job, not only as parliamentarians but as Canadians, educating one another about modern Canadian agriculture. I look forward to having that opportunity to do so.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his bill. I also have farmers who have had protests on their farms in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

I would like to ask him a quick question. Would the bill also protect the health and welfare of animals at fairs and rodeos? I have a lot of those in my riding as well. Could he clarify that?

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I thank the shadow minister for agriculture and agri-food for all her great work. I appreciate her support on crafting this bill.

Yes, is the short answer. All of us have rodeos, farmers' markets and fairs within our ridings. Any enclosed space, whether on a farm, at a fair or in transport, is addressed in the bill and is encompassed by the amendment to the Health of Animals Act.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Foothills for introducing Bill C-205 so that we can talk about it.

I know that the bill was introduced to support biosecurity on Canadian farms and other establishments, which is a laudable objective.

I believe I speak for everyone when I say that Canadian consumers are engaged consumers. They care deeply about where their food comes from and whether it is safe.

I am pleased to report that Canada has one of the best food safety systems in the world, and we continued to maintain that high confidence level in our food safety system during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In April, the Government of Canada announced \$20 million in funding for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, or CFIA, to support critical food inspection during the pandemic to ensure that Canadians would have continued access to safe, high-quality food.

In my opinion, our country's high level of food safety and security can be attributed to the ongoing work of the CFIA and the robust biosecurity measures in place on Canadians farms and other establishments.

[*English*]

It is important to note that the health of animals and biosecurity measures, as was discussed in the speech by the member for Foothills and in the question and answer period, are a shared jurisdiction between the federal government, the provinces and the territories.

I want to take a moment to talk about the role of the CFIA and the Government of Canada in relation to the topic we are discussing tonight, a very important topic I might add.

CFIA enforces regulations concerning the transportation of animals. The government introduced the health of animals transport regulations in February. It is also concerned with the humane treatment of animals at federally licensed abattoirs, or slaughterhouses.

The member for Foothills talked about education between rural and urban. There is a difference between provincial abattoirs, or slaughterhouses, that are licensed to provide meat products within those provincial or territorial boundaries and the federal licensing system, where the meat that is processed goes across the country. Therefore, it is important to recognize that there is concurrent jurisdiction in relation to these two domains.

The provinces also have the ability to introduce their own regulations as it relates to the health of animals regulations and biosecurity.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

I will leave it up to my colleagues to elaborate on the strong biosecurity measures already in place on Canadian farms and facilities as well as the jurisdictional aspects and existing legal instruments.

I want to focus on the Health of Animals Act. I ask that all members be patient as I will be discussing some rather technical concepts.

The Health of Animals Act was enacted in 1990. It repealed and replaced the previous act, the Animal Disease and Protection Act.

The Health of Animals Act is enforced by the Canada Food Inspection Agency.

[*English*]

With respect to the real purpose of the Health of Animals Act, its long title is “An Act respecting diseases and toxic substances that may affect animals or that may be transmitted by animals to persons, and respecting the protection of animals”. Section 34 is the primary authority in the Health of Animals Act for making regulations. This section gives the Governor in Council, or the minister, the authority to make regulations for the protection and health of persons and animals by controlling or eliminating diseases and toxic substances, and for the carrying out of any other purposes under the act.

I want to highlight for all of my colleagues in the House and, indeed, all Canadians watching that three objectives are revealed by these three provisions, the underlying goals of the act. The first is to prevent or control the spread of diseases that may affect animals; the second is to prevent or control the spread of diseases that may be transmitted to humans by animals, which are called zoonotic diseases; and the third is to protect animals from inhumane treatment. There are provisions related to this objective found under part XII of the health of animals regulations, which deals with the humane transportation of animals.

I will talk specifically about the contents of Bill C-205. One thing that needs to be fleshed out in this discussion, and I look forward to my colleagues' thoughts on this, is whether CFIA would have an additional role. The member for Foothills gave examples of where the behaviour of individuals, activists and protesters on farms was creating challenges. He mentioned Ontario and Alberta as two examples, and perhaps there are others, that have introduced provincial legislation in this sphere, but there was not a whole lot of conversation on who enforces this. Is this being done by police or

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CFIA, given the fact that it has the explicit responsibility for this act?

Something we need to consider is whether that would be an expectation of CFIA, whether it would be given a larger mandate and be required to have additional personnel who would also be responsible on farm, because right now it is largely maintained among the federal abattoir-inspected facilities. I asked the member for Foothills about this and in his remarks, which I do not have right in front of me, he said that many of these activists do not know what they are walking into or they are not aware.

I will read the provision that he is suggesting we add to the legislation. It says:

No person shall, without lawful authority or excuse, enter a building or other enclosed place in which animals are kept knowing that or being reckless as to whether entering such a place could result in the exposure of the animals to a disease or toxic substance

My concern is if the member for Foothills is correct in saying that the majority of people do not know about this when they go on farm and the provision is that they had to know about or ought to have known about it, it may be a difficult threshold for us to make meaningful change on these pieces, but perhaps that could be studied at committee, assuming that it passes to that level.

I want to highlight a few things. There are strong biosecurity measures already in place on Canadian farms and other establishments. The member for Foothills himself acknowledged the good work that Canadian farmers do along with industry, in co-operation with the federal, provincial and territorial governments.

It is up for debate, but there are legal instruments already in place to perhaps deal with the issue around whether the provinces have the ability to introduce these types of legislation, as some provinces have already done. There are provisions under the Criminal Code. It is up for debate and I look forward to hearing other members' thoughts on whether prosecutors, who try to prosecute on these particular grounds, believe they have the tools to successfully have a prosecution in these circumstances, which I would agree are unfortunate and cannot continue.

The Health of Animals Act, which is where it is suggested this particular legislation be added, the private member's bill, is designed to protect the health of animals. I do not think anyone would question that is not a good intent, but I do not know if it is intended to be used as a mechanism to crack down on trespassers. That is why I asked the member for Foothills about whether there has been a connection between a biosecurity risk and trespassing on a farm. I do not know what that information is. I asked that in earnest. I hope it is a point that we can discuss in the House, because this bill is an important piece of consideration for agriculture communities.

I want to bring in the Nova Scotia context very quickly. I am in one of the heaviest agriculture ridings in Atlantic Canada, in Kings—Hants. This has been mentioned by my stakeholders and that is why I have the privilege of being able to speak to this tonight. Speaking on behalf of the government, it does appreciate that the incursion on farms and biosecurity facilities can potentially result in the introduction of concerns and we look forward to hearing more of the debate tonight.

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• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will start by thanking my colleague for introducing this bill. As my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot said, we will support it.

I will start with a question. At times, we might wonder if something that happened to us has also happened to someone else. For example, has anyone here ever experienced a break-in?

One of my colleagues raised a hand. I was not really expecting an answer, but I thank him for that information.

I have experienced a break-in, and I know it can change a person's life. It had a psychological impact on my sense of safety and consequences for my belongings. Nothing I took for granted was guaranteed anymore. I was worried about my family's safety 24/7. I was distressed and did not know what to believe. Personally, I think such an event changes a person's life, changes their habits.

Now imagine that the future of one's own business is at stake, that thousands of dollars are at stake or that the break-in makes one responsible for disease or for not having taken proper care of one's business.

Colleagues mentioned it earlier, including my colleague from Kings—Hants, whom I commend for his remarkable efforts to speak French. I tip my hat to him. Even though the Liberal Party does not have any tangible measures at least there are people in the Liberal Party making a serious effort. I encourage the hon. member to have a positive influence within his party.

As agriculture critic, when we would tour farms or processing plants before COVID-19, we would have to wear plastic from head to toe and wear a mask. People would have to remove their jewellery. They do not ask people to do that just for kicks. They do this for the sake of biosafety.

This bill is very serious and extremely important. It makes it an offence to enter, without lawful authority or excuse, a place in which animals are kept if doing so could result in the exposure of the animals to a disease or toxic substance that is capable of affecting or contaminating them. A disease or toxic substance may be introduced by a well-meaning person who wants to water an animal with an outside source that was not subject to quality control. As such the person might jeopardize the entire herd. Let's not forget the people who go near an abattoir or a farm to protest.

As my esteemed colleague warned us earlier, this is not about preventing people from expressing an opinion or protesting, quite the contrary. We live in a country that affords its people a lot freedoms that all parliamentarians here respect and want to continue to respect.

However, we must not lose sight of the basics, such as private property, biosecurity or the food security of our people; these are concerns that we have become extra sensitive to, particularly during this pandemic. It is therefore extremely important to take action, and here is why.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's mandate on animal welfare is limited to regulating the humane treatment and transporta-

tion of food-producing animals when they are at the slaughterhouse or on the way there. As another colleague mentioned earlier, it is about preventing disease.

It is complementary, but I think the proposed legislation is necessary because it will add to and clarify the consequences. What I like about this bill is that it contains concrete measures, such as prison sentences and significant fines.

We have heard all kinds of stories about things that happened in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. Farmers and restaurateurs do not dare report incidents because they figure that if they get mad, they will come back. The government does not have the right to not ensure people's safety. The government certainly does not have the right to not ensure the safety of farmers, the people who feed us.

• (1805)

This does not take away anyone's right to protest. People can protest in the street with placards and on social media. All we are saying is that there must be no unjustified intrusions without appropriate precautions being taken.

I am sure that if these people want to visit facilities, they will find businesses that are willing and all the necessary precautions will be taken, just like the precautions that we as parliamentarians take when we visit farms and we don plastic from head to toe. Farmers are transparent. They have nothing to hide. That is the essence of Bill C-205.

I want to come back to the incident that happened in Quebec nearly a year ago, in December 2019. My colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot talked about it earlier. It had to do with Porgreg, in the Saint-Hyacinthe region. Those individuals were incredibly courageous, speaking out publicly with the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec, out of a sense of duty to serve the public. Despite the fear of reprisals, they did it for the public good.

In Quebec, this resulted in a temporary injunction prohibiting protesters from getting within a certain distance of farms, so as to ensure the safety not only of livestock, but also of property owners and businesses.

The piglets that died were mentioned earlier, but we did not hear about the disease that ensued. Rotavirus spread throughout the facility shortly after the trespass. Farm officials said they had not seen that disease for 40 years. How could one file a complaint and prove that the protesters brought in the disease? It would be very difficult. That is the problem. The proposed regulations will give some clout to people who might want to take action in that kind of situation. I am running out of time, but I could probably talk about it for a good half hour.

Leaving the doors of a hog barn open when it is -12°C outside is reckless. People were there all day. The police were called in to evacuate them one by one. I will come back to my anecdote from earlier. Imagine coming home and realizing that you have been burglarized and, to make matters worse, the burglars are sitting in the living room. Then imagine that the police tell you that it is a tough call because they did not break anything and no one can prove that they were the ones who stole the merchandise. At Porgreg, they put water in the diesel. It is appalling. We have to put ourselves in the farmers' shoes.

We have to adopt this measure because it is simply logical. Yes, there are jurisdictions to consider. We are very aware of that and we will be careful, but I think this bill deserves to be studied further because it is essential. Imagine not having any recourse against people sitting down in our own home. We have to adopt this measure now to avoid unfortunate events. I do not want to scare anyone, but we want to avoid that.

When one's own business is put at risk by a group of total strangers who came from another province, the interprovincial regulations become very important. It is important that we adopt this measure. The Bloc Québécois will support this bill. When the bill is a good bill, the Bloc Québécois will vote for it. I urge those who brought forward this bill to do the same for the bills we are introducing.

• (1810)

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to also offer my congratulations to the member for Foothills for bringing forward Bill C-205 for the House's consideration and debate. I enjoyed working with the member for Foothills when he was previously a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, of which I have now been a member for almost three years, going back into the previous Parliament. Maybe we will be able to invite the member back to the committee, this time as a witness to defend his bill.

I am quite excited about this because in the almost-three years that I have been a member of that committee, I have not yet had the chance to examine any legislation at the committee. It is actually exceedingly rare that the agriculture committee gets to examine legislation, and we may in fact now have two bills headed our way, both Bill C-206 and Bill C-205, so it is going to keep us quite busy in the short term.

The legislation that we have before us, Bill C-205, an act to amend the Health of Animals Act, is essentially centred on the danger that exists from potentially exposing animals on a farm to disease or to a toxic substance. Before I get into the particulars of the bill, it might be helpful just to spend a few moments talking about biosecurity and why it is so important for farms. Therefore, I will talk a bit about the experiences I have personally had here in my riding.

I have had the pleasure of visiting a couple of farms in my riding, and I will identify two of them: Lockwood Farms and Farmer Ben's Eggs. They are both fantastic egg producers in my riding.

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Because I have a small flock of chickens myself, one of the strict requirements was that I have no contact with my own chickens for an entire week before I visited those farms because there is a very real danger that I could unwittingly, or through negligence, transfer diseases like avian flu. I also have a flock of ducks. For anyone who manages fowl, there is a real understanding that disease is prevalent and it is quite a danger, so there was that requirement before I even visited the farm. Of course, when I was there, we had to take great care to make sure that our footwear was clean, that we put on disposable booties and wore the gowns and the hairnets, before we actually went into the barn to look at their egg production facility.

When in the barn, we get a sense of why this is necessary. First, avian flu is a very contagious disease and if it were to go through the flock, it would be absolutely devastating. Any farmer whose livelihood depends on animals, whether livestock or poultry, will tell you that their first and primary care is focused on the well-being of their animals. They literally stay up at night wondering about all the dangers that could come, and biosecurity is a huge part of that.

Another experience I had, going back a few years to a previous life, was when I was a tree planter. One of my tree planting contracts was near Merritt at the Douglas Lake Ranch. It is one of the largest working cattle ranches in the interior of British Columbia and their lands are so vast that they actually lease them out to logging companies. They do selective harvesting of their lands and, as a tree-planting company, we were brought in to reforest. When I was doing the reforestation, there was a real danger of foot and mouth disease, so before we were allowed entry onto the lands, we had to have our vehicles wiped down, the wheels hosed off and all of our footwear hosed off with cleaning agents to make sure that we were not inadvertently transferring the disease.

All of these examples just help to illustrate the very real concern that exists out there with biosecurity.

Given the fact that international trade is such a huge part of agriculture, we have seen many diseases and pests come from other parts of the world, diseases and pests that are novel to the Canadian environment and pose a very real risk. I have spoken to researchers at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and the number of new diseases and pests entering our borders every year really does keep them up at night. It is an ongoing battle to try to make sure that they're coming up with the best practices and best defences against those diseases.

• (1815)

I also want to highlight the important role that animal rights organizations play. As the member for Foothills correctly noted in his speech, the vast majority of them have the best interests of the animals at heart. Their ultimate goal is to make sure that we have a farming system in place that is treating our animals with respect and making sure that the standards of care are there.

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What we face, and I think the member illustrated it very well in his speech, is the balance that we have to have between the public's right to know, the transparency we want to see and the right to protest, and the rights of a farmer to secure his or her property from trespassers, people who may not know how the farming operation works and may not know about the dangers they might be carrying, just simply on the soles of their feet. They could be transporting diseased soil or something in some food they are carrying, and these are all very real dangers for the reasons that I illustrated previously.

That is the balance we are confronting through the legislation we are considering. In Canadian law, when it comes to animal welfare, it is primarily our provinces that have jurisdiction over protecting the welfare of animals. Here in British Columbia, depending on what the case is, we have the B.C. SPCA. They do farm inspections. We also have visits from officials from the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture.

Going to Bill C-205 and what it is doing, for the next part of my speech, I just want to highlight the provisions that currently exist in the federal statute that is the Health of Animals Act. If we go through the existing act, we can see that there are number of sections within the act that are already seeking to prohibit. For example, people are not allowed to conceal a reportable disease or toxic substance. People are not allowed to keep diseased animals. People are not allowed to bring them to market or to dispose of them improperly, or to let them out. These are all prohibited actions and they come with some pretty severe fines and penalties, because we are essentially trying to prevent those types of actions from occurring.

Where Bill C-205 steps in is that it is going to insert a new section 9.1, which is aiming to prohibit the entry of persons into a building where animals are kept, if by knowingly doing so or if they were reckless in doing so could potentially expose those animals to disease or a toxic substance. This is important. If the ultimate goal here is the welfare of animals, a person may have noble intentions and may want to see if the animals are being taken care of, but by doing so they may in fact be doing more harm than good.

Again, I understand the struggle that is out there, the debate that is going on with the public's right to know, but it has to be balanced against the very real consequences that those actions bring about. As the NDP's critic for agriculture and agri-food, I support the bill. I support the principle behind it. I believe that the bill does merit further study at the committee. That is why I will be looking forward to voting for it.

In closing, I have received correspondence from concerned people from across the country who are worried that the bill might serve as an effective gag against their right to protest. What I would say in reply to that is that if we look at the specific wording of this act, it is talking about a person entering without lawful authority or excuse. There is nothing in the bill to prevent a whistle-blower, like a farm employee, who is already lawfully there and who witnesses something that they believe is wrong or contrary to animal welfare laws, from blowing the whistle and raising the alarm on that.

Perhaps what the bill may serve to do is to have a broader conversation on how we instill that public trust and build that kind of

transparency so that people understand what farming is all about and the struggles that farmers go through, and also give farmers a chance to inform the public of how a farm operates and what measures they try to put in place to look after their animals.

I will conclude there. I will just congratulate the member for Foothills again for bringing forward the legislation. I hope it is sent to committee so that we can take a further look at it.

• (1820)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to resuming debate and the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South, I will let him know that we are just shy of the normal 10 minutes that would be available for him for his speech in this hour. Of course, whatever time is left that he is unable to get to will be carried over into the next hour of debate on the motion that is before the House.

The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to congratulate the member for Foothills on his excellent private member's bill.

Before I get into the heart of my speech, there are a couple of arguments that I think are misplaced. Quite frankly, I am a bit frustrated, as over the last couple of days I have been involved in private member's bills that were designed to help the agriculture industry, and we have received support and constructive feedback from both the Bloc Québécois as well as the NDP. I have to say I am a little disappointed in the Liberal Party and in its response to our supporting rural agriculture.

Specifically, I would like to address a couple of things that have come up. One is that this is absolutely an area of federal jurisdiction. It is co-jurisdiction, but the federal government has the right. Currently in some of the provincial legislation that would attempt to prevent some of the conduct that is contemplated in this legislation, some of the penalties are less than stringent. Therefore, this federal legislation, which is definitely within the jurisdiction, is also warranted.

Secondly, the member for Kings—Hants brought up the idea that maybe animal activists will not know about this law, and asked how we could put this law in place. The reality is that there is an old common-law principle that is hundreds of years old that says ignorance of the law is not an excuse. We must be aware of the law. It is part of being a citizen of a country.

Finally, the other subject he brought up was the idea that, and he did ask it earnestly and I do respect that, whether for one of these biosecurity lapses, protesters had created an outbreak or the spread of a disease, and whether there was evidence of this. I would say, respectfully, to him that before COVID there was no COVID. Before the Holocaust there was no Holocaust. We need to get ahead of things; we cannot stay behind them. The reality is that, whether this has occurred in the past or not, there is the very real opportunity for this to occur, which it appears all parties acknowledge. Therefore, we need to be ahead of these things, not behind them.

At this point, I would like to get into the meat of my speech. I can say with great pride that I am the member of Parliament for Northumberland—Peterborough South, a predominantly rural riding where we have, I believe, some of the best farmers in our country. I am honoured to rise in the House for the second time this week to speak in support of the amazing hard work farmers do across Canada.

Canadians should all be proud of the amazing work our agriculture sector does. We have incredibly difficult and stringent regulations, which farmers across our country meet every day to make sure that Canadians have the safest, most secure food supply in the world. Whether it be growing grain on the Prairies, produce out in the beautiful province of British Columbia or raising livestock in my province of Ontario, Canadians can rest assured that every step is being taken by our farmers to make sure that food is safe and secure.

We have talked about biosecurity in Canada, but I would just like to take a half-step back and explain, at least in accordance with the Province of Ontario, what biosecurity is. Biosecurity is defined at the farm level as a management practice enabling producers to prevent the movement of disease-causing agents onto and off of agricultural operations. This includes environmental contamination. Biosecurity, therefore, involves many aspects of farm management, such as disease control and prevention, closed-herd vaccination, nutrient management and visitor control. Although controlling and limiting the movement of livestock is recognized as the most important biosecurity measure for most diseases, many important hazards can be carried on contaminated clothing, boots, equipment and vehicles.

While many people outside of the agricultural industry may not yet be aware of the issue of biosecurity, it has become a major concern within the industry as a result of the foreign and emergent diseases that are increasing public concerns over food safety and the globalization of agriculture.

• (1825)

I would like to comment on the question addressed by the member for Foothills.

There is unfortunately a divide between rural and urban Canada. Hopefully this speech and legislation helps to bridge it. As someone who is in rural Canada, I invite every member of Parliament, whether Liberal, NDP or Green, to come out to rural Canada. I would be happy to show everyone around my farm and the farms in my area. We would, of course, abide by all appropriate measures.

The concerns of biosecurity will only grow as we have greater farm and population density. This will increase the relevance and salience of biosecurity concerns.

In my opinion, the passing of Bill C-205, an act to amend the Health of Animals Act, is long overdue. This is an issue that all Canadians should care about. I hope to see all my colleagues join me and the member for Foothills in supporting this important legislation.

The protection of biosecurity on farms has always been an important issue for farmers across the globe, but perhaps it has never

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been more salient than right now. There are currently no provisions at the federal level to protect our farmers, and the incredible products they produce, from trespassers, who may pass on an array of various diseases to their livestock.

Meanwhile, we are becoming increasingly aware of many diseases plaguing our farmers and animals across the globe. I want to give an example: African swine fever. Of course, the member for Foothills talked about this. This is a very real concern for Canadian farmers.

I want to tell the story of Chen Yun, a pork farmer in Jiangxi, China. He noticed that one of his pigs had stopped eating. Shortly after, it developed a fever. He was concerned, so he checked on the rest of his pigs. Within a week, all 10,000 of his pigs had died of African swine fever. This virus is highly contagious and affected every province in China, and it led to the slaughter of half of Chinese pigs.

Soon after the outbreak, the fever spread from China to Southeast Asia to central Europe, where it has now reached Belgium. This virus shows the importance of biosecurity and why this legislation is very important.

• (1830)

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1835)

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are waiting for a COVID-19 vaccine to help control the spread of the virus and protect our most vulnerable citizens. The vaccine needs to be free for Canadians, it needs to be effective and it needs to be safe.

In my question to the government, I asked if it was time to return to the model of publicly owned laboratories to develop low-cost medicines and vaccines to serve the greater good. In his response, the minister put forward a list of corporations that have received government funding for vaccine initiatives. That did not answer my question.

The government has reserved 414 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines with six private sector contracts. We still do not know how much this will cost taxpayers, but we do know that none of the vaccines will be produced here and that Canadians will have to wait for our supply. I ask members to imagine how different our situation would be if the vaccines were being produced here at a government-owned lab, where public health is the motive instead of profit.

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For 70 years, government-owned Connaught Medical Research Laboratories developed low-cost vaccines and other medicines for Canadians. It was established in Toronto in 1914 by Dr. John FitzGerald to produce the diphtheria vaccine. FitzGerald struck a deal with the University of Toronto to house the lab. As a non-commercial entity, all proceeds were dedicated to the improvement of public health and education.

Before the establishment of Connaught Labs, Canadians were reliant on expensive vaccines and medicines produced in the United States, a situation that echoes where we are today. After the discovery of insulin at the University of Toronto, Connaught Labs expanded to manufacture and distribute, at cost, in Canada and overseas. Connaught produced typhus vaccines, polio vaccines and penicillin. It created mass-production techniques that played a crucial role in reducing diseases around the world. Its work saved millions of lives.

Connaught was a proud Canadian success story, but in 1972 it was sold to the federally owned Canada Development Corporation by the Liberal government. A for-profit model was imposed, prices were increased and manufacturing standards were lowered. In 1986, after years of lobbying from the private sector, the Conservative government sold Connaught to a private corporation, ending the era of non-profit government-supported medical development for the public interest.

It is all about the free market and corporate profits now. We still have publicly funded universities doing research, but the breakthroughs and developments achieved in these labs are exploited for profit, not public health. Where is the return on that public investment?

Canada needs a universal pharmacare program, and the government has promised to introduce it. We are the only country with universal medicare that does not have a universal pharmacare program as well. The cost of visiting a doctor is covered but the treatment they prescribe is not.

As the cost of medication grows increasingly more expensive, many people are forced to choose between filling their prescriptions and paying their rent or putting food on the table. When people cannot afford their prescriptions, they often end up in the hospital, which is far more costly for all of us. This is not acceptable in a country as wealthy as Canada.

Re-establishing publicly funded labs based on the Connaught model would ensure that universal pharmacare is affordable for Canadians, not a cash cow for the pharmaceutical industry. Let us work together toward this sensible solution.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the comments by the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith regarding COVID-19. Let me be clear. The health and safety of Canadians is our government's top priority. The government is focused on, and is implementing, every possible solution to deliver safe and effective vaccines and treatments to all Canadians.

It has taken rapid action to deploy policy and program instruments to support vaccine development and manufacturing capabilities

in Canada. We have established and mobilized extraordinary partnerships with industry, academia and research institutions to fight COVID-19, the most significant global health challenge in recent history.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the government's efforts have focused on a comprehensive made in Canada approach to harness world-renowned Canadian ingenuity and innovation to address this crisis. The government has made investments that are accelerating the development of vaccines and therapeutics in Canada and are strengthening our national biomanufacturing capabilities.

A signature investment is the \$175.6 million provided to Vancouver-based AbCellera to advance its therapy discovery platform and to establish a good manufacturing practice facility right here in Canada. This Canadian company's technology is helping advance a world leading monoclonal antibody treatment for COVID-19 in partnership with U.S.-based Eli Lilly.

The government's investments also include up to \$173 million for Quebec City-based Medicago, which is pioneering a virus-like particle vaccine created on the company's unique plant-based technology platform. The government's contributions provide funding to Medicago so it can develop its vaccine candidate through all phases of clinical trials and so it can expand its manufacturing capacity to establish a new, large-scale good manufacturing processing facility right here in Canada.

Another innovative vaccine investment is up to \$18.2 million in contributions to Precision NanoSystems Inc., a Vancouver-based company. Precision NanoSystems is working on a novel messenger RNA vaccine candidate and has created lipid nanoparticle technology that provides Canada with a distinct technological advance in the global arena. The government's investments in these projects are growing Canada's capabilities in the most sophisticated vaccine and therapeutics technology and helping solidify world-leading clusters across the country. Among others, I would like to reference messenger RNA vaccines and associated technologies as key examples.

However, the development of vaccines is complicated. It depends on supply chains and requires biomanufacturing assets to serve as a safety net in case of unforeseen disruptions to the global production network. For this reason, the government is taking concrete steps to strengthen domestic biomanufacturing capacity. We are doing so not only to reinforce Canada's ability to deliver vaccines and therapeutics for Canadians in the near term, as part of our fight against COVID-19, but also to develop our country's capacity for the future.

A major investment in this area is the expansion of the new Biologics Manufacturing Centre at the National Research Council of Canada's Royalmount site in Montreal which, I might add, is well under way. Once operational, this facility will have—

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• (1840)

The Deputy Speaker: We are at the end of time.

We will go back to the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Mr. Paul Manly: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his response. The belief that the private sector in a free market can do everything better than the government is a bankrupt idea. Connaught Labs was proof. It provided affordable medicines and vaccines that saved lives and made Canada a world leader in public health. The free market has brought us more expensive medicines and a focus on profit.

Canada needs a universal pharmacare system and a publicly owned model of medicine, development and production will make it affordable. Privatizing Connaught Labs put us farther behind in our fight against COVID-19. It is time to go back to a common-sense model that serves the common good.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Speaker, it is important to keep in mind the human cost of this pandemic. The government owes it to those on our front lines who are selflessly helping Canadians suffering from this virus. Now is the time to come together with determination to swiftly advance a comprehensive approach and strengthen our capabilities to put an end to this global pandemic.

With a surge in the number of cases, Canada cannot be complacent. We must continue our efforts to manage, control and defeat the pandemic. Investments made under the made in Canada initiative will help restart Canada's economy, end the pandemic and put our country on a higher trajectory of growth and innovation.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am following up tonight, seeking further information about the government's failure to respond in a serious way to the strategic and security challenge presented to our interests and values by the Government of China.

What we are seeing right now from the government, in terms of its China policy, is a significant shift in rhetoric, but barely a blip of change in substance. When the Liberals became the government, they trumpeted a new golden age with China. They also criticized the previous Conservative government for blowing hot and cold with China. The implication was, I suppose, that there was something wrong with a policy that was a mixture of warmth and pressure. Instead, they wanted to pursue a policy that was all hot and no cold. That was where they started: all hot and no cold.

Today the Liberals say that our relationship with China is complex and multi-dimensional, involving areas of co-operation and areas of conflict. This seems to me to be another way of saying that now they have decided that blowing hot and cold is not such a bad idea after all. Aside from the change in rhetoric, we have not seen any change in policy. The National Post has reported that a new China policy was brought to cabinet and rejected, so now we have a new slogan, but no new policy.

The government trumpets its suspension of the extradition treaty with Hong Kong. This is, though, the lowest of the low-hanging fruit and nobody was on the verge of being, or likely to be, extradited to Hong Kong anyway. Let us not forget that this is the same government that announced exploratory discussions with China

about an extradition agreement with the mainland a few short years ago.

Liberals are sending their thoughts and prayers to Uighur Muslims in concentration camps. They say they are deeply disturbed and they are doing absolutely nothing. Their so-called immigration program for people from Hong Kong does not apply to the vast majority of democracy advocates, since most face charges that are not directly related to the national security law.

On the substance, Liberals have refused to impose Magnitsky sanctions against human rights abusers in China, refused to expel diplomats who are found threatening or intimidating Canadians, refused to stop Huawei infiltration of our networks in a timely manner and refused to withdraw from the neo-colonial Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Why are we still funding the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank? Why are we sending cheques to a Chinese state-controlled development bank which is building pipelines in Central Asia to advance China's foreign policy goals?

The Liberal Minister of International Development once tweeted that she wanted to “landlock Alberta's tar sands”, yet she has no problem funding the construction of pipelines for China and calling it international development.

On the issue of foreign interference, I have just introduced Motion No. 55, designed to push the government to provide meaningful protection and support for Canadians who are victims of foreign-state-backed interference, including from China. Liberals say that foreign interference in Canada is unacceptable, but they are doing absolutely nothing about it. Victims testified on the Hill today that they have gotten the runaround, calling different agencies and being sent to other agencies without the kind of support and assistance that they need when faced with planned attacks by foreign states on themselves and on their activities.

When it comes to foreign interference, Liberals are like parents who tell their child not to take extra snacks and then, when their child takes a snack anyway, they just shrug and ignore it. Expressing opposition to a behaviour and then ignoring it when it happens is no way to build credibility, as a parent or as a country.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs does not have a new China policy. All he has is a new slogan: firm and smart. “Firm and smart” is what the Liberals say. Offering modest criticism of Chinese government policy, while refusing to act to block it and continuing to fund the PRC's neo-colonial policy, is neither firm nor smart. Sadly, the Liberals' China policy is not firm and smart. It is soft and stupid.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1845)

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in recent years, Canada has observed, with great dismay, a steady decline in the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong.

On June 30, the Chinese government imposed a national security law on Hong Kong without engaging Hong Kong's own institutions. The lack of clear definitions and acts of territorial application of the national security law to persons outside Hong Kong, among other concerns, has put Canadian citizens at risk.

We are not about slogans. We have taken concrete action. In response to these developments, on July 3, Canada undertook a series of bold measures to safeguard our interests and the safety of Canadians. The three principal pillars adopted by our government on July 3 consisted of the following: one, suspending the Canada-Hong Kong extradition agreement; two, stopping the export of sensitive items and; three, updating our travel advice and advisories for Hong Kong.

I should also add that the announcement on July 3 was preceded by joint statements on Hong Kong, which the Minister of Foreign Affairs forcefully delivered alongside his allies and counterparts.

Among these joint statements, allow me to refer to the following. On May 22, Canada joined Australia and the U.K. On May 28, Canada joined with Australia, the U.K. and the U.S. On June 17, Canada joined the G7 and the EU.

Let me be very clear. Canada has never shied away from standing up for human rights in China, and our voice has been heard loud and clear around the world. In fact, a growing coalition of countries have heard our clarion call for action and have opted to join us in calling for the protection of civil and political rights in Hong Kong.

In addition to what I referenced earlier, on June 30, Canada joined 27 other countries at the UN Human Rights Council to express our collective concerns. Furthermore, at the 45th session of the UN Human Rights Council in September, Canada co-hosted a side event on Hong Kong alongside the United Kingdom and Australia. Shortly thereafter, Canada co-signed, alongside 38 other countries, a statement on the human rights situation in Xinjiang and Hong Kong at the UN General Assembly's Third Committee.

It is important to emphasize here that China's coercive diplomacy has put a strain on Canada-China relations, yet despite pressure and threats, we have continued to forcefully highlight our concerns.

That said, we are under no illusion that China or the situation in Hong Kong will change overnight. Canada will continue to work with partners, sharing our values, to persuade China to live up to its international obligations and to adopt a more conciliatory approach toward Hong Kong.

We certainly reserve the right to undertake appropriate action in response, as recently exemplified by our Minister of Immigration's introduction of new immigration measures in response to the situation in Hong Kong.

• (1850)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, this is what passes for bold measures if one is a Liberal. The Liberals have spoken, made statements, sent letters and hosted events. I could host events. What the government can do is implement policy.

John McCallum told the Canada-China special committee that the government knew of Operation Fox Hunt years ago. This information, new to the public, about foreign-state interference was not new to the government. It knew about it years ago and failed to put in place new legislative measures to support Canadians who were victims.

Where are the Magnitsky sanctions? The government used them with respect to Burma and Venezuela. When will we see Magnitsky sanctions in response to what is happening in China to deter this abuse of human rights?

We continue to send hundreds of millions of dollars to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. We say that we are against the Chinese human rights abuses and the Chinese state neocolonialism and we are funding them through the AIIB.

At the very least, could the parliamentary secretary tell us that the government will stop sending cheques to support the Chinese government's foreign policy?

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Speaker, regrettably, my hon. colleagues does not seem to appreciate that we have to act and lead alongside our allies.

Let me reiterate that China's coercive diplomacy has put a strain on Canada-China relations, yet despite pressure and threats, we have continued to clearly and forcefully highlight our concern for the protection of human rights in places like Hong Kong. Our voice, alongside those of our partners, has been heard loud and clear. It seems the member is the only who does not seem to hear it.

A growing coalition of countries have joined our call for the protection of civil and political rights in Hong Kong. Let me be emphatic that Canada will continue to work with partners to persuade China to live up to its international obligations. As I noted earlier, we reserve the right to undertake appropriate action in response to any future developments as we deem and recognize as necessary.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Monday, April 20 and Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn and the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole, with the order being to study all votes under Department of Health in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

I do now leave the chair for the House to resolve itself into committee of the whole.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

HEALTH—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2020-21

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Health in the main estimates, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair)

The Chair: Tonight's debate is a general one on all votes under the Department of Health. The first round will begin with the official opposition, followed by the government, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party. After that, we will follow the usual proportional rotation.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, November 24, within each 15-minute period, each party may allocate time to one or more of its members for speeches or for questions and answers.

In the case of speeches, members of the party to which the period is allocated may speak one after the other, but the time allocated for speeches must not exceed 10 minutes. The Chair would appreciate it if the first member to speak in each period would indicate how that time will be used, particularly if the time will be shared.

The order also specifies that, when the time is used for questions and answers, the minister's answer should approximately reflect the time taken by the question. In addition, the Chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent.

[*English*]

I also wish to indicate that in committee of the whole, comments should be addressed to the Chair as they always are in the House. I ask for everyone's co-operation in upholding all the established standards of decorum, parliamentary language and behaviour.

We will now begin tonight's session.

The House in committee of the whole, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Department of Health in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

• (1855)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will start with brief remarks and then go into questions for the purposes of your timing.

Business of Supply

The COVID pandemic has been the greatest crisis in the modern history of our country. It has been a difficult year for Canada, for Canadian families, seniors, small businesses, front-line nurses, PSWs and doctors. Our country has pivoted in remarkable ways.

I want to thank those on our front lines who have been a part of the national response to COVID-19.

The questions we will have for the minister are based on Canada needing to do better. The very hybrid nature of Parliament itself is a result. People are working from home. We have a hybrid structure. The minister will be on a screen today as opposed to in the House where she was earlier today. That is a sign of the hybrid nature of how things are changing.

After months of lockdown, of uncertainty, of businesses failing, of people declaring bankruptcy and of people losing a loved one, a vaccine on the eve of Christmas was the hope for which our country was looking. That hope and that desire for Canada to do well, to recover and to help our people will underline my questions here tonight.

When was the minister first informed, or her office, by company representatives, telling them that the Pfizer vaccine would require specific logistics of a pharmaceutical-grade freezer and cold logistics chain?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Chair, every step of the way, the Department of Health has been working very closely with Procurement Canada, in fact, hand in glove. We have been working with the manufacturer to understand what the requirements are to transport vaccines, store vaccines and, in fact, to deploy vaccines. We are working with provinces and territories right now to ensure everyone is set up for success.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, my question was when was the minister informed of the extreme cold temperature requirements for the Pfizer vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, the work of procurement has been integrated with the work of Health Canada as we pursue, acquire and plan to deploy vaccines. I am very proud to say that the whole of government—

The Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, this will be long night if we just have more “whole of government” or “our portfolio of vaccines”. Those are the lines we want to get past tonight.

Again to the minister, when was her team informed of the challenges posed by the extreme cold storage requirements for the Pfizer vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, every step of the way we have negotiated and communicated extensively with the manufacturers of the seven very promising vaccine candidates. Of course, we know the requirements for storing, transporting and deploying. We are working now to have every success with provinces and territories to do that.

Business of Supply

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, I will move on. One last time, can I get a date on the cold storage requirements for the Pfizer vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, we have worked extensively with the pharmaceutical manufacturers to fully understand how best to transport, store and deploy them.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, moving on, Ford Motor Company has begun to procure the type of specialized freezers to store the Pfizer vaccine.

Can the minister tell the House how many freezers Health Canada has procured to store the Pfizer vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I am so grateful for the work of Procurement Canada that is working hand in glove with Health Canada and indeed the work that we are doing with provinces and territories to understand their capacities and ensure we have the materials available when the vaccine arrives. We are very well along in that process and we are very optimistic about the ability of the provinces and territories to deploy this vaccine.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, I will let Canadians and journalists watching this committee of the whole know that we will hear a lot of “hand in glove”, “whole of government” and a lot of “robust portfolio” tonight. We want answers to simple questions that are important in the public interest, so I will continue.

Did the government negotiate or attempt to negotiate the right to manufacture the Pfizer vaccine in Canada?

• (1900)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, we have been so well served by the vaccine task force, which is composed of hard-working volunteer Canadians with a variety of expertise in manufacturing of pharmaceuticals, vaccination and virology. That is why we are so well situated, with seven candidates. They are the most promising candidates around the world, a diverse portfolio indeed, and Canadians will be well served by their expertise and leadership.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, I will ask again. Did the minister, with respect to the Pfizer vaccine, in their great portfolio of vaccines, negotiate the ability to manufacture that vaccine in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I am thrilled that Canadians will have such a variety of vaccines. Canada has purchased more vaccine per capita than any other country in the world. We are very confident that the provinces and territories have the expertise they need to deploy the vaccine. We are working with the—

The Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, hand in hand, whole of government and grand portfolio; no answers to specific questions. I will move on; no answer on Pfizer.

Did the government negotiate or attempt to negotiate the right to manufacture the Moderna vaccine in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, the president of Moderna has noted how well situated Canada is to acquire the Moderna vaccine and deploy it. The president has noted that we placed our order early and that we are well situated in our ability to receive Moderna and deploy it successfully in Canada.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, does the minister think I would actually get answers from perhaps the president of Moderna?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, as the member opposite knows, pharmaceutical companies are working with countries around the world. They have been contracted to provide doses for this global pandemic, and we are thrilled that Moderna has Canada at the top of its list.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, I hear no answers on the Pfizer vaccine, no specific details on the Moderna vaccine and more reference to a vague portfolio. I am sure it is reassuring, as Canadians will see vaccines rolling out to billions of people around the planet, that we will have a robust portfolio in two years.

On May 12, the government signed an agreement between the National Research Council and CanSino that would “allow the NRC to advance a scale-up production process for a vaccine candidate.”

Did the government have the right to manufacture the CanSino vaccine in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I have to say that I am incredibly confident, with the portfolio of vaccines that we have acquired, that we have the right blend of vaccines.

As the member opposite knows, we have vaccines from a variety of different kinds of technology, and we have the capacity, as a leading country in immunization, to deploy these vaccines successfully. This is good news for Canadians.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, I heard no response to making Pfizer, Moderna or CanSino in Canada, for those following.

The news release from the announcement states that the National Research Council will have “readiness for Canadian bioprocessing of potential vaccine candidates as they become available.”

Did the government originally intend to manufacture multiple vaccine candidates at the NRC site in Montreal?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, as the member opposite knows, our government has been investing in science and research and has been investing in the biomanufacturing sector, and that is exactly what we need to do to combat future pandemics. In terms of vaccination for Canadians, we are thrilled that we have seven such promising candidates, three of them already with Health Canada for regulatory approval.

Business of Supply

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, of the seven promising candidates she has referred to several times, did the government negotiate to have any manufactured in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, in fact, one of the seven is Canadian, Medicago, and that is exciting news, because as we rebuild our biomanufacturing sector, this will hold Canada in good stead for future health crises.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, on August 5 the government announced the Pfizer and Moderna agreements, well after other countries.

Was the agreement between CanSino and Canada raised in the negotiations with Pfizer and Moderna?

• (1905)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I have to say that Procurement Canada has been doing incredible work in making sure that Canada is well positioned to purchase the most promising vaccines as they have been recommended by our vaccine task force. Canada is well positioned with more doses per capita than any other country and with a robust experience in immunization. I will say that the provinces and territories—

The Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, “robust portfolio” and “whole of government” I think we will determine to be a stock answer too.

Three weeks later, on August 26, the government's deal with CanSino fell apart. Has the Public Health Agency since briefed the minister on the government's lack of ability to domestically manufacture a COVID-19 vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I think this is a great time to thank the hard-working people at Health Canada, especially the regulators who are working literally 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to make sure that we are analyzing the data of the three promising vaccines that have applied for regulatory approval here in Canada. When the vaccines are ready, Canada will be ready, and this is good news for Canadians.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, that was the “whole of government” response. We are looking for actual answers to these questions, and it is disappointing that we are not getting them.

Since the CanSino deal fell apart on August 26, the government has signed deals with AstraZeneca and GlaxoSmithKline. Has the government attempted to negotiate the right to domestically manufacture either of these vaccine candidates?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, we are thrilled to have contracts with seven of the most promising vaccines in the world. Indeed, it has been wise advice from the vaccine task force to have a diverse portfolio, because, of course, some of these are still in development. The three most promising, however, are actually in the regulatory approval process and working very closely with Health Canada to ensure we have the data needed to assess their safety.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, this morning, Dr. Njoo stressed that only a “limited” quantity of vaccines would be available in the first quarter of 2021. How many Canadians could be vaccinated using the Pfizer vaccine at the current freezer capacity in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, we are working closely with the provinces and territories right now. We have purchased equipment that will support the deployment of the Pfizer vaccine, which, as the member knows, requires extremely cold storage. We have purchased equipment, we are analyzing with provinces and territories the existence of current equipment, and we are ready to deploy when the vaccine arrives.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, the minister finally referenced the extreme cold storage requirements that I asked about in my first question.

What date or in what month was the minister first made aware of the extreme cold storage requirements for the Pfizer vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, we have been working around the clock with the provinces and territories to prepare for not just the Pfizer vaccine, but the variety of vaccines that will arrive. Some of them are more complex. Some of them are more traditional. The good news for Canadians is that Canada has a robust and very long history of—

The Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, I am not looking for “around the clock”. I am looking for the calendar.

On what date did the minister become aware of the maximum freezer requirements for the Pfizer vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, every step of the way, Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Sanofi and all other pharmaceutical manufacturers have been very clear with Canada about the types of vaccines they are creating and the conditions they require in order to—

The Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, did the Government of Canada, through the minister, put all its eggs in the CanSino basket in terms of domestic manufacturing capability for a vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, clearly we have not. We have Canadian candidates and we are thrilled to support the growth of the biomanufacturing industry here in Canada, which will prove very beneficial for Canadians and generations to come.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, this ties together two concerning trends with the Liberals. They could not get domestic manufacturing access from western companies because they had exclusivity with CanSino.

Does the minister now acknowledge it was a mistake to put all the eggs in the CanSino basket when it came to a vaccine that would help Canada get access quickly?

Business of Supply

• (1910)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, maybe the member opposite did not hear me when I said that we have the most diverse portfolio, with seven promising vaccine candidates, a variety of different kinds of vaccines and a variety of different manufacturers. This serves Canada well because we will have options on vaccines that we know will be successful in the end.

The Chair: We will go to the next round, with the hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am thankful for the opportunity to rise virtually here today to speak to the main estimates for the health portfolio.

I want to begin by noting that the resourcing plans outlined in these estimates were put in place in early 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic changed the tenor of life in Canada and around the world. Our supplementary estimates (A) and (B), which were tabled later, reflect further investments needed to deliver Canada's health response to the pandemic.

With this in mind, I will spend my time today updating everyone on the Government of Canada's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Afterward, I will be happy to answer questions about the main estimates or our pandemic response.

As our recent case numbers have shown, the battle with COVID-19 is not over. In fact, despite the gains we have made over the past nine months, we are now facing a number of new challenges. Canadians are moving indoors for the winter, where the risk of transmitting COVID-19 is greater, but we cannot stop now. As the pandemic evolves, so must our response. We are building on the work we did in the spring and summer as we pursue new tools that will help us live safely with COVID-19 in the months to come.

One of those tools is testing. Early diagnosis of COVID-19 is critical to slowing and reducing its spread.

Last month, the Public Health Agency of Canada released guidance for a national approach to testing. Developed through the federal, provincial and territorial special advisory committee on COVID-19, the guidance aims to optimize the use of local resources in protecting the health of Canadians. Ultimately, the goal is to expand testing up to 200,000 tests per day across the country.

To increase testing capacity, Health Canada has prioritized the review of all types of COVID-19 tests. To date, Health Canada has authorized 47 COVID-19 testing devices for sale in Canada, and this includes three antigen tests and five point-of-care molecular tests. In addition, Health Canada is proactively contacting test manufacturers to seek their interest in entering the Canadian market, and the Government of Canada has purchased rapid tests in bulk. To date, more than five million rapid tests have been distributed to the provinces and territories.

Even as we increase testing capacity, we are preparing for the day when a vaccine is finally ready. We have already signed agreements with seven different companies to secure tens of millions of vaccine doses for Canadians. So far, Health Canada has received submissions for authorization of three COVID-19 vaccines, from AstraZeneca, Pfizer and Moderna, and we expect to receive submissions from other manufacturers soon. Reviews are being con-

ducted through rolling submissions. This allows our scientists to review the data as it becomes available, allowing for quicker review without compromising safety and efficacy.

In addition, the government has committed \$220 million to the COVAX facility. The COVAX facility and the advance market commitment within it are designed to guarantee rapid, fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for every country in the world to slow the pandemic. Through this arrangement, we have secured the option to purchase doses for 20% of Canada's population and committed an additional \$220 million to provide vaccines to the developing world. By joining this initiative, Canada is contributing to the global effort to develop a safe, effective and accessible COVID-19 vaccine for 172 participating economies across the world.

We are moving steadily toward a future with a vaccine, but in the meantime, we need to find ways to live safely with COVID-19. Virtual tools and services can help.

When the pandemic first hit in March, the provinces and territories moved quickly to put into place temporary physician billing codes and new digital tools so that Canadians could continue to get the health services they need. On May 3, the Prime Minister announced \$240.5 million to support this work through virtual care and digital tools, such as secure messaging and video conferencing.

Since then, the Government of Canada has continued to provide a suite of tools to help Canadians stay informed and healthy during the pandemic. This includes tools like the COVID trends website and the Canada COVID-19 mobile app, both of which provide reliable, up-to-date information on the pandemic in Canada. ArriveCAN, by contrast, helps travellers comply with restrictions at the border by allowing them to submit their information digitally. The COVID Alert app allows those who have tested positive for COVID-19 to alert others of possible exposure.

• (1915)

Finally, the Wellness Together Canada online portal provides Canadians with free and confidential psychological and substance use services remotely. These services are provided in both official languages, with instantaneous translation available for phone counselling in 200 languages and dialects. So far, more than 463,000 Canadians have reached out for support through this portal.

Tools like these are going to continue to be essential as the pandemic continues.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also revealed a number of weaknesses in our society, and it is up to us to learn from and act on them. This brings me to long-term care facilities.

People living in these facilities were hit hard by the first wave of the pandemic. Many fell ill and far too many people lost their lives. We cannot let that happen again. That is why, although long-term care falls under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, our government has committed to working with the provinces and territories to set new national standards for long-term care so that residents get the best support no matter where they live.

As is the case with so many public health issues, a co-operative and coordinated approach is essential. We were able to put in place public health surveillance for COVID-19 very quickly, with all levels of government working closely to share information. However, even so, the pandemic has shown us that we need to improve public health data and systems in Canada.

That is why, as part of the safe restart agreements with the provinces and territories, we are investing \$4.28 billion to expand our testing and contact-tracing capacity and to enable rapid and efficient case reporting, as well as access to data to inform public health decision-making. This funding will support efforts by the federal, provincial and territorial governments to leverage the existing data infrastructure, and it allows us to work together to accelerate the development of data standards. It will also facilitate access to public health data.

Time and again we have seen that fighting COVID-19 is a team effort and that we all have a role to play. For the departments and agencies of the health portfolio, it is our top priority. We are committed to leading Canadians safely through this crisis. We will stay vigilant, we will learn from our experiences and we will adjust our approach as new information becomes available.

I want to say to all Canadians that there is a light at the end of the tunnel and we will get there. We just have to keep working together.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: There are now seven and a half minutes to put questions to the minister. As this is a unique situation and it is not possible for the minister to put questions to herself, another member of her party may do so.

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will start right away with my questions for the Minister of Health and I want to thank her for being here tonight.

The COVID-19 pandemic is in its second wave and it continues to devastate individuals, families and communities. As part of the efforts to fight COVID-19, in July 2020, the Government of Canada announced the safe restart agreement funding of over \$19 billion for provinces and territories, to help them safely restart their economies and make our country more resilient to possible future waves of COVID-19.

Business of Supply

What portion of this funding will be used to support mental health and substance-use issues, which continue to be impacted by the pandemic?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his incredible advocacy and hard work in the area of mental health supports.

In fact, \$500 million of the safe restart agreement funding was targeted for mental health and substance-use services. The funding can be used in any way that addresses the immediate needs of the provinces and territories related to staffing, human resources, wraparound care, harm reduction and evidence-based treatment supports and services, including enhancement to workforce stability and retention plans.

I want to thank the individuals who are working so hard on the front lines, supporting people with mental health and substance-use issues, especially during this difficult time. I know that oftentimes, the front-line workers working in these areas also experience trauma. That is why the creation of working training plans, mental health first aid and trauma-informed practices are all good for the people who need the supports and for the people who are providing them.

● (1920)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Chair, the impact of COVID-19 on mental health continues to affect Canadians' stress and well-being, and individuals with pre-existing conditions have been the hardest hit. The pandemic has also exacerbated inequities in accessing mental health care, with many unable to access their regular sources of support.

With the end to the pandemic apparently nowhere in sight, what is the government doing to help Canadians who are suffering now and those who will continue to suffer long-term consequences?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I will say I agree with the member opposite that it can feel like the pandemic is never going to end, but it will and there is light at the end of the tunnel. Canadians need to know that we will get there together and that we will stand strong with them as we work toward eliminating COVID-19 from Canada and, indeed, around the world.

We know that however much optimism we have about getting to the end of COVID, it still represents a high-degree period of stress and anxiety for many Canadians. That is why we launched, early on in the pandemic, Wellness Together Canada. Back in April, we knew that there were going to be challenges for Canadians as we were asking people to stay home, as they were being disrupted from their everyday lives and as they were worried about their jobs, their livelihoods, their health and the health and safety of their loved ones.

Business of Supply

We launched this portal in April. It provides free incredible mental health and substance-use supports. It is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to Canadians. It is available in both official languages and there is translation for over 200 other languages. In fact, people can get free access to social workers, psychologists and other professionals by phone and by text. We have seen an enormous take-up of this service, and we encourage all Canadians who are struggling or who have family members who are struggling to use this free resource, which is available to all Canadians.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Chair, I am a big supporter of the Wellness Together portal.

What about Canadians without Internet access? How does Wellness Together Canada support them?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, that is a great question. In fact, for those people without Internet access, they can access confidential chat sessions with social workers, psychologists or other professionals by phone or by text. To get started, there is a dedicated phone line for program navigators. Those program navigators stand by to help Canadians access the resources that are best suited to meet their needs.

This is really a unique service that is offered by the federal government directly to Canadians, which is very tailored to each person's specific needs. Again, I would encourage all members to let their constituents know about this additional free service. Some people in communities do not have benefits. They do not have access to mental health supports. Certainly, some people have been disrupted from seeing professionals face-to-face and this service can certainly help every Canadian that needs it.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Chair, on that same topic, what about those grieving the loss of a loved one or a relationship, employment or other area of their life that has been impacted negatively by COVID-19?

Could the minister tell us how the government will support them?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I will just say that grief is a large component of living through a pandemic. In fact, not only are people grieving the loss of loved ones, but they are grieving the loss of their routines. They are grieving the loss of contact with family. They are grieving the loss of normal life. There have been a number of times I have heard people talk about the need to get back to normal and their wish to be with people and friends.

This is very difficult for all Canadians and, in fact, Wellness Together Canada has experts and skilled professionals who deal exclusively in the area of grief, who can help individuals with the grief they are facing, with the loss that they are facing. We do have to stand together and this resource provides that support for people who are really struggling as a result of the incredible life changes that we all face now as a result of this pandemic.

• (1925)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Chair, I have just one quick question for the minister. How many people have accessed the Wellness Together portal so far since its inception?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I am so excited to talk about the Wellness Together portal. Almost half a million Canadians have ac-

cessed Wellness Together and some of them many times, so we have over 1.5 million uses of the portal.

The portal, by the way, has enough resources available for everyone, so again, we would really appreciate all parliamentarians making sure that Canadians know about Wellness Together. I know we have opportunities to communicate with our constituents in writing and other ways. Please make sure to let Canadians know about this free and valuable resource. It is private, it is confidential and it is helping Canadians get through a difficult time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Chair, I am very pleased to participate in this debate. I want to commend our health critic, the member for Montcalm, who is undoubtedly here and following our work very closely. I want to thank the Minister of Health for being here this evening. She is here to get grilled, so to speak, until late tonight. I was a minister during the estimates process in Quebec, and I went through the same kind of thing. It is not necessarily easy, but it is always interesting. I also want to thank the members of all stripes who are participating in this process. I commend them for being here. I am sure the Chair will not mind if I take this opportunity to acknowledge my colleagues from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot and Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, who are here with me this evening. I thank them very much for being here.

I am not my party's health critic, but I am the critic for intergovernmental affairs. One thing that has surprised me since coming back to the House of Commons is that the federal government is always quick to jump in and interfere in areas under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. I should not be surprised to see the same old, same old, as they say. However, the government does not always step up when it comes to taking care of its own business. I would even say that it neglects to take care of its own business.

It makes us wonder whether the government should perhaps try focusing on what it has to do, rather than always wanting to meddle in the provinces' jurisdictions, in areas where it has no authority. At the height of the crisis, the Prime Minister was, as usual, giving lectures. I say he was giving lectures because, like everyone, he was horrified by what happened in seniors' residences in Quebec, Ontario and now other provinces, particularly in Quebec's long-term care homes. Obviously, we were all horrified by what happened. I would not want anyone to think that the MNAs in Quebec City were any less horrified than we were here in Ottawa. No one in the National Assembly, at Queen's Park or in any other legislature in Canada wanted this to happen. No one wanted our seniors to end up in the situation that many of them found themselves in at the height of the crisis and are still in today.

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The federal government saw a gap. It said that Quebec and the provinces were unable to manage this properly, so it decided to create national standards. Ottawa does not run any hospitals or seniors' homes, but Ottawa is going to create national standards because even though it has no experience in the matter, Ottawa always knows best and knows how things should be done. This is not a federal matter, but Ottawa knows best and will tell us how it works. Meanwhile, it is becoming clear that the federal government cannot even manage its own affairs, as we saw with the Wet'suwet'en crisis. What did the Prime Minister say when I told him he does not run any hospitals? He replied that no, he does not, but that the federal government does provide health services to indigenous peoples.

I want to clarify something. Off-reserve health services are the responsibility of the provinces and Quebec. They are the ones who provide those services to indigenous people. It is obvious how negligent the federal government is when it comes to the health of indigenous people when a few communities still do not have access to clean drinking water in this day and age. They do not have clean drinking water in 2020 in a G7 country. They do not have clean drinking water.

• (1930)

I think a lot of people, including people in Quebec City, are horrified by that. They think we should probably set provincial standards to make it clear to the federal government that it is not doing its job.

As Quebec's former public safety minister, I know that the federal government is not doing its job when it comes to police services. In northern communities, police services are provided by either the Sûreté du Québec or an indigenous police force, even though the Government of Quebec is in no way responsible for such services. In fact, Quebec taxpayers are footing the bill for police services in indigenous communities because the federal government is failing to do so.

Quebec had to create standards to make up for what the federal government was not doing. Now the federal government is saying it is going to show us how things should be done in seniors' homes.

Let me say a bit more about the pandemic, because that is top of mind for everyone.

As the Bloc Québécois's parliamentary leader astutely pointed out today, the federal government should have moved quickly to close the borders to prevent the virus spreading in Quebec and Canada, but it did so days, nay, weeks, too late, after the horse was out of the barn. As our colleague said, it was a failure.

The federal government should have approved rapid tests. It should have done it quickly so we could take samples, run an analysis and get results quickly. That is the crux of the problem, and it is critical in the fight against a pandemic. However, the government dragged its feet and it took weeks.

The federal government should have increased health transfers, not just to deal with the pandemic, but also to ensure the normal delivery of health services. For those who may not know this, seniors care is not covered by the health transfers. That means Quebec cov-

ers 100% of the operating costs of long-term care facilities. The federal government does not invest one cent, yet it wants to impose national standards on us.

The federal government already imposes so-called national standards. Under the Canada Health Act, five conditions must be met to obtain the meagre 17%, or perhaps just a little more, that the federal government deigns to send for health care. It originally promised to pay 50% of the cost. It did not keep its promise, and now it wants us to trust it to establish national standards for seniors' residences.

The government should have increased health transfers. It is constantly bragging about the \$19 billion it says it sent to the provinces to combat the pandemic. The second wave has hit. It is time for the federal government to come back with more funding.

The federal government should have secured vaccines, but we have learned that the people of Mexico will be vaccinated before the people of Canada. Unbelievable. We may have reserved the largest number of vaccine doses, but that does not do us any good if they are not being administered.

I see that my time is running out, so I will wrap up.

I have to wonder if the federal government deliberately kept vulnerable populations vulnerable as a way to justify the introduction of these so-called national standards for our seniors after the fact. That would be despicable if true.

I hope that the federal government will do what the Government of Quebec is asking and give a date for when vaccinations will start. In the meantime, we are living in uncertainty. No one has the slightest idea when the vaccine will start being administered in Canada. Will it be in January? In July? Will it be this year, next year or the year after?

• (1935)

Nobody knows. All we know is that everyone in the world will get vaccines first, and then there might be some left for Quebec and Canada.

I will now ask the Minister of Health my first question.

How can the federal government lecture the provinces and Quebec on how to take care of our seniors, when it did such a poor job with its own responsibilities, including securing rapid tests and vaccines in order to get the vaccination process under way as soon as possible in Canada?

We still do not have an answer on when it will begin, though not for lack of asking.

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I will spend some time correcting some of the misinformation in my hon. colleague's speech.

Business of Supply

Let me first talk about the work we have done to support Quebec and Quebecers through COVID-19. Quebec received over \$5 billion in the safe restart agreements. That was for testing, contact tracing, data, long-term care, mental health and a variety of other supports. In fact, Quebec has received in total supports from the federal government, including supports for people and businesses, \$36 billion. This is good news for Quebecers.

I will also say the guidance for long-term care homes the member opposite is talking about is national guidance, which was created with all medical officers of health at the table, including Dr. Aruda, who I know is serving Quebec tirelessly during the pandemic.

That national guidance was created with all medical officers of health early on, as we knew that if COVID-19 were to get into vulnerable congregate settings such as long-term care homes, it could have very tragic consequences. This is exactly what we saw in the province of Quebec and around the country in the first wave.

That is why, when the province asked for help through the deployment of the Canadian Red Cross and the Canadian military, Canadians sprung into action. I am so grateful for the work of the Canadian Armed Forces for helping Quebec out during a very difficult time. We still have a couple of hundred, if not more, people deployed right now in Quebec. I can get the member the exact number. We also have 296 Canadian Red Cross staff in 14 homes in Quebec right now, paid for by the federal government. This is in support of Quebecers, who are struggling through the pandemic like all Canadians.

The last thing I will say is that this is a time for all provinces, territories and the federal government to pull together, because that is how we will get through this. When we support each other, we are there for each other with money, resources, staffing and support. That is exactly what we are doing at the federal level, making sure we spare nothing to support the provinces and territories as they deliver on their health care responsibilities.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, we do indeed need to pull together. We certainly do not need to be lectured.

The minister talked about the armed forces being brought in. I agree with her. We should be very grateful to the armed forces. However, Quebecers pay for these armed forces, and it is only logical that when the need arises, as it does overseas, the armed forces are there to help. They were there, and that is quite fortunate.

Let's talk about universal pharmacare. There is one thing that the federal government can do something about without putting its grubby hands on universal pharmacare, a program that Quebec already has, and that is the price of drugs. Again, Ottawa is dragging its feet, which hurts those who need access to drugs at a reasonable price.

● (1940)

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, ensuring that Canadians have access to pharmaceuticals at a reasonable cost is a top priority for me, despite the pandemic, which has consumed a lot of time, as

members well know, and has been very pressing for all of us to respond to.

I will just say this: Our department continues to work on national pharmacare, including the standing up of the Canada drug agency. I do hope that Quebec fully participates in exploring how pharmacare and national pharmacare can be part of Quebec's supports for ensuring people in Quebec can access—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Chair, I have great respect for the minister and thank her for being here.

However, I must say that a lot of the answers from the government through the COVID-19 crisis have been unnecessarily general. I believe that parliamentarians and Canadians deserve clear and direct answers to responsible questions. Through the questions that I ask, I am hoping the minister will do Canadians the respect of answering the questions directly, if she can.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has released a vaccine distribution strategy, which set a target date of November 15 for states to be ready for COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

What is Canada's target readiness date for vaccine distribution?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank the member opposite for collaborating so closely on so many issues. I must say that I do enjoy working with him, despite our political differences.

The provinces and territories are working right now with the federal government on their readiness plans. As soon as a vaccine is available, we will be ready to deploy.

We have Health Canada regulators working around the clock to assess the vaccines that have applied for regulatory approval. We also have been working with provinces and territories to ensure they understand the specific requirements of the different types of vaccines, have the storage and transportation considerations under control, and—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, I would appreciate the enforcement of time limits, please.

Once a vaccine has been approved, U.S. authorities plan to begin distribution within 24 hours. Are there plans in place for COVID-19 vaccines to be distributed in Canada within 24 hours of approval?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as soon as the vaccines are approved, they will be able to be deployed in Canada. We are very grateful to the hard-working team at Procurement Canada and Health Canada who are working, as I said, very closely together to ensure that we are able to approve—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, millions of Canadians will have to be vaccinated across Canada if and when a COVID vaccine is approved. Who does the minister anticipate will administer the vaccinations?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the majority of vaccinations will be administered by provinces and territories, which have sophisticated immunization systems already. The federal government has responsibility for vaccination of some federal populations.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, on August 31, the Prime Minister said the National Research Council would be able to produce hundreds of thousands of vaccine doses starting in November, and millions by the end of this year. Now, of course, not 90 days later, he says Canada has no capacity to produce vaccines at all.

How does the minister explain this blatant reversal on vaccine manufacturing?

• (1945)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, what I can say is this. Canada has not been a large player in biomanufacturing for a number of years. We have invested money to increase our capacity as a country, of course, to prepare for future health crises like this and because it is a valuable sector to have in Canada. I will say I am confident that the seven candidates we have procured are going to provide the diversity of vaccine candidates that will ensure that Canadians can get—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, perhaps if the minister is not going to answer the question, she could do it succinctly so I can get more questions in.

Health officials also confirmed that the government failed to negotiate the right to produce vaccines in Canada, as other countries have done. This means Canadians will have to wait for a vaccine and lives are in the balance.

Why did the government fail to negotiate the right to produce vaccines in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, what this government successfully did was negotiate the best portfolio of vaccines in the world with more doses per capita than any other country. That is what this government has achieved and we are so proud of the work we have done on behalf of Canada and Canadians. We will continue to make sure that we are investing and moving rapidly—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, Australia is a mid-sized federal parliamentary democracy like ours. It has a clear road map and strategy on vaccine distribution in just 12 pages, with clear lines of

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responsibility between its federal government and states, outlining its options and priorities. It is also producing 30 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine domestically.

In contract, in Canada, we have a federal government that speaks in vague terms and will not give us firm answers on basic vaccine readiness.

How does the minister account for this difference in approach?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we also have a plan. It is being worked out now with provinces and territories. We are confident that they will have their plans for immunization ready. In fact, all of the provinces and territories have experience in immunization, and we will be there to support them with the novel vaccines that will require extra attention.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, the Liberal government has rightly pointed out that Conservatives seriously eroded Canada's pharmaceutical capacity, perhaps most starkly when the Mulroney Conservative government privatized Connaught Labs, a publicly owned laboratory that helped produce vaccines and low-cost prescriptions for Canadians. However, that was in 1986. The Liberals made no moves to create a public drug manufacturer, despite many years of government since then.

Will the current government do so?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I think the Prime Minister himself has been very clear that Canada needs to invest, and is investing, in biomanufacturing in this country. We have all lived through an experience now, in this pandemic, and realized that Canada needs to assert its sovereign independence in its ability to actually provide medical supplies, vaccinations and pharmaceutical goods, and we are making those investments.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, with COVID-19 cases surging at an unprecedented rate across Canada, the Prime Minister has called on premiers and mayors to “please do the right thing”, and “act now to protect public health”, but growing numbers of public health experts are calling on the federal government to use its emergency authorities to coordinate a national response.

Is the federal government prepared to follow this advice? If not, why not?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, every step of the way we have provided national advice and guidance through the special advisory committee, which brings together all public health officers from across the country to work in collaboration to determine the next steps and provide national advice and guidance on a variety of issues.

We will continue to work with provinces and territories and support them in their obligations around health care delivery, including, for example, acquiring vaccines and distributing them at no cost to provinces and territories.

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Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, is the minister confident that current provincial and territorial control measures are sufficiently robust to address the resurgence of COVID-19?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, every step of the way this government has listened to our experts, our scientists and our chief public health officer, Dr. Theresa Tam, who, as the House knows, chairs the special advisory committee and works on national guidance developed with all of the other medical officers of health. We know that following science and evidence is the way to protect lives in this country. It is the way to get through COVID-19. It is—

• (1950)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, Canada's pandemic warning system, the Global Public Health Intelligence Network, was the cornerstone of Canada's pandemic response capability, yet the federal government effectively shut down GPHIN prior to the outbreak of COVID-19. Former Liberal federal health minister Ujjal Dosanjh called this decision a colossal failure.

How does the minister explain her government's decision to shut down GPHIN?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, when I heard that scientists within the Public Health Agency of Canada were not feeling that their voices were being heard as part of the team of the Global Public Health Information Network, I was alarmed. That is why I called for the external review, which has begun. I am excited to hear the findings, both from a retrospective perspective about how that decision was made but also the suggestions of how to build the best public health information network in the world.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, the minister knows the NDP introduced Bill C-213 in the House to create a structure to establish universal public pharmacare in Canada.

She is also aware this bill mirrors the Canada Health Act by allowing any province that agrees to provide necessary prescription drugs to its residents, at no direct cost via our public health care system, to receive federal funds to do so. This is exactly the same way we fund all other covered medical services, from hip replacements to cataract surgeries and broken arms.

Will the minister support our bill?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, this government has done more to lower the cost of pharmaceuticals than any government in a generation. In fact, we have been working tirelessly over the last number of years to put into place ways to control the cost of drugs in Canada and to ensure Canadians can access the drugs they need at a fair price.

We are going to continue that work. As I speak, work is under way to stand up the Canada drug agency, a very important next step in ensuring we have the coordination nationally to pursue pharmacare.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, as health minister, does the minister support public pharmacare or instead a private-public patchwork system?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, my mandate letter from the Prime Minister asks me to create a universal pharmacare program. That is exactly what I am doing.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, according to industry documents reviewed by Reuters, the pharmaceutical industry has made a last-ditch offer to the Government of Canada to spend \$1 billion over 10 years to block the coming into force of the amended patented medicines regulations set to go into force on January 1.

According to an industry estimate, the regulations would reduce drug companies' revenue by \$20 billion over 10 years; \$6 billion by the estimate of the PMPRB.

Will the minister confirm that the Government of Canada will refuse this blatant attempt to buy regulatory benefits from the drug industry?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the changes to the PMPRB are going forward. We agree with the member opposite that we must have lower drug costs for Canadians. There is no point in having access to drugs that are unavailable because they are priced out of the market for most Canadians. The PMPRB is doing the work it needs to do, and we are very proud of our work to lower drug costs for Canadians.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, the government's 2019 throne speech called universal dental care an idea worth exploring. What steps has the government taken to explore this idea?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, our government has been focused entirely on COVID-19 and indeed some other projects such as the universal pharmacare program about which the member spoke.

I encourage the members of the health committee to study the idea of a universal dental care program. This is an excellent idea. They are independent and will choose their own topics of study, but certainly more could be learned through the expertise of the members on that committee.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, experts and public health authorities across Canada, including B.C.'s provincial health officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, have called for the decriminalization of substance use and the provision of safe supply to bring this crisis under control. The evidence shows conclusively that criminalization exacerbates the harms to those suffering and does not work to help them recover.

The government has repeatedly claimed that it follows expert advice in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, yet the minister has unequivocally ruled out this evidence-based response to the overdose epidemic. Could the minister please explain this contradiction?

• (1955)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I am so proud to be part of a government that understands that compassion and access to treatment and supports for people who use substances is critical in reducing the deaths from opioid overdose, but also ending the stigma for people who use substances.

I have worked extensively with the Province of British Columbia as well as many other provinces. I have written to my colleagues across the country to accelerate their work. We have ensured that people can access programs to provide safer supply, so people reduce their use of toxic street drugs. We have made it easier for communities to set up safe consumption sites. The work continues.

I will continue to work with provinces, territories and, indeed, local communities until they feel it will help them manage opioid overdose and problematic substance use.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Chair, according to PHACS' recent report on an equity-based approach to COVID-19, "COVID-19 has underscored the inequities in health that are shaped by these determinants, highlighted how these inequities may be exacerbated in the context of a pandemic, and shown how they can aggravate and prolong the spread of disease, making the pandemic worse."

Would the minister support the implementation of a guaranteed livable income to address the inequities shaped by the social determinants of health?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the hon. member is absolutely right. Poverty, lack of access to affordable housing are the things that make people more at risk of contracting COVID-19, but also all kinds of other illnesses. In fact, they contribute to a lack of people reaching their full potential.

That is why we have pursued things like an enhanced Canada child benefit, lifting 300,000 Canadian children out of poverty. That is why we immediately moved to implement the CERB when we asked people to stay home. We knew it was an important public health—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: We have to resume. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am pleased to rise virtually from my home this evening to speak about the actions taken by the government to address the broader consequences of COVID-19.

This pandemic is the biggest public health crisis that we have experienced in our lifetime, and that is something with which most everybody in the House agrees. It has had profound and unprecedented impacts on the health, social and economic well-being of people in Canada. Our top priority continues to be to protect the health and safety of all Canadians.

COVID-19 has underscored that our health, our economy and our society are closely intertwined. The health of Canadians is strongly influenced by the social and economic conditions in which we are born, live, learn, work and play. The pandemic has also shown us that threats to public health can have broad societal impacts both directly and through unintended consequences of public health countermeasures. These broader consequences include interruptions to education among our children and youth and

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widespread unemployment and economic instability among working-aged and older Canadians. We have seen increases across a range of health outcomes and risk factors.

For example, more people are indicating that they are experiencing poor mental health problems, problems with substance use, intimate partner and family violence, sedentary behaviour, food insecurity and housing instability.

We are also reminded that while COVID-19 is affecting us all, it is not affecting all of us equally. Some Canadians are shouldering a far heavier burden than others in terms of the health, social and economic consequences of the pandemic. These groups include seniors; children and youth; women; workers providing essential services, such as those in hospitals, residential care settings and the food supply chain; migrant workers; low-income and precariously employed workers; racialized populations; indigenous peoples; and people living with disabilities. In many cases, these disproportionate impacts are linked to pre-existing vulnerability inequities in society, which have only been further heightened due to the pandemic.

For example, long-term care residents have been hit the hardest, accounting for approximately 75% of COVID-19-related deaths as of November 19. We are also seeing evidence that communities with a higher proportion of visible minorities are experiencing higher infection mortality rates from COVID-19.

In Toronto, for example, people who identify as members of a racialized group make up 52% of the total population, yet, as of the end of the September, have accounted for nearly 80% of confirmed COVID-19 cases where race data was reported.

The social and economic tolls of the pandemic and the necessary public health countermeasures are also unevenly felt.

For example, women, racialized Canadians, lower-income earners and young people bore the brunt of losses at the beginning of the pandemic and have experienced a slower pace of economic recovery. School closures and the shift to online learning have created particular challenges for families with fewer financial resources or less access to high-speed Internet and computing devices, which may compromise their children's educational performance and social development.

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Increased economic instability has widened and deepened food insecurity in Canada, especially for lower-income households that may already face higher levels of financial, material, physical and mental stress. Public health measures put in place to mitigate COVID-19, such as physical distancing and quarantine, have created additional challenges for survivors of family violence and the organizations that serve them. These unequal social and economic impacts may, over time, lead to widening health and social inequities.

The unprecedented nature of this public health threat has called for an unprecedented government response, and this is precisely what we have sought to deliver. Since the start of the pandemic, the Government of Canada has taken extraordinary steps to address the broader health, social and economic impacts of COVID-19.

Recognizing the importance on the mental health of Canadians, the Public Health Agency of Canada has provided additional funds to address the increased demand for crisis support services. These include \$7.5 million to support Kids Help Phone in providing mental health support services to young people during the COVID-19 pandemic; and \$21 million for the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and its partners to implement a pan-Canadian suicide prevention service that provides access to 24/7 bilingual crisis support from trained responders. This service is currently providing crisis support via voice 24/7 and via text in the evening hours.

- (2000)

The Government of Canada has also invested \$46 million to date to support a new mental health and substance use support portal that the minister spoke of earlier, Wellness Together Canada. The portal provides Canadians with free access to credible information and supports to help address their mental health and substance use issues. Canadians can access different levels of support, depending on their needs, ranging from information to self-assessment tools to connecting to peer support, social workers, psychologists and other professionals for confidential texts or phone sessions.

As the pandemic has unfolded in Canada, it has become clear that we need to improve our understanding of and our ability to prevent and respond to the impacts of COVID-19 among vulnerable populations in Canada. Accordingly, we are working with our partners to gather more detailed and complete data, including by race, ethnicity and indigenous identity. Federal, provincial and territorial public health partners have agreed to a new national data set for COVID-19, which includes new variables to help understand the impact of racialized groups in Canada.

In addition, we are also funding research activities to generate urgent evidence to support decision-making during the pandemic through a range of research grants. Studies are under way to analyze changes in mental health, self-harm, suicide attempts and substance-related harms during the COVID-19 period.

Studies are also under way to identify other impacts of the pandemic, such as attitudes and practices related to COVID-19 and containment measures, daily mobility and changes in social activities, social isolation and stigma, and food security.

Tragically, in many communities, COVID-19 is worsening the parallel public health crisis of opioid overdoses. In response, we

have taken action to ensure communities have the tools and support they need to keep people at risk of overdose safe during the outbreak, including additional funding for safer supply of products and overdose prevention sites.

We are continuing to deliver our regular public health programs for Canadians under these unprecedented circumstances and working closely with funding recipients to find innovative solutions to adapt their community-based initiatives to the pandemic context.

We have all seen the promising early results of several global vaccine candidates in the news. The Government of Canada continues to actively work to secure access to these and other vaccines and treatments to protect Canadians from the virus and support our recovery from the pandemic. Particular attention is being paid to ensuring that the rollout of any future vaccines prioritize high-risk populations and those who help keep our pandemic response, economy and society running.

The immunization partnership fund supports Canadian initiatives to improve vaccination confidence and uptake. Our government has continued to invest in the health of Canadians by extending this program for two additional years to ensure that Canadians, including those who are most marginalized, have the information and supports they need to confidently receive COVID-19 and other life-saving vaccines.

Beyond the health portfolio, the government has marshalled a whole-of-federal government response to protecting Canadians from the broader consequences of COVID-19. Key measures include direct financial supports for Canadians impacted by the pandemic, including through the Canada emergency response benefit, the Canada recovery sickness benefit and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit.

We have also invested millions of dollars to provide help for Canadians experiencing food insecurity and homelessness; for seniors facing barriers to accessing essential services; for victims of stigma, racism and discrimination; and for women and children fleeing violence.

Through the safe return to class fund, the federal government provided \$2 billion to support the reopening of schools and to keep kids and staff safe in the classroom.

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Through the safe restart agreement with provinces and territories, we have invested over \$19 billion to support the safe restart of Canada's economy. Recently we also announced \$1.5 billion to help Canadians in under-represented groups and those in sectors that have been hardest hit by the pandemic, such as construction, transportation and hospitality, to quickly access supports to re-enter the workforce.

These initiatives have been necessary to protect Canadians from this pandemic, while attending to the broader impacts experienced throughout our communities.

We recognize that the pandemic is not over, and that more needs to be done. COVID-19 has revealed the best of our systems, structures and behaviours, while also exposing the gaps that need to be addressed. It has revealed long-standing social and economic weaknesses that have placed our most vulnerable members of society at risk.

However, it has also shown us what our country is capable of when we unite under the common goal of protecting and supporting one another. We have an opportunity now, as we continue to care for each other through these uncertain times, to build back as a stronger and more resilient Canada.

• (2005)

I have a couple of questions for the minister.

Before I start, members have probably noticed this caterpillar on top of my lip, this crazy moustache. Of course, the minister knows why I am growing this mo. It is because it is Movember and Movember focuses on men's mental health and suicide prevention.

Timely access to health services is of critical importance when one is faced with mental health and addiction issues. As such, the Government of Canada has committed to work with the provinces and territories to increase the availability of high-quality mental health and addiction services for Canadians.

As we focus on keeping ourselves, our families and our loved ones physically safe and healthy, we are seeing that the pandemic is also having substantial mental health impacts that require attention and support. Could the minister please tell us what the government is doing to deliver on its commitment to improve access to mental health services for Canadians?

More specifically, what is Canada's health research investment agency, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, doing to support the mental health of Canadians, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to thank the member for his incredible work and advocacy in mental health. We can tell by his remarks and his speech that he is passionate and knowledgeable about the subject.

I am so thrilled he is talking about men's mental health because we know men struggle just as much as women do. Oftentimes society stigmatizes men who are struggling. It is harder for them to reach out.

It is harder for men to access services for a whole bunch of reasons, but we have to stand together. This is a perfect example of

actively that, a man advocating for better men's mental health. I thank the member for highlighting the need for men's mental health services.

It is very important that we better understand mental health and substance use because this is one of the areas where I think Canadians struggle. Sometimes they get access and the help they need, but access does not always lead to the kinds of improvements they need in their mental health or the mental health of their loved ones.

As a member of Parliament and a candidate in a federal election, I hear many stories when I knock on doors to talk to people about the things that concern them or they wish were better in their lives. Frequently, one of the things people talk about is access to mental health care.

That is why our government has been focused so significantly on supporting the provinces and territories with fiscal transfers dedicated to mental health services, as well as funding for innovative and timely research through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. It is a \$13.5-million investment to date to provide evidence to decision-makers on mental health responses in the context of COVID-19.

This is important because we are seeing a worsening of people's mental health and substance use in this time of extreme stress, grief and loneliness. Combined with Wellness Together Canada, the investment through the safe restart agreement, we have already made investments in the capacity of the provinces and territories to deliver on mental health services.

With our commitment to supporting virtual care, and ensuring Canadians have free access to professionals through Wellness Together, we are taking this situation very seriously. I thank the member for his advocacy and expertise in this area.

• (2010)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Chair, as this pandemic has unfolded in Canada, it has become clear the health consequences of the pandemic differ across populations. Those Canadians who were at greater risk of poor health before the pandemic are likely to be at greater risk of suffering its consequences.

There is also emerging evidence that COVID-19 may be widening health inequalities. More information on certain groups at a higher risk for exposure to or severe outcomes of COVID-19 is needed. Given this, what racialized data has the federal government gathered on COVID-19 and the health of Canadians? How will improved data inform next steps?

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Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the member has highlighted a significant gap in our capacity to understand the differences in how COVID-19 is affecting Canadians. That is why we have been supporting the work of provincial-territorial partners to expand their capacity to collect data and disaggregated data as well as many other factors, so we can better understand—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Chair, my questions will relate to how long Canadians are expected to remain in lockdown and how many Canadians are projected to die of COVID-19 under the government's current projected vaccination and rapid-testing plan.

What percentage of the Canadian population, assuming the efficacy rates of various vaccine candidates, will need to be vaccinated before herd immunity is achieved in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, vaccination is an extremely important tool in the battle against COVID-19, as we all know, but so are the many other things that will prevent COVID-19 from spreading in our communities.

Until we have mass vaccination, in fact until we see the world have access to vaccination, we will continue to need to be careful and to protect our loved ones. Of course—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, a paper in *The Lancet* recently suggested that, depending on vaccine efficacy, the percentage of people who need to be vaccinated against COVID to achieve herd immunity is between 60% and 90%. This depends, again, on the efficacy of the vaccine.

Based on the minister's current projection, when will herd immunity be achieved in Canada for COVID-19?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, of course vaccination is going to be a very important tool. There are a number of questions still, though, about immunity from COVID-19. For example, we do not know how long immunity lasts. We do not know, necessarily, if people will need to be vaccinated in an annual way, as is done for influenza. These are questions—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, is the minister managing to herd immunity, to zero cases of COVID or to some other measure with her current plan?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I will just say it is Canada's plan. It is the provinces and territories working along with the federal government. Of course, we would all love to see zero cases of COVID-19, but in the interim what we are managing toward is—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, based on the efficacy rate of the Pfizer vaccine, we would need about 44 million doses to achieve herd immunity in Canada, looking at a very con-

servative projection rate on herd immunity. When will 44 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine be available in Canada?

• (2015)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, this is why it is great that Canada has a diverse portfolio of a variety of different kinds of vaccines. Some will be more effective than others, some will have different kinds of populations that they might be indicated for, so this diversity of vaccines is going to serve Canadians well—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, will 44 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine be available in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we have more doses per capita of vaccines than any other country in the world.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, when will 44 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine be available in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we have more doses per capita than any country in the world.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, when will 44 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine be available in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, Canada has procured more doses per capita of vaccines than any country in the world. We are in good stead to serve Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, how many Canadians are projected to die of COVID-19 before the first dose of COVID vaccine is delivered in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, provinces, territories and local public health officers are working day and night to protect Canadians and save lives. I want to thank them for their dedication and their tireless work.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, how many people are projected to die of COVID-19 in Canada before the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine is delivered in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, it is a great time to remind Canadians that, really, the power to flatten the curve is in all of our hands. We need to continue those public health measures that we have all been taught over the last several months, such as keeping our physical distance—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, how many people are projected to die in Canada of COVID-19 before the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine is delivered in Canada?

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Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, again I thank the health care workers, who are struggling every single day to save lives from COVID-19. The more that we take the public health measures seriously, the more lives we can save.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, when will the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine be delivered in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we are anticipating the first doses to arrive in quarter one.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, when will the first vaccine be delivered to a Canadian for COVID-19? On what date?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as soon as a vaccine is proven to be safe, we will be able to deliver doses of vaccines to Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, the member opposite just heckled that the first dose would be available on January 19. Is this correct?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, Procurement Canada and Health Canada are working extremely closely together. As soon as the vaccines are demonstrated to be safe, they will be available to Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, will the first dose of COVID vaccine be available on January 1?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as soon as the vaccines are proven to be safe, we will be able to deliver vaccines to Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, will the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine be available on January 2?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, at Health Canada we take our obligation to protect Canadians' safety very seriously. The regulators will approve the vaccines when they are certain that the data proves they are safe and Canadians will receive vaccines thereafter.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, will the first vaccine be available on January 3?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the vaccines will be available when they are approved by Health Canada.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, this is not a joke. We do not have a date and the Americans are about to vaccinate the equivalent of the entire population of Canada by the middle of January.

Will the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine be available in Canada on January 15?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as soon as Health Canada approves the vaccines for being safe for use on Canadians, then the vaccine will be available to Canadians.

• (2020)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, does the minister understand that it is her job to provide a timeline to Canadians on when the COVID-19 vaccine will be available?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I am so proud of the hard-working regulators who are working 24 hours a day, seven days a week to assess the data from the three manufacturers submitted for regulatory approval. As soon as the vaccines are approved, they will be available to Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, why was the minister's counterpart under the Trump administration able to provide a date for the delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine, but she was not?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I cannot speak to the process of the Americans. I can only speak to the Canadian process.

I will tell colleagues that we put the safety of Canadians first and foremost in the work that we are doing at the regulatory body. I am so proud of the hard-working civil servants, scientists, researchers who are poring over the data—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, is the minister proud that approximately 40 million Americans will receive COVID-19 vaccines before a single Canadian receives a COVID-19 vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I am extremely thrilled for Canadians that we have managed to secure seven contracts, more doses per capita than any other country and that we have three of the leading promising vaccine candidates submitted for regulatory approval before any other country in the world.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, does the minister realize how ridiculous she sounds right now?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I am not sure how to answer that question other than to say that I stay focused on the health and safety of Canadians, and that I do not believe they are served by insults.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I would like to remind members that we do not call each other names.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, the minister should be able to tell us when the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine will be delivered to Canadians.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, Canadians can have confidence that, as soon as the regulators approve the vaccines to be safe for use in Canada, there will be vaccines for Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, why can the minister not provide a date for when the first COVID-19 vaccine will be available for Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the manufacturers are working extremely closely with Health Canada. In fact, the three leading manufacturers that have promising vaccines to date have submitted to Health Canada for regulatory approval. The data is coming in on a rolling regulatory process, which means that we can review the data—

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The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, at least 40 other countries are able to tell when the first dose of COVID-19 vaccines will be delivered to their population. When will the first dose of COVID-19 vaccines be available to Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as soon as the vaccines are approved for safety, they will be available to Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, are we not working as fast as the Americans, the U.K., Germany, Argentina or the Mexicans?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, in fact, we are working very closely with the FDA and the EU regulators to share data so we can all approve vaccines as quickly as possible.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, then why can the minister not tell us when the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine will be available in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we are grateful that the manufacturers are submitting the data as quickly as they acquire it. As they acquire the data necessary to complete those reviews, we will review that data expeditiously. We have regulators working on reviewing the data 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When they are safe for Canadians, we will approve them and vaccines will be available.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, how many businesses will close before the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine is delivered in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I am so proud of our government for the work we have done to support small businesses and individuals through this very difficult and terrible time, including things like the wage subsidy, the small business loans, the supports for individuals who—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, how many more people will die in long-term care without seeing their families before the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine is delivered in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we all need to do our part to protect and save lives in Canada. We are doing our absolute best at Health Canada to ensure that provinces and territories can deliver on their health care responsibilities.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, how many more marriages will dissolve in Canada due to COVID-19 lockdowns before the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine is delivered in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, let me take a moment to talk about Wellness Together. This is a free tool for Canadians who need access to supports for mental health, substance use or marital problems, for any kind of emotional stress. It is private, confidential and personalized.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, does the minister understand that her inability to tell Canadians when the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine will be delivered is directly responsible for deaths, business closures, marriage failures and people dying in long-term care without seeing their families?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I want to thank Canadians for the hard work they have taken on to protect each other from COVID-19. Canadians understand this is a global pandemic, that all countries are struggling, and they are making enormous sacrifices to keep each other safe. I want to thank Canadians for that hard work. I know it is extremely difficult, but I want them to know we have their backs and we will throughout this pandemic.

● (2025)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, does the minister understand that Canadians have had enough of this, that they have no future, no plan without her telling when we are going to get the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine? Does she understand that Canadians have had enough of this garbage?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I, as a Canadian, fully understand how difficult it is for Canadians to be trapped in their homes, to be working virtually, to be working from home, to be missing their families and to be missing events. Yes, absolutely, I understand this is incredibly difficult for all of us.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, when is the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine going to be delivered to Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as I said, Canadians can be proud they have one of the best vaccine portfolios in the world, with more doses per capita than any country and provinces and territories that are working so hard with the federal government to be able to deploy—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, when is the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine going to be delivered in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I am so proud of the hard work of the vaccine task force, which has put us in a very good position with seven very good candidates, three of them under regulatory review right now. We are working with our American—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, when is the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine going to be delivered in Canada?

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Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as soon as Health Canada approves those vaccines, they will be available to Canadians. As I have said before, we are so seized with this. We are working—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, what we just listened to for the last 15 minutes was sheer and gross incompetence that is going to cost Canadian lives, Canadian businesses, hope and mental health.

This is not the leadership that Canada needs right now. This is somebody who is incompetent and derelict in their duty. To sit there and say that they are proud of the fact that we are behind virtually every other country in the world when two-thirds of the world's population will have access to a vaccine or some sort of plan or some sort of way out of this, it is ridiculous.

Enough is enough. We cannot sit in lockdown forever. We cannot sit in lockdown over Christmas. We cannot keep letting marriages fail. We need to be honest about a plan forward and about the impact of this. We need to have more targeted measures, better data and a plan on vaccines.

To sit there, reading talking points off a computer screen instead of having a plan, instead of being able to say—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

• (2030)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Chair, I will start this evening with a few comments, and then I will go into some questions for the minister.

I want to thank her for taking the time to be with us and for spending so much time answering questions in such a rapid-fire way today. It truly demonstrates her capability and her knowledge of the subject.

One thing to note about the pandemic is that from day one, this government took it seriously. We did this from the minute it was talked about overseas until the time it landed on our doorstep and we implemented measures to protect Canadians, and we can see the results of that.

I know some have compared us with our neighbour to the south this evening. We do not want to see even one death, obviously, but the reality of the situation is that our death rate is one-third the rate, if not better, of our neighbours to the south. I believe strongly that this is the result of the serious action that has been taken on this file, the way the minister has responded and the way that the government has responded.

I have said many times in the House, and it bears repeating, that we went from the World Health Organization declaring a global pandemic to getting money in the bank accounts of 5.4 million Canadians in one month and four days. That is action from a government that is taking this extremely seriously and is interested in protecting its citizen. It has been there with Canadians every step of the way. We saw that in the spring, as we went through the first wave and as we came into the second wave and had a lull.

I respect where the Conservatives are on this now, but they were not there on day one.

An hon. member: What? Tell me more about it.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: They were not. As a matter of fact, at the beginning of this, the Conservatives, when we started wearing masks, were not even wearing masks in the Parliamentary precinct.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: It is true. I was up in Ottawa quite a bit at that time.

The Conservatives have always been trying to play catch-up and trying to own the issue—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The member has a point of order.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Chair, I am listening to people call us anti-maskers. I am just wondering if there needs to be truthfulness when people are speaking. I am very concerned, because as a proud Conservative—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: That is debate. I did not hear those words.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, what has been very apparent, which I also witnessed at the PROC committee, is that the Liberals, and even the Bloc and the NDP, were looking for solutions on how to make the House function in a pandemic. However, what did we see as a result? The Conservatives were kicking and screaming, trying to prevent us from going there.

A virtual and hybrid Parliament, which is what we are experiencing today, did not happen as a result of the Conservatives. They did not want to go along with this plan. Quite—

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Chair, on a point of order, what are the rules on misleading the House?

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The member has the floor, and he is providing his speech.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, we just have to go back and read the blues from the PROC committee. The member who is continually rising on a point of order is on it now, but she was not on it when we were dealing with this situation.

Let us get to the topic at hand today with respect to the vaccines, which everyone is spending a lot of time talking about.

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There is criticism coming from members of the opposition. That is their job. Their job is to push the government to make sure the government is doing everything it can to properly bring forward the right responses. However, the reality of the situation is that the groundwork has been laid by the government, by preparing to vaccinate Canadians, investing in domestic projects, negotiating advance purchase agreements with several countries, getting us the largest portfolio available that any country has secured given the various options, enabling the regulatory process to be expedited when the time comes and investing in the necessary infrastructure and supplies to make sure that when the vaccine comes, we are prepared to make sure it rolls out.

I am extremely proud of this government's response to date. It has been, in my opinion, exceptional in the way it has supported Canadians and provided the resources and supports that Canadians have needed, as well as in the way it has worked with the provinces.

I will point out one last fact. If we look at the amount of COVID relief spending in the province of Ontario alone, 97% of that came from the federal government, because the federal government understood the reason people needed to be absolutely protected throughout the pandemic.

My first question for the minister is about the bilateral agreement between the federal government and the provincial governments. It relates to the COVID Alert app specifically.

Canadians are proud of the universal, publicly funded health care system, yet we have an aging population with greater risks of chronic conditions.

They expect all governments to work together to continue to improve it. The pandemic has underscored that this is critical and that we need to find new and better ways of delivering care. Targeted investments are needed in critical areas of health for the health care system to improve access to high-quality health care that Canadians can access safely at home and that is not dependent on an individual's ability to pay. This includes a full range of health care services, including home and community care and support for mental health and substance use issues.

The government's previous mandate letter outlined the need to complete the bilateral agreements with each province and territory. These bilateral agreements supported a targeted federal investment of \$11 billion over 10 years and should result in measurable improvements with clear public reporting on outcomes achieved.

I am curious if the minister can update the House on when the Government of Canada will see results from these investments.

• (2035)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, over the years, we have focused on home care and mental health in particular, as well as on palliative care. As the member opposite knows, all of those things are extremely important to Canadians.

The member is right. We have been investing in those areas and working on creating standards in some cases, such as in the area of mental health. This work has been somewhat disrupted by the pandemic, but I know that the provinces and territories are committed

to continuing it to ensure we have mental health care standards across the country.

As I mentioned earlier in a response to another colleague, access to mental health care is one of the things I hear about the most, as a member of Parliament, when I speak with constituents. We certainly know that the provinces and territories need to continue their hard work to ensure that there is equitable access and diversity of access and that we have standards for access to mental health care across the country.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, I am really glad the minister brought up mental health specifically, because mental health is something I believe in. Based on the interactions at my office, I am becoming very concerned about people's mental health as we go through COVID-19.

I am wondering if the minister can hit on the Wellness Together program and what supports the government is providing during COVID-19 to Canadians experiencing mental health issues that they need to be assisted with.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I am extremely happy the Wellness Together portal is serving Canadians. It is available to Canadians from coast to coast to coast, no matter their circumstances or where they live. It is an online tool Canadians can use. It is also available by phone, as I mentioned earlier in my remarks.

It provides a variety of different self-help tools, such as a self-assessment tool, and a connection to psychotherapists, social workers and counsellors. It is available in a variety of different formats. People can talk, text or virtually chat with someone. It really does provide the diversity of access that we know accelerates the use of these tools.

I really want us to promote this tool together to our constituents. We have a number of ways we speak to our constituents. It is a great thing to slide into our householders to let Canadians know there are free resources available to them at no charge, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in both official languages and with translators for 200 other languages.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, one of the other tools we have, which I mentioned a few minutes ago, is the COVID Alert app. It is an exposure notification app rather than a contact-tracing app. The app uses strong measures to protect the privacy and confidentiality of any data it collects. It does not track a user's location or collect personal identifiable information.

At what level of uptake will the app be considered effective, and why has the Government of Canada not made the COVID Alert app mandatory in all provinces and territories so all Canadians can benefit?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the COVID Alert app is a useful tool. It is designed to complement manual contact tracing by identifying close contacts not necessarily found through standard contact-tracing methods. It is also a way to protect the anonymity of people who want to let close contacts know they may be diagnosed with COVID-19.

The app alerts people who have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive. It tells them to reach out to public health to get advice about testing or isolation. It also helps alleviate the burden on our hard-working front-line public health workers, who are doing so much contact tracing every single day.

More than 5.4 million Canadians have downloaded the app. More than 5,800 users who have tested positive have notified others of their possible exposure.

We are continuing to work with the provinces and territories to encourage them to implement it in all jurisdictions—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

• (2040)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, my next question for the minister is related to the safety of the vaccine when it becomes available to Canadians. We know that there are a lot of people out there who are concerned about the safety of a vaccine. A lot of vaccines go through a 10-year period in order to establish that level of safety.

What is the Canadian government doing to ensure the confidence of the Canadian public in the vaccine that becomes available to them, when it does?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the member opposite talks about something that is extremely important. We know there are people who are vaccine hesitant in Canada. These are people who are not necessarily sure if vaccines are safe or right for them. That is why making sure anything we approve in Canada is done with the utmost commitment to integrity, science and data review is so important to ensuring that Canadians can be confident that the vaccines approved for use in Canada are indeed safe.

We are working closely with the manufacturers and, as the member noted, we have instilled a rolling regulatory review process through an interim order that I made. This allows for the manufacturers to submit the data as they acquire it. Health Canada regulators are working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, around the clock, assessing data. We are working in partnership with—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, just so the minister knows, I will say I am on the same side of the House as her. She called me the member opposite, but I am on the same side. I am sure they would love to have me over there, but I am still on the same side as her.

The World Health Organization identified people's hesitancy to take vaccines, generally, as one of the top 10 threats to global health in 2019. This absolutely concerns me because in order to protect a lot of people who perhaps cannot take a vaccine for one

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reason or another, to achieve that immunity, we need people who can take it, to take it.

I wonder what the government might be doing to ensure that people have confidence. I know the minister has already touched on this, but how do we reduce that hesitancy that might be there from people when it comes to taking the vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, it is so important that we know, first, that most Canadians believe that vaccines are safe, but we have to protect that confidence that Canadians have in vaccination. That is why we are providing a variety of information for Canadians about the vaccines under review, and we will continue to provide full transparency about the effectiveness of the vaccines as we go forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Chair, I will share my time with my colleague from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

I would like to talk about Pfizer. More specifically, on July 22, the Americans signed an agreement with Pfizer for 100 million doses of vaccine.

On August 5, the Government of Canada secured 20 million doses and, more recently, in early November, it secured an additional 56 million doses.

Can the minister explain to me why the Americans, who signed an agreement on July 22, and the Government of Canada, which signed an agreement two weeks later, will not have access to the Pfizer vaccine at the same time?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, the member opposite has heard me, I am sure, say that we are in fact so thrilled that Pfizer is one of the seven promising vaccines in our vaccine portfolio, and it has submitted to Health Canada for regulatory approval.

Pfizer is the vaccine manufacturer of a new and novel vaccine. This is something that all countries around the world are working to approve, to ensure that we understand the safety of the vaccine. As soon as a vaccine is approved for safety in Canada—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, the minister has been telling us the same things over and over for weeks.

Does the minister realize that the agreement the Americans signed on July 22, a contract for 100 million doses, stipulated that they would be the first to receive them? That was part of the agreement.

The Americans' MO is not the same as this government's. The U.S. health department puts everything down in writing and in detail. We are familiar with their agreements. The Americans tell us exactly where they are going.

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Why is the minister constantly telling us about some big portfolio, which is meaningless, given that we know the Government of Canada has booked 76 million doses from Pfizer and that we will probably get six million doses by late March or early April? Can the minister clarify?

I think we have spent enough time fooling around.

● (2045)

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as I said, we expect to receive doses of Pfizer and Moderna in the first quarter of 2021. In fact, Health Canada is doing the work right now to review the vaccines for safety. As soon as they are approved for safety, they will arrive in Canada and we will deploy them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, I do not think the minister can explain how it works because I do not think she knows, or perhaps she does not want to know.

What I can say is that the United States was able to negotiate its contract, and its vaccine negotiations have been made public.

Also, we learned today that the Food and Drug Administration and Health Canada are working together on approving the vaccine. The minister, however, keeps telling us that we will have to wait.

Just today, we were told that everything is going to be done at the same time, while the United States is announcing that people will be able to get vaccinated in two weeks.

Why can't Canada be more transparent and clear? Can the minister tell us about something other than her large portfolio of vaccines? That does not mean anything to us right now.

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I think I have been perfectly clear. What I have been perfectly clear about is that Canadians can have confidence that they too will have access to effective vaccines in Canada. In fact, a variety of different kinds of vaccines, which is good news for Canadians. We are not certain that all vaccines will work on all people. In fact, some vaccines will be indicated for use on certain kinds of populations. This diversity in our portfolio will serve Canadians well. We have the most per capita—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, I am going to change subjects and come back to the issue of ultra-cold freezers.

Two or three weeks ago we learned that Quebec took the initiative to buy 60 units. Quebec did not wait for the federal government because I think it understood that it needed to be proactive. Now, here in Canada, I believe we have 126 of these freezers.

Can the government tell us whether contracts have been awarded?

Have the freezers already been manufactured? Are any of them ready for use?

When will we be getting them?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the fact that Quebec is preparing to receive, especially, the Pfizer vaccine that must be stored at extremely cold temperatures is exactly a sign of what he is asking for, which is interprovincial-federal collaboration. That is so essential to ensuring that we can deploy these vaccines successfully. As the member opposite will also know, Quebec has a long and very successful history of immunizing its population, something it has the provincial jurisdiction, authority and expertise to do. That is why I think Canadians are in good stead—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, Quebec took the initiative to do something about the ultra-cold freezers it needed. That is great, but the nine other provinces, as well as the territories, are awaiting news from the federal government.

Can the minister tell me when the ultra-cold freezers will be available in the other provinces? I will not ask her how many each province will get, because I think that is a bit much. However, will the provinces get these freezers by December 15, December 31 or January 1?

Can she give us a date?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, in fact, the federal government at a number of working tables has worked closely with provinces and territories, first, to assess readiness to receive vaccines, and second, to ensure that if they do not have the equipment necessary the federal government can procure that equipment for them and have it in place. Let me be clear: When a vaccine is approved, Canadians will have access to the vaccine. Canada will be ready.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, from what I understand, the minister has no idea what is going on with the various contracts. If she does know, she is choosing not to say, which is the most disturbing part of this for everyone. I want to touch on one last point, which is the infamous contract awarded to CanSino Biologics.

Can the minister tell me why the Government of Canada did business with a company owned by the Chinese communist regime, which allowed the company to steal Canadian intellectual property?

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• (2050)

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the work we have done to procure the diversity of vaccines in our vaccine portfolio is truly a great thing for Canadians. In fact, it means that Canadians will have access to a variety of different kinds of vaccines. Provinces and territories, as well, will have access to a variety of different kinds of vaccines to deliver in their health care jurisdictional authority.

Our regulators are working on the three companies that have submitted to date to ensure that we can approve them quickly, working with our U.S. counterparts and our EU counterparts. As soon as a vaccine is shown to be safe in Canada, we will make sure that Canadians have access to that vaccine.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Chair, Canadian Blood Services is begging Canadians across this country to donate blood this holiday season in the midst of a second wave. I want to donate and make a difference, but I cannot because I am gay.

In the year 2020, why is that?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I think the member opposite likely knows that the Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec are independent from the government and set regulations according to their own protocols. However, we have been funding both the Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec to better understand how to end the blood ban. I agree with the member opposite. We need to take stronger steps to ensure they have the research they need to—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Chair, here is the problem. The minister in the Liberal government made the promise to end the discrimination and stigma that gay men face in this country. She had no problem during the election campaign telling gay men this would end. Now, she is hiding behind a bunch of bureaucrats and organizations. She did not plan, and did not tell people they would study it for years and delay it.

Why is she breaking her promise that she made during an election campaign to gay men in this country?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we successfully funded Héma-Québec and Canadian Blood Services to do the necessary work to eliminate the blood ban. As members know, the organizations have reduced significantly the time that gay men must wait before giving blood, and we will continue that work.

I agree with the member opposite. This does need to end. The research is ongoing and we anticipate they will—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Chair, the minister tonight has used the buzzword a robust portfolio. Let me tell her that there is a robust portfolio of gay men in this country who want to step forward, make a difference and donate blood. They want to give blood like you promised you would allow us to do.

What date can I book my appointment to make a difference, save lives and donate blood?

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I remind the member that I did not make any promise, but I will let the minister answer the question.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I want to thank the member opposite for his commitment to Canadians and his desire to serve his country by donating blood. Truly I know that many men and others around the country wish to be helpful during this time of need, and I thank him for that.

As the member opposite notes, we have funded both blood services to complete research so that they can take steps to eliminate the blood ban and, in fact, that is solely in their jurisdiction—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Chair, this is going to be a long seven and a half-minute exchange, and very painful for the minister because she did not promise to study or review or fund or do anything. She promised to end it. It was in the Liberal Party platform. If she could commit to doing that, she needs to back up and put her words into action.

The minister said she would end it. Why did she make that promise, if now she is saying there is another path that has to get there? Why is the minister breaking her promise to gay men, which she made five years ago and counting?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, again, I want to thank the member opposite for his commitment to serving Canada during this time of need. I can understand his frustration. I am frustrated too, but I will say this: The Government of Canada is committed to supporting Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec to complete that research and end the blood ban. He is exactly right. We committed—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Chair, I am frustrated too and it is personal for me.

The minister had no problem during an election campaign, alongside the Prime Minister, to end the stigma and end the discrimination against gay men in this country. To hear that answer and the waving all over the place, I hope gay men watch this and see what is actually happening.

I want to get personal. Would the minister take my blood?

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• (2055)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I want to first say that this party has done more for LGBTQ2+ rights than any party before it. In fact, the Conservatives, as we know, have been no friend to gay men in their history in leadership.

I will answer the question with this: I will obviously support the member's efforts to end the gay blood ban. I—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Chair, I am going to ask again. I am not going to let it go. Would the minister take my blood?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as the member opposite knows, this government is committed to supporting the rights of LGBTQ2+ people. In fact—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Chair, I am going to ask a third time. The minister is perpetuating a stigma here. She is the one who can act. She is the one who can deliver. She is the one who can put an end to this.

Does she not feel comfortable, with me being a gay man, taking my blood?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I support the end of the gay blood ban. That is why I am part of a government that has provided research to Héma-Québec and CBS, and we will continue to press them to submit to Health Canada to end that ban.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Chair, this is not funny. This is not what she promised gay men: to end the stigma over five years ago.

Here is the part that makes it worse. There is an easy, science-based and fair solution that could end the stigma and the discrimination against gay men. The Canadian Medical Association has said it, and the All Blood is Equal campaign has said it.

Can the minister tell the House exactly what that is? What is the solution?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, when the Conservatives were in power, the deferral period was five years and we have reduced it to three months. There is more to do.

I agree with the member opposite. I think the gay blood ban needs to end. That is why we funded the research to the two blood services, and we expect them to submit their recommendations to Health Canada. As soon as they do, we will review them and make the changes.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Chair, let me get this straight, no pun intended. The minister does not even know what the simple answer is to end this discrimination.

It is simple. We can change our blood donation policy in this country by not basing eligibility on sexual orientation, but rather on sexual behaviour. She knows the solution. She would not even say it. I hope she knows the solution. If she can make the promise, she should know what the answer is.

She knows it is safe. She knows it is the right thing to do. When can gay men finally get the stigma and discrimination ended? It has

been five years. It has not been the Conservatives. It is not years ago. She is the health minister now. She promised it five years ago. When can I donate blood?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I can commit to the member opposite that I will keep at this. As the member opposite knows, Health Canada cannot unilaterally change the policies of Héma-Québec and Canadian Blood Services. We have supported them to do the research they need to make these changes and—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of National Revenue.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is great to rise this evening. I will be speaking for 10 minutes, and then have five minutes of questions and comments with the minister.

The Government of Canada remains deeply concerned about the devastating impact the overdose crisis continues to have on people, families and communities across the country. Since 2016, over 16,300 Canadians have lost their lives to opioid-related overdoses.

Tragically, thousands more Canadians are experiencing harms related to problematic use of various substances, including methamphetamines and alcohol. Problematic substance use impacts families, friends, communities and loved ones from all walks of life, creating losses felt by tens of thousands of people. The crisis is so severe today, no community remains untouched.

[*Translation*]

We have been living with the overdose crisis for a long time and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this tragic crisis. A year ago, we could see an improvement as the number of overdoses and deaths in some of the most affected areas was steadily decreasing.

However, everything changed with the emergence of COVID-19. Since March 2020, several provinces and territories have reported historic levels of opioid-related deaths and harm.

• (2100)

[*English*]

Recent reports from Ontario have shown that there was a 38% increase in opioid-related deaths in the first 15 weeks of the pandemic compared with the 15 weeks prior. It is predicted that if opioid-related deaths continue at the current weekly rate, there will be over 2,200 lives lost in the province by the end of the year. This will be a 50% increase in deaths compared with 2019.

We know that 1,048 people in British Columbia died between March and September of this year as a result of overdoses. To put this in perspective, this is approximately four times the number of people in British Columbia who have died from COVID-19.

Other jurisdictions across the country are pointing to similar trends. For example, Alberta reported a record high of 301 opioid poisoning deaths from April to June 2020. This was more than double the number that occurred from January to March 2020.

Saskatchewan has reported 296 suspected and confirmed drug-related deaths so far in 2020, breaking the record total in 2018.

[*Translation*]

In Quebec, Montreal recorded the highest number of overdoses in over five years in July. Unfortunately, this spike lasted until October in Montreal.

In short, in light of these reports and the available data, 2020 is on track to becoming the deadliest year in Canada's history in terms of overdose deaths.

[*English*]

There is no doubt that several contributing factors have led to the surge in overdose deaths, yet there are two that are particularly significant.

First, public health measures related to COVID-19 for physical distancing, self-isolation and worker safety have contributed to reduced availability, and utilization of, substance use treatment and harm reduction services. For example, there are reports of significantly decreased foot traffic at supervised consumption sites. In some cases, there have been site closures. With over 2.3 million visits nationwide and not a single overdose death, we know that these services save lives when they are utilized. Social distancing and lockdown measures have led to the unintended consequence that more people have been using drugs alone, which considerably increases the risk of overdose and death, and when people are isolated they cannot reach out for help.

Second, border closures have had an impact on the supply of illegal drugs. We are hearing from law enforcement, and from people working on the front lines, that the availability and composition of street drugs has worsened during COVID-19. They are seeing highly toxic synthetic opioids such as fentanyl and carfentanil appearing more frequently in street drugs. The consequences of this reality are unsurprising. More people are experiencing overdose deaths and other drug-related harms.

Since 2016, the government's approach to the overdose crisis has been comprehensive, collaborative and guided by our federal drug strategy: the Canadian drugs and substances strategy. The Canadian drugs and substances strategy takes a public-health-focused approach and lays out our framework for evidence-based actions to reduce the harms associated with substance use in Canada. It includes four pillars: prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement.

[*Translation*]

We conducted and coordinated our work with other levels of government, indigenous peoples, addiction experts, service

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providers, first responders, law enforcement, those directly affected and other partners.

The government adopted a comprehensive approach with specific measures in the four pillars to deal with the overdose crisis and the problems of substance abuse more generally.

• (2105)

[*English*]

The government has taken action to implement a number of measures to address the overdose crisis head-on at the ground level, including supporting communities so they have the tools they need to help keep people at risk of overdose safe. We listened to the provinces and public health professionals to ensure we understood their challenges. At their request, we changed federal regulations to make it easy for people with substance use disorder to access the medications they needed. Specifically, we issued a class exemption for pharmacists to make it easier for people to access medications during the pandemic, while following public health advice, such as physical distancing.

Through Health Canada's substance use and addictions program, we are providing funding for 11 projects to provide a safer supply of pharmaceutical-grade medications for people with opioid use disorder in British Columbia, Ontario and New Brunswick. This includes five multi-year pilot projects and six shorter-term initiatives, funded in response to the risk posed by the worsening toxic illegal drug supply as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. These innovative projects will be independently evaluated and this assessment will contribute to building the evidence base to support the scaling up of effective models.

In August, the Minister of Health reached out to the provincial and territorial ministers of health and regulatory colleges to encourage action at all levels to better provide people who used drugs with a full spectrum of options for receiving care from practitioners. This includes increasing access to safer pharmaceutical-grade alternatives to the contaminated illegal drug supply for people at risk of overdose.

We also talked to public health workers in the provinces and municipalities about the unique challenges that we were facing in trying to contain the spread of COVID-19, while also protecting homeless Canadians. To help address their needs, we made it easier for overdose prevention sites to be established rapidly in temporary community shelters and other locations.

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[Translation]

We also facilitated the adoption of the services of the operators of existing supervised injection sites to promote physical distancing and follow public health guidance.

To help front-line service providers obtain all the information about these regulatory changes, we prepared a set of resources explaining the changes and encouraging their implementation.

[English]

These new measures have been enacted to help vulnerable people get the supports and services they need during the pandemic.

In addition to regulatory barriers, we also increased federal investment. For instance, in July the Government of Canada committed to providing \$500 million to address immediate needs and gaps in the support and protection of people experiencing challenges related to mental health, substance abuse and/or homelessness.

[Translation]

These investments are part of the more than \$19 billion invested in the safe restart agreement to help the provinces and territories safely restart their economy and to guarantee that Canadians will have the support they need in these difficult times.

[English]

We continue to work closely with the provinces and territories on the implementation of the emergency treatment fund, which was announced in 2018. The fund provided \$150 million of one-time matched emergency funding for provinces and territories to support multi-year projects that would improve access to evidence-based treatment services in the context of the overdose crisis. We have heard—

The Deputy Chair: The member will have to ask his questions. His 10 minutes are up.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Chair, Canada has been accused of vaccine nationalism, securing far more doses for its population than it needs.

Why did the government adopt this approach?

• (2110)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, the member's speech was incredibly compassionate. He spoke about people who used substances and the supports we were putting in place to better protect people from the risk of the opioid overdose. He is right. It is a national tragedy as well.

Our government has been working so hard, ever since we were elected, to reverse so much of the harmful policy in place through the Conservative legacy of being tough on people who used substances. Quite frankly, these are our brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and children. I cannot tell members how many times I have comforted somebody in my community who had lost someone to an opioid overdose.

We are continuing this work, as the member knows. We are working with the provinces and territories to accelerate access to tools, as he mentioned, such as safer access to prescription substances and better access to treatments and supports. We are en-

couraging the provinces and territories to take strong action to protect the lives of people who use substances. He is right that the—

The Deputy Chair: I want to remind the hon. minister that the length of the answer should be about the length of the question, unless the member would like the minister to elaborate longer than the length of the question.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Chair, the minister can continue.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I also want to thank the member for his hard work in his community. I know he is also quite connected to the skilled trades, which is another area that has been working really hard to understand the context of substance use among men, in particular men who work in the skilled trades.

We have more to do together, but I am confident, with the compassion I have heard in the member's voice tonight and with the full understanding of the need to be compassionate, kind and to treat substance use as the physical illness instead of one of criminality, we will get to a place where we will reduce the stigma for people who use substances, so they can come forward and get the treatment they need and deserve.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Chair, can Canada expect Health Canada to approve vaccines in line with the timelines of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and other international regulators?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, our regulatory system is designed, first and foremost, with the health and safety of Canadians in mind. That is not compromised in any way, shape or form.

Canadians expect us to ensure that whatever we approve through Health Canada is safe for use in Canada as well as effective and of high quality.

Having said that, we know there is an urgency in getting access to a vaccine. Therefore, I issued an interim order this fall that would allow Health Canada to review data for companies on a rolling basis, facilitating access to data so we could make timely decisions. Health Canada regulators are working around the clock to review this data as it comes in and with the manufacturing companies to fill in those data gaps.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Chair, why is the Government of Canada prioritizing international vaccine candidates over made-in-Canada solutions?

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Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, our top priority is to access safe and effective vaccines for Canadians. Supporting domestic vaccine projects has been an important part of our strategy. We have spent over a billion dollars in support of early-stage research on COVID-19 clinical trials of domestic vaccine candidates and the expansion of domestic bio-manufacturing capacity.

As an example, on October 23, we announced an investment of \$173 million in Quebec City-based Medicago. This funding will help to advance the company's vaccine candidates through clinical trials.

Our portfolio is among the best in the world. We have more doses per capita than any other country.

On the member's earlier statement—

The Deputy Chair: I am sorry, the time is up.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Chair, on what date will a national system to certify who has received the COVID-19 vaccine be available?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, we are working with the provinces and territories right now on all aspects of the vaccination program in Canada, including a data system that can track vaccinations and follow up.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, when will that system be up and running?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, that system will be up and running as the vaccines are delivered to Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, January, February, March, approximate ballpark, when will the system to certify who received a COVID-19 vaccine be up and running?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we are working with provinces and territories now to ensure a system will be available when vaccinations become available.

• (2115)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, is the system going to be an IT system that is available across jurisdictions or is it the little yellow paper vaccination certificate from the 1970s?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I think the member is speaking about the vaccine immunization data system that is used, certainly in my province of Ontario, and it illustrates just how far we have to go together. I have every confidence that we will be able to accomplish this—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, how much has been invested by the federal government, if anything, on a national system to certify who has received the COVID-19 vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we are working right now to ensure that we have everything necessary for a national immunization system, including the data that will track who has received the—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, who is going to pay for the COVID-19 vaccine doses, the federal government or provincial government?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as I said earlier in the House, no Canadian will have to pay for a vaccination.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, that is not what I asked. Will the provincial government or the federal government be paying for doses of COVID-19 vaccines?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I can speak to the incredible investments that we have made already to the provinces to fight COVID-19, in fact \$19 billion through the state—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, who is going to pay for the doses of COVID-19 vaccines, the federal government or provincial government?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, in Alberta, there are \$22 billion in supports to that province in terms of safe restart money, supports for—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, it is probably going to cost a lot, so maybe she should tell the provinces if she is expecting them to pay. Is she expecting them to pay for the doses of the COVID-19 vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we have been there for provinces and territories in historic ways, including in her province with more than \$22 billion in support for—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, how much will it cost to vaccinate every Albertan against COVID-19?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, what I can say is Canadians will not have to pay for vaccination in this country.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, will the Government of Alberta have to pay for the COVID-19 vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I am so pleased that we have been able to be there for the Government of Alberta as it fights against COVID-19 with a transfer of—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, she must realize how glib she sounds. It is a very simple question.

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The Deputy Chair: I want to remind the member that she can ask a question. She can criticize the government, but she cannot use that type of language or make those types of remarks against an individual.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, fair enough. The response was glib. Will the federal government be paying for the COVID-19 vaccines, or will that be the responsibility of the provincial governments to bear?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, Canadians should be comforted by the fact that no Canadian will have to pay for vaccination in this country.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, will the federal government be paying for the vaccine or will the provincial governments be paying for it?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, every step of the way we have been there for provinces and territories, including \$1.3 billion in safe restart funds, a total of \$22 billion—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, will the federal government be transferring extra money to the provinces to pay for the COVID-19 vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, every step of the way, we have been there for provinces and territories, including in procuring PPE, testing capacity, data capacity, contact—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, who will have the responsibility for vaccinating first nations and indigenous persons in Canada? The federal government, provincial governments or another level of government?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, there are certain populations the federal government is responsible for, including indigenous peoples on reserves and other federal populations.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, what structure has been put in place to bring first nations to the table on delivering a COVID-19 vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we are working with indigenous leaders, with provinces and territories to make sure that we have a robust plan that—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, will the provinces or the federal government have to pay for the COVID-19 vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we are procuring the vaccines as we speak.

• (2120)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, there were some challenges with the procurement of PPE, in that supplies were being stolen off of tarmacs and planes were coming back to Canada empty. Has the minister worked with the department of defence on securing vaccines for transport to Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, in fact, vaccine deployment and procurement is a whole-of-government approach, and the Canadian Armed Forces are at the planning table.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, on what date were procurement contracts issued for freezers for the Pfizer vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the Government of Canada is procuring the necessary equipment, including freezers, needles, swabs and—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, is a certain number of freezers required before Pfizer will ship us any doses of the vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, each vaccine has different requirements, and we are working through each of those requirements carefully to ensure we have everything in place to successfully deploy a vaccine to Canadians—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, I am just assuming that Pfizer would want to have freezers in place before it shipped the vaccine to us. Is that part of the contract, a certain number of freezers?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we are working very closely with Pfizer to meet all of the requirements to receive the vaccines. I am very confident in the plan, and Canadians can be confident in the plan too.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, I would have more confidence if the minister could tell us when the freezers will be in place in their entirety.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, not only are we working with the manufacturer, but we are working with the provinces and territories to make sure we understand their deployment plan—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, does the minister have any plans to remove Health Canada review user fees for the review of at-home rapid tests?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we have not approved at-home rapid tests as yet. No company has applied to Canada. However, we will be expeditiously reviewing any applicants.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, could the minister tell us why no company has applied to Canada to produce or sell at-home rapid tests for COVID in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, at-home testing is a rather novel technology at this point in the pandemic. We certainly have worked with manufacturers to encourage them to apply, and we will continue to do that.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, why can an American buy an at-home test for COVID in the U.S., but Canadians cannot here?

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Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the member is incorrect. In fact, those at-home tests are available by prescription only in the U.S. However, we are in conversation with the—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, when will Canadians be able to buy at-home rapid tests?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as soon as they are approved by Health Canada.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, when will that be?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as soon as we have an applicant that is proven safe and accurate for use.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, why do we not have an applicant yet?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I cannot answer that question. I certainly know that Health Canada has worked with manufacturers. The manufacturer in question that the member mentioned earlier—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, has the minister taken any meetings with any manufacturers of at-home rapid tests?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, manufacturers of at-home rapid tests have not approached me for meetings to my knowledge, but certainly, I would be willing to speak with any company—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, has the minister proactively reached out to meet with any manufacturers of at-home rapid tests for COVID?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I have actively engaged with a variety of manufacturers on different equipment across the country and across the world. I will continue—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, has the minister proactively reached out to any manufacturers of at-home rapid tests to encourage them to apply, or to ask what the barriers are to having them enter into our approval process?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I work very closely with the Minister of Procurement to make sure that we are actively pursuing new technology that could be beneficial to Canadians, and I will continue that hard work.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, I just asked, because the minister has said many times over the last few months that we do not have access to these types of tests because nobody has applied, but she must understand that Canada is a small market with an onerous regulatory process. What measures is she thinking about putting in place to incent people to apply to our review process for at-home rapid tests for COVID?

• (2125)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, in fact, Canada's regulatory process is admired by the rest of the world. In fact, we work very closely with other regulators, the EU, the FDA and Switzerland, and Canada is a world leader in health product regulation.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, how many times has the minister been briefed on the status of the renovations and

constructions at the Montreal NRC facility that is slated to produce COVID vaccines?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I stay extremely focused on ensuring that I can deliver the equipment, the supports and the services for Canadians through the provinces and territories and directly to municipalities. That is—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, my understanding is that, at some point in time over the summer, it became clear that there was a problem with the Montreal NRC facility. There was only one room that could work and there needed to be something else done, but there was a long period of time before anything happened.

Who took their eyes off the ball?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I can tell members that my eyes have been on the ball of delivering for Canadians since the pandemic began. I will continue to have my eyes on the ball, because Canadians are expecting us to work—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, did the renovations at the Montreal NRC facility for vaccine production have any adverse impact on the timeline for Canada being able to produce an adenovirus-based COVID-19 vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I will reiterate. We have one of the best portfolios in the world. We have more doses per capita than any other country in the world. We have a world-class regulator. We have a procurement program that is active, and we are ready to deploy as soon—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, would the minister say it is correct that at this point in time today, we have zero doses per capita of any COVID-19 vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I would say that we have procured millions of doses for Canadians, and they will be available for deployment as soon as they are proven to be safe and they have arrived in Canada.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, do we have zero doses of vaccine right now?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, in fact, the three leading candidates have not distributed doses anywhere in the world as of yet.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, when will we not have zero doses?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we will be able to deploy vaccines as soon as they are approved by the regulators. We are working very closely with Procurement Canada.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, the Americans will have more than zero doses in about a week. When will we have more than zero doses?

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Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as soon as the vaccines are approved by Health Canada, we will be able to deploy them to Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, when will that be?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the regulatory process is under way for three very promising candidates.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, who will be paying for the COVID-19 vaccine, the provinces or the federal government?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we have supported provinces and territories in unprecedented ways through COVID-19, and we will continue to be there for provinces and territories.

The Deputy Chair: Fifteen seconds.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, what will the cost to various levels of government, of deploying the COVID-19 vaccine, be?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I can say that all levels of government are working extraordinarily hard to protect Canadians from COVID-19 and to prepare for vaccination.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Madam Chair, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of ensuring access to quality health care. Now more than ever, Canadians deserve to have a strong health care system that meets their needs. This includes the full range of health services such as home and community care services, as well as support for mental health and addiction issues.

Canadians are proud of their universal, publicly funded health care system, but as our population ages and rates of chronic disease rise, they also expect all governments to work together to strengthen health care so that our people can continue to access the care they need, whether at home, in health care facilities or in hospitals.

That is why in 2017 our government committed to providing \$11 billion over 10 years to the provinces and territories to help them improve access to home and community care, mental health care and addiction services.

We provided federal leadership on a common agenda for change through a common statement of principles for shared health priorities, which was signed by the federal, provincial and territorial ministers of health.

As part of the bilateral agreements with each province and territory, federal investments help support the creation of initiatives or the development of existing projects in priority areas tied to home care and community care and mental health and addictions services.

Thanks to our efforts, the Canadian public receives more professional services and better coordinated and integrated care in home care settings. Care providers and patients have better access to the technologies and digital infrastructure for obtaining home and community care. People taking care of a loved one at home have better support. A greater number of Canadians have better access to palliative care and end of life care at home.

This also means that children and youth have better access to school programming on the prevention, detection and early treatment of mental health problems. There are more mental health and addictions services in the community.

Canadians have easier access to crisis intervention services and multidisciplinary professional mental health services. We have better access to integrated, culturally adapted mental health interventions.

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on Canadians' mental health. Canadians are dealing with stress and anxiety, which has highlighted the need for more mental health supports. The results of a study conducted by Mental Health Research Canada in April 2020 revealed that anxiety levels have quadrupled and that depression levels have doubled since the start of the pandemic.

Furthermore, overdose rates had started to decrease in 2019, but the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the risks and harms associated with substance use and overdoses. In response, our government took swift action to meet the immediate needs of Canadians and to shoulder some of the burden for the provinces and territories.

On April 15, we launched Wellness Together Canada, which gives all Canadians access to a wide variety of free mental health and drug addiction supports. This service is available 24-7 online, on the phone or via text message. More than 600,000 Canadians have accessed the various support options on the site, which include self-directed programs; peer support; and confidential sessions with social workers, psychologists and other professionals. In addition, there are specific resources and text messaging services for more vulnerable groups, such as youth and front-line workers.

● (2130)

I remain deeply troubled by the devastating effects that the opioid overdose crisis continues to have on people, families and communities across the country.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have reduced regulatory obstacles and increased federal investments. For example, in July 2020, the Government of Canada committed to providing \$500 million to address immediate needs and shortcomings in the support and protection of people with mental health problems, substance abuse issues and homelessness.

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In 2020, we also announced an additional \$32 million over five years to support 26 projects under Health Canada's substance use and addictions program. These projects will be implemented across the country and meet a variety of needs for harm reduction and treatment including \$10 million to support 13 front-line community harm reduction projects; \$16 million to support five projects to increase access to pharmaceutical-grade medications, also known as safe supply; and \$6 million to support eight projects to find approaches to the problematic use of methamphetamine.

We also listened to Canadians from communities across the country who asked us to allow them to redirect their existing funds to support immediate COVID-19-related needs. That allowed us to fund six additional projects to provide access to safer, pharmaceutical-grade drugs, as an alternative to the supply of illegal toxic drugs, to people suffering from severe disorders related to problematic opioid use. We will continue to listen to Canadians and service providers in communities across Canada and work with our provincial and territorial partners and community services to respond to the crisis and support those who are among the most vulnerable during the pandemic.

The pandemic has also revealed that it is essential we find new and better ways to provide care that take full advantage of technology and innovation. In March, when the pandemic hit, the provinces and territories quickly put in place temporary billing codes and new digital tools to ensure that Canadians could continue to receive the care they needed virtually.

To help the provinces and territories expedite their work, our government committed to providing \$150 million this year for new initiatives to ensure that Canadians can access the services they need using secure text messaging, video conferencing and other tools. In addition, Canada Health Infoway will receive up to \$50 million to develop pan-Canadian standards and support provincial and territorial efforts.

In addition, our government is working with our health care partners to implement a palliative care action plan. Measures included in the action plan will focus on information sharing, virtual health care, advance care planning and caring communities in order to reduce isolation and improve palliative care provided at home and in the community.

Our government is also investing \$750 million over six to eight months to help control and prevent infections among vulnerable people receiving long-term care, home care and palliative care. At the end of the day, we want to ensure that all Canadians have access to the health care they need when they need it. This is a fundamental principle of health care in Canada.

Now more than ever, the Government of Canada remains firmly committed to ensuring that Canadians have a public health care system based on the values of equality, justice and solidarity.

• (2135)

Our government has always defended those values by upholding the principles of the Canada Health Act, which guarantees—

The Deputy Chair: Order. I am sorry, but the hon. member must get to her questions, as her 10 minutes are up.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Madam Chair, the special access program, the SAP, gives doctors access to non-marketed drugs to treat patients with serious or life-threatening conditions when conventional therapies have failed, are unsuitable or are unavailable in Canada. Although emergency access is exceptional and although access to unapproved therapy is optimal in the context of a clinical trial, the SAP can provide limited access to therapies that have been approved in other jurisdictions.

This program is an important way to help Canadians manage their health under exceptional circumstances. To protect patients from the potential risks associated with taking non-marketed drugs, Health Canada has mandatory reporting requirements for doctors accessing the program. They are required to report the outcomes of the treatment sought, including any adverse reactions.

Concerns have been expressed about the SAP's administrative burden and the application process for potentially life-saving therapies. That includes concerns about the information required and the decision-making process, as well as the fact that there is no guarantee the requested drug will be made available and the perception that Health Canada questions doctors' judgment.

Can the minister explain how changes to the Food and Drug Regulations, which came into force on October 14, 2020, will help facilitate timely access to treatments doctors request to treat their patients under exceptional medical circumstances?

• (2140)

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, my thanks to my colleague for her very passionate speech. I have had the opportunity to work closely with her. I know how much she cares about the most vulnerable citizens of our communities. In her past work, she spent a lot of time working with the John Howard and Elizabeth Fry societies and folks who were trying to get their lives back in order after oftentimes very difficult circumstances. I thank the member very much for her work and her passion.

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The question, however, relates to new SAP regulations and how the changes to the food and drug regulations related to the special access program help facilitate access. Facilitating access includes timely access to drugs by easing the burden for health practitioners by removing reporting requirements for treatments previously approved by SAP, approved without restrictions on the European or U.S. market, or previously approved in Canada, and the drug identification number was not cancelled for safety reasons; allowing for the shipment of treatments to a community pharmacy, which will be more convenient for patients, especially those who do not live close to their physician or hospital; and allowing advance importation and storage of drugs, known as pre-positioning, to facilitate quicker access to treatments requested through the SAP when urgent delivery is critical.

Also, we have made a number of operational changes so that we can support regulatory changes and improve client services under SAP. This includes additional supports for practitioners treating patients who are in urgent, life-threatening or end-of-life situations due to an emergency, critical or terminal illness, and a number of other situations.

[Translation]

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for her words. It is also a pleasure to work with you, Minister. I will ask my question quickly.

Eli Lilly's new drug, bamlanivimab, was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and Health Canada last week.

What is the government doing to ensure that Canadians will have access to this drug?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, it is exciting that we have access now to the Eli Lilly drug, which has been approved by Health Canada and, indeed, the FDA. I will say it is a Canadian success story because, in fact, AbCellera, the company here in Canada, was the creator of this novel drug that helps lessen severe cases of COVID-19.

[Translation]

The Deputy Chair: I would remind the member that she must address her remarks to the Chair, even in committee of the whole.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Chair, I would first like to acknowledge the minister. Committee of the whole meetings in the evening are a different sort of exercise. They must be very demanding for the people responsible for the file, since they last for several hours. I would like to acknowledge her and thank her for making herself available for this.

I want to begin by quoting Sophie-Hélène Lebeuf, a Radio-Canada journalist. She wrote:

Dr. Moncef Slaoui, the head of the operation, said that the United States will be able to produce enough doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to vaccinate every American who wants to be vaccinated by May or June 2021.

I would like to ask the minister whether the situation is the same in Canada.

• (2145)

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank the member for his kind words. These are long nights for all of us, and I appreciate that we are together, even if we are so virtually.

As I said, I am confident in the vaccine portfolio we have acquired for Canadians, including doses of Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca, which are three vaccines being reviewed right now by Health Canada. They are under regulatory review.

We work with Americans and the European Union, sharing data so we can quickly assess these vaccines together and ensure, to the best of our ability, that we have no data gaps. As soon as those vaccines are proven to be safe here in Canada by our regulators, we will be able to deploy them in Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, I am sorry. There are some slight delays with interpretation and that sort of thing for those of us participating virtually. I want to recognize and thank all of the interpreters.

I thank the minister for her answer. Let us hope that all Canadians get vaccinated as quickly as possible.

To the minister's knowledge, has the government estimated the cost of a one-month delay in vaccination, for example? Suppose the public is vaccinated a month later than originally planned. Has the government calculated the economic impact of such a decision?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the member opposite's observation that we cannot separate the health of Canadians from the health of the economy of Canada is a wise one. All too often we hear people trying to make that balance between doing what is right for the economy and doing what is right for health. His comments reflect what is increasingly becoming visible around the world, which is that we need a healthy community and population to have a healthy economy.

Having said that, we know we are well positioned to receive the vaccine, and the vaccine will be a very important tool to bring COVID-19 to its knees, so to speak. There are so many things we still do not understand about immunity with COVID-19, including whether vaccines will need to be delivered on an annual basis and how—

[Translation]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for her answer.

I would have liked to know whether the government has estimated the cost of a one-month delay. The minister said that there were still too many unknowns to carry out an accurate assessment, but I think that this piece of information, as imperfect as it may be, would be important to consider when assessing the options available.

Furthermore, as she said, we still do not know how long immunity will last with a potential vaccine.

Can the minister tell me whether the government is looking into manufacturing vaccines in Quebec and in Toronto, instead of simply buying them from the United States or somewhere else in the world? It could be the three vaccines we are talking about or any others that may be developed later in the year. By manufacturing them in Canada, we would be less bound by the timelines of multinational corporations that do not have labs here.

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as the member opposite heard, the Prime Minister has made a commitment and we have invested in biomanufacturing here in Canada, including the Quebec company Medicago, of which I am sure we are all very proud of. This is a commitment for the long term, and it is a commitment to rebuild Canada's capacity to have a strong and robust biomanufacturing sector.

Having said that, Canadians cannot wait. We need to ensure that we can procure vaccines as they become available. That is why we have such a diverse portfolio. It is why we have committed to purchasing more doses per capita than any other country in the world. Canadians need to have access to that vaccine, and we are going to make sure they do.

• (2150)

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, as far as I know, the investments that were announced were not directly aimed at increasing our vaccine production capacity. They might help increase capacity, but they were not intended to produce more Canadian-made vaccines. Perhaps I misunderstood what was said about that.

At the start of the pandemic eight months ago, the government decided to negotiate contracts to purchase vaccines from various pharmaceutical companies. There were many risks to be managed, and it certainly had to assess the possibility of immediately investing in Canada's vaccine production capacity. At that time, the government did not go with that option, and it chose to sign contracts instead.

I would like to know why the government did not decide to immediately increase production capacity eight months ago, so that now, eight or ten months later, we could produce the vaccines ourselves without depending on contracts with foreign pharmaceutical companies.

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as the member opposite knows and has heard, the Prime Minister has made the commitment. We have been investing in the capacity of Canada to grow its biomanufacturing sector.

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Having said that, we cannot wait for that sector to be ready. We must be able to deliver vaccines when they are available. That is why we have purchase agreements with seven vaccine providers, three of which have already applied for regulatory approval. This is good news for Canadians because we know that as vaccines become ready, available and safe, Canadians will have access to them.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, my question was obviously not about recent announcements. It was about the choice that was made eight months ago, at the beginning of the pandemic, to not immediately make investments to build a production capacity that would have allowed vaccines to be produced right now, or at least in early winter.

Today, the Premier of Quebec, François Legault, announced that he would be having a conversation with the Prime Minister of Canada this evening. He said he wanted to find out two things, namely the date when the first vaccines would arrive and the quantity of vaccines that would come in each week.

Can the minister confirm that this conversation took place and that the Prime Minister answered both questions from the Premier of Quebec, François Legault?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I can confirm that, to the best of my knowledge, the premiers meeting went ahead. However, I cannot confirm what was discussed, as I was not there participating. I am here.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, I was thinking that she might have heard something about it through text or email. I was just trying my luck to see whether we might get that information.

We know that there will be six million doses in Canada between January and March, which means we will be able to vaccinate three million people, if all goes well in the approval and distribution process, of course.

Has the government already decided how it will distribute the doses among the provinces? If so, will they be distributed based on the population, based on the population aged 70 and over, or based on the population aged 70 and over living in residences like long-term care centres?

I think this information has already been given, but I am asking the question to make sure.

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the finalization of the sharing agreement has not been completed. The provinces and territories are working right now on a formula to equitably share vaccine doses as they arrive. We have had great success in this area, though, with previous negotiations, including for personal protective equipment and testing devices. I have every confidence we will work out an agreement that meets everybody's needs.

Business of Supply

• (2155)

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, in her speech at the beginning of this committee of the whole, the minister reiterated her plans to impose Canada-wide standards for long-term care facilities. I personally have not heard anyone in my riding say that things are not going well because there are no Canada-wide standards. I would like to know whether the minister speaks frequently with her counterpart, the Quebec minister of health, Christian Dubé, and whether she has spoken to him about this. Does she know what he thinks?

From what I have heard, the problem in long-term care centres is not down to a lack of Canada-wide standards. Rather, it is down to lack of staff, in other words, a lack of funding. Is the minister considering increasing the health transfers? The provinces are calling on Ottawa to increase its share of health care spending from 22% to 35%.

Furthermore, since staff must be paid every year for the system to work properly, this should be a recurring transfer, not a one-time transfer.

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, all Canadians think elderly people living in long-term care homes and other congregate settings need to have the utmost care and the utmost protection. The tragedy of deaths in long-term care homes is something Canadians will never forget. In fact, 85% of the deaths in the first wave occurred in long-term care homes and we are seeing the same pattern with the deaths occurring now. Clearly more has to be done in all provinces and territories by all jurisdictions.

The member opposite is right: There are staffing issues. In Quebec, 328 Red Cross staff are still in long-term care homes assisting the province to provide quality care to seniors so we do not see those kinds of horror stories again this time around. However, we have supported, through the safe restart agreement, \$740 million to provinces and territories to strengthen infection and prevention control.

I look forward to those conversations, quite frankly, and I am certain they will include the ways the federal government can support the provinces and territories to deliver better care for long-term care residents, no matter which province they live in.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for her answers.

On Monday, we will be getting the eagerly awaited economic update. We have not had a single budget since the last election, but a number of bills have been passed. We asked the previous finance minister for an update, but all we got was an economic snapshot.

Can the minister tell us if the provinces' request to boost federal health transfers from 22% to 35% might be an item in the next budget?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I am just as excited as the member to hear the fall economic update from our new finance minister, and I look forward to hearing it with him.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, I would like to wrap things up by thanking the minister and telling her that I am excited about her answer.

I am looking forward to good news about health funding in Monday's economic update. I think the pandemic serves as a reminder that Ottawa has a role to play in health care, and that is to ensure adequate funding for the sector.

[English]

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Chair, I know the first line that my scriptwriter has put here echoes everybody's sentiment: I am pleased to be here today. We are having an important discussion tonight, and my portion of it will reflect something that is critically important. It is the process that goes on all the time outside of a pandemic, but is never more important than during a pandemic. We are here to discuss the regulatory modernization and the achievements relating to facilitating access to much-needed health products for Canadians.

Health Canada has played in the past, and will continue to play, a key role in protecting the health and safety of Canadians, and 2020 has been a really challenging year in that regard.

Our government's top priority has been to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve this, we have focused on implementing innovative and agile regulatory measures to help prioritize and expedite the regulatory review of drugs and medical devices, including critical COVID-19 health products. We have had to do this without compromising Canada's high standards for safety, efficacy and quality.

There are obviously some pushes every now and again for politicians to set the agenda as to when such-and-such is going to happen or when so-and-so is going to be available. However, politicians should not be making those decisions. We should leave them to the experts and the people whose task it is to keep us all safe.

Our efforts to modernize regulatory pathways did not begin as a response to the global pandemic. We have been at this for a while. In fact, for several years, Health Canada has mobilized on many fronts to improve access to the products that Canadians need for taking care of their health and the health of their families.

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Since 2017, Health Canada has been working on the regulatory review of the drugs and devices initiative to improve access to needed health products for Canadians. This has included strengthening the way the department collaborates with other regulators on the scientific review of drugs and medical devices. It has allowed Canadians faster access to many therapies, and so far this has been done in the areas of cancer, blindness, pediatrics, depression, opioid addiction, which is a major issue in British Columbia, and HIV home testing. Many more products are now coming to Canada as a result of these actions.

Health Canada has improved its scientific capacity to review more affordable generic medicines and has also created accelerated pathways to provide earlier access to promising new drugs for patients. This is what we are seeing demonstrated today. For example, Health Canada has approved three novel cell-based gene therapy products, including one for the treatment of pediatric cancer patients. There is also a new IV formulation for five difficult-to-treat bacterial infections and another treatment for vision loss due to inherited retinal conditions. In other words, there are Canadians who gain faster access to therapies that directly help, thanks to these regulatory efforts.

Additionally, Health Canada launched an ambitious regulatory innovation agenda, and as part of these reviews, stakeholders made it clear that regulatory agility was key to economic growth and innovation. The pandemic has reinforced the need, of course, for the regulatory agility and flexibility that we need for getting health product oversight and a principled focus of the agenda's initiatives.

Health Canada has also launched additional temporary emergency measures to help companies bring urgently needed health products and medical supplies for COVID-19 into our market. The measures include solutions intended to broaden access to clinical trials, expedite the regulatory review of health products and support enhanced management of product shortages. They have provided an opportunity to pilot many of the improvements planned as part of the agenda.

As a result of these measures, Health Canada has approved 4,000 hand sanitizers, 495 medical devices, two drug treatments and 46 testing devices, and it has done all of this since March. The department has also received three vaccine submissions, with more expected in the near future. This has made a tremendous impact on Canada's leading response to COVID-19.

Canadians and health care workers can count on Health Canada to ensure that their communities have access to the products they need to stay safe from the risks of COVID-19. Moving forward, Health Canada will build on the administrative and regulatory agility that has been put in place in response to COVID-19 to further support industry in providing timely access to much-needed health products.

• (2200)

Medical devices are playing a critical role in the public health response to COVID-19. Many Canadians also rely on these products to maintain and improve their health and well-being. Health Canada is continuing important work for the medical devices action plan.

Health Canada has already accomplished a great deal under this plan. For example, in December 2019, Health Canada became the first regulator worldwide to bring into force regulations that required hospitals to report all serious adverse drug reactions and medical device incidents. This will be particularly useful in the pandemic, because we will be able to identify any safety issues Health Canada will need to take action on.

Finally, Health Canada established a new scientific advisory committee on health products for women. The committee was created to provide Health Canada with timely patient-centred scientific and clinical advice on current and emerging issues regarding women's health and the regulation of medical devices and drugs.

More important, however, is the rapid regulatory response, which has been key to supporting access to health products during the pandemic. Health Canada has introduced several innovative measures to maximize regulatory agility while maintaining protections for health and safety. The amount of work that has occurred on the regulatory side over the past few months is incredible. It is truly a historic response. For instance, the Minister of Health has signed five interim orders with respect to health products related to COVID-19.

An interim order is one of the fastest mechanisms available to the federal government to help make health products available to address larger scale public health emergencies. These include expedited pathways for clinical trials and access to drugs and medical devices. These new pathways have been successful in bringing COVID therapies faster to Canada.

Due to the high impact of illness from COVID-19, Health Canada and other highly regarded international regulators are prioritizing and expediting the review of all submissions for COVID-19 treatments. Health Canada is working with all our international partners to share information, to discuss the scientific evidence we are gathering and to ensure Canada's approach is aligned globally.

While we are working hard to give Canadians access to COVID-19 drugs, personal protective equipment and medical devices as fast as possible, we will not compromise Canada's safety, efficacy and quality standards. The agile response needed for the pandemic is rooted in the innovation and vision for a modern regulatory review of drugs and devices. We are proud of our accomplishments to date, our regulatory leadership and the ability to respond to an unprecedented health crisis.

Business of Supply

• (2205)

I now have some questions for the minister.

It is clear that successive and robust border measures, including quarantine and travel restrictions, have had an impact on reducing travel-related COVID-19 infections in Canada. I would like to add that, from the British Columbia perspective, an analysis of where our initial infections came from surprised many people because they thought airliners coming over from Asia brought the virus with them.

In fact, the vast majority of initial infections in British Columbia came from eastern Canada, and they got into eastern Canada as a result of people coming back from spring break. A lot of those people said to close the border, but I would not like to try to keep any of my buddies out of the country if they were coming back from their spring break. We actually had an obligation to let them back.

Despite the fact that essential workers are allowed to enter the country, the social and economic impact of travel restrictions has put a strain on Canadians and our economy. Considering certain U.S. states have lower rates of infection than others, from a border perspective, and to reduce the impact of border restrictions on Canadians, what would it take for Canada to allow selective re-entry from certain U.S. states?

• (2210)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank the member for explaining so deftly the ins and outs of regulatory processes in Canada, including the changes we have made to accelerate access to medications and medical devices, particularly during the pandemic. It is a testimony to Canadian integrity that our regulators are seen worldwide as leaders in this field.

In response to borders, the member is right. Since the pandemic, we have taken successively stronger measures at the borders, first, going from screening from affected countries, and then later to actually restricting entry for non-essential travellers and foreign nationals.

Obviously Canadians always have the right to come home, as the member has pointed out. Even for Canadians returning home, we have additional measures, including mandatory quarantines for 14 days. We even have quarantine facilities for people who are coming into Canada who are either ill or unable to quarantine safely, to ensure that we can catch any importations of illness.

A lot has happened on the border. As the member points out, some Canadians are frustrated, on the other side, about the border measures and how it either restricts travel or it restricts reunification with friends and extended family.

There is a lot of work happening right now to better understand how to manage the border to prevent importation, but also to do so in a way that allows for increased mobility. It is very exciting to have ongoing border pilot projects doing that work of gathering research right now, including one in partnership with the Province of Alberta. These testing—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Fleetwood—Port Kells.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Madam Chair, yes, we noted with interest the rapid test pilot in Alberta and despite what we have heard quite often about how rapid testing could really be a game-changer in controlling the spread of the virus, the rapid testing in Alberta has not necessarily produced that result.

Studies have indicated that the quick identification of positive cases through testing does allow for the isolation of those who are sick and timely contact tracing to limit the spread of COVID-19. Recently we have seen an increase in the global use of these rapid point-of-care tests to enable diagnosis and screening. Furthermore, these kinds of tests can also help reduce the strain on the public health system. That said, they do have their limitations and, in fact, dangers. We have seen the United States withdraw from rapid testing because in many cases they are not used properly and the results they get are highly inaccurate in some cases.

That said though, what steps is the government taking to ensure ready access to these tests?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the member understands that the use of rapid tests is obviously an asset to jurisdictions but it does require careful guidance and utilization to make sure that the tests are used in a way that can actually add to the benefit of containing COVID-19. That is why not only have we been procuring rapid tests and rapidly, no pun intended, deploying them across the country to provinces and territories, but we also worked with provinces and territories to release, through the special advisory committee, updated screening and testing guidance so that we could actually understand how best to use which test for which purpose and in which setting. Again, all with the effort to contain COVID-19.

On the distribution side, we have distributed over 4.6 million rapid tests to provinces and territories to date. In Ontario it is over two million. In Quebec it is over 1.2 million, and in B.C. it is 354,000. Some provinces and territories are using these in novel ways. For example, I understand in Nova Scotia they have been deployed for use in bars and restaurants in certain pilot project settings, to understand the transmission in those settings. Other provinces are beginning to deploy them in long-term care facilities where there is a need for very quick turnaround and understanding for people who are symptomatic of whether or not they are COVID-positive, but some provinces and territories have not deployed their tests yet. We are working with—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Madam Chair, I know once we get started, there are so many details.

Business of Supply

There is one last question though that we needed time to get in. Many jurisdictions are experiencing outbreaks. They have been unable to keep up with contact tracing for people who have tested positive. Given that there is at least some asymptomatic transmission contact tracing, it is important to identify those who may be infected so that they can seek testing and help break the chain of transmission.

The Government of Canada announced surge capacity for contact tracing. Could the minister with the time available provide an overview of the support and the nature of the support provided to date?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we have provided provinces and territories with additional contact tracing support. We can do over 20,000 calls a day and we are providing support to Ontario, Quebec and Alberta, making some 1,400 to 1,600 calls per day for these provinces—

The Deputy Chair: There is no more time left. I am sorry.

The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Chair, has the minister directed her department to find out how many rapid tests would be needed to test every traveller coming into Canada at airports and border crossings?

• (2215)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, as I mentioned to the previous member who was speaking, we are so enthusiastic about the border pilot project that is happening with Alberta. There are two others happening on both the east and west coasts. That research is going to give us a very good idea of how to use testing in—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Chair, the Province of Alberta asked for forgiveness not permission, was frustrated and went out on its own.

Do you know how many rapid tests would be needed to test every traveller coming into Canada by the border crossing and at the airports?

The Deputy Chair: I would remind the member that he is to address his questions through the Chair.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, well, it is quite clear that Alberta went on its own in some regards but not in regards to testing at the border. In fact, that is a joint research project with Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada. It is designed to understand better the mix of quarantine measures along with rapid testing to alleviate the burden of quarantine for people who are travelling—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Chair, has the minister directed any of her staff or her department to come up with a plan for rapid testing or at-home testing that would reduce or eliminate the 14-day quarantine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, that is entirely the nature of this research project, as I mentioned, with Alberta. There are two

others. There is one happening on the east coast with McMaster and another happening out of the Vancouver airport. These research studies will—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Chair, can the minister tell us when that pilot project will be concluded and when those tests will be available to reduce or eliminate the 14-day quarantine in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the research study is 26 weeks in length, and the tests are available and being utilized in the pilot study.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Earlier at the health committee, Dr. Tam said that the COVID Alert app is ineffective because of a lack of testing and delays in results. Does the minister agree with Dr. Tam's assessment of the COVID Alert app?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the faster people can get their results input into the COVID Alert app, the faster people who have been close contacts can be notified of their contact with that positive case. As the member opposite notes, we have supported the provinces and territories to increase—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Chair, the Liberal government spent \$10 million on promoting the COVID Alert app and about 5% of Ontarians who tested positive actually used the COVID app to report their infections.

Does the minister agree with Dr. Tam's assessment that the COVID app is ineffective?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we certainly hope the provinces and territories utilize their full capacity to test and are utilizing their capacity to increase the turnaround time so people can have access to their results sooner. That certainly will help with the COVID Alert app. What will also help is for all jurisdictions, including Alberta, to sign on to utilize—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Chair, earlier this evening the minister said several times that they have provided 4.6 million rapid tests to the provinces. Does the minister think in a population of 35 million Canadians, where rapid tests are needed multiple times, that 4.6 million rapid tests distributed by the federal government to the provinces is sufficient?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, at this point in time I guess they are since they are not being utilized by the provinces and territories, including Alberta, but certainly more are shipped every week and we will have more to supply every single week to the provinces and territories as they require them.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Chair, did the minister just blame the provinces for not accessing and distributing rapid tests? I want to make sure I am clear on that.

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Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, what we know is that provinces and territories still have not fully deployed the rapid tests they have received in many cases.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Chair, at the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, the health minister as well as the Prime Minister told Canadians to stay home, especially during Easter. During that time, the health and the Prime Minister used the government jet to travel. In fact, the health minister used it 11 times.

Once again, during Christmas, they are telling Canadians to stay home. What are the health minister's travel plans for the Christmas holidays?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I work in Ottawa and live in Thunder Bay. I will be returning after the House rises to spend time in Thunder Bay over the Christmas season, and I will return to Thunder Bay this weekend. Like many other Canadians, I travel for work.

• (2220)

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Chair, the point is that it is do as I say, not as I do. Will Canadians be able to travel over the holiday season, if they have access to rapid or home-based testing, with a negative test result?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, we have released guidance for Canadians to protect themselves from COVID-19 over the holiday season. Of course the safest choice is to limit our interactions outside of our immediate family members, but there are additional tips—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Chair, the Deputy Prime Minister, who heads Canada's COVID response team, said that accessing rapid testing is like selling snake oil to Canadians when Canadians are losing their businesses, losing their homes, and in many cases losing their loved ones and mental health is at a critical stage.

Does the health minister agree with the Deputy Prime Minister's assessment of rapid testing?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, testing, whether rapid or not, is a very important component of containing COVID-19, but so are the following steps, which include, contact tracing and isolation of close contacts. We know that COVID-19 can spread while people are asymptomatic. That is why testing has to be a component of a strategy to contain COVID-19, using contact tracing and isolation.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member has 27 seconds.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Chair, during the COVID-19 crisis, the suicide and opioid deaths in Alberta have doubled from the first quarter to the second quarter. Mental health is at a critical stage. Will the health minister commit to implement the 988 system in Canada, yes or no?

The Deputy Chair: The minister has eight seconds to respond.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I would hope the member opposite would encourage the Province of Alberta to reverse its harmful decision to close safe consumption sites, which is making it harder for people who use opioids to stay alive.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Chair, earlier this year, about 360 international farm work-

ers, who were working in greenhouses in Leamington, Ontario, were put in solitary confinement after being required to quarantine in hotel rooms. They had no contact with anyone for 14 days, and 12 of the workers were found to be asymptomatic. The owners of the greenhouse had to shut their greenhouse down, resulting in the loss of 7.8 million pounds of vegetables. It was shut down the same day the cucumber harvest was supposed to start.

For workers, while they are in Canada, their co-workers are like their family. They live together, and then they were put in solitary confinement, away from their Canadian families. For the workers, being barred from in-person human contact was inhumane and it took a toll on their mental health. This was like COVID prison for them.

For many farmers, their farm workers return year after year to work with them. Some of them even go and visit their workers in their home countries. The relationship between farmers and their workers is like a family. In fact, earlier in the part of this forced confinement, the farmers were providing three square meals a day to each of the workers until they were banned from doing so. Then the Red Cross came in and offered them so-called meals of chips and pop.

In my family business of farming, my family has brought international seasonal workers here, just like Juan, Tyrone and others who were confined. Given that this happened earlier this year, it is understandable that Juan, Tyrone and several other seasonal farm workers like them may be reluctant to come back to Canada.

Finally, shutting down a farm or a greenhouse shuts down food production and puts Canadian food security at risk. Of the 575 greenhouse workers tested at that particular greenhouse in Leamington, 199 came back with positive tests, but none of them were hospitalized and most of them were asymptomatic.

What steps are the minister and her cabinet colleagues taking to ensure Canadian producers and workers like Juan and Tyrone will not have a repeat of what happened this year with farm workers coming to Canada?

• (2225)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I worked extensively on the Windsor-Essex outbreak with public health leaders, political leaders, members of Parliament and with the farming community and ensured that we all had one thing first and foremost, which was the protection of lives. It was tragic to see young farm workers die so far away from their homes. More had to be done. In fact, we provided support to farmers for the quarantine time. We ensured that farmers had the necessary financial resources to complete that quarantine for incoming workers.

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When it became clear that crowded housing conditions were accelerating the spread, along with interaction with other workers who were COVID-positive, and these workers were yet again becoming infected, we did send in the Red Cross to help support a humanitarian response to a growing crisis. Not only was this a risk to the farm workers, but it was a risk to the entire community of Windsor-Essex. It saw its cases climb exponentially and with a great degree of alarm. In fact, working together, we were able to put out that outbreak.

I think we have all learned a lot about how we can better protect the lives and health of farm workers, who are so far away from home, and the people who live near them.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Chair, is the minister not aware of the inhumane treatment these workers faced? Would she treat Canadians the same way?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, as we speak, thousands of Canadians are in isolation, protecting themselves and their families from COVID-19. One of the terrible aspects of COVID-19 is that we cannot necessarily tell when we are infected. Sometimes we are asymptomatic and—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Chair, is the minister aware that the 2021 season for greenhouse growers begins in January in Ontario? This is when they need their international farm workers. We need to hear from the minister what she will do to guarantee that we can put them to work right away, when they are needed, and I have a suggestion for her.

Instead of the 14-day quarantine we saw earlier this year, will the minister put in place a rapid-testing pilot project for farm workers coming to work in greenhouses in Ontario?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, if that is what the Province of Ontario wants to do, then I am certain that could be a very useful research tool. I think the more that we understand about the blend of testing and quarantine as a way to reduce the spread of COVID-19, the better.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Chair, is the minister not aware that the Government of Canada is already partnering with the Government of Alberta in a rapid-testing pilot project at the Calgary Airport for travellers who are arriving internationally?

On Tuesday, here in Ontario, the premier of Ontario announced rapid testing, with results in as little as two minutes, will be more available, especially in long-term care facilities and in partnership with a few Ontario employers. Why can the minister not create something similar to the Alberta pilot project and the Ontario government's rapid testing for international farm workers coming to Ontario in January?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, it is great to hear that Ontario is now beginning to use the two million tests that it has received from the federal government and deploying them in long-term care.

I actually have a call scheduled with Minister Elliott this week. I will be happy to speak with her about additional pilot studies that can be undertaken. I am certainly always interested in more evidence and data that demonstrates how we can better stop the spread of COVID-19.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Chair, does the minister not understand that this is a key piece in ensuring Canadians' food security in terms of preventing food shortages, guaranteeing the safety of food produced and to holding down food prices?

Again, I will ask the minister this: Does she feel it is important, and will she work with the Province of Ontario, in implementing the pilot test project for greenhouse workers coming in January?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I am extremely seized with the safety and protection of temporary foreign workers who come to Canada to pick our produce, help farmers and help Canadians. In fact, they deserve safety and dignity.

That is why our government has been working with the farming industry to ensure they have the supports they need to provide safe and adequate housing. That is one of the factors that contributed to the spread of COVID-19.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Chair, will the minister at least agree, perhaps with flexibility, when producers have large acreages or large greenhouses, that their workers can both isolate and continue to work at the same time, so they can tend to the crops, we can ensure food security and we do not go down the same road that we did earlier in the spring?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the member's question reflects that she does not understand that it is not me who makes those rules; it is local public health.

The local public health officer of Windsor-Essex took incredibly brave and strong measures to protect not only the temporary foreign workers, but the residents of Windsor-Essex. Asking people to work and come into contact with others while they are positive with COVID-19 is not a safe practice according to the medical officer of health of Windsor-Essex, so he implemented—

• (2230)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Madam Chair, I will speak for five or 10 minutes, and then I will ask my colleague, the Minister of Health, a question.

[*English*]

Patty, when you come back, you will certainly be welcomed by the people of Thunder Bay—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member needs to address all questions and comments to the Chair. If he wants to have a personal conversation, he will have to do it on the side.

The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

Business of Supply

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Madam Chair, thank you for those words of wisdom.

Let me start by saying that obviously the wrench that has been thrown into our financial predictions, both in terms of health care and for all ministries of the government, has been COVID-19.

The opposition has been very vocal in criticizing our government for delays: being slow to do things, to recognize asymptomatic transmission, to close the borders, to advocate the use of masks and rapid testing and, most recently, to distribute vaccines to the people who need them. I think these accusations are unfair.

No one in the world predicted this pandemic, and certainly no one in the world was prepared for this pandemic. As of late, we have all become armchair epidemiologists, and for all those armchair epidemiologists out there, let me fill them in a bit in terms of the history of infectious disease. We are on chapter 12 of a very long book on infectious disease. Certainly infectious disease in the past has a long history. Infectious disease in the past was exceedingly important.

For example, in 541, there was the plague of Justinian. At its height, that epidemic killed more than 5,000 people per day in Constantinople.

In the 1300s, the Black Death or the plague killed between 30% and 60% of the European population.

In 1812 it was typhus. When Napoleon retreated from Moscow, typhus killed more people than the Russian army did.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the white plague, tuberculosis, killed an estimated one-third of the English population.

Of course in 1918, Spanish influenza, which was a particularly virulent strain of influenza, affected an estimated 50% of the population at the time and resulted in 80 million to 100 million deaths, which was 3% to 5% of the world's population.

Of note, as with COVID, infectious disease disproportionately affects the poorest people in our society. Tuberculosis and typhoid at one time were epidemics in wealthy countries in the northern hemisphere, but now have become rare in those countries. However, they remain as problems in many developing countries.

Generally, as a result of the industrial revolution and increased prosperity in developing countries, infectious diseases have been a lot less of a concern in the northern hemisphere and northern countries; however, they remain endemic in many Third World countries.

As a result of the industrial revolution and the increased prosperity in northern, more affluent societies, we have developed the belief that pandemics will no longer affect us, which has certainly proved wrong.

Before SARS and before COVID, there was, I would point out, HIV/AIDS, which was a pandemic, albeit a very slow-moving one, that affected multiple countries around the world.

It was SARS that really woke up the world to the threat of infectious disease, both in terms of morbidity and mortality, but also in terms of their effects on the economy.

In 2005, in response to SARS, the World Health Organization approved and passed the international health regulations, or IHRs, that gave the WHO the authority to advise countries, including Canada, on what measures to take to limit the spread of infectious diseases among countries.

● (2235)

What has happened in recent years goes a long way in explaining why not just Canada, but the whole world reacted as it did to COVID, and why there was the slowness in reaction.

Let me start off by giving a brief history of recent infectious diseases in the world. H5N1 was in 1997 in Hong Kong. There was a concern it would become a pandemic, but did not. H7N7 was in the Netherlands, which was another influenza outbreak. Again, there was a concern it would become a pandemic and it did not. H9N2 was in Hong Kong and it mostly affected children. There was a concern it was going to become a pandemic and it did not. H7N9 was the same thing.

In 2009 to 2010, there was H1N1. There was an outbreak and it did go global, but WHO was heavily criticized for having overreacted and having been too quick to hit the panic button. In 2013, MERS was another coronavirus. There was a concern it would become a pandemic, but it did not. There were over 50 outbreaks of Ebola in Africa. Again, a highly infectious disease with a very high rate of mortality that really exceeds COVID-19. Again, a concern it would become a pandemic and never did.

This is really important to remember. There were numerous outbreaks of infectious disease where there was a genuine concern they would become pandemics. They never did. WHO was criticized for overreacting, being too fast to hit the panic button.

When COVID came along in December 2019, people were a little hesitant to react. That is for a reason. There were all these other outbreaks of diseases that never went anywhere. WHO was heavily criticized for overreacting in the past with something that did not turn out to be a major concern. That, in part, explains its reaction.

As it turns out, they were wrong. We were wrong, they were wrong and everyone was wrong. It certainly explains the mentality and the reason for both our Public Health Agency and for our Ministry of Health being hesitant to react. The vast majority of times, it turned out to be nothing.

As for the measures we have taken in reaction to the pandemic, it is important to consider the role of the international health regulations in the response, and also the prevailing attitude of people in public health who are in positions of authority with respect to coercive measures and their negative interpretations of the necessity of coercive measures with respect to controlling a disease.

The international health regulations are akin to a treaty, which the World Health Assembly adopted with the input of Canada and with the approval of Canada. In the international health regulations, it specifically requires countries to adopt measures that are least restrictive to international travel. This was largely in response to—

● (2240)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member has already used up 10 minutes. I would ask him to get to the questions.

The hon. member.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Madam Chair, as a public health practitioner for 35 years, I know there is a lot of concern among health practitioners, front-line workers. I worked in an emergency room for a lot of years. What are we doing in terms of PPE?

Globally, I think over 8,000 health care workers have died as a result of COVID-19. Obviously, in Canada, despite all the criticism, we have done a little better. A lot of people in the health care profession have not been infected, but what has our government done with respect to PPE? How much money have we put into it? What did we have and when did we start to address the problem of PPE for health care workers?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank the member for the interesting history of pandemics. He is absolutely right. Countries have abided by the international health regulations. Also, he is right that Canada was one of the creators of the international health regulations, which guide countries in their actions when there are outbreaks.

The member is also right in that this is the public health crisis of a lifetime; the big one, as people in public health say. It is unprecedented. I am certain that the international health regulations will be reviewed as a result of COVID-19. I look forward to that review should I be so privileged to take part in it.

With respect to his question on health care providers, the member is right. In the early stages of the pandemic, we did have some supplies in the national emergency stockpile, but as Dr. Tam said, we had seen one pandemic—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Madam Chair, at the forefront of everybody's mind is the vaccine. I certainly have been advocating 100% that the answer to this problem is the vaccine. I know we have been heavily criticized for the fact that we do not have the capacity to make vaccines. However, as I sit on the health committee, I know 100% that we have invested in organizations, companies and universities that have been trying to develop a vaccine and also trying to develop the capacity.

Could you tell us what investments our government has made both in developing a vaccine and producing the vaccine?

The Deputy Chair: I cannot, but I will ask the minister to answer.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I will finish my answer to the last question, because it is important.

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In fact, early on we realized as a country that we were going to need to do two things: one, boost domestic production of PPE; and two, act incredibly rapidly and acquire PPE from around the world in what the Deputy Prime Minister has called the “wild west”. That is exactly what we did. We left nothing on the table. We spent billions of dollars to procure PPE and to stimulate domestic production to protect health care workers and other health care professionals.

It is paying off. We have a fairly stable supply of PPE. There are still shortages with specific types of PPE, but we work very closely with provinces and territories to fill those gaps, and we are in a much stronger position now.

The Deputy Chair: The member has one minute left for the question and the answer.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Madam Chair, at the health committee, the minister talked about her personal relationships and personal conversations with CEOs and people in the vaccine companies whom she felt have assisted and will assist Canada in getting the vaccines sooner. This was really interesting and also really important.

Can the minister please go over some of those conversations and how she thinks they will help us get the vaccine faster?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, all ministers involved in procurement and in the COVID response, which is most of us, have had conversations with CEOs of pharmaceutical and PPE producers. In fact, we have pulled out all the stops, sometimes in very unusual circumstances, to get what Canadians need to respond to COVID-19.

● (2245)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Chair, I will be taking the first five minutes and the member for Edmonton Strathcona will take the remaining 10 minutes.

Dr. Henry stated, “The decriminalization of people who are in possession of drugs for personal use is the next logical and responsible step we must take to keep people alive and connect them to the health and social supports they need.” She is calling for a model similar to the one used in Portugal, which decriminalized drug possession in 2001.

Will the minister follow Dr. Henry's evidence-based medical advice by fully adopting a health approach to drug addiction, and decriminalize simple possession?

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Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank the member opposite for her passion regarding equity and supports for people who use substances. As she knows, I am also passionate about that. That is why I have spent so much time speaking to Dr. Henry; Dr. Daly, with Vancouver Coastal Health, whom she may know; and Mayor Kennedy, who has been doing some work in this area.

We will continue to be there for people who use substances. We will continue to provide communities and the provinces with the tools they need to combat problematic substance use and support people who use substances so that, first, they can get access to supports and services and, second, they can receive fair and ethical treatment no matter where they live.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, all of the people the minister mentioned are advocating for decriminalization. While it is not a silver bullet, it is definitely an important measure to help stem the tide of overdose deaths. However, the truth is that Canada is faced with three crises: the pandemic, the opioid crisis and a national housing crisis.

In my riding, the Downtown Eastside is a strong, caring and resilient community, but we are faced with one of the most deadly public health emergencies of our lifetime. To date, more than 1,000 people in B.C. have died of an overdose in 2020. We are seeing an average of five overdose deaths a day in B.C.

Dr. Henry said, “Now more than ever, we must remove the stigma of drug use and remove the shame people feel, which keeps them from seeking help or telling friends and family.” The path forward to help remove the stigma is to decriminalize.

Back in July, the member for Vancouver Kingsway and I wrote to the minister and urged her to implement a nationwide exemption, under section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, to the prohibition on simple possession in section 4, as an urgent interim health measure. Yesterday, the City of Vancouver unanimously passed a motion to request the federal government to decriminalize simple possession of illicit drugs for personal use.

Will the minister act on those requests?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, it has been a pleasure to work with Mayor Kennedy as he seeks to solve problematic substance use in Vancouver. I have been to the Downtown Eastside a number of times and therefore in the member's riding. It is always an honour to visit, especially to talk with the front-line workers who work so compassionately with people who use substances or have experienced extreme trauma in their lives. I have committed to the mayor to explore any and all tools that can help with the City's work to decrease the stigma for people who use substances and increase access to a number of projects we have funded, including safer supply projects and safer consumption site supports.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, now they are asking for the government to decriminalize.

On top of the opioid crisis, the Downtown Eastside has the highest number of COVID-19 cases in Vancouver. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, we have been told to wash our hands and socially distance. Van East has the largest homeless encampment in the country. These health measures are next to impossible for those

who are homeless or live in overcrowded or substandard housing with shared bathrooms.

Will the minister support the province's request for a fifty-fifty cost-shared COVID-19 housing measure as a key component to address both of these health emergencies?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I know my colleague, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, has worked extensively with the province of B.C. to address the extreme shortage of housing, has funded a number of affordable housing projects in partnership with the province and continues the work, including through the \$1 billion rapid housing project announced recently.

• (2250)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Chair, through you I will start by asking the minister a series of questions about my home province of Alberta.

The federal government allocated \$3 billion to the provinces to help provide extra pay for essential health care workers, emergency responders and other crucial employees. Has Alberta received the federal funding to support the essential health care workers who are not just risking their lives on our behalf every day, but are also having to fight their own provincial government, which is tearing up contracts, laying off essential health care workers and failing to listen to our health care specialists?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, yes indeed. The federal government provided essential workers with a wage top-up of up to \$3 billion for the provinces and territories to address the need to ensure that workers, especially vulnerable workers in health care settings and other front-line workers, received pay that reflected their duties and the care they place on those duties. That money was provided on September 30.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, can the minister tell me if these funds have been spent?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, no, I cannot account for provincial spending. All I can say is that the safe restart agreement required the provinces and territories to move forward on a number of measures and the—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, could the minister finish that thought, please?

Business of Supply

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, there were commitments made by provinces and territories to use the safe restart money and the essential workers top-up to address the significant shortages in, for example, testing, contact tracing and data. In the case of the essential workers wage top-up, that was the responsibility of Alberta to spend that money appropriately.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, with the skyrocketing numbers and lack of contact tracing ability in Alberta, what is the federal government doing to get provinces to buy in to using the federal contact tracing app?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I met a number of times with the minister of health for Alberta, Minister Shandro, to talk about the need to take up the contact tracing COVID Alert app. In fact, the province is still unwilling to do so. I certainly would appreciate any assistance because I know Canadians from coast to coast would benefit—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, today I met with firefighters in Alberta and at the moment they are very afraid. They are classified as tier 3 for receiving vaccines despite the fact they are often on the front lines dealing with emergency calls and are obviously providing an essential service.

Will the minister agree to elevate firefighters to tier 1 or tier 2, as was done during the SARS pandemic?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the federal government will not determine priorities for provincial dissemination of vaccines. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization has provided national interim guidance that provinces and territories will use to determine their own priority populations. It is the work each province and territory has to do.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, will the advisory body be putting firefighters in tier 3, tier 2 or tier 1?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization has provided general guidance for provinces and territories and then they will further refine that guidance based on their own prioritization process.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, why is overdose prevention not a part of our national pandemic strategy given that it is in fact a syndemic.

Given that some jurisdictions like Alberta are actively introducing measures that are not rooted in evidence and will cause harm, will health transfers to provinces receive more direct federal oversight to ensure evidence-informed overdose prevention strategies are being used?

• (2255)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I share the dismay of the member opposite with any measures that remove protections for people who use substances, including the removal of safe consumption sites or the refusal to use a safer supply, such as prescription opioids, which could reduce the reliance on toxic street drugs.

I have written a letter to all of my counterparts to urge them to do whatever is in their power, including any regulatory powers—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, in the first wave of the pandemic, we were the worst country in the OECD when it came to deaths in long-term care homes. Tragically, we are still seeing big deadly outbreaks in long-term care homes across the country. In Edmonton, all but four residents of the South Terrace Continuing Care Centre have tested positive for COVID-19.

This is an unbelievable tragedy. We know that these for-profit centres kill. Will the government do what needs to be done to make sure that long-term care in this country puts patients ahead of profits?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I share the deep sadness of the member opposite about the loss of life in long-term care homes, where they have a duty and obligation to protect the health and safety of the people there. They are paid to do so.

That is why we have worked so closely with the provinces and territories, including providing additional monies, \$740 million, to strengthen infection prevention control in long-term care homes.

The development of national long-term care standards is included in the Speech from the Throne. We are going to do more together. Canadians are depending on it.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, according to the PHAC's recent report on an equity-based approach to COVID-19, "COVID-19 has underscored the inequities in health that are shaped by these [social] determinants [of health], highlighted how these inequities may be exacerbated in the context of a pandemic, and shown how they can aggravate and prolong the spread of disease, making the pandemic worse."

Would the minister support the implementation of a guaranteed livable income to address the inequalities shaped by the social determinants of health?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, our government has taken unprecedented action. In fact, it is one of the top countries in the OECD in terms of our response to the pandemic, including providing the CERB; revising the employment insurance program for easier access; making sure that businesses had access to wage subsidies, many of which are small businesses and on the brink without those supports; making sure that Canadians had a boost to the Canada child benefit, which has already lifted 300,000 children out of poverty; and more. We have been supporting seniors—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, I do not think the minister heard my question. I am just going to repeat it.

Business of Supply

Would the minister support the implementation of a guaranteed livable income to address the inequalities shaped by the social determinants of health?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, in Alberta, the province of the member opposite, the government has supported Canadians with \$22 billion in spending. That is the safe restart money, but also transfers to individuals and businesses to keep the Canadian economy afloat—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, that still was not an answer. I will move on.

The NDP has introduced Bill C-213 in this House to create a structure to establish universal public pharmacare in Canada. The minister would also be aware that this bill mirrors the Canada Health Act by allowing any province that agrees to provide necessary prescription drugs to their residents at no direct cost via our public health care system would receive federal funds to do so.

This is exactly the same way we fund all other covered medical services, from hip replacements to cataract surgery to broken arms. Will the minister support this bill?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the work that we have done as a government to lower the cost of drugs for Canadians is unprecedented. We have taken more action in a generation than any other government. In fact, we are going to continue that work.

Pharmacare is front and centre for us and, as the member opposite knows, we have taken important steps, including strengthening the PMPRB, and we are working on the Canadian drug agency. We will have more to say about that in the days and weeks to come, but Canadians can be sure that we will implement a universal pharmacare program that will ensure everybody can access affordable drugs.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Chair, as the health minister would she support public pharmacare or a private-public patchwork plan?

• (2300)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the member opposite knows that the creation of the universal pharmacare program is in my mandate letter. I intend to live up to that request from the Prime Minister.

The Deputy Chair: It being 10:59 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), all votes are deemed reported. The committee will rise and I will now leave the chair.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11 p.m.)

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