



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

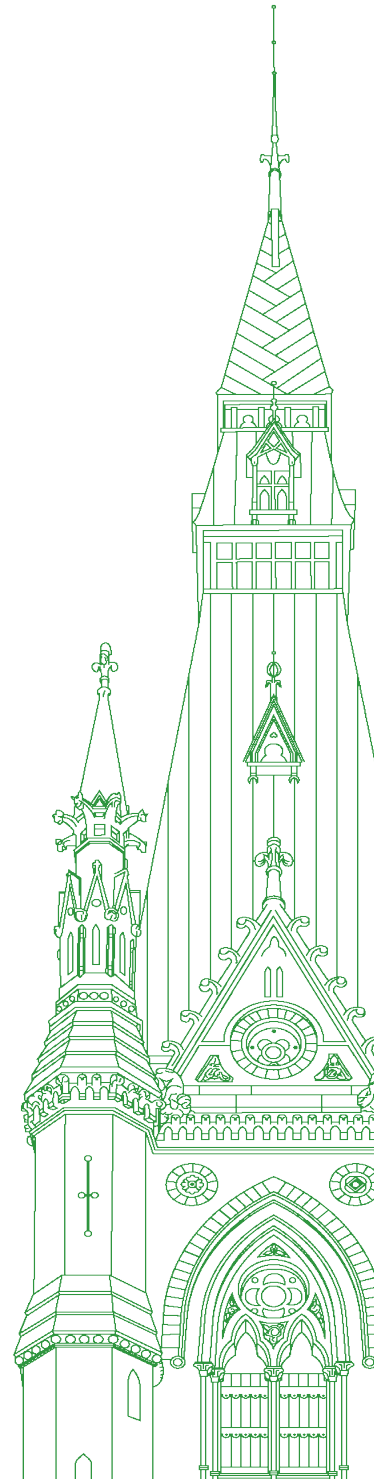
43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

House of Commons Debates

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Wednesday, January 27, 2021

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, January 27, 2021

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, led by the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1405)

[*English*]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak out against hate in all its forms.

Today is Holocaust Remembrance Day. It is a stark reminder of the atrocities that can occur when we do not speak up against hate.

On January 6, we watched as Capitol Hill in Washington was stormed by a mob of insurrectionists, white supremacists and hate groups, cheered on by leaders who spread misinformation and promoted vigilantism.

In Nanaimo—Ladysmith, racism raised its ugly head on social media and in the community when there was a COVID outbreak in the Snuneymuxw First Nation. Ignorance about the effects of colonization on indigenous health outcomes was on full display. Chief Wyse rightly said that the burden of addressing racism needed to come off of the shoulders of indigenous people. Indeed, it needs to come off the shoulders of all who are affected by racism and bigotry.

Together, we have a responsibility to combat hate in all its forms.

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VIRTUAL TOWN HALLS

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Kitchener—Conestoga, we continue working hard to make sure we safely stay connected.

In 2020, we learned that virtual events help keep constituents up to date on important issues and allow their voices to be heard.

I am proud to say that we are coming up on our 25th virtual town hall featuring local leaders discussing important community issues. Guests have included mayors, elected officials, community service groups, economic development representatives, environmentalist groups, diversity and inclusivity advocates, veterans, guests from various economic sectors and even at the end of the year a town hall that featured some holiday music.

The success of these virtual town halls is due to the contributions of everyone who shares his or her ideas in these engaging discussions. I feel grateful and inspired to be part of these important conversations and I appreciate everyone's involvement in these meaningful dialogues.

I would like to invite all of Kitchener—Conestoga to view our past town halls online and encourage them to participate at our next one.

* * *

• (1410)

ESSENTIAL GUEST WORKERS

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the first of over 14,000 essential guest workers are beginning to arrive in the Windsor-Essex region for this year's agricultural season.

Leamington Mayor Hilda MacDonald has called me and both the federal and provincial levels of the governments to be accountable for these workers. Together with Kingsville Mayor Nelson Santos and Warden Gary McNamara, they continue to press for more effective oversight of guest workers within their communities. Good for them. They are deserving of better answers than those to date.

Statements by Members

Together with my colleagues from Essex, Windsor—Tecumseh and Windsor West, we are working across party lines and jurisdictions to develop the answers the municipalities and local communities need. We look forward to working with industry to address these challenges for our more sustainable regional economy and provide quality of life for all, including our essential guest workers.

We thank Mayor MacDonald for her leadership.

* * *

STUART THIESSON

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with great respect, I recognize Mr. Stuart Thiesson of Saskatoon, who passed away this month.

Stuart worked in the farm movement for 41 years with the Saskatchewan Farmers Union and later the National Farmers Union. He was the wordsmith behind so much of what the NFU stood for, holding the pen that drafted hundreds of presentations to provincial and federal governments. Stuart was gifted in turning ideas into words and turning those words into calls for action.

A founding member of the Saskatchewan Agricultural Hall of Fame, he served on the Labour Relations Board and the Statistics Canada advisory committee and was a founding director of the Saskatoon Community Clinic, where he fought for accessible health care for all.

As well, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Saskatchewan and inducted into the Agriculture Hall of Fame. Stuart loved to play musical keyboards and host friends and family at his cabin on Emma Lake.

Stuart is truly one of Canada's best.

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[*Translation*]

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, every year in January the Alzheimer Society organizes an Alzheimer's Awareness Month.

In order to shine the light on neurocognitive disorders and the impact they have on people, let us listen to the voice of the people with the disease and their families, as well as caregivers and health care professionals, particularly during this pandemic when they are more isolated than ever. Let us consider the example of Lyne, a human resources professional who was not prepared to become a caregiver when her husband Yves was diagnosed at the young age of 63.

Life does not stop because of Alzheimer's. The maintenance of social connections and stimulating daily activities are vital in helping people retain their place in the community. Awareness is the first step in combatting judgment and discrimination, strengthening human rights, effecting policy change and doing anything else that might help people with neurocognitive disorders.

We have a duty to remember all victims and their families so that they are not forgotten.

ONLINE SCHOOL

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during this lockdown, many parents are experiencing a new reality with online school.

I would like to thank all the teachers in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, who are doing amazing work online with our kids. Across the country, teachers are using their imagination and creativity to motivate kids during online school. One teacher in particular, Danika Bélisle, who teaches grades 7 and 8 at École secondaire catholique Embrun, is doing a really fantastic job. Every day, Ms. Bélisle shows up in a costume or a disguise to boost student morale during these trying times.

Our young people are our future. They are going through tough times too. Every day, from coast to coast to coast, their determined teachers are right there with them, and they make a big difference in our kids' lives. Three cheers for teachers!

* * *

● (1415)

[*English*]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, operating a small business is difficult in good times; operating one during COVID is a struggle, and for those who opened a new business in 2020, it has been a nightmare.

The Canada emergency business account is supposed to help small businesses, but new ones are being turned away instead.

My constituent, Laura-Lee Gamby, signed her lease in February 2020 but did not open until August. She is not eligible for CEBA. Michelle Joyce and Kevin Thompson did not get a CRA number for their restaurant before March 31; they cannot get help. Chris Brakel opened his gym right before this pandemic hit, and he has been denied assistance. Dr. Charlton, a long-time chiropractor, just updated her CRA number in March because she no longer has staff. Now she cannot get help because hers is considered a new business. I could go on.

The rules preventing new businesses from getting help need to change. The government needs to fix CEBA and help our new entrepreneurs, now.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the COVID-19 pandemic has caused tremendous hardship in our communities, it has also presented an opportunity for our Canadian spirit of kindness and generosity to shine through. In my wonderful riding of Humber River—Black Creek, Dennis Keshinro is one of those wonderful individuals.

Dennis and his great team of volunteers have been heroes in our community, delivering bundles of food and personal protective equipment to over 500 residents and organizing fundraisers for those in our community worst affected by this pandemic. His contribution and his wife and family's dedication to Humber River—Black Creek are a reminder to us all that even in dark times we can all strive to do better and exemplify what it means to be Canadians. I thank Dennis.

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BON SOO WINTER CARNIVAL

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in past years, I have risen in the House and invited all members of Parliament to join me in Sault Ste. Marie for Bon Soo, our annual winter celebration.

This year, however, the 58th Bon Soo Winter Carnival will be transformed from a predominantly outdoor event to an online virtual event. Make no mistake about it: Bon Soo is on. This year, with a click of the keyboard, everyone can join us for one of Canada's best winter carnivals. This year, we will not be gathering to watch fireworks or shooting down the ice bum slides or braving a polar bear dip, but the spirit of Bon Soo is as strong as ever, with online contests, games and more scheduled for February 5 to 15.

Reinventing a winter carnival has been a challenge for our awesome organizers and volunteers, but I am proud to see the essence of Bon Soo, the celebration of winter and northern Ontario, continues to thrive even in the middle of a pandemic. Happy Bon Soo, everybody.

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TRAGEDIES IN WEST NOVA

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find myself once again talking about a tragedy in West Nova and commemorating lives lost.

On December 15, the *Chief William Saulis*, a scallop dragger out of Yarmouth, sank in the Bay of Fundy. Lost were Captain Charles Roberts and fishermen Michael Drake, Daniel Forbes, Geno Francis and Leonard Gabriel. There is always a danger of losing lives at sea. Sadly, these six hard-working men lost their lives providing for their families.

While the RCMP and Coast Guard have found the sunken vessel in 60 metres of water, only one body has been returned for burial.

[*Translation*]

Less than a month later, on January 10, search and rescue was called to the small community of Morris Island, where Kenneth Surette and his wife Noreen disappeared while visiting their camp

Statements by Members

on a neighbouring island. Searchers found Noreen's body, but it took fishers a few days to find Kenneth's.

[*English*]

We need to thank the Canadian Forces search and rescue ground search and rescue teams, the Coast Guard, the RCMP and the hundreds of volunteers who supported the efforts and the families during this difficult time.

We need to remain Nova Scotia strong. May they all rest in peace.

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MAUREEN AMBERSLEY AND ARLENE REID

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout the pandemic our front-line health care workers have been taking care of our seniors, supporting patients and being there for our loved ones when we cannot. Today, I want to commemorate two health care workers from Peel region who lost their lives saving the lives of others.

Maureen Ambersley was a registered practical nurse and worked in the Extendicare Mississauga long-term care home for more than 13 years. She lived in Brampton and was an excellent nurse and a caring mother and grandmother.

Arlene Reid worked as a personal support worker for the Victorian Order of Nurses in Peel region. Arlene is survived by her five children and three grandsons and was described as having a vibrant smile that lit up every room.

While Arlene and Maureen lost their lives in the pursuit of caring for those who needed it most, their passing is a tragedy that should remind everyone about the toll this pandemic is taking on our health care workers across this country.

We will never forget their service.

* * *

● (1420)

COVID-19 VACCINES

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months we have been begging the government to step forward to help the aviation sector. We have pushed to exhaustion the ideas of rapid testing, pilot projects and a well-thought-out plan, but it is evident that the effects of the government's inaction go well beyond this sector, as we see the chaos and fear surrounding us today. The implementation of further travel requirements, with more on the way, is further proof of the government's incompetence. We pushed rapid testing and testing on arrival; the Liberals have not listened.

Statements by Members

Canadians did what they always do. They were patient, trusting the government when it said that a supply of vaccines was on the way, hoping this was a sign of a return to normal and a full restoration of the economy and life in Canada. Once again, the government has failed.

In September, when I first spoke about this, it was about the airline sector, but inaction and incompetence of the government has moved far beyond this. The current government managed to fail on it all, including rapid testing and testing on arrival, and now it is failing terribly on vaccines to the detriment of not just one sector, but all Canadians.

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[Translation]

COVID-19 VACCINES

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all remember the Prime Minister's grandstanding last December when the first vaccines arrived in Canada. He tried to give Canadians the impression that it was the beginning of a massive nationwide vaccination effort against COVID-19.

What do we know now? It was all for show. Not surprisingly, once again, our Prime Minister is all talk and no action. The reality today is that the vaccine supply has come to a complete halt. No more vaccines are coming into Canada. The provinces have confirmed that they are waiting anxiously for this Liberal government to push ahead with the vaccine rollout.

As recently as January 5, this Prime Minister had no problem criticizing the provinces because he thought vaccines were not getting into people's arms fast enough. Instead of being condescending and lecturing the provinces, why is he not showing leadership by ensuring an effective and continuous supply of vaccines to get Canadians back to work, get our economy moving and put an end to this pandemic once and for all?

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[English]

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is International Holocaust Remembrance Day, and with deep love, I honour my grandmother.

I adored my grandmother, a survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camp and a woman of courage who gave up my father into hiding during the war, which saved his life. It was a fortunate choice, a choice that graced me with having him as a father. He was the only surviving child on both sides of my paternal family after the war, with five survivors in total. As a mother, I cannot imagine having to make that choice, but she did, in all of her courage, kindness, wisdom and strength.

To all individuals who lost loved ones during the war whom they may have known, to all those who feel a loss due to those relatives they were never blessed to know but whom they cherish in their blood memory, I extend my heart, strength and hope for a better, kinder, more gentle world for all today as we strive to ensure human rights and dignity for all.

I remember. We remember.

* * *

[Translation]

REGIONAL NEWSPAPER IN THE MAURICIE

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 1920, Joseph-Hermann Fortier founded the daily newspaper *Le Nouvelliste* in a modest space on Rue du Platon in the heart of downtown Trois-Rivières.

Over the many years and issues, several renowned columnists and journalists joined the team to cover and analyze current events in the Mauricie.

On October 30, 2020, *Le Nouvelliste* celebrated in a more subdued than festive manner its 100th anniversary, a centennial marked by rushed but necessary efforts to digitize the publication in the midst of a pandemic. *Le Nouvelliste*, which has changed hands several times, was able to adapt and evolve by adopting a co-operative model.

I want to acknowledge the invaluable media contribution of our daily newspaper and wish a happy anniversary to *Le Nouvelliste*.

* * *

● (1425)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Today, let us remember the millions of lives lost, and may their memories be a blessing. Let us think of those who survived and the families whose lives were shattered forever. It is for those we lost, those who survived and their families that we must continue to do the work necessary and honour our commitment of “never again”.

Sadly, we see a continued rise in anti-Semitic attacks year over year. There is still much work to be done, but I am proud to be part of the multipartisan international task force on combatting online anti-Semitism with elected officials across the globe. As members of Parliament, it is our duty and responsibility to ensure that the hateful acts that led to the Holocaust never happen again.

Today, on behalf of the Conservative Party of Canada, I pledge our unwavering commitment to “never again”.

[Translation]

SHELTER FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have all seen the devastating impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable in our society. The plight of the homeless has especially resonated with us, and the lack of resources for those without a fixed address has come to light. We have also witnessed the important work being done for the homeless by workers on the ground, who are tireless, creative and compassionate.

Some young people are also homeless, and there are very few resources to meet their needs. In Châteauguay, we rely on the dedicated team at L'Élan des jeunes, an organization that provides accommodation and services for homeless youth.

I am very pleased to say that with \$423,000 in financial assistance from the rapid housing initiative, Élan des jeunes will be able to handle more requests.

The Speaker: The hon. member for La Prairie on a point of order.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the whips and leaders agreed that male MPs participating virtually must wear a tie. You are aware of this and have also insisted on it.

I saw that the member for Sault Ste. Marie was wearing a red sweater, something that you would wear to a festival. We are not at a festival; we are in the House of Commons. I would like the Leader of the Government and his whip to be reminded of that.

The Speaker: I was just about to raise that point. I thank the hon. member for La Prairie.

I want to remind all members that no one is allowed to wear clothing with distinguishing marks. There is a fair amount of leeway here. In the past, there has been a lot of flexibility for members making statements under Standing Order 31. Normally, we can see the tie and a jacket is worn over the sweater. This case was a bit of a stretch.

[English]

I want to remind all members to be judicious and use some reason when making their S. O. 31s because we do not want any messages going out. Again, props evoke an emotion in members in the chamber and we want to keep everything as peaceful and civil as possible.

Mr. Terry Sheehan: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of clarification. I was wearing a tie under the sweater with a coat over it, as in the past. I think if you looked closely, you could see the top of it.

• (1430)

The Speaker: We will leave it at that. We will use this as a learning lesson so that members do not do it again in the future. Members should ensure their ties are showing when they have a jacket on and everything should be fine.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we now know the government's first vaccine deal with Chinese pharmaceutical giant CanSino fell apart almost immediately after the Prime Minister announced it. It only took a week for the Chinese state to stop the necessary material from being exported to Canada so research and production could happen. It was the only leading vaccine the Liberal government was pushing to be made in Canada.

Why did it take the government three months to admit the CanSino deal had fallen apart?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning, we knew that signing deals for vaccines with as many different companies as possible was going to be the best way of ensuring that Canadians made it through this pandemic. That is exactly what we did. We signed a record number of vaccine deals with potential vaccine makers, and that is why we now have more vaccine doses potentially per person than anyone else.

Yes, we cast the net very wide. Some of the deals did not work out, including with CanSino, but we secured doses, early doses, for Canadians through the deals we did agree to.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says he cast the net wide. Well, Providence Therapeutics is a Canadian company that has been part of the COVID-19 vaccine race. It submitted a proposal to the Liberal government in April for a vaccine. It did not hear back until August, the same time the government rolled out Pfizer and Moderna, which would not make vaccines in Canada.

After months of global hoarding of PPE and supply issues in the first wave of the campaign, why did the Liberal government abandon the chance to make a vaccine here in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think most Canadians understand that what was incredibly important during this pandemic was to make our decisions informed by the recommendations of our top scientists, health officers and medical professionals, and that is what we did. We followed the advice of the vaccine task force on who to sign deals with and how to move forward.

I am very pleased to highlight that we have actually given \$10 million to Providence Therapeutics for it to commence its clinical trials to support made-in-Canada solutions as well. Science has guided us every step of the way.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister waited five months to even respond to a Canadian company that could make the vaccine here, and months are an eternity in the worldwide race for vaccines.

Oral Questions

In June, the National Research Council told committee that the CanSino agreement was still going ahead. In July, the government told CTV that the CanSino vaccine was going to be produced in Canada. The government was negotiating with other manufacturers while all this was going on.

Why did the government not get the right to produce any of these vaccines in Canada when the Prime Minister knew that the CanSino deal was dead?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, this government based our decisions on the best recommendations of the top scientists and experts in vaccinations and epidemiology across the country to make the right decisions. That guided us every step of the way.

Yes, we looked to sign deals with as many different companies as possible to ensure that we would get the vaccines for Canadians as they started to arrive, and that is exactly what we are doing. We had a strong and aggressive plan to do that and we are delivering for Canadians.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are actually no deliveries for Canadians this week.

[*Translation*]

The European supply of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines is worrisome for Canada.

The European Union is going to impose export controls on the vaccines. They are engaging in protectionism over the vaccines. We could end up seeing a bidding war. There is fierce competition around the world.

Has the minister called European leaders to confirm our orders?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just an hour ago, I spoke to Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, about our concerns. We are all worried that we will not get the vaccine doses we signed a contract to buy.

She assured me that the transparency measures undertaken in Europe would not have an impact on Canada's deliveries of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

• (1435)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are tired of the long delays, and there are problems with vaccine distribution. Anxiety is at an all-time high for Canadians, and COVID-19 variants are emerging. Canadians deserve better.

When will the Prime Minister take action and give Canadians the truth about the real vaccine delivery dates?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it a bit disturbing to hear the leader of the official opposition playing political games and suggesting that we are not telling Canadians the truth.

On the contrary, we have demonstrated rigour and transparency from the beginning. We have been sharing with the provinces and territories all of the dates and forecasts that we have and that we are

receiving from the companies providing the vaccines. We will continue to be transparent.

If the leader of the official opposition really wants to reassure Canadians during this pandemic, he needs to start making sure he is telling the truth.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has a responsibility when it comes to funding the health care systems of Quebec and the provinces. The existing commitment to contribute 50% has never been implemented in real life.

This morning, I had the opportunity to talk to the Premier of Quebec in his capacity as the chair of the Council of the Federation. He is going to speak to the leader of the official opposition in the coming days, and he wants to know whether the premiers' demands for health transfers to be increased to 35% will be met in the next federal budget, the budget that the Prime Minister is preparing for the election.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I regularly discuss this issue with the provincial premiers, including the Premier of Quebec, who chairs the Council of the Federation.

We have assured them that we will keep increasing health transfers. For now, however, we are offering short-term help. That is why we have sent billions and billions of dollars in direct transfers to help Quebecers and Canadians across the country. That is what we will continue to do.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, their phone calls must not be going all that well, because what Quebec and the provinces want is long-term, predictable funding. They want transfers boosted from the current 22% to 35%.

That amounts to \$28 billion, because our parents and grandparents and vulnerable people need health care workers, health care equipment and health care services.

Is the Prime Minister saying no to all of Canada's premiers? Is the Prime Minister saying no to our parents, our grandparents and our seniors?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, actually, I have a question for the leader of the Bloc Québécois. Why is he saying no to working together to better protect our seniors, our parents and our grandparents?

We want to bring in measures to ensure that all seniors in Canada, no matter where they live, receive the best possible care. That is what we are working on with many of the provinces. I hope that Quebec will recognize that we must work together in order to protect our parents and grandparents and not make political attacks.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the vaccination delays mean more people will get infected and more people will die. Experts have made it clear that one of the biggest transmissions of COVID-19 happens in workplaces.

Will the Prime Minister commit to improving access to paid sick leave to protect our workers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were very proud to be able to introduce sick leave measures that received unanimous support from all members of the House of Commons, because we know how important it is.

We continue to work with the provinces, and we hope that the provinces will also participate and ensure, as many already have, that workers have sick leave and support. The federal government is there to provide \$8 or \$9 out of every \$10 for such measures during this pandemic. We also look forward to working with the provinces on issues like these.

• (1440)

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, delays in receiving the vaccine mean more people will get infected and, sadly, more people will die. Experts have said one of the biggest transmissions of COVID-19 happens in workplaces. Experts also agree that one of the best tools we have to stop the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces is paid sick leave.

Will the Prime Minister commit to making the existing federal program, which we fought for, broader and easier to access to protect workers and their communities?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were pleased to bring forward paid sick leave for workers who are not covered by their workplaces. We were happy to have the support of all parties in the House to do just that. We will continue to work with the provinces and territories to ensure that every worker gets the right protection. We have done a lot from the federal level and are always looking to do more, but we also know there are many things we should be doing in partnership with the provinces. We look forward to continuing to work with willing provinces.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the provinces had to speed up vaccinations under pressure from the federal government, which had promised that vaccines would arrive in Canada regularly every week. This week, however, Pfizer is not sending us any vaccines. Next week, we will get a very small amount. Quebec is ready and able to administer 250,000 doses per week. Canadians and Quebeckers are tired of being taken for fools.

Where are the vaccines that were promised?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as new vaccines were being developed for the entire world, we knew there would be some bumps in the road in terms of product

Oral Questions

and plant issues. That is why Pfizer's delay is unfortunate, but within a few weeks, it will be back to shipping hundreds of thousands of doses a week for everyone. We are still on track to meet all our targets for the end of February, the end of March and even having everyone vaccinated by September. We are still delivering for Canadians, because we know how important this is.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps saying that we have a vaccine portfolio. What good is a portfolio if we cannot get the vaccines? There is no consistency and no transparency, which is causing chaos. The truth is that he did a bad job negotiating the contracts. The provinces have to make decisions with what little information they have.

Will the Prime Minister be transparent and make the contracts public?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that question is ridiculous.

We have been transparent all along. We immediately inform the provinces and territories of waiting times for the vaccines. Because we negotiated many different contracts with many different companies, we are able to minimize the impact of issues like the one Pfizer is experiencing. Since the company is renovating its factory, it will be able to deliver even more doses to us in a few weeks.

We will continue to be there to deliver vaccines for Canadians.

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is receiving zero doses of COVID-19 vaccines this week, even though other countries are getting plane loads of them. Last night, the minister of procurement said that Canada has the right to sue companies that break vaccine contracts with us.

Is the Prime Minister planning on suing any company for failing to deliver much-needed vaccines to Canada, or did he negotiate such bad terms that he does not have a leg to stand on?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to correct the member for Calgary Nose Hill. The contract, and the expectation, for the Pfizer vaccine is to receive four million doses by the end of March. We are very much on track for that.

Yes, there is a temporary disruption because the company is improving the factory in Belgium that produces our vaccines, but within a few weeks it will be sending us more even than the hundreds of thousands we were receiving before, and we will be on track to fulfill all of the responsibilities we laid out for Canadians.

Oral Questions

• (1445)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to correct the Prime Minister. We actually received 8% of what he said we would receive last month in the same period, so it is really one or the other. He either negotiated an iron-clad contract that would allow us to have recourse and get vaccines, or he completely failed.

We do not have any recourse. The rest of the world is getting vaccines and we are not. Which one is it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to speak with the heads of Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca over the past few days and I can assure the House that Canada is very much on track to continue to receive doses of vaccines for Canadians. We are on track to getting more than three million Canadians vaccinated by the end of Q1, as we said from the very beginning, and we will have all Canadians who want to be vaccinated, vaccinated by September 2021.

That is us delivering on the commitment we made to Canadians: that we have their backs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last September, the government tabled a 50-page bill at the last minute, and we had to pass it in 24 hours. As a result, it contains mistakes and problems, such as giving \$1,000 to workers who travelled for non-essential purposes. That does not make sense and must be fixed.

Yesterday, I moved a motion to let the government table a bill that would fix this immediately. Unfortunately, the government said no.

Why did the Prime Minister turn down our offer to work in a positive and constructive manner to close the scandalous \$1,000 loophole for travellers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we moved a motion to obtain the unanimous consent of the House of Commons to improve the bill and address this loophole. As the member stated, the bill was passed by all members of the House. Unfortunately, the Conservatives did not want to give their unanimous consent to resolve this right away.

We will continue to work with the parties in the House to fix this problem as quickly as possible, because people returning from non-essential travel should not have access to this money. We will fix this with or without the Conservatives' support.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that the Prime Minister does not like working in the House of Commons, and therein lies the problem. He introduced the bill in September and we only had a day to debate it. The result is that there are problems. He asked us the Monday after the bill was introduced to pass it right away, without debate. That is not how the process works. He made a mistake six months ago and now he wants to make the same mistake again. What we want is the opportunity to properly debate the bill.

Why will the Prime Minister not introduce the bill right after question period so that we can all debate it together, work on it and pass it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we often hear this type of thing from the Conservatives. We moved too quickly to help Canadians. We reacted too quickly. We were too generous to students, seniors and workers. During this pandemic, we made a very simple promise to Canadians. We promised that we would be there to help them. We will do whatever it takes for however long it takes. That is exactly what we are doing.

Of course, the fact that we had to work quickly to help people means that there are things that need to be corrected. That is why we are fixing the problems that none of the parties noticed when we passed this bill. We will ensure—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for La Prairie.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know that Pfizer is unable to deliver vaccines from Europe this week. We also know that Pfizer is producing vaccines just across the border in Michigan but that it cannot sell those vaccines to Quebecers and Canadians because President Trump signed an order preventing it from doing so. We know that Joe Biden is now the President of the United States and that the Prime Minister talked to Joe Biden just last week.

Did it occur to him to ask the President for an exemption to that order so that Canada can make up for the vaccines it is not getting from Europe?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was a great pleasure to talk to Joe Biden last week about vaccination, vaccine supply, partnership and how we can work together to keep our citizens safe from COVID-19 and make sure everyone gets vaccinated quickly. We will keep working with our American friends to ensure we are doing everything we need to do to help Canadians and everyone as quickly as possible.

• (1450)

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have a serious problem. Canada has no domestic vaccine production. The Americans cannot sell us any. The Europeans are threatening to halt all shipments. We just heard that the Prime Minister spoke with the European Commission an hour ago. That does not reassure me at all. He could have spoken with American officials and told them that since they are cancelling Keystone XL and enforcing the Buy American Act, they could send us some vaccines as a form of compensation, to make up for the lack of vaccines from Europe. That is called negotiating.

When will the Prime Minister finally wake up and ensure that Quebecers and Canadians can get vaccinated?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite working with a difficult administration in the United States for four years, we still managed to protect supply management. We also defended the cultural exemption and stood up for our steel and aluminum workers, even in very difficult situations and despite the protectionism of the former administration.

We are working very constructively with the new American administration on COVID-19 and climate change, and we will continue to work closely in everything we do to ensure that we are there for Canadians.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is a good storyteller, but never fails to disappoint on results. For months, we have been calling on him to take action on Keystone XL. The end results are starkly clear. Now, the governor of Michigan wishes to cancel Enbridge's Line 5 easement, which would seriously affect workers and consumers in Ontario and Quebec.

Since this outcome would negatively impact millions of Canadians, will the Prime Minister take action now so that more Canadian workers and families are not simply disappointed and left in the cold?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past seven years I have defended the Keystone XL pipeline, including to American Democrats, and I have continued to defend it every step of the way. In my conversations with President Biden and with Special Envoy Kerry, we talked about Keystone XL. We talked about energy security. I have emphasized the interconnectedness and the opportunity for us to work together to create good jobs in the energy sector, and indeed across our economies, by working together in North America. That is exactly what we are going to do.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thousands of jobs in Ontario depend on the operation of Enbridge's Line 5. In November, the governor of Michigan decided to revoke the easement, which has allowed this pipeline to operate safely for decades. Line 5 was not mentioned in the Prime Minister's readout of his call with President Biden last week, or his call with John Kerry last night.

Specifically, why has Line 5, the thousands of jobs, the decades of a safe record, not been a priority for the Prime Minister?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think all Canadians know that this government has consistently stood up for Canadian interests with a challenging situation south of the border over the past four years. We defended our steel and aluminum workers. We defended our supply management. We protected our most important trading relationship by renegotiating and even improving NAFTA.

We are going to continue to work to ensure energy security and jobs for Canadians, and continue the fight against climate change, hand in hand with the American government.

Oral Questions

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, President Biden's new buy America executive order contains much tougher rules than we have ever seen before, all but shutting Canadian businesses out of U.S. government contracts. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce says this will have a chilling effect on businesses and jobs.

The Liberals failed to negotiate Canada's participation in Chapter 13 of CUSMA, which addresses government procurement. The Liberals' trade failures just keep piling up. Is the Prime Minister negotiating buy America exemptions for Canadian businesses?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past four years, we have seen one of the most protectionist administrations the United States has ever had, and we were able to consistently defend Canadian interests, stand up for Canadian workers, and ensure our continued access to the American market and free trade.

We will continue to work with this new administration, in much more positive ways, to defend Canadian jobs and interests. I highlighted our concerns with Buy American provisions directly with the President. He committed to working together to ensure that we are creating jobs and prosperity for both of our countries.

* * *

● (1455)

HEALTH

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in this pandemic, we are hitting record cases. Canadians are worried. They think there is no plan when zero vaccines come and in the coming weeks we will receive an unknown amount. The Prime Minister is suggesting we are misleading Canadians when we ask questions about the very documents they are presenting from our health motion last fall, which he opposed. They were questions about CanSino and questions about failures to deliver what he promised last month.

The Prime Minister prorogued Parliament. He has kept contracts hidden and has not released documents to allow us to do better. Last month he promised vaccines, and we are only going to receive 8%. Will he apologize to Canadians for dropping the ball on vaccines?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives yet again try to score cheap political points, we are focused on delivering for Canadians. That is why we have delivered over a million vaccines to the provinces and territories, and hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Canadians have been vaccinated. That is why we continue to work with vaccine companies around the world to get those deliveries of vaccines to Canada.

We will be receiving hundreds of thousands of Pfizer doses in just a few weeks, more than we had before, so we can deliver what we promised to Canadians.

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the holidays, the government sent anxiety-inducing letters to close to half a million Canadians, most of whom applied for the CERB in good faith. Some were given incorrect information by the government, a government that is now threatening to make them pay back thousands of dollars in the middle of a pandemic. At the same time, the Prime Minister refuses to make companies like Imperial Oil, which took the wage subsidy and then handed out millions to shareholders and CEOs, pay back a single cent.

Why are the Liberals going after Canadians who are struggling, who did nothing wrong, yet refusing to hold their corporate friends accountable?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of this pandemic, we made a straightforward promise to Canadians: that we would have their backs. That is exactly what we did. We sent out unprecedented help to millions of Canadians who suddenly found themselves unable to work or without a job because of this pandemic. We have continued to support Canadians, and we will work with Canadians who are worried to ensure that there are no penalties and no late fees involved as a result of being misunderstood. We will work with them on a case-by-case basis.

At the same time, we will continue to ensure that all the rules were enforced, and anyone who was profiteering or taking advantage of the processes will—

The Speaker: The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his first days in office, the new U.S. president has signed a number of executive orders, including one for pausing federal student loan payments. President Biden stated, “Too many Americans are struggling to pay for basic necessities and to provide for their families.” The same can be said here in Canada. In November, this House unanimously supported our NDP motion to extend the moratorium on repaying student loans until May 31, 2021. However, there is still no action from the government.

Why is the Prime Minister content with breaking his promise to students and leaving them to struggle?

● (1500)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that young people are always hardest hit by economic shocks and downturns, and significant scarring from years of

opportunities missed because of this pandemic could potentially follow them for years. That is why we moved forward with unprecedented measures, such as the CERB for students, for example, direct supports for young people, the creation of new jobs and new opportunities for young people, and yes, with forgiveness of student loans.

We will continue to work with all parties in the House to support young people, because we need them to continue to contribute to how we get through this pandemic and help us build a better world afterwards.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms. Marci Ien (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we observe International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which commemorates the six million Jews and 11 million others who were murdered by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.

Can the Prime Minister tell this House what our government is doing to combat anti-Semitism and honour the lives of those lost in the Holocaust?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we honour the memories of the victims and survivors of the Holocaust. We pledge to tell their stories so that the horrors of the Holocaust could never happen again. We have formally adopted the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism and appointed the Hon. Irwin Cotler to lead Canada's efforts to promote Holocaust remembrance and combat anti-Semitism abroad. We will always stand with the Jewish community and fight anti-Semitism wherever and whenever it occurs.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when a worker quits their job, they are not entitled to employment insurance. That applies to all workers except for the former Governor General, who was personally selected by the Prime Minister.

Friends of the Prime Minister who leave their job get a gold plated pension to the tune of \$150,000 a year for life and a lifetime expense program.

Toxic environment, humiliation, intimidating physical contact: the examples are serious and not new. It truly took wilful blindness on the part of the Prime Minister and his office to not be aware of what was going on.

Does the Prime Minister still stand by his decision today?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as soon as we heard about the allegations in the press last summer, we launched an independent and rigorous process to look into and review the working conditions at Rideau Hall.

We know that Canadians deserve to have a safe workplace and we thank all the employees at Rideau Hall for the exceptional work they have always done to help this country and for living up to the standard of service we provide to Canadians.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is not taking responsibility for his decision. This is exactly what happens when a Prime Minister thinks he is more important than the position he holds.

The Conservatives implemented an excellent non-partisan viceregal appointment process to prevent the kind of fiasco the Prime Minister has landed us in. There was a toxic work environment and no background check. Instead of finding the best person, the Prime Minister chose virtue signalling and deliberately ignored the underlying issues. Once again, the Prime Minister's judgment is at the heart of the problem.

Will he strip the Governor General of her gold-plated pension?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will obviously look at the existing processes and improve them if necessary.

We expect everyone who serves this country to do so with dignity and to fulfill the duties of the position.

We also want to ensure that public servants across the country have safe work environments. We all agree on that, and we will continue to work towards that goal.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals just committed \$90 million in new funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. Classroom materials distributed to Palestinian students encourage them to “defend the motherland with blood”, portray child-murdering terrorists as heroes and call Israel the enemy.

Will the government suspend funding to UNRWA and commit to aid for Palestinians through alternate means, just as the previous Conservative government did and, more recently, just as the Netherlands and Switzerland did?

• (1505)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to engage in international development in many projects around the world. Our support and our presence in UNRWA continues to ensure that the materials and the funds that are vehicled to the Palestinians are done in the right way. We will continue to stand up for a two-state solution and for the kind of peace that we need to see through direct negotiations between both Israel and the Palestinian state.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just said a mo-

Oral Questions

ment ago that he would stand up to anti-Semitism whenever and wherever it occurs. Well, here it is. Stand up to it.

The fact of the matter is that \$90 million in taxpayer dollars is being used to fund UNRWA's indoctrination of children by inciting violence toward Jews. The government talks about supporting a peaceful two-state solution, yet we see funding of an agency that is working to push hatred, not peace.

On this International Holocaust Remembrance Day and with anti-Semitism across the world on the rise, how does the Prime Minister justify the use of taxpayer dollars to fund the teaching of hatred toward Jews?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have long tried to use approaches like this to score cheap political points on the backs of intolerance and victims. We will continue to do the right thing. That means, yes, standing up for Israel, standing up for a two-state solution, working closely with our partners in the region, and yes, funding development aid for the most vulnerable, including through UNRWA. That is something this government stands for.

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[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, everyone in Quebec is asking the Prime Minister for the same thing. They want him to ban non-essential flights, make sure people abide by quarantines and ensure that those who had to cancel their vacations are reimbursed.

It is January 27 and the Prime Minister has still not resolved the problems that emerged before Christmas. He waited until all of the travellers who have been returning over the past three weeks got back to Canada, and even now nothing is being done. He waited for seniors' residences in Ontario to be infected with the U.K. variant of the coronavirus.

There is no time to lose. When will he take action?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would not want my colleague to mislead Canadians. That would be unfortunate. I can reassure everyone that the measures we have been taking at our borders since March are among the strictest in the world. People who do not live in Canada are not allowed to come to Canada. That is a measure that we have had in place from the beginning.

What is more, we imposed a mandatory quarantine on everyone who is returning to the country. They are monitored by the local police and Health Canada authorities. A few weeks ago, we also began requiring a negative test—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

Oral Questions

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, he talks about quarantines, but he is not even enforcing them.

Action must be taken, but there is no easy solution. The Prime Minister was elected to make difficult decisions. Quebec makes difficult decisions every day. It imposed a curfew, and that was a difficult decision. Quebec hospitals are triaging patients. Figuring out who can or cannot be treated is a difficult decision.

Quebec closed its stores and businesses. The Prime Minister must close the border to non-essential travel.

When will he do his job of making difficult decisions and taking action to keep Canadians safe?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the start, we put in place some of the strictest measures in the world to protect our border, and we are going to do even more.

Speaking of difficult decisions, we were there to help support the Government of Quebec in making its difficult decisions, by investing billions of dollars to help Quebec businesses, families and workers. The federal government was there to help Quebecers and all Canadians directly, and we will continue to be there. It was a difficult process, but not a difficult decision—

• (1510)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

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[*English*]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians are counting on the Canadian emergency and recovery benefits to put food on the table and a roof over their heads. Unfortunately, the people who need it the most are given the runaround, wrongly labelled ineligible or trapped without support as processing backlogs force them to wait for months. Ten months later, still the paralyzing bureaucracy, confusion and loopholes in these programs continue to persist. This must be a priority. When will the government fix the emergency and recovery benefits program?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives continue to attack our hard-working public servants, we have worked with them while they have made heroic efforts to get money out to Canadians across the country in record time, in record means and in record numbers to help Canadians.

While the Conservative finance critic continues to say we should not have helped people so much, we should not have been helping families and we should have given more money to businesses, we stayed focused on helping Canadians through this. It was a simple promise that we would have Canadians' backs, and that is what we have done every step of the way, despite the critiques of the Conservatives that we were doing too much too fast.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday the government asked for unanimous consent to pass a bill correct-

ing the paid sick leave loophole in the rushed Canada recovery benefit legislation that can be exploited by non-essential travellers and vacationers. The House said no, that it was better to study it at committee to get it right this time. The Liberals then refused to table the legislation.

What could be so urgent that it needed to be passed without study, but is now so unimportant the Liberals will not introduce it for proper consideration?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again we hear the approach from the Conservatives that we rushed to help Canadians in the spring, that we rushed to help Canadians in the fall. Yes, we did. We are in a global pandemic right now and we needed to put measures out as quickly as possible to support Canadians. Of course we did not get everything perfect; nobody does. However, we made the necessary moves to deliver support to millions of Canadians to keep food on the table and help them out.

Every step of the way the Conservatives grumbled that we were doing too much too fast, that we should not be helping Canadians that much. Well, we disagree. We will be there for Canadians. We will continue to have their backs.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the old deflect and dissemble. Let us move on to another Liberal snafu.

Thousands of Canadians who have applied for EI since CERB have been refused and told to apply for the CRB, but they are being rejected because they made the original EI claim. Service Canada confirms the denials are improper. The CRA said it is trying to fix its faulty computer codes. For many, family savings have run out and there is no money for groceries.

Glib assurances are unacceptable. Where is the fix?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have delivered help to millions of vulnerable Canadians, but we know there is much more to do. We are working on repairing some of these gaps to ensure the most vulnerable Canadians get the support they need. This is something Canadians are expecting and counting on. As I said from the very beginning, this government will continue to be there to do everything necessary to help Canadians get through this.

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada had its first case of COVID-19 a year ago this week.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have acted quickly and effectively to mitigate the spread of the virus.

Could the Prime Minister tell Canadians about the border measures that have been taken to keep all Canadians safe?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Lac-Saint-Louis for his question, his leadership and his hard work in our caucus.

Our borders have been closed to foreign travellers since March. We implemented a mandatory two-week quarantine for everyone entering Canada, and incoming air travellers must have a negative test before boarding the plane. Our border measures are tough, they are right for this evolving situation, and they are working.

All options are on the table, and we will be announcing new measures very soon.

* * *

• (1515)

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the evidence is overwhelming: China is committing genocide against the Uighurs through population control, sexual violence and mass detentions, yet all we get from the Liberal government are vague expressions of concern and empty promises of an investigation. The time for action is now.

What specific steps is the Prime Minister taking to formally request that China allow such an investigation, and when will he finally declare these atrocities to be a genocide?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we of course take allegations of genocide extremely seriously and are working with the United States and our partners to move forward on concerted action. We recognize, as I have recognized directly to the leaders of China, the concerns around human rights violations in Xinjiang, and we will continue to work with the global community for transparency, for accountability and for clarity in terms of what is happening in Xinjiang.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to a question about the Uighur genocide, the foreign affairs minister said the government is calling upon China to do two things: first, allow unfettered access to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; and second, allow an independent, impartial committee of experts to enter China.

Has the government formally made these two requests of the Chinese government, either through the Chinese ambassador to Canada or through Ambassador Barton?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take the situation faced by the Uighurs in Xinjiang extremely

Oral Questions

seriously, which is why we have been bringing up this issue for years at all levels of Chinese government. We are working with our allies on assuring access for the UN special representative and on more transparency into what is going on there. We need to hold China to account as a community of nations, and that is exactly what we are going to continue to do.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is Holocaust Memorial Day. We are asking the Prime Minister direct questions about a contemporary genocide and he is refusing to answer simple direct questions. Irwin Cotler, the government's own special envoy for Holocaust remembrance and combatting anti-Semitism, agrees that Canada must recognize and respond to this genocide.

Independent investigations have already been conducted. They have drawn on survivor testimony, satellite imagery and leaked Chinese government data. The evidence is clear, the investigations have been done and the victims have testified. The government should believe them.

Why is the Prime Minister still sitting on the fence and refusing to answer questions and recognize this genocide?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been highlighting our deep concerns about the situation in Xinjiang for many years to the Chinese government. We have also worked very, very closely with our international partners on holding them to account.

We take allegations of genocide extraordinarily seriously, and that is why we are going through the right processes in terms of establishing our perspective and our official position on that. I understand the desire to move quickly on that, but it is also extremely important that we move rigorously on it.

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HEALTH

Ms. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a range of tools in our fight against COVID-19, and having access to quick test results is important in stopping the spread.

Can the Prime Minister provide an update on the status of rapid testing in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Markham—Stouffville for her excellent work.

Testing is one of the most important tools we have to stop the spread of COVID-19. We are working around the clock on the approval and procurement of new testing technologies. We have approved six rapid tests to date and sent almost 15.9 million rapid tests to provinces and territories over the past months. Even yesterday, we shipped almost 250,000 Panbio tests to Ontario.

Points of Order

We will continue working with industry, the provinces and territories and public health experts to ensure that our communities have the tools they need to keep Canadians safe.

* * *

• (1520)

[Translation]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Air Canada flight attendants have been the victims of a serious injustice.

The Liberals could not care less about workers and are allowing large corporations like Air Canada to manipulate the Canada emergency wage subsidy with impunity and for their own benefit. Rather than maintaining the employment relationship with thousands of its employees, Air Canada is pocketing as much it can and laying off four out of five flight attendants, ignoring the subsidy's primary purpose.

Will the Liberals ever stop catering to the interests of large corporations and rich people? Will they ever put workers first?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the wage subsidy was introduced to help workers, and that is what it has done for millions of workers across the country.

We will continue to ensure that the assistance goes directly to the workers. Any individual or company that does not follow the guidelines and deliver this government money as intended, to help workers, will suffer the consequences.

* * *

RAIF BADAWI

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That this House call upon the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to grant citizenship to Raif Badawi by exercising his discretion under section 5 of the Citizenship Act, which authorizes him to grant citizenship to any person to alleviate cases of special and unusual hardship.

The Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement. Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

I hear none. The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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GIRL GUIDES OF CANADA ACT

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties, and I believe if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, Bill S-1001, An Act respecting Girl Guides of Canada, be deemed read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at the report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

The Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement. Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

I hear none. The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, considered in committee of the whole, reported, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

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[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

VISUAL DISPLAYS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Earlier this week, one of your deputies ruled on whether slogans could be worn on face masks. She had indicated that they could not. I notice that the member for Battle River—Crowfoot is wearing the exact same mask that she had ruled on. In addition to that, I have noticed that a couple of members of the Bloc Québécois actually have their party logo on their masks.

I was wondering if you would like to take this opportunity to make the ruling again so that all members could be made aware of that ruling.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just a few minutes ago, or less than an hour ago, you let a member express himself even though he was not respecting the rules. I just want to make that point.

• (1525)

[Translation]

The Speaker: I want to clarify. Usually there is some flexibility during statements by members. However, the hon. member is right. I let the member talk because it was not something that caused a negative feeling for members of the House. The House leaders are discussing that subject to determine what will and will not be allowed.

[English]

We are not allowed to have a slogan or anything that represents something on a mask or in general in the chamber. I will be coming back to the chamber with a definitive answer on that, once I have consulted the leaders in the House.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a discussion took place on Monday when it was brought up, because that particular logo on a mask had something to do, specifically, with a very real thing within my constituency.

I have seen various members of all parties do similar things at different points in time. The NDP, the Bloc Québécois and Liberals have very clearly displayed certain types of messaging, including some of the backdrops that the Liberals have used in their video conferences.

In this act of consideration, when it comes to an issue that is of real and significant importance: not a slogan, but something that truly affects 1,000 jobs within my constituency, simply standing up for—

The Speaker: We are getting into the area of debate right now. I just want to clarify to all the members in the chamber and virtually, again, that I will be coming back with a definitive answer. I want to consult the House leaders to make sure that we have everyone on board and we have a very clear policy. It has been very fuzzy in the past, and we have let some things slide. I think we want to make sure we have a clear understanding of where we are going with this.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the discussion you are going to have. I am very glad you are doing this, because you are right. The rule, the convention or the practice really has been fuzzy in the past.

We are dealing with a situation regarding the Bloc Québécois masks in particular, but also the mask of my colleague from Alberta. Nobody would know this was a problem if the member had not raised it, because these people were not in the camera shot.

A relevant precedent to take into account here is the practice regarding how one is dressed in the House of Commons. The expectation that one will wear a tie and be in business attire is important when one is speaking. It seems to me there is a clear distinction between when one is speaking, or in the camera shot, and when one is not. That is a relevant precedent to take into account as you form your decision.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member. It will certainly be discussed among the House leaders.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The Speaker: It being 3:27 p.m., pursuant to order made Monday, January 25, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-238 under Private Members' Business.

[*English*]

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

● (1530)

The Speaker: Given that this is the first recorded division on a Private Members' Business item in this Parliament, and with the implementation of hybrid sittings, I would like to take a moment to explain the new process to hon. members.

Private Members' Business

[*Translation*]

We will begin with the sponsor, whether he is participating in person or virtually.

[*English*]

We will then proceed to the vote for members participating in person who are in favour of the motion, beginning with the back row of the side of the House on which the sponsor sits.

[*Translation*]

The members on the other side of the House will then vote, again beginning with those in the back row. The votes of those who oppose the motion will then be recorded in the same order.

[*English*]

Finally, we will call members who are participating by video conference one by one in alphabetical order and by party based on the list at the table.

The list of members voting by video conference has now been established for use by the table.

● (1615)

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

(*Division No. 41*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benzen
Bergen	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Boudrias	Bragdon
Brassard	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Carrie
Chabot	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chiu
Chong	Cooper
Cumming	d'Entremont
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	Desbiens
Desilets	Dhaliwal
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fortin
Gallant	Gaudreau
Généreux	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Harder
Hoback	Jansen
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmieć	Kram
Kurek	Kusie

Private Members' Business

Lake	Larouche	Gould	Green
Lawrence	Lehoux	Guilbeault	Hardie
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)	Harris	Holland
Liepert	Lloyd	Housefather	Hughes
Lobb	Lukiwski	Hussen	Hutchings
MacKenzie	Maguire	Iacono	Ien
Martel	Mazier	Jaczek	Johns
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman	Joly	Jones
McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Jordan	Jowhari
Melillo	Michaud	Julian	Kelloway
Moore	Morantz	Khalid	Khera
Morrison	Motz	Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Nater	Normandin	Kwan	Lalonde
O'Toole	Patzer	Lambropoulos	Lametti
Paul-Hus	Pauzé	Lamoureux	Lattanzio
Perron	Plamondon	Lauzon	LeBlanc
Poillievre	Rayes	Lebouthillier	Lightbound
Redekopp	Reid	Long	Longfield
Rempel Garner	Richards	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Rood	Ruff	MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Sangha	Maloney	Manly
Saroya	Savard-Tremblay	Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Scheer	Schmale	Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
Seeback	Shields	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon
Shin	Shipley	McDonald	McGuinty
Simard	Soroka	McKay	McKenna
Stanton	Steinley	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Ste-Marie	Strahl	McPherson	Mendès
Stubbs	Sweet	Medicino	Miller
Thériault	Therrien	Monsef	Morrissey
Tochor	Trudel	Murray	Ng
Uppal	Van Popta	O'Connell	O'Regan
Vaughan	Vecchio	Oliphant	Petitpas Taylor
Vidal	Vignola	Powlowski	Qaqqaq
Vis	Wagantall	Qualtrough	Ratansi
Warkentin	Waugh	Regan	Robillard
Webber	Williamson	Rodriguez	Rogers
Wong	Zimmer — 150	Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)
		Saini	Sajjan
		Saks	Samson
		Sarai	Scarpaleggia
		Schiefke	Schulte
		Serré	Sgro
		Shanahan	Sheehan
		Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
		Simms	Sorbara
		Spengemann	Tabbara
		Tassi	Trudeau
		Turnbull	Van Bynen
		van Koeverden	Vandal
		Vandenbeld	Virani
		Weiler	Wilkinson
		Wilson-Raybould	Yip
		Young	Zahid
		Zuberi — 171	

NAYS

Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Bessette
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boulerice
Bratina	Brière
Cannings	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Collins	Cormier
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Dhillon
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Garneau	Garrison
Gazan	Gerretsen

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

[Translation]

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS ACT

The House resumed from January 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-224, An Act to amend An Act to authorize the making of certain fiscal payments to provinces, and to authorize the entry into tax collection agreements with provinces, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-224, under Private Members' Business.

● (1700)

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

(Division No. 42)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benzen	Bergen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blaikie	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Carrie
Chabot	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chiu
Chong	Collins
Cooper	Cumming
d'Entremont	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	Desbiens
Desilets	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Duval	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fortin
Gallant	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Gray	Green
Hallan	Harder
Harris	Hoback
Hughes	Jansen
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kurek	Kusie
Kwan	Lake
Larouche	Lawrence

Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Martel	Masse
Mathysen	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McPherson	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Nater
Normandin	O'Toole
Patzner	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perron
Plamondon	Poilievre
Qaqqaq	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Rood	Ruff
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Sangha
Saroya	Savard-Tremblay
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shin	Shipty
Simard	Soroka
Stanton	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Thériault	Therrien
Tochor	Trudel
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vignola
Vis	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williamson
Wong	Zimmer — 174

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Besette
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Bratina
Brière	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Cormier	Dabrusin
Damoff	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Garneau	Gerretsen
Gould	Guilbeault
Hardie	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono

Routine Proceedings

Ien	Jaczek
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Manly	Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Miller
Monsef	Morrissey
Murray	Ng
O’Connell	O’Regan
Oliphant	Petiipas Taylor
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Regan
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Sahota (Brampton North)	Saini
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simms
Sorbara	Spengemann
Tabbara	Tassi
Trudeau	Turnbull
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Weiler	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Yip
Young	Zahid
Zann	Zuberi— 152

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Bow River, Agriculture and Agri-Food; the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona, Taxation; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Canada Revenue Agency.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on International Trade, entitled “Good Friday Accord”.

* * *

PETITIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am here today to present petition e-2740 on Holocaust education, with 747 signatures, including those of former prime ministers Joe Clark and Paul Martin.

The petitioners are concerned about increasing anti-Semitism, and the fact that there are fewer survivors alive to tell the stories about the horrors of the Holocaust to young people. They are calling for increased investment in Holocaust education, research and remembrance, especially to reach young people, and also funding to preserve the testimony of survivors.

It is particularly fitting that I am presenting this petition today, on International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition. It states:

We, the undersigned citizens of Canada, draw the attention of the House of Commons to the following:

Whereas, a new report published by the Associated Press has revealed that there has been an ongoing campaign of Uyghur birth suppression by the Chinese Communist Party which includes methods such as forced sterilization and abortion; and,

Whereas, in addition to the recent news of coordinated Uyghur birth suppression, there is also a body of mounting evidence showing that Uyghurs are being subject to political and anti-religious indoctrination, arbitrary detention, separation of children from families, invasive surveillance, destruction of cultural sites, forced labor, and even forced organ harvesting; moreover, it is estimated that up to three million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities have been detained in what have been described as concentration camps; and,

Whereas, evidence now makes clear that the Chinese Government's treatment of the Uyghurs meets most, if not all, of the criteria for genocide as outlined in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; and,

Whereas, Canada cannot remain silent in the face of this ongoing atrocity.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the House of Commons to take the following actions to address the situation:

1. Formally recognize that Uyghurs in China have been and are being subject to genocide.

2. Use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (“Magnitsky Act”) and sanction those that are responsible for the heinous crimes being committed against the Uyghur people.

• (1705)

The Speaker: I remind hon. members to be as concise as humanly possible when they report on the petition they are presenting.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think it is particularly important today, on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, to be raising a petition about our collective failure to live up to the promise of “never again”. Despite the promise of “never again” after the Holocaust, there have since been many, many instances of genocides targeting minority communities. In particular right now, we have the ongoing genocide of the Uighur people.

This is a genocide that has been clearly identified by the Subcommittee on International Human Rights on an all-party basis. Petitioners, recognizing that, and recognizing various independent studies, reports, satellite imagery and so forth, are calling on the Government of Canada and Parliament to recognize clearly that what is happening in East Turkestan right now does constitute a genocide.

The evidence is there. The petitioners are calling on the government to recognize that and to recognize our responsibility to protect and respond through measures such as Magnitsky sanctions, which will hold perpetrators of this horrific violence accountable. We need Magnitsky sanctions targeting individuals involved in that violence, as well as measures to address problems in our supply chains, whereby we are importing products produced by slave labour.

Any measures that the government has announced up until now on this constitute window dressing and are totally ineffective at addressing the substantive issues. Petitioners are calling on the House and the government to act swiftly to recognize this genocide and seek justice for victims.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a lawyer, a former judge on the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and a lifelong advocate for human rights, I am distressed by the atrocities committed against the Uighur Muslims in China. Forced sterilizations, arbitrary detentions and anti-religious indoctrination are simply unacceptable. There is no place for this in our world.

That is why I present this petition today, which also calls on the Liberal government to formally recognize that Uighurs in China are being subjected to genocide and to impose Magnitsky sanctions on those responsible.

CERB ELIGIBILITY

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to table e-petition 3066, which was signed by 7,312 Canadians.

The petitioners are concerned that 441,000 Canadians received letters stating that they may have to pay back the CERB because of ineligibility. They note that the government has admitted it was not clear about CERB eligibility for self-employed workers and that CRA agents provided incorrect information. Even government MPs did not know the rules. Many self-employed Canadians will have a great deal of difficulty repaying this emergency benefit, which they applied for in good faith.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to retroactively allow self-employed Canadians to use their gross pre-tax in-

Government Orders

come before business expenses when determining their CERB eligibility.

* * *

● (1710)

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.): Madam Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2020

The House resumed from January 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 30, 2020 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 89 minutes.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to this bill, and I would first like to give an update on what has been happening in my riding with regard to vaccines.

As members know, I represent an indigenous northern region of Canada. I am pleased to say that first nations communities have been vaccinated, and a number of our Inuit communities as well. All long-term care residents and the staff have received the vaccine, and other communities in the southern region of Labrador have been scheduled for vaccines. I am really pleased to see how this is rolling out and serving the people of Canada and the people I represent.

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Canadians are very strong. I do not need to stand anywhere in this country to say that. We know that; we live that experience every day. We are known to care for each other. This pandemic is unprecedented, and it is something we have never seen or experienced before in this country. However, our response to it, by caring and supporting one another, is something we have become all too familiar with as Canadians.

When the government and Canadians were informed of the coronavirus pandemic and we learned what it would mean for the health of Canadians and the economics of our country, there was no blueprint or manual on how government should manage its way through it and keep Canadians safe during a time like this. It was very much uncharted territory for the Prime Minister, leading scientists and researchers, health organizations and institutions, and all of us as politicians and citizens. We knew it would require courage, outward thinking, strength and drawing upon Canada's very best in the scientific community, health care facilities and research institutions. Everyone stepped up.

Even the media stepped up. I saw the media reporting the facts and informing and education Canadians, not just editorializing everything that was happening. I think that is very important, because today in our country we often see that journalism is more about editorials as opposed to reporting facts and information. I think the media did well in this pandemic to inform Canadians.

People right across Canada are working from their kitchen tables to make masks to keep us safe. They are working from their home-based businesses, or doing their jobs from home. Students all across the country are using laptops to study and some finished up high school and university degrees. The adjustments that so many Canadians have had to make are remarkable.

When storefronts were closed down across Canada, and some continue to be closed down, businesses started to deliver. They were not going to see people stuck.

Everyone did their part. Everyone stepped up and they have continued to step up. They have not stopped. As a government, we also stepped up. We have not stopped and we will not stop. That is what this fiscal economic statement is about. It is about how we support Canadians at a time when they need it.

Not only the government but our Prime Minister had to enter uncharted waters. Ours was a world that came to a halt. Sometimes we fail to realize the huge significance of what this pandemic has meant to so many. However, not only did the world come to a halt, but Canada was vulnerable. For the first time in many generations, we were vulnerable, and protecting the health of people 24-7 and rising to that responsibility was left solely to the leadership of the government and Canadians.

• (1715)

The pandemic required the best of all of us, and it still requires the best of all of us. I am very proud of how the Government of Canada has stepped up for Canadians. I have seen first-hand in my riding the significance of government investments, government care and government outreach and how these have made the pandemic a little easier on a lot of people.

In the last few weeks, there has been a lot of banter back and forth by the opposition about the pandemic and the vaccine itself. I listened very carefully to what the Prime Minister had to say a few days ago, when he talked about the urgency of ensuring that Canadians had access to these life-saving vaccines as rapidly as possible, and that our government was operating with a sense of urgency every single day. Canadians know that and they understand that. With more than 1.1 million vaccines already distributed across the country to date, not only is Canada among the top five G20 nations for COVID-19 vaccines, we were also in the top two contributors to COVAX to ensure there would be equitable access to vaccines around the world, because that is what we do. We are Canada.

The Minister of Health, the Prime Minister and many others in the country, such as the people who have led behind the scenes to acquire those vaccines and do the work that had to be done, have all said, over and over, that even if no additional vaccines are approved by Health Canada, we remain on track to receive six million vaccines by the end of March, 20 million between April and June and a total of over 70 million doses by the end of September. Our government has been on top of this. Holding government accountable is a good thing, but focusing on politics for the sake of politics on issues such as what is happening around the vaccine does a disservice to all Canadians. It creates fear where there should be none.

Every day I hear the opposition talk about how the government has invested in people through this vaccine and that we are spending too much money. One day they tell us we are not spending enough, and the next day they tell us we are spending too much. I would like to review a couple of things.

I live in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Today, without the assistance of the federal government, communities would be experiencing tremendous challenges. People would be left behind without the supports the federal government stepped up to provide across the country and across Newfoundland and Labrador. I have one of the most rural northern ridings in Canada. It has made a difference.

In this pandemic, through the Government of Canada, the Canada health transfer increased in my province by \$13 million over the last year. It was necessary to support the health of the people who live here. Nearly \$150 million has gone to Newfoundland and Labrador through the safe restart agreement. That agreement allowed the province to look at testing capacity, to do tracing, to look at public health data and at ways to fight this pandemic and to keep the people of my province safe. That was a priority. That is not a waste of Canadian taxpayers' money. That is about saving lives. That is why I am always so taken aback when I hear the Conservative Party, in particular, continuously harp at the government for how we have stepped up for Canadians.

I wish no lives had been lost, just like every single person in the House of Commons. Every step has been taken—

• (1720)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to inform the hon member, but we are out of time and we have to go to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada received 8% of the doses the Prime Minister promised for this period. My colleague said that there is fear where there should be none, and I actually agree with her. This week at the Roberta Place long-term care facility, over 40 people died of COVID-19. Health care workers who had a dose of vaccine do not know when they are getting their second one. Many do not have it at all. There is fear there. There is actual fear, and the fear is legitimate, and this week Canada got no doses of the vaccine.

I am wondering if the member can put aside everything she said for a moment. She said this is about how to support Canadians at a time when they need it. Canadians need vaccines, and we do not have them.

Does she think it is acceptable that those residents who died did not receive the vaccine because the Prime Minister could only deliver 8% of the doses of vaccines that he committed to just a month ago?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question, because there is a lot of fearmongering, and unfortunately a lot of it is unwarranted. We wish that every Canadian from day one could have accessed this vaccine. We wish that today every Canadian in this country could access this vaccine, and every Canadian around the world, but the government has stepped up. The government, the team of people within Health Canada, the people within procurement and the leading people who have been a part of this pandemic have done what has been necessary to secure those vaccines, and the member opposite knows that we are on schedule. It has been said, over and over again, that we are on schedule to ensure that the vaccines that have been procured for Canadians will be received by Canadians during the target dates that were projected.

To do anything outside of that is purely political, and the member knows that.

• (1725)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would agree with the member for Labrador to the extent that we did what we had to do. We provided financial supports to the millions of Canadian workers and the millions of small businesses that were really struggling or in desperate straits because of COVID. However, now I am hearing concerns from a lot of my constituents about how we will pay for this. The NDP says that the people who did very well during COVID should be the ones who pay: the ultra-rich.

I am wondering if she would agree with the NDP that we need a wealth tax on super-wealthy Canadians, who have more than \$20 million in assets, to pay for the amount that we have spent to make sure that no Canadians were left behind.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, when it comes to the investments that we have made into Canadians, all of those invest-

Government Orders

ments were necessary, whether it was the Canada child care benefit, which increased payments to families; whether it was the bonus, or the small grants, that we gave out to seniors across the country; whether it was the money we invested with businesses, so that they did not all go bankrupt during this pandemic; or whether it was the supports we gave to workers that were necessary. I really believe in this country, and I believe that when we invest properly, we generate revenue on those investments.

In the Government of Canada, we are positioning ourselves not just for a safe restart, but for future economic growth and to work with businesses, with industry and with Canadians to ensure that we can create those new jobs, build that new revenue and generate that new economy we feel is within our grasp.

In terms of taxation in this country, we are the government that stepped up to increase taxes on Canada's wealthiest individuals. We have done that. We have a fair tax regime right now, and I am very proud that we were able to do that, but we have to be fair to those who are in need, as well: the most vulnerable. The money I have seen going into food banks, homeless shelters and women's centres made a huge difference in the lives of so many people.

I would never stand in this country—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, seeing as this is my first speech in 2021, I want to start by wishing all of my colleagues a happy new year. I also wish a happy new year to my constituents of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. I know we are all very hopeful that this is the year when we finally turn things around.

The experiences of this pandemic have shown that we are not, in fact, all in this together. What is closer to the truth is that we are in the same storm, but we are in different boats. Some of those boats have certainly been much better at weathering this storm than others. Indeed, many have sunk. We have people right across the country who are in extremely dire straits and, in the immediate future, things are not going to get better. We are still in a very rough patch.

All around my riding, I have been witness to people who have lost their jobs, to small business owners who have shuttered their doors forever, and to many who are very much struggling to stay afloat. It is an open question as to whether they will continue to be able to do so.

We are now dealing with an outbreak in a local first nation. Cowichan Tribes has seen an outbreak of COVID-19 that, unfortunately, has led to a strong rash of racist incidents, which I am joining other community leaders in my riding to condemn.

Government Orders

I also want to acknowledge that many people have stepped up to the plate to support those who have been affected by the pandemic. I want to acknowledge the work of the local chambers of commerce. I have five chambers of commerce in my riding, and they have all been very strong advocates for their members and for the needs of small businesses throughout the region.

Families and workers continue to be concerned about the impacts of job losses and the worsening situation that we find ourselves in. When we come to actual measures that are going to provide assistance, while some parts of Bill C-14 are good, unfortunately it is a continuation of half measures. Given the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic, including where we have been, where we are and where we are going for the foreseeable future, it is extremely important for us, as a House of Commons, to seize this opportunity to strengthen our social safety net by investing in programs that directly help people.

From the beginning, the goal of the NDP caucus has been to get more help to more people, more quickly. That has been our focus for the last 10 months. I believe that we were very successful in leveraging our position in a minority Parliament by working with the government and with our Conservative colleagues to make sure we could do things like increase the amount of the emergency response benefit. We managed to have that increased to \$2,000 a month and we also managed to have it extended.

It was great to see our leader, the member for Burnaby South, join with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and unions like UFCW, Unifor and the United Steelworkers to ask the government to increase the wage subsidy from the initial 10% to 75%.

We have consistently pushed for more and stronger payments for students, for seniors and for persons with disabilities.

We were able to secure Canada's very first paid sick leave. That is incredibly important in the middle of a health crisis, because we do not want to see workers making the impossible choice between their health and their ability to earn money. If we are going to get through this pandemic, we absolutely must give workers a way to stay home if they are feeling sick. It is a way to not put anyone else in danger of catching COVID-19.

I looked back at the speech that the finance minister delivered in November: the fall economic statement. Bill C-14, the bill we are discussing today, is meant to be the implementation act of that speech.

It is quite clear to all parliamentarians that we are not going to effectively get through this pandemic until we see a very strong rollout of Canada's vaccines. I know that the government has consistently come forward with the message of how much it has invested in vaccine agreements and how much it has secured in a domestic supply, but it has become clear, over the last number of weeks, that there are some holes.

• (1730)

Not to play politics about it, but it is really our job in the opposition to hold the government to account and ask these probing ques-

tions. Why is there a delay in the vaccine rollout? Why is Canada not receiving any doses in some weeks and going forward?

My colleague, the member for Vancouver Kingsway, in the emergency debate last night referenced the fact that this is the third time in two weeks that the federal government's delivery schedule has been revised downward. Canadians have questions about that, and I believe it is incumbent upon the federal government, the Liberals, to be up front and honest about where we are at and to provide answers to those very important questions.

When we look at Bill C-14, we see that it is proposing a series of measures, including allowances for young children, a suspension of interest on student loans and an increase in the borrowing limit. I know my Conservative colleagues have great concern over that aspect, but if we look at the desperate times we are in, we can see that we absolutely need to have the federal government step in and provide that important backstop. The alternative is to have more and more businesses falter, never to open their doors again, and recovering from the economic circumstances in which we find ourselves will take so much longer.

I will concentrate on one particular aspect of the bill that has great significance for my riding. It is the fact that \$64.4 million is being allocated for mental health and substance use in the context of COVID-19. Here in the Cowichan Valley, as in many parts of the country, we are still suffering through an opioid epidemic. Indeed, British Columbia posted record numbers of deaths last year from opioid overdoses. We have consistently asked the federal government to step in to do more to address this crisis, to provide more financial resources to the provinces, to declare a national health emergency and to start finally treating this problem like the health issue it is. We have to seriously look at criminal justice reforms and at decriminalizing possession of small amounts of illicit substances so that people do not have to fear the criminality of their actions and can actually get the help they need.

There were some missed opportunities, as I alluded to earlier. If we are going to make those bold policy fixes that are truly going to help Canadians get out of this crisis, we need to see massive investments in child care. It is one thing to give parents a financial contribution, but they will not be able to make much use of it if child care spaces are not available. I know that in Langford, which is one of the most rapidly growing urban centres in all of Canada and is full of young families, the lack of good available child care spaces is a huge concern to so many young parents and families.

Similarly, on pharmacare, I am glad to see the member for New Westminster—Burnaby stepping up to the plate with his Bill C-213, which would actually put Liberal promises into NDP action. This would make a huge difference, along with dental care, in actually addressing some of the real costs that so many working families have on their budgets.

We also need to have a serious conversation on how we are going to finance all of this. We have to have a serious talk about implementing a wealth tax to make sure that those very wealthy individuals and corporations that benefited from this pandemic and made profits in the billions of dollars are contributing their fair share and that the payment does not fall on the shoulders of working families.

The Liberals also missed a golden opportunity to fix the wage subsidy, in that start-ups that did not have payroll accounts before March 15, 2020, still cannot qualify for the emergency wage subsidy. I have one business in particular, V2V Black Hops Brewing, an amazing social enterprise that does work in my riding for veterans, that cannot qualify for the wage subsidy because of the payroll account issue. I implore my Liberal colleagues to please fix that in legislation, and this bill was a missed opportunity.

I will conclude by saying that Canadians can no longer wait for half measures. We need bold, decisive action.

• (1735)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I apologize to my colleague. I was listening to his discussion toward the end about the wage subsidy and in particular what he thinks needs to be fixed in order to make it better.

Could he repeat and possibly elaborate on that point so that it is clear?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question because it allows me to go into more detail.

Because the small business I have been trying to help did not have a payroll account number established before March 15, 2020, it has been unable to qualify for the wage subsidy. It has been going through 10 months of the pandemic just like every other small business, but not having that wage subsidy has absolutely been detrimental to it.

The Liberals need to look at start-ups and businesses that have not qualified to see how we can help them get the wage subsidy. We are going to be in this storm a few months longer and they desperately need that help, so I implore the Liberals to please commit to action on that front.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened closely to the speech by my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. There were two points in his speech that stuck out to me.

My colleague spoke about Canada-wide programs that would interfere in Quebec's jurisdictions, in particular with respect to child care. Quebec already has a child care program. We do not want to pay double or do twice the work.

The member then mentioned the universal pharmacare program proposed by his colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby, but Quebec has had a pharmacare program since 1996.

The Bloc Québécois is not making up the rules. The rules are enshrined in sections 92, 92A and 93 of the Constitution Act, 1867, originally known as the British North America Act.

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What does my colleague have to say about the fact that Quebec has already addressed these issues and that it has requested the right to opt out with full compensation? Is he prepared to respect Quebec's autonomy and the decisions it makes?

• (1740)

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, how I would respond to my colleague from the Bloc is by pointing out the Canada Health Act. The Canada Health Act is a perfect example of federal legislation that still respects provincial autonomy, jurisdiction and health care. It sets up five priorities on how provinces can qualify for those federal health transfers and it ensures that we have a public, universally funded system right across the country so that no matter what part of this great country a person resides in, they have access to the same kind of care. This kind of federal model both respects provincial jurisdiction and allows us to play a strong federal role in making sure that every Canadian, no matter what part of the country they live in, has access to the same great services when they need them.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my neighbour's speech, and he really did a good job of laying out where we are presently.

What I am hearing in my riding is that most people are still very much in the pandemic. While we need to think about what is ahead, we also need to take care of those who are in need now. We are seeing a phenomenon in which independent professionals, artists and some small business people who were in need applied for CERB in good faith, but they are now being threatened with clawbacks because of the CRA's interpretation of the rules.

Can the member comment on how unjust that is?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for raising that important issue. I want to contrast that particular issue with the fact that some large corporations received federal assistance and then used that money to actually pay out dividends to their investors. They are not being chased down by the federal government. They are not being penalized. However, Canadians who made applications in good faith are being penalized. This is the completely wrong direction, especially when some Liberal MPs are encouraging people to apply in good faith.

When we are in the middle of a pandemic, we need to start taking care of people's immediate needs, not threaten them with this over-the-top, heavy-handed approach. I agree with the member that we need a different approach. The Liberals should be looking, in fact, at corporations that have benefited from this pandemic.

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Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again I want to wish everyone, including all my constituents, a happy new year, as this is my first official speech in 2021.

I am extremely happy to be able to speak today on Bill C-14. Before I do, I want to thank and congratulate the people of Nova Scotia. I know we are in the midst of a second surge right across this country, but we have been very successful in limiting the numbers in Nova Scotia. What people have done, what students and teachers have done in the school system is something to be proud of. It has been a success story on that front, even in these very challenging times.

The fall economic statement focus for me today is on protecting the health of Canadians, ensuring that individuals and businesses have the opportunity to continue to work and prosper and making sure we build better as we move forward. The fall economic statement is an important piece of that delivery.

I cannot thank front-line workers enough for the work they have done. We are faced with health challenges, and they have to go to work in dangerous places because of the disease. They are there on the front lines, and it is just amazing. We have seen that throughout the pandemic. For people working in grocery stores, students in schools, and so on, it has been very challenging.

I want to thank the Canadian Armed Forces for the work they have done with the long-term care facilities throughout the pandemic. We have heard some very sad news. We have also heard about the improvements that are needed, and I will talk about that later.

We have invested over \$1 billion in vaccine agreements, which allows us to have seven promising candidates and over 400 million doses of vaccine. We are in a very good position; in fact, it is one of the most extensive vaccine portfolios in the world. We are providing the vaccine free to all Canadians. As well, we have procured over 38 million rapid tests, and I am proud to talk about our COVID app, which 5.5 million Canadians have downloaded to help them identify possible exposure.

Again, we should talk about PPE. We have invested \$2 billion in personal protective equipment. Many companies, even here in Nova Scotia, made changes to their manufacturing so that they could manufacture products that would help us through COVID. What they were willing to do to help Canadians is pretty impressive.

Also, we have made investments in mental health and the challenges around mental health, such as the opioid crisis and homelessness. Trying to find ways to prevent the spread of COVID in those areas is very important.

Throughout the pandemic, we have identified major gaps in long-term care facilities that we need to deal with. Most deaths that we have seen in COVID-19 have taken place in long-term care facilities. Our government has indicated that we will move forward to negotiate national standards with provinces, which is crucial, and Canadians expect us to do so.

We have been faced with the deepest and fastest recession since the Great Depression. We saw a decline in our GDP in March and April and the second quarter of last year like we have never seen before. We have seen over three million Canadians lose their jobs. Can we imagine people losing their jobs and not having any revenue?

Our government needed to respond to this unprecedented challenge with an unprecedented response, and we did so by investing over \$400 billion to help ensure the health and security of Canadians, to help with financial benefits and to brace the business community throughout this crisis.

• (1745)

That is 19% of our GDP. It is the largest relief package since World War II. However, today, as difficult as it is, about 80% of the jobs have returned compared to the United States where it only has about half that number.

We were very quick in trying to help young families with the Canada child benefit and the increases on that front, now adding \$1,200 per child under age six depending on the family income.

CERB helped Canadians. One in five Nova Scotians received the CERB to help him or her through this tough time. Those are big numbers.

The Canada emergency student benefit supports young people, who are very much challenged through this tough time as well. We have increased the Canada summer jobs program and we will increase it again this year by another 40,000. We have invested in the youth employment and skills strategy for another 45,000 jobs.

We have supported seniors with \$300 or \$200 depending on their income for the OAS. We have to move forward on long-term care and pharmacare as we said we would. We are working with provinces as we speak.

In Nova Scotia, 32,000 companies were able to take advantage of the wage subsidy, which is very impressive. Also, 15,000 companies in Nova Scotia were able to take advantage of the Canada business account.

We know the challenges around the airlines and we have helped them through wage and rent subsidies and supported them through rent relief and other ways as well.

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We have helped communities in Nova Scotia. We increased the equalization payments. We increased the Canada health transfers and the Canada social transfers. Those are all extra investments to help us through this as well as adding a regional relief and recovery fund. Let us keep in mind that these businesses were not able to get any financial supports through the other programs and this picked up the extras that did not get support through those programs. It is a way of trying to catch everyone as best as we could.

With regard to build back better, our government, in our economic statement, will invest around \$100 billion over the next three years, which is 3% or 4% of GDP, to stimulate the economy. That will be focused on a greener, more innovative, more inclusive and more competitive economy. This is the Canadian way.

We need to invest in early learning and child care, and we will make some investments in that. This will increase the accessibility to high-quality child care. It will give children a better start and will allow both parents to work if they so desire.

There are also green investment grants for homeowners to improve energy efficiency. Charging refuelling stations will be very important as well. There will be the planting of two billion trees to fight climate change and protect the forestry. Our Canadian net-zero emission accountability act will be binding, and of course reporting annually.

Finally, I want to talk about the student loans to help students through tough times. This coming year the interest on the student loans on federal money will not exist and that will help them as well.

Through this very difficult time, through COVID-19, we were able to help in the health and security of Canadians. We were able to help them financially. Now we need to ensure, as we continue, we are able to jump-start the economy as quickly as possible so all Canadians will benefit. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel and I am confident we will be successful as we move forward.

• (1750)

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, a little earlier the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs talked about how the vaccine distribution was going very well in her northern and remote riding. Now the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs spoke proudly of the wonderful job the government had done in securing vaccines.

Like the parliamentary secretary of Northern Affairs, I come from a northern and remote riding as well. Today I was contacted by a chief of one of the first nations communities, a community of about a thousand people. It has been dealing with a suicide crisis and is now in the midst of a COVID outbreak. Today he told me that they were now dealing with three more funerals, one more from suicide and two from COVID. So far this community has received 30 doses of the vaccine. He told me today that hopefully he would get more in February.

Is this really what the parliamentary secretary is proud of in the distribution of the vaccine to northern and remote communities?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, as my colleague well knows, we have negotiated some of the most extensive vaccine candidates in the world and the vaccines are coming. More candidates are being added as we move forward. We are distributing vaccines as best as we can to try to initially reach as many of the Canadians who need it most, and we have been very successful in doing so.

As my colleague understands, when one is receiving vaccines, based on the number of them coming in at one time, one is unable to get all the vaccines that are important for Canadians. We are working on that. We have a plan that is moving forward. There will be some challenges here or there, but the objective is that we are able to get as many vaccines as possible and as quickly as possible to Canadians right across our great country.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned two things that resonated with me as the Bloc Québécois critic for seniors.

First, he stated that national standards are necessary and essential. We would like to remind the government that caring for seniors requires money, not national standards.

The government must give our health care systems, Quebec's and the provinces', the means to take care of those who are sick at this time. What Quebec's advocates for seniors are calling for is an immediate health transfer and not standards. Once again, standards are not going to ensure that people are cared for.

Second, he also said that his government had really helped seniors by increasing old age security. Aside from the \$300 cheque sent to OAS recipients, I have not heard about any other measure.

Why are the Liberals stubbornly ignoring their election promise to increase old age security? People should be able to access it when they turn 65, not 75.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that important question.

We are responsible for the health of Canadians across the country. We must support all Canadians who are dealing with health problems.

We have made investments through a national health fund that is already contributing significant funding to support seniors. While we deal with the challenge of COVID-19, we are adopting other strategies to provide more help to seniors.

As Canadians we must support seniors whether they live in Quebec, Newfoundland or in British Columbia. This is not just a matter of giving money to each province, but of setting standards so that all Canadians receive what they deserve and—

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have time for one last question.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague's speech was very interesting, but I do have some concerns about some of the things he mentioned about supports for young people and students.

In particular, he spoke about the emergency student benefit, which I am sure he knows does not exist any longer. He also spoke about expanded funds for Canada summer jobs, which I hope he knows did not happen last year. Of course, there were the almost \$900 million that were supposed to go to students and did not. Now we have stopped charging interest on student loans.

Despite the fact that his party voted to put a moratorium on loan repayments until May, could he explain why the government has not acted on that when students and recent graduates so desperately need that support right now?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, there is no question that young people and students are facing very challenging times through this pandemic. The program we initiated for students in the summer, the CESB, was very important and it helped many young students in my constituency. Last summer we also increased the Canada summer jobs program. I know the numbers increased in my riding and the member should do some calculations because the intent was to increase jobs right across the country. Again next year, we will add another 40,000 to bring this number—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, here we are debating the economic statement implementation act, following a throne speech after prorogation, but before I get into the substance of my speech, I think it is important to again put on the record the context that this debate is taking place about 600 days since the last federal budget. It has been 600 days since Canadians had a full view of the finances of our nation. Certainly, I think that reality should cause many to pause and question the objectives and agenda of the federal government.

We all understand the unprecedented times we face. However, provinces, other jurisdictions and cities have all been able to figure out how to present, approve and manage the budgetary process, yet here we are 600 days later. Conservatives certainly were calling for full economic details the entire way, but we have not gotten those, which is incredibly troubling. That is the context, the 30,000-foot view of the bill we are debating, Bill C-14.

I spent a lot of time on the phone last night with constituents. The Liberals are very, very quick to brag about the way they have handled this crisis. In fact, the associate minister and parliamentary secretary just prior to me were bragging about how much they spent, \$400 billion. However, one has to consider not just the dollars that are spent, but also consider how effectively those dollars are being spent and what the result is. Certainly, when any Canadi-

an goes shopping, they do not simply look at who can spend the most. They look at the value for the dollars being spent. That is just part of simple budgeting, which speaks to my initial point.

On this side of the House we have great concern about the effectiveness of some of these dollars. Supports have been needed. I know the Liberals are quick to say that Conservatives would not have done all of this. We have been collaborative throughout the entire process, but critical at the same time because there is much to be critical of. When we look at the results of what has been spent, there are some serious questions. That is what I heard from constituents last night.

I want to bring together the speech I made a couple of days ago and what we are discussing today, specifically the economic realities that my constituency is facing. I spoke to a rancher in a small community in my constituency. She was almost in tears on the phone and said that we should share with the Prime Minister and the Liberals this comment: "Look me in the eye and tell me there's no future for my kids in Alberta."

We were talking about the economic circumstances of Alberta and Alberta's place in the federation. It is heartbreaking the number of people whom I speak to who think that Alberta might be better off alone. I know that the members opposite will want to play politics with that issue, but I will say that as a member of Canada's national Parliament and a proud Canadian, to hear so many who feel that Canada has given up on them and that they have no choice is tragic. That should cause all involved in national leadership to pause. Certainly, that relates directly to what we are talking about here today.

I also got an email that sums up quite a few of the other calls I got last night. I will not read it all, partly because the language used is not parliamentary, but it still provides the context of the devastating circumstances around Keystone, the energy sector and the economy, with the service sector being pummelled and hotels being closed. All of these things are seeing a level of tragedy that is unbelievable. This is talking about the mental health effects specifically. In this case, two parents from her son's class saw no hope and committed suicide. I have put that on record because it provides the context of how important it is to get this right.

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• (1800)

There is a whole host of issues addressed in this bill and, quite frankly, there are some things that need to be addressed. Some of it is fixing some of the issues with previous legislation that was brought forward. Some of the issues were identified early but we are only now fixing. Some of them are promises that were made in the throne speech that the government is now attempting to actualize. Some issues have been mentioned, such as that the entire House agreed on the need for action on student loans, but which we are only now seeing the government get to.

There is a bit of understanding of something that I would like to bring into context with regard to the spending part of what this bill addresses. There is certainly some concern when it comes to the overall spending, although there has been no question that supports have been needed. That is why Conservatives have stepped up to the plate. In fact, we attempted to collaborate, and here I can give the government a bit of credit because in some cases there has been successful collaboration. Unfortunately, there have been other times when there was unwillingness on the part of the government to come forward in a fair and transparent way. We can reference its attempted power grab early in the pandemic when the Liberals wanted unlimited tax and spending powers and attempting to roll back 800 years of parliamentary tradition. There have been scandals, which we certainly are still demanding answers on, such as WE Charity and Baylis Medical, among others.

There was the prorogation for no other reason than the fact the Prime Minister was trying to hide from his own mistakes, and so he prorogued Parliament. Although the Liberals will claim they only lost two days of parliamentary sittings, Canadians can see through that. When we look at the facts, about 35 days were lost, especially when we include the bills on the Order Paper that had to be reintroduced and debated, many of which came back exactly the same, even though issues had been identified with them.

As I come to the conclusion of my remarks, in part 7 of this bill, there is an increase in Canada's borrowing authority. We have seen unprecedented growth in the spending of our government and this economic statement that we will be voting on speaks to aspects of that.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, by the end of fiscal year 2023-24, the spending of the government, when it comes to debt financing requirements, will be \$1.642 trillion. However, I would note that the Borrowing Authority Act asks for \$1.831 trillion. There is a discrepancy there, doing math quickly in my head, of \$207 billion. If the government plans to spend that \$207 billion, it is the right of the government to bring forward that legislation and that plan to suggest so.

However, we have seen an unprecedented lack of transparency in the way the current government has operated and here we see a massive increase in the borrowing authority of the government for what is not the government's money. That is one of the frustrations. Whenever I hear a prime minister or a minister or any level of government say it is their money to spend, that is one hundred per cent categorically false. It is taxpayer money. It is hard-working taxpayers who spend that.

Therefore, I believe there are serious questions that need to be answered, whether in regard to Bill C-14 or the overall circumstances that we find ourselves in. I look forward to questions.

• (1805)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I get to my question on the issue of government expenditures, I will point out many of the investments we have made, though they are expensive, will actually reduce the overall cost to government, because the cost of not supporting households and businesses to get through this pandemic is far greater than the cost of making sure they can survive and preventing that economic scarring.

The thesis the member led off with was effectively that the government should not just be spending money, but figuring out whether there is value received for that money. I want to talk about one specific program. His leader has repeatedly criticized in public the Canada emergency response benefit, or CERB as it has become known to Canadians. It has now reached nearly nine million Canadians to help them keep a roof over their heads and food on their tables for their families.

Does he agree with his leader that this program was completely screwed up or does he believe that the Canada emergency response benefit actually provided value for money to Canadian households?

• (1810)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, there it is. He is putting words in the mouth of the Leader of the Opposition. Let me clarify for the member. In fact, Conservatives were there in the beginning when CERB was first introduced understanding that the unprecedented circumstances that we all faced needed unprecedented action. Conservatives were there and not only were we there, but we were doing everything we could to be collaborative in the process to ensure that it would be effective, to ensure that it would be spent the right way, and to ensure that the formulas being used would balance accountability with the need to get dollars in the pockets of Canadians.

In fact, we made further suggestions about the way it could have been administered, which the government decided not to follow. That is its right, but likewise, it needs to accept the consequences of some of those decisions and, now, the challenges that have arisen as a result. Canadians needed support, yes, but when it comes to the question of effectiveness of this program, it is not immune from criticism. In fact, it is responsible for many of the challenges we are faced with.

[*Translation*]

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

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He pointed out that the federal government has not tabled a budget for quite some time, which is completely unacceptable. This is an image-obsessed government. One only has to look at the eligibility criteria for the new highly affected sectors credit availability program to understand that the program made for a great announcement but it will not make much difference, since no one will be eligible for it.

Bill C-14 does have some interesting aspects, but it also includes some intrusions. Some aspects are disappointing, for example for landlords who still are not getting any assistance for rental costs or farmers who had expenses in 2019 and are ineligible. I would like to hear my colleague's opinion on some of the gaps in the legislation.

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member. There are many holes. In fact, there have been a few times when the government made an announcement, took way longer than many would suggest was necessary in implementing that announcement, and screwed it up the first time and then had to go back to the drawing table. For sure in one case, and I am sure there are others, it screwed it up a second time and now have to return to Parliament to see fixes to that again.

That is the problem. Had the Liberals been more collaborative in the process and listened to some of the constructive criticism that were made, including the premiers and the affected sectors, we would have been in a very different situation today than we find ourselves in and, certainly, the dollars would have been spent more effectively.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, would the member support, as 60% of Conservative supporters across Canada do according to polls, the idea of a wealth tax on the very people who can afford to pay for the situation that we find ourselves in, instead of ordinary Canadians?

Would he be in favour of that wealth tax?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot may give a brief answer, please.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I will not take any lessons from a member of the NDP who wants to shut down wealth creation in this country, such as the pipeline. I know he asked a whole bunch of questions on Monday about how we should simply, with the snap of our fingers, force thousands of people out of work and shut down an entire sector and somehow miraculously, maybe with some unicorn dust and a few other things, there will be sectors that simply replace themselves.

However, the reality is that Canada has a world-class energy sector that needs to be respected, and doing so is a big part of the way we can dig ourselves out of the economic challenges we find ourselves in. I would ask that member very specifically that he has to look at the things—

• (1815)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Sorry, but when I say “brief”, I would ask that members try to keep it as a

brief as possible. I did allow for extra time, but I do have to cut the clock at some point to make sure everybody gets a chance to speak.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for this opportunity.

I will start by acknowledging that I am speaking from the traditional territory of the WSÁNEC first nation, the indigenous people of the territory that I am honoured to represent in Parliament.

Today, we are addressing Bill C-14, which, of course, includes the legislative changes that are required as part of the fall economic statement that was tabled November 30. Although our commentary today should be limited to the legislative changes before us, and I know that some of the speeches have been quite wide-ranging, I want to reflect briefly on the fall economic statement itself, then turn to the legislation before us, and then to the things that are missing from it and that we wish were there.

The fall economic statement, at over 200 pages, is definitely wide-ranging. It references a lot of hard work, and I want to acknowledge the hard work of our Minister of Finance, indeed, the government as a whole, with a good dose of gratitude.

There is no perfection to be found in the actions of any government around the world in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some do better than others, and some do worse than others. I think we do better as Canadians when we try to work together.

That is the intent of Greens, whether we are elected federally or in the provinces across this country. We prefer collaborative efforts, co-operation and working through consensus. However, in looking at this document, it is extraordinary in detailing ambition around a wide range of issues.

First, on the question of a safe restart, there was about \$20 billion put into a safe restart. We know that this was transferring money to the provinces for things as important as personal protective equipment, PPE, and getting the vaccines rolled out, which is a subject we debated until midnight last night with a lot of emotion and different opinions, but we have vaccines. We wish that they were being rolled out more quickly, but it does take federal-provincial co-operation. It also takes dealing with global multinational pharmaceutical companies. We are also looking at day care, so for the safe restart and a number of other aspects, there was \$20 billion.

There are priorities in the fall economic statement that are not COVID-related but are high-priority items for Greens, particularly working towards indigenous reconciliation and moving towards pharmacare. I do not know why it is taking so long, but pharmacare is flagged in the fall economic statement.

Government Orders

Specifically, we should start looking at pharmacare in relation to rare diseases. I am part of a caucus, quite an informal caucus, with members of Parliament from every single party in this place, and that is a great place for collaboration. We are working with the CF Foundation and trying to get the life-saving drug Trikafta to patients in the CF community. We work together, and I think we are better when we do so.

On the opioid crisis, again, referenced in the fall economic statement, Greens favour decriminalization. We need to move fast to stop the deaths from opioid addiction, which is an extension of a mental health issue. It is a health issue. It is not a criminal issue.

On climate, which is also referenced in the fall economic statement, Greens are very keen on improving our east-west electricity grid and also improving its potential to reach north. We applaud the focus on interties that we have begun to see out of the Canadian Infrastructure Bank. However, we need more. We need more work on the electricity grid. We need more work on public transit, but it is flagged, as is the importance of electric vehicles.

Many climate-related measures are in the fall economic statement, including nature-based climate solutions. On the commitment to planting two billion trees, which we have heard of many times and look forward to seeing, it is critical that they are trees appropriate to the ecosystems in which they are planted. It is critical that we do the tree planting in ways that enhance carbon sequestration and protect biodiversity, such as along stream banks to help protect our wild Pacific salmon where they have lost so much habitat.

These are measures we support, but they are not enough. We have seen Bill C-12, and they are referenced in the fall economic statement for climate accountability, but without major strengthening, such as a fixed dark target date of 2025 for carbon reductions, it will not be worth supporting.

• (1820)

When we look south of the border we see the steps the new Biden administration is taking, pursuing some of the courses Barack Obama left in place. This is also encouraging. Canada has scope, as is mentioned in the fall economic statement. With carbon and border adjustments, we can move our economies in the same direction and create more jobs while doing so. These are encouraging things.

We support Bill C-14 as far as it goes. The measures are important in order to get more COVID assistance to people to get more relief.

What is missing? There are many sectors that are not just falling through the cracks, but plummeting through a chasm. They need more help. I refer specifically to all the businesses in the tourism sector, particularly restaurants, but also bus services.

The fall economic statement refers to the highly affected sectors having more credit availability, but it is capped at \$1 million per piece of assistance. I will specifically mention Wilson's bus lines, which provides not only charter service but also regularly scheduled service into first nation communities. It is an integral part of our tourism ecosystem here. It is being pressured out of existence

by the commercial banks. The banks are demanding repayment. The \$1-million capped loan will not be enough to save Wilson's.

For other parts of our transportation infrastructure, such as regional airports, \$1 million in loans is not going to help them. We need to focus on what is needed to save all of our transportation infrastructure that is at risk right now. I think the best way to do that would be for the Minister of Finance or the Prime Minister to talk to all the CEOs of the big commercial banks and remind them they are making profits every quarter.

This is the most recent news. If we just scan the headlines of BNN Bloomberg, we see the new quarter, post-2020 into 2021, news. It is a kickoff for big bank earnings. They are doing great. They have adjusted fourth-quarter profits above the average analyst estimates. When the banks are doing well, maybe not as well as before the pandemic, but they are not struggling or about to go under, they need to help.

Similarly, we should not be leaning on Canadians who got the CERB in good faith because they thought they made \$5,000 in the previous year. The qualifications to say they did not qualify came out later. Come on. Let us fix it in this bill to say that anyone who received CERB who received \$5,000 gross income in 2019 is entitled. That would clear up a misunderstanding and remove the cloud over the heads of over 440,000 Canadians who received, and I think this is an Orwellian turn of phrase, an education letter.

The critical issue of long-term care homes is referenced quite a lot in the fall economic statement. It mentions long-term care home workers. One of the more disturbing stories I saw in the last few months was of an outbreak of COVID in an Ottawa shelter for the homeless. It turned out the homeless who were living there were actually workers in long-term care. They were earning so little as long-term care workers, they were living in the Ottawa homeless shelter because they could not afford a roof over their head.

We need to do much more. We need to get into those long-term care homes and make sure our seniors are vaccinated. We need to stop the senicide. We need to make sure we pay our workers adequately, whether they are front-line workers in long-term care or anywhere in our society. We really do need a guaranteed livable income to ensure equity and decency for every single Canadian.

Government Orders

This is just a quick scratching of the surface of what we see as a challenge to us as Canadians. The fall economic statement gives us a good direction, but it needs to be more ambitious. We need to ensure that as we come out of COVID we repair our social safety net so it is not a net full of holes, but an actual place of stability, decency and respect for every single one of our human beings in this society, whether homeless, indigenous, or a woman who cannot figure out how to go back to work. We need to rebuild. We need a society that lives up to our greatest aspirations, including acting on the climate emergency while we still have time.

• (1825)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member from the Green Party talked about pharmacare. This is something that has been talked about for many years now and is, in my opinion as well as hers, long overdue. It is overdue because there are potentially many benefits to pharmacare, not just from a social infrastructure perspective, but also, with respect to the costs of medicines, from an economic perspective.

I wonder if she can elaborate on how she sees that as the right direction for Canada to move in now, how we can delay no further on it, and how we can move quickly to introduce universal pharmacare throughout our country.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, the evidence is overwhelming and has been for a long time. We are the only country with a universal health care system that does not include necessary prescription drugs. We know from various reports, including one a few years back, *Pharmacare 2020*, that Canadians who cannot afford to fill a prescription end up costing our health care system more because something that was a manageable chronic disease suddenly becomes a catastrophic event where, instead of just getting their prescription filled, they end up in emergency and intensive care.

We know that pharmacare is affordable, but we cannot afford to ignore the need to bring it into place right away, as quickly as possible. It will save our economy money. That is the conclusion of all of the experts. Failure to provide pharmacare causes unnecessary illness and death.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands, who cares a lot about social justice and wants everyone to do their part so that we can reinvest in programs to help those who need it most.

Social justice and investments in social programs to help people are all good things, but we also need to track our public finances. As we saw during the COVID-19 pandemic, many measures were implemented to help businesses and individuals who were truly struggling, but now we no longer know what is happening with our public finances.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that. What does she think about the idea that the Bloc Qu b cois and the other opposition parties came up with to create this much-talked-about special committee that would examine all the measures put in place during the pandemic from a financial perspective?

Setting up a special committee to examine all of the COVID-19-related spending could help us get an accurate picture of the situation. What is more, we would be able to see whether any questionable contracts, other than the one with WE Charity, were signed, costing us a lot of money that could have been spent elsewhere. That would be unfortunate.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I apologize to my colleague for answering in English. I cannot switch my channel over.

Absolutely, transparency around government spending is always a good idea. I do not particularly get excited about deviating into scandals. For instance, if we are talking about pharmacare or social justice, we need to talk about where we find revenue, and that I think means that we are looking at a wealth tax. We should be bringing in a wealth tax. We should look at going after the offshore tax havens. We need to bring in the revenue we need to ensure that we have social justice.

Yes, all government expenditures should be held to the highest levels of transparency. I think the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer needs more resources, and that the Parliamentary Budget Officer should be an officer of Parliament, but it certainly is a step in the right direction to ensure full transparency around all government spending.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Conservative member who spoke before the member suggested that we would need some unicorn dust to fund the just transition to provide jobs right away to oil sector workers who have found themselves out of work over the last five years.

I am wondering if you have some comments about where we could find that unicorn dust.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask the member to address his questions and comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, when I heard the hon. Conservative member who spoke before me say that, I wondered where he was when the former premier of Quebec, Pauline Marois, did the right thing and shut down the asbestos industry because it was killing people around the world. It was a tough thing to do. Quebec has gone through the experience of a just transition for its workers. We learned some things from that. It was not quite as good a just transition as it should have been.

Government Orders

We need to bring in a just transition act across Canada, as the Liberals promised in the last election. We have guidance from an excellent piece of work from a task force co-chaired by Hassan Yussuff from the Canadian Labour Congress. It is a very strong report on a just transition for coal sector workers. We also know that we do not need fairy dust—

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have run out of time.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, this is my first speech of 2021, so I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and all my parliamentary colleagues a happy new year.

In these trying times of health and economic crisis, we are treading an ever more challenging path littered with stumbling blocks. Before getting into public life, I paid close attention to political affairs. My father and I spent many hours a week keeping abreast of what politicians and the official parties, both governing and opposition, were up to. At times, I would think to myself that, if I were in their shoes, I would say this or propose that and really try to make the people the focus of my thoughts and actions.

Now I am here, actively participating in a process brought on by the pandemic. We all know politics has never seen anything like this. I am proud to contribute to the process, and I am bringing the heart and soul of an artist and a businesswoman to the table. People all around me are working to help individuals grappling with all kinds of problems, and I am right there with them. We are, by nature, hard-working people, and that shows in our efforts to help others.

In politics, and in the context of the pandemic, as career politicians or newly elected members, we have to adapt to new variables and roll with the punches. We have to strengthen our resolve and even reconsider how we do things. It is essential that every elected member of this House set aside certain electioneering tendencies, redirect their attention away from their electoral plans and campaign photo-ops, and focus on all these social issues that are also calls for help.

Helping people in times of crisis is our role. It is a matter of prioritizing public safety and our social safety net. Leading anthropologists and sociologists will say that there are three types of social security: physical, psychological and financial. Citizens put their trust in us and hope that we can stay focused on what is essential and avoid the worst for now and the future.

What is the worst? Simply put it is insecurity and uncertainty. Under the guise of an emergency and without any clear direction, the CERB, wage subsidies and business loans were handed out haphazardly by the government, and the concept of emergency grew ever broader to justify the failure to act responsibly. Clear direction and better targeted assistance would have allowed us to adapt the various programs.

What seems obvious, unfortunately, is that the government is trying to provoke an election before this all backfires. The current situation points to a very worrisome future that will have to be meticulously planned and rigorously managed through an economic recovery guided by very clear priorities. Between \$70 billion and \$100 billion has been announced to that end. This investment must not serve only to further increase the deficit and make the rich richer. Consistency and political courage are needed to avoid dipping again and again into the pockets of honest taxpayers in order to avoid disaster.

While huge organizations are avoiding paying billions of dollars in taxes—I am talking about the web giants—I have to wonder whether there is anyone at the controls. This country, which is part of the G7 and G20 and brags about being a model in certain areas, is depriving its economy and its citizens of such huge amounts of money. Quebec, meanwhile, has had the courage to tax the virtual economy, so yes, Quebec is the real model.

How do we begin to address the security of people and businesses in a society such as ours? To ensure physical security, we must close the border and prohibit non-essential travel. We must also look after public health and the health of the most vulnerable by providing the maximum amount required to fund health care through transfers to the provinces and Quebec with no conditions, improving seniors' financial situation, increasing purchasing power strategically and investing in pharmaceutical independence. Psychological security and financial security pretty much go hand in hand. People cannot live serenely or maintain the mental health required to get through a crisis such as this if they do not have financial security, even if it is minimal.

It will be extremely important to ensure that the government directs its assistance to Canadians and its support for businesses in the same way, that is by channelling financial assistance to those most impacted by this crisis, even if it means increasing taxes for those who were able to profit from the pandemic.

In speaking of the most impacted, I do not hesitate to say that, after considering the sad plight of seniors, who were especially hard hit by the virus, the arts and culture sector was the first to be brought to its knees and will be the last to emerge from this crisis. What did the culture sector receive? The CERB and emergency programs evaporated like the rain from a storm. Hundreds of artists, creators, self-employed individuals and sole proprietors fell through the cracks of programs and received no money for lack of funds or because the eligibility criteria did not mesh with these people's reality.

Government Orders

• (1835)

Now we are getting promises that other announcements will be made soon. That is the thrust of my speech. This promise holds the very future of our culture in its hands and, by extension, a large part of the mental health of Quebeckers and Canadians. These people will be desperately craving forms of entertainment, looking for magical places to come together, places filled with extraordinary creators, visionaries who weave the stories of our collective imagination.

Where will these places be? What will have happened to the artists? Will they still exist? These storytellers, production designers, directors, some world-renowned and others on their way there: Will they be able to continue creating without a decent income? Will our technicians be able to continue innovating and bringing our creators' imaginations to life?

Will our culture, our national pride, endure? Where will we find the stages featuring our up-and-coming architects of joy, our purveyors of the future and champions of our values? Where will we find consciousness-raisers and the people embracing free expression with ships of gold? Where will we be able to nurture our Leclercs, our budding Vigneaults or our future Beau Dommages? Where will we find our Cormiers, our Michauds, our Cowboys Fringants, our Charlotte Cardins, our Geneviève Jodoins or our Vent du Nords?

We must also think of our wonderful artists, the dancers, the circus performers, our favourite authors. Will our entrepreneurs and cultural organizations still be there to provide events and stages for all those beloved artists? How many of our museums, art galleries, festivals, theatres, cinemas, all those event spaces that drive, promote and disseminate our culture, will still be there? What about our wonderful media outlets that surround our artists, that promote and critique them, will they be forever changed? Will the individual financial assistance and programs we are asking for to support culture have been sufficient and properly distributed? Will the major legislative reforms that are necessary for the survival of the creative industry, such as Bill C-10, have been sufficiently robust and comprehensive?

Will our legislators have been courageous enough and determined enough to conduct a thorough review of the laws governing creation, creative content, its areas of application, and the obligations of users and aggregators?

To date, over 100,000 cultural workers have changed fields. It breaks my heart. We have already lost so much expertise, talent and resources that are vital to the evolution and development of our signature culture. I am asking the government and all of Parliament to recognize the value of culture and treat it accordingly. Culture is a service that is essential to society's mental, physical and financial health. It is a profitable essential service because the creative industry makes a vital contribution to Canada's and Quebec's GDP and serves as an important tool in promoting the vitality of parent economies, such as tourism. We have heard that some sectors of the economy will have practically disappeared by the end of this crisis, while others will shift to a more virtual economy. However, culture is not suited to a virtual experience, no matter how lifelike. Let us be realistic. Not everything is suited to the virtual world, particular-

ly not culture. Arts and culture are living, breathing human things. They are about emotion and they are at the heart of every individual's socialization. Culture is vital.

Circumstances conducive to getting cultural activities back up and running may not be in place until 2022, maybe even 2023. Culture is going to need help. We all want life to get back to normal, but the only way that can happen is if we make sure artists get the support they need to stay in the business. Culture cannot and must not be the pandemic's next casualty. It is our duty to protect our society's cultural health because all forms of art immunize us against bitterness and distress. Culture is the most effective treatment for post-traumatic stress humanity has ever devised.

• (1840)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to pick up on the arts and culture aspect, I was really encouraged late last year when I had the opportunity to meet with the Folk Arts Council, which is involved with Folklorama, a spectacular two-week summer event. There are literally thousands of volunteers and paid artists, and hundreds of thousands of people from across the country, most from Manitoba, participate in it. It was really encouraging that the Prime Minister took the time to meet with the board, albeit virtually, to hear its concerns. We got that first-hand experience. I know he is doing things of a similar nature throughout different regions of our country.

It is one thing to talk; it is another to get things to materialize. When we look at culture and arts, the wage subsidy was one of the critical programs. In fact, the Folk Arts Council complimented the degree to which it helped keep the doors open. I agree with the member that we can always look to our arts and cultural industries to give us the taste of life that is absolutely essential going forward.

Does the member have any other advice about something specific we could be adding to complement our arts and cultural communities in Canada?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I ask the member to keep his remarks to one minute to allow others to speak.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. We agree on a number of things.

I am so glad this matters to my colleague. There are two basic things we need to do as soon as possible to help the cultural sector. The first is support for individuals, which should be adjusted as the recovery progresses. The same goes for cultural organizations. Holding events, big or small, requires predictability. Certainty around budgets is essential to planning for 2022 or even 2023, some organizations having already written off 2022.

To plan its recovery, the cultural sector needs recurrent funding for three to five years. That would give everyone some certainty.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for emphasizing the impact of the pandemic on arts and culture. It is true in all of our communities, no less so in greater Victoria than in Quebec, and artists are really finding it very hard, creative as they are, to find new ways to reach an audience and communicate during the pandemic.

In response to the question from the hon. parliamentary secretary about what he could do, I wonder if the member would join me in calling for an end to the threat to claw back CERB benefits from artists who are in need and who applied in good faith.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

That could be an option. I think that not only should the CERB be extended to people in the cultural sector, but the conditions should also be adjusted. CERB in its current form does not allow people to work or it allows them to work very little. Hours were calculated to a certain maximum number in order to be eligible for the CERB. These people have families, children, homes and cars. They have no choice. This penalized creation because at some point they had to stop so as not to lose their CERB. I agree with my colleague that this absolutely needs to be reviewed. We can sit down together and talk about it and propose something to the government.

• (1845)

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague from Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix on her speech. She is a passionate woman who represents a magnificent part of the country.

I would like her opinion on a program we have been awaiting for a very long time, for far too long, the famous program that was introduced in the economic statement, the highly affected sectors credit availability program. This affects the cultural industry, which she talked about, and the tourism industry. Since the hon. member represents a tourist region, what does she think about the eligibility criteria, which are extremely strict? Businesses will have to show that they recorded an annual drop in revenue of at least 50% for three months in the eight months preceding their application and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but the member's time is up. I said that he had time for a brief question.

I urge all members to co-operate when I give them time for a brief question; otherwise, I will no longer give the option to ask additional questions when there is not much time left.

The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix for a brief answer.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, our critic for tourism. Tourism is one of our top issues.

Government Orders

I agree that the highly affected sectors credit availability program, or HASCAP, lacks flexibility. We will certainly have to look at real-life experiences. This program needs to adapt to people's realities, and not the other way around. In most cases, more than 80% of applicants are ineligible because the criteria are far too strict and complicated. I obviously hope we can improve the terms and conditions of the program and make it more flexible for the very people it was designed for, and especially those who work in the tourism and culture industries.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin my speech by reminding members of a few things that have happened in recent weeks and months.

Members will all recall that, in December, the Prime Minister stood before the door of Rideau Cottage and announced that Canada would receive 125,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine every week in the first month of 2021.

On January 5, the Canadian Prime Minister once again stood before the door of his cottage and told us that he was frustrated with the pace of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. During a press conference at Rideau Cottage, he said, "Canadians, including me, are frustrated to see vaccines in freezers and not in people's arms." That is what was reported by CBC, and those who were watching him heard him say that.

This proves that the Prime Minister had absolutely no idea what he was talking about or what was going on at that time. In fact, the Premier of Quebec was quickly rebuked by his federal counterpart when he also made a statement at his press conference indicating that all the vaccines Quebec received every week were used every week and that Quebec had the capacity to vaccinate 250,000 people per week. However, the federal government planned to send only 233,000 doses to the province by the end of January.

That was in early January. The Quebec government also said at the time that it could be vaccinating four times as many people, but it did not have enough doses. Those statements were made at a time when the Prime Minister was saying there would be 125,000 doses available per week in Canada. That is how January began.

We are currently in the last week of January, and what is happening? Whether in Quebec, western Canada, Ontario, the Maritimes or the territories, it is the same everywhere. One number comes to mind when we think of the number of people vaccinated this week: zero.

Why? Because zero is the number of vaccines Canada got from Pfizer this week.

What does that mean? Clearly, it means that no one was vaccinated this week: not one vulnerable person, not one senior, not one essential worker.

Government Orders

When we see what is happening in other countries, what we must ask ourselves is, why? Why did Canada not have access to any vaccine doses in the last week of January?

We do not know how many doses we will receive next week, but we are still being promised that hundreds of thousands will arrive in the coming weeks and months and that the majority of Canadians who want the vaccine will be vaccinated by September.

I would like to remind members that the Prime Minister is making these announcements when just two months ago, he was saying we would receive 125,000 doses a week from Pfizer. One month later, we are coming to realize that his plan was untenable. How can we believe the Prime Minister when he tells us that all Canadians who want the vaccine will be vaccinated by September 2021?

Why is the Prime Minister acting this way? It is simple. He prefers his daily show at Rideau Cottage. He can give Canadians information while knowing that he can give more the next month, and the next, for as long as he gets to give press conferences in front of Rideau Cottage.

Why are there no vaccines? It is because the Prime Minister staked everything on one contract, with a Chinese company, instead of trying to sign agreements with pharmaceutical companies so that we could manufacture the vaccine here in Canada.

While the Liberals were staking everything on the Chinese vaccine last spring, our allies were signing agreements with AstraZeneca, Moderna and Pfizer. Canada did not sign agreements with these pharmaceutical companies until months later.

All Canadians are paying the price for this leadership failure, because the Prime Minister is not being straight with Canadians, he refuses to disclose the agreements signed with the pharmaceutical companies, and the Liberal government is governing by the seat of its pants, with no plan and no expertise.

• (1850)

The vaccination plan is chaotic at best. We still have a lot of questions to ask to find out what went wrong.

Many of our allies have vaccinated a considerable portion of their population, while we are still in lockdown and worrying about the spread of new COVID-19 variants.

Again today, during question period, the Prime Minister gave us the same empty rhetoric we have been hearing for weeks now. He said that Canada has acquired more vaccine doses per person than any other country, that we will have more doses than anyone else, but we do not know when we will get them. There was not much point in signing so many vaccine agreements if we are going to be the last to get the vaccines. Canada did not receive any vaccines this week. None.

While the Liberals were wasting precious time, thousands of Canadians lost their lives to COVID-19. Businesses had to close their doors. Canadians had to deal with the consequences of the lockdown. How many people got COVID-19 this week? How many of them will die because the government failed to provide the provinces with vaccines? Seniors are the most vulnerable. They deserve better.

Today we are debating Bill C-14, legislation that delivers on promises made in the fall economic statement. That economic statement included some important measures, such as measures for Canadian families, that the Liberals opted not to implement before the holidays. The main reason they held off is that the Liberal government and the Prime Minister are in election strategy mode.

It is obvious that the Prime Minister does not like Parliament. It is even more obvious that he does not like consulting opposition parties about anything and that what he wants most of all is an election. When he had a majority, he could make all kinds of mistakes with impunity. Now he has to contend with opposition parties whose members are not as docile as those of his own party, and his convoluted explanations for those gaffes are falling on less forgiving ears.

A recent example is the fiasco of the appointment of the former Governor General. Today I called for the Prime Minister to accept responsibility. Employees who quit their job are not entitled to employment insurance. That applies to all workers except for the former Governor General, who was hand-picked by the Prime Minister. Friends of the Prime Minister who leave their job get a gold-plated pension. The former Governor General will get \$150,000 a year for life and a similar expense budget, and this is all despite the revelations in the much-anticipated report. It has not yet been made public. It will be released at the pleasure of the President of the Privy Council, who will decide what will be published in the report and when. It is a much-anticipated report.

In the meantime, we are victims of a totally unacceptable fiasco with this minority government. This is truly wilful blindness on the part of the Prime Minister and his cabinet. They had to have turned a blind eye when they proceeded with this appointment, otherwise they would have known what happened. The Conservatives put an excellent viceregal appointment process in place to avoid this kind of fiasco. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister decided to disregard it. That was his choice. What the Prime Minister wanted took precedence over the health and future of Canadians. What Canadians want is to get out of this pandemic. They want to be healthy and go back to seeing their friends. They want lockdown to end and to get the vaccine the Prime Minister promised to provide them. They want a real economic recovery. There is nothing about any of that in Bill C-14.

Last fall, the Prime Minister and the Liberals missed a golden opportunity to use the economic statement to present a plan to return to normal. Millions of Canadians were abandoned during the pandemic because of the Prime Minister's incompetence. He put our workers and our economy at risk because of his failures on the vaccine front. There is only one way for us to protect our future. Under the leadership of the hon. member for Durham, the Conservatives will be able to ensure the safety of Canadians.

Unfortunately, what the Liberal government has taught us is that it is possible to spend billions of dollars and still leave behind millions of Canadians. As the Minister of Finance has confirmed, we are on track to having a historic deficit of almost \$400 billion. The economic update clearly indicates that the Liberals still have no plan to help the millions of Canadians looking for work or the tens of thousands of businesses hit hard by the pandemic.

• (1855)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member has a very different outlook of what the reality is. The only ones who talk about the election are the Conservatives and the Bloc. It is the opposition party members who tend to always want to talk about an election.

Our focus from day one has been the pandemic and ensuring that Canadians in all regions of our country are in fact being served by this government. That includes the creation of programs like the wage subsidy program and the CERB program. Today, we are ensuring we have the vaccines that are safe, free and effective for Canadians. We will have those six million vaccines before the end of March, the first quarter, something we have talked about for a long time.

Why are the Conservatives giving misinformation on a whole litany of things regarding COVID-19?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I am always astonished at how the Liberals can manipulate all the elements at their disposal in an attempt to look good. However, the facts and figures speak for themselves. Anyone who consults the Liberal Party of Canada Facebook page will see all kinds of posts by members asking the public to re-elect a given candidate, minister or member. We were not the ones who started this blitz. We were not the ones who launched a pre-election period in this country. I invite my colleague to have a look at his own party's social media. He will see that there is a lot of talk about an election.

The facts speak for themselves. We have received no vaccines from Pfizer this week. Despite saying—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I must allow time for another question.

The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, as in the case of the economic statement, the most notable thing about this bill is what is missing from it. For example, Quebec and

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the provinces asked the federal government to increase health transfers. We know that, in the 1970s, the federal government was covering approximately 50% of health care costs. Now, it is paying only 22%. It is choking Quebec and the provinces, which enables it to spend in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

I would like my colleague to talk about the Conservatives' position on health transfers.

• (1900)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We are short on time, but I will allow the hon. member from Mégantic—L'Érable to briefly respond.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I will heed your words and keep my answer brief. What we absolutely do not want is for the Prime Minister to interfere in areas of provincial jurisdiction. We will ensure stable, adequate funding for the health care system that will increase over the coming years.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have one minute and 45 seconds when this matter comes before the House again.

It being 6:59 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

INSTRUCTION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed from October 29, consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak in this House today in representing the good people of North Okanagan—Shuswap. Although my participation is virtual, I strongly believe that it is important for members' voices from across the country to be provided opportunities to be heard in the debates, especially in times of adversity, such as we are currently facing.

The member for Lac-Saint-Louis has introduced Motion No. 34, which is a substantial motion that seeks to direct the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to undertake a lengthy and comprehensive study of many aspects of Canada's policy and legislation related to fresh water, including international treaties governing water. The motion also proposes that within the study the committee specifically focus on the creation of a Canada water agency.

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Reading this motion, I was reminded of my work at the fisheries committee nearly four years ago, when the fisheries minister directed the committee to set aside its existing work plan to undertake a review of the Fisheries Act in preparation for legislation the government was planning to introduce. We are told as parliamentarians that committees are masters of their own destiny and work plans. Here we again have a member of the governing party attempting to set the committee's work plan from outside the committee.

Parliamentary committees were never meant to operate at the behest of the governing party; rather, they are empowered to act independently to identify and study matters they deem to be of importance. The sponsor of this motion wants this House to impose a study plan on the environment committee when the government members of that committee could simply have proposed the study themselves at the committee table, which is the appropriate place for future business of committees to be discussed and determined.

The committee's work is meant to occur according to the will of the committee, not of the governing party. When the House becomes the voice and the hand of the Prime Minister's office, telling committees and parliamentarians what to do and when to do it, we effectively erode the independence afforded members and standing committees in the Standing Orders.

I noticed the sponsoring member had a previous intervention on this motion in which he stated his long interest in water. This is indeed an interest I share, as I have long held an interest in Canada's water resources and especially the fish and other species that live therein.

Before I was a parliamentarian, I dedicated much of my life to conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitat. In that role as a conservationist, I learned of the importance of Canada's freshwater systems and the species of wildlife and communities of Canadians that our fresh waters sustain.

When I view the government's performance on protecting Canada's freshwater resources, I see two critical areas where the government has failed to address significant threats to Canada's freshwater systems.

The first of these, I note, is the Liberal government's failure to deliver actions and resources required to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, or AIS, to Canada's water systems. My riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap spans a boundary between two major watersheds in British Columbia: the Okanagan, which feeds into the mighty Columbia, and the Shuswap, which feeds into the Fraser River. It is well known as one of North America's greatest salmon-producing rivers. These two networks of fresh water are massive and cover a large portion of British Columbia and three U.S. states. If AIS infestations occur in these systems, the ecological and economic damages will be permanent.

These networks of fresh water and the salmon stocks that the water has historically supported are extremely important to both the histories and futures of indigenous and non-indigenous communities alike. However, the Liberal government has repeatedly chosen inaction over action when it comes to protecting these fresh waters that sustain our precious salmon stocks.

In 2019, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development provided the House with a report on AIS, in which she concluded that Canada's lakes, rivers and oceans are poorly protected against aquatic invasive species. The commissioner also included that the cost for prevention of AIS was much lower than the cost of managing or trying to eradicate them after introduction occurs.

• (1905)

Similar conclusions and warnings were also delivered to the government in the report from the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans tabled in the House last November.

Despite these warnings and calls to action for the sake of protecting Canada's fresh water and the habitats they embody, the Liberal government has failed to deliver protection to our fresh water.

Should this motion be supported by the members of the House and initiate a study by the environment committee, I would hope that the committee would grant due consideration to the protections, or lack of protections, of Canada's fresh water against the spread of aquatic invasive species. Also, if the motion leads to a study, I hope the study will assess the roles and responsibilities of the federal government and those of the provinces and territories in what should be a united and coordinated effort to protect our freshwater resources and establish contingency plans for responding to threats and such introductions of aquatic invasive species.

The second failure of the government that I raise is its plan to defer, by amendment, deadlines for the implementation of federal waste-water treatment effluent regulations. Last summer, when the government was embroiled in the WE scandal and Canadians and the news media were distracted from other actions of the government, the current Minister of Environment, who is a previous fisheries minister, announced that his government intended to extend the prohibition deadline for dumping of untreated sewage into Canadian waters.

While the previous Conservative government established these national standards and set deadlines for the implementation, the Liberal government wants to suspend those protections for years by deferring implementation deadlines. If the Liberal government, the Minister of Environment and the sponsor of the motion are serious about protecting Canada's fresh water, why are they undermining protections that were supposed to be in place and operating this year?

Private Members' Business

This is but one more example of a government full of promises and empty of actions, and another example of how it disincantizes compliance actions that actually protect our waters. Wastewater systems effluent regulations set national effluent quality standards and came into effect in 2015. Communities with systems that did not apply were able to apply for extensions or transitional authorizations before June 2014. Many communities applied, but some did not. Those communities that failed to apply will now be given another deferral. This is not the leadership or stewardship that our freshwater resources deserve.

Again, it is an honour to represent the citizens of the North Okanagan—Shuswap and to participate in this important debate on the essential matter of conserving our fresh water. Anyone who has visited or lived in the North Okanagan—Shuswap will understand how important water is to the people here.

Water and the species therein have sustained habitats here for millennia. It has been a means of transportation for just as long and even more so with the development of our most western province. Water, fisheries and especially our Pacific salmon are extremely important to us in the North Okanagan—Shuswap. If this study occurs, I hope it will lead to greater awareness of the importance of our water and the effective protection needed.

I will continue to advocate on behalf of my constituents on the issues I raised today and all issues important to them.

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, today I spent some time rereading Motion No. 34.

As an observer of Canadian politics, I was reminded that centralization at the expense of the provinces never works in the Canadian federation. Attempts at centralization are often rationalized by the argument that Ottawa knows best, and that was what pushed me to get involved in politics and stand up for the interests of Quebec. Today's motion is in the same vein, in that it is a direct infringement on provincial jurisdictions. This aspect is particularly troubling to me, and I will come back to it later.

In addition to the infringement on provincial jurisdictions, the motion would paralyze the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development for 10 meetings, which is a big deal. I do not know about you, Madam Speaker, but I think I speak for most parliamentarians when I say that we can smell a hint of impending elections in the air. We would be paralyzing the committee for 10 meetings for a bill that is not clear in its intentions. We do not really know what the mandate of the Canadian water agency would be. The committee would be tied up for 10 meetings even though there are many other things it should be looking at first, such as our climate change proposal. I think the committee would be more interested in studying climate change than in this infringement on provincial jurisdiction over fresh water.

My first question is this: Does this subject justify paralyzing the committee for 10 meetings? I do not think so. That is why I will vote against this motion, and I hope my party will do likewise because we have received the signal.

Another subject that should be examined in committee is the recovery, which will eventually happen. The recovery plan the government is currently proposing focuses on two main areas of activity. The first is the electrification of transportation, which, as everyone knows, will help Ontario's automotive sector. The second is fossil fuels, including the ridiculous announcement we heard recently regarding the production of hydrogen from oil and gas. It seems to me, then, that by tying up the committee with this motion, we will not be able to focus on the critical issue of possible green stimulus measures that could be introduced.

On the face of it, I do not see how, in the short time available to us, we could devote 10 meetings to the fresh water issue without slowing down the work of the committee, which is much more urgent.

Last summer, I had the opportunity to visit many watershed organizations in my riding. Quebec is home to many such organizations. Some that come to mind include my friends from Lac Kénogami and my friends from Lac Labrecque. These people all told me that their biggest hurdle is the fact that the Canadian Navigable Waters Act is a federal piece of legislation. For example, navigation speeds must be federally approved. These people are having a hard time putting standards in place because the federal government is sluggish and reluctant to act. When it comes to legitimate concerns about the protection of the shorelines of several lakes in Quebec, we cannot legislate because that falls under federal jurisdiction.

• (1915)

My fear is that if this motion is adopted, another layer of bureaucracy will be added and many boaters and people who believe in the management of their waterways will lose a significant portion of them. This remains to be seen as well.

The issue of traffic management was raised several times as was water quality. The proposed motion does not enlighten us as to how we could control water quality.

A few years ago, Quebec had to deal with the major problem of blue-green algae. I am not an expert, but, as I understand it, a significant contributor to the problem was shoreline erosion. The federal government did practically nothing about this. If we add another layer of bureaucracy, I believe that the problem would only worsen.

People living in the area have legitimate concerns and already feel excluded by navigation laws. We see these kinds of concerns emerging and they are not being addressed by the federal government. My fear is that the motion will add another layer of bureaucracy.

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Also, the work of the committee would practically come to a halt for 10 meetings in what is likely, if we are being an honest, a pre-election context. I think this is a very bad idea and ill-advised.

Moreover, I introduced Bill C-225, which seeks to ensure that what happens in Quebec is governed by the Government of Quebec. I think that this environmental sovereignty, in the current context and from a climate change perspective, is absolutely essential. Quebec has demonstrated its freshwater management capabilities. We have the institutions we need to have our local fresh water, in our territory, managed by Quebeckers. It should be noted that Quebec has 3% of the world's renewable fresh water. That is significant. Several organizations have already been established. I was talking earlier about watershed organizations, but there are also cross-border watershed organizations and we have the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact. These measures are already in place. I do not see how we could harmonize what the Government of Quebec has already done with the proposed motion.

In summary, this problem brings to mind the federal government's political agenda. This is what happened with long-term care homes for seniors. The federal government wants to establish national criteria and implement Canada-wide policies, but this approach often ignores communities' concerns. The federal government's track record on the environment since the beginning of this Parliament has not been good. We only have to think of the pipelines and the recent example with Trans Mountain. Is this motion intended to be just smoke and mirrors? Talking about fresh water and freshwater regulations sounds good, but that is ultimately difficult to enforce. I simply do not think the committee has the time to study this kind of motion. I urge my Liberal and Conservative friends to look at this motion before us and perhaps set it aside.

• (1920)

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to discuss sustainable development, particularly as it relates to freshwater management and protection.

Many members will know that the protection of fresh water is something that hundreds of thousands of Albertans are deeply worried about now probably more than ever as we face the potential destruction of large portions of the eastern slopes of our Rocky Mountains and the poisoning of the Oldman River, streams and aquifers that sustain life in southern Alberta.

I am not from southern Alberta, but my husband's family has lived in the shadows of the eastern slopes for a very long time. I was born and bred in Edmonton. As many members will know, Edmonton is located in the North Saskatchewan River watershed and relies on the water of the North Saskatchewan for our very existence. I feel deeply compelled to not only protect this watershed but all watersheds and water basins in Canada.

Canada is one of the most freshwater-abundant countries in the world. We are blessed with beautiful lakes, streams and waterways from coast to coast to coast. However, that does not mean there are no issues. Canada has long faced water challenges, especially in Al-

berta, and now those challenges are intensifying with climate change.

We need to change our approach to freshwater protection and management to address climate change, while improving Canada's outdated federal freshwater legislation. We also need to address new threats to our freshwater systems from ecologically damaging developments, like coal exploration and mining projects that Jason Kenney and the Conservative provincial government is supporting. The federal government has an obligation to ensure waterways are protected even when provincial governments refuse to do so.

Canadians are now well aware of the impacts of more frequent and more severe water-based natural disasters as well. We talk of 100-year floods more frequently now. We will probably have to change what we call those, because we can hardly call something a 100-year flood when it happens significantly more frequently.

In Alberta, we have bounced between drought and flood. It has cost lives and billions of dollars in disaster assistance and community rebuilding. In 2013, catastrophic floods displaced 100,000 people and killed five Albertans. We have seen similar disastrous floods in Ontario and Quebec. More regular floods and droughts cost billions in lost agricultural production and infrastructure.

Toxic algae blooms are now common in lakes across Canada. They kill wildlife and pets, sicken people and force our recreational areas to close.

My family has a small lakeside cottage at Seba Beach. We have had it for about 50 years, and it is only in the last few years that algae blooms close the lake for all intents and purposes for several weeks each summer.

Our capacity to manage these events is severely hampered by a number of things. Among those would be deficient data and reporting, a lack of national forecasting and prediction capacity, outdated flood plain maps and a failure to adequately incorporate climate change impacts into our decision-making.

We know that climate change is already impacting fresh water and we know that these issues caused by climate change are complex and interrelated. It is not just changing weather patterns: the floods that come with sudden extreme storms, the droughts that come when we no longer get snow in the winter. Climate change is also changing how our forests grow, leading to more frequent and more dangerous forest fires, which in turn are leading to more flooding and more drought.

It is vital that the deficiencies in data, forecasting and mapping in the current system be addressed, but it is also vital that we have a coordinated and integrated federal response to these challenges. That requires federal water laws and policies that account for climate impacts now and into the future.

I spoke with the Minister of Environment earlier this month about the open-pit coal mining. I was alarmed by the admission that he could only evaluate individual projects and could not consider the cumulative impacts of multiple projects. Our ecosystem does not work this way and neither should our approval processes.

• (1925)

When I speak of the vital importance of having a holistic, comprehensive look at water issues and how we protect water, I want to make it crystal clear that we cannot allow this study to delay the creation of a Canada water agency. The government committed to the creation of the agency in the most recent throne speech, and I fully support that action.

A Canada water agency is overdue, but that agency's mandate and functions should be co-developed with indigenous nations. Water is sacred. Under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, water is understood to be an inherent right. It is a right that is not subject to other legal interpretations.

We know that indigenous people in Canada have had their inherent rights to water ignored for generations. These rights are barely recognized in current water management systems. A new nation-to-nation governance paradigm consistent with the principles of reconciliation and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is needed to recognize indigenous nations' inherent right to self-determination. Anything else contravenes the stated intentions of the government and will ensure that the new agency is a failure.

The agency's mandate must also be developed in close collaboration with local authorities, water organizations and the general public. The level of expertise among academics and activists on these issues in my riding of Edmonton Strathcona alone is impressive and we need to make sure that this expertise is accessed.

Finally, on the issue of creating a Canadian water agency, I just want to add that the agency would be just one of the reforms we need. We also need to modernize and update the Canada Water Act. The motion should not delay or otherwise prevent the committee from setting a work plan to do just that.

Earlier in my speech, I talked a bit about the proposed open-pit coal mining and the environmental protections and the need to protect water in Alberta. As members will know, this is preoccupying me at the moment. In Alberta, Jason Kenney's UCP government has now rescinded the coal policy that has been in place my entire life and that has prevented new coal expansion and development on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

It is important to note that while I am urging the committee to consider a wide range of issues, including climate change and broad consultation, Jason Kenney's government did absolutely no consultation before rescinding the coal policy, a policy put in place by the Lougheed government after six and a half years of public consultation.

Jason Kenney's move to open the eastern slopes to coal mining and exploration will not just change our mountains forever, but will also have severe consequences for Alberta's water basin for generations to come. These impacts will be felt far downstream, including

in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the United States. It is that cross-border water issue that means the federal government must act.

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As the committee develops this study and the renewal of our water policies, it is critically important that it consider the impacts of decisions by governments like Jason Kenney's to turn to old technologies and old development for short-term economic gain at the expense of our water systems. The federal government must include an examination of open-pit coal mining in this review.

Given that the quantity, quality and timing of water flows are all directly related to land use and that the need for climate change mitigation will increase the importance of groundwater recharge, which occurs on terrestrial environments, it is essential that the committee include expertise and consideration of land-use impacts on water security as well.

Failure to consider the links between land use and water has caused ongoing challenges, and no effective solutions are being implemented. A case in point of course is coal mining. The sort of damage becomes evident thanks to water monitoring in the streams themselves, and this is traditionally where we have looked for water problems and solutions. However, the problems are actually land-use problems and the solutions will require new approaches to planning and regulating land use in the source water areas for Canadian rivers. For this reason, it is essential that the committee include expertise and seek advice.

Right now, a single project threatens the water supply for much of southern Alberta, including drinking water for Lethbridge, Fort MacLeod and surrounding communities and the irrigation water that farmers and ranchers rely upon for agricultural systems. The committee must include these issues in its study.

• (1930)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to speak in favour of this motion. There are some significant issues covered by the proposal, and a full and complete study by a committee of Parliament, with recommendations back to the House as well as to cabinet and the Prime Minister, is in order.

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There is an old saying in municipal affairs that if we do not manage our water, our water manages us. This was abundantly clear, unfortunately, in Calgary where a flood in 2013 did about \$3.4 billion worth of damage to the city. That could have been avoided if an investment of \$600 million had been made in flood protection in the river valleys that run through the city. The call from the City was made to the federal government, but it was dismissed by federal Conservatives at the time because it appeared that they were supporting the impacts of climate change. While the Tories were still struggling with their denial of climate change and the science of climate change, they allowed Calgary to fend for itself. In response, the damage was done because water does not wait for Conservative leadership to catch up to science. Science is science, geology is geology, and water is water.

This underscores a need. We have had five “storms of the century” in the last 15 years in Toronto alone. Water is going to play an increasing role in significant economic disruption but, more importantly, in population displacement and population loss in parts of the country.

The forest fires that have been plaguing western Canada are a direct result of drought and other influences tied to the management of water, and those fires do extraordinary damage. They are seen as fire and emergency situations, not as water and climate change issues. Until we start to broaden our understanding of exactly what the impact on water is as it relates to climate change, we are going to be playing catch-up on this. We are going to be spending billions of dollars mitigating the impacts of badly managed water, instead of spending the hundreds millions of dollars it would take to hopefully create and deliver much stronger environmental policies but also much stronger water policies.

I will note that I represent a riding that, as can be seen from the map behind me, is part of the Great Lakes system. There are a number of issues around this bill that are related to that.

For example, the Great Lakes are home to 51 million jobs largely dependent on fresh water, on power generated by water, and on the lakes' shipping capacity. All of these things combine to create an economic vitality that is quite profound in terms of its impact on the continent, so there are a significant number of jobs. In fact, one-quarter of all Canadians draw their drinking water from the Great Lakes. We have to be smart about how we manage this asset or, as I said, this asset will manage us.

The situation is fluctuating. It has great volatility and great capacity to cause danger. It is not simply something, as a member from the Bloc said, to relegate to the Province of Quebec. How do we relegate water to a province when it crosses boundaries every time it flows? How do we relegate management of the Ottawa Valley to one province over another, any more than we tell people in Montreal they should be flooded so we can spare folks on the north shore of Lake Ontario from being flooded, or vice versa?

Clearly a national conversation needs to be had. Clearly a national strategy needs to be enunciated. We can look at the 16 different international joint commissions that govern water in Canada, and the four national jurisdictional bodies that govern water from the prairie rivers to Lake of the Woods in the province of Manitoba. We can look at the Ottawa River, as I mentioned earlier. We can look at

the Mackenzie River Delta. All of these interprovincial and interterritorial waterways have a profound impact on everybody who shares that water.

The floods that happen in the Ottawa Valley do not distinguish between the Quebec and the Ontario sides of the river, or between the Quebec and the Ontario citizens who are impacted. Neither do the floods contain the economic damage province to province, and simply say one province alone has to deal with it, and that the country is going to walk away from it because some sort of archaic, bizarre interpretation of the Canadian Constitution is that we do not share resources like water across provincial and territorial boundaries. That literally does not hold water as an argument.

● (1935)

In terms of the Great Lakes, our government has stepped up on these fronts, but the stepping up on these issues requires us to work within regulatory frameworks where we never have total control of the issue or a global perspective on what is happening with water, and we do not understand, from a national perspective at all times, what the best strategic direction forward is.

For example, the member from the Bloc said that water flow is an issue when navigating up the St. Lawrence Seaway and into the great lakes. The reason water flow is an issue is that we are trying to drain the Great Lakes because of their record high and fluctuating water levels driven by climate change and due to habitat destruction in the watersheds around the Great Lakes. When we do not plant trees or protect wetlands, as we are seeing in Ontario now with the MZOs from Queen's Park and when we do not protect our conservation authorities, as we are also seeing being undermined by moves at the provincial legislature, what ends up happening is that the Great lakes overflow with water and the flooding is profound. We had 600 homes in my riding alone flooded in the last couple of years, and the way we have protected those waterfront properties is by flowing the water out of the Great Lakes faster. That has implications for shipping. It has implications for Montreal and downstream, and to simply pretend that we can manage the Great Lakes without understanding the impact in Quebec and downstream into the Atlantic provinces is just absurd.

This is a critically important issue for protecting water quality; protecting the integrity of our habitat, our wetlands and our river basins, as well as our Great Lakes; and also managing the navigational and shipping capacity that water offers us, in particular to cities like Hamilton, where the agricultural business there depends on getting boats through the St. Lawrence River. We cannot do that if the water is too low or too high, or if it is moving too fast or too slowly. All of these issues require comprehensive, coordinated action and investment in a stronger water agency to make sure that we have coordinated action and that the best science is available so that the best conservation and displacement policies are put in place. As well, this would inform us on how to manage the environment upstream, so that we create a more balanced approach to the way in which water impacts us right across the country.

I will also say this about water, the impact it has on cities and settlements and why this institute is so critically important, which is that we have a fifth of the world's fresh water in Canada. That commodity is going to result in unbelievable economic opportunities and advantages in the coming years. It will also be what will give us the ability to survive the next century, if we manage it properly. To start trying to solve the problem after it has been created is like trying to mop up a house after there has been a leak in a bathroom. The thing to do now with water is to attend to it immediately before it causes damage that takes out so much in so many communities around our waterways.

When we take a look at this proposal to study the joint commissions and international treaties and the interprovincial and territorial treaties, indigenous water lot rights and indigenous approaches to conservation, as well as indigenous treaty rights tied to water lots, we are examining the water quality issues that are required for human existence and industrial standards. In Pittsburgh a few years ago, they had to close a high-tech plant because the water quality was so low they could not get water clean enough to do some of the high-tech work in that part of the country.

When we take a look at water quality, it is not just a question of human existence; it is also what our economy is based on. We have an economy that is based far more than on just the fish and what we pull out of the water; it is the use of the water in industrial processes. It is critical.

When we take a look at our energy and switching away from fossil fuels where possible and moving toward renewables where there is an opportunity, water plays a critical role in that new energy future in this country.

As we move toward more electric vehicles and greater use of batteries as a mobile power source for more than just vehicles, but also for all sorts of machines, water is going to play an increasingly important role in all of this.

• (1940)

If we do not understand where fresh water is being managed, what the goals and strategies are and the impacts of decisions as they relate to the economic dynamics around water conservation, water usage and the use in industry as well as power generation, if we do not also take a look at the impact in terms of the storms and flooding we are seeing and the droughts that we are trying to miti-

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gate, but also take a look at the climate change impact and where water—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member's time is up. I have been trying to give him a few signals, but I am not sure if he was just not seeing me.

[*Translation*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, on September 23, 2020, in the Speech from the Throne that opened the second session of the 43rd Parliament of Canada, the Government of Canada reiterated its desire to create a Canada water agency. The throne speech stated that the government will create a new Canada water agency to keep our water safe, clean and well managed. The government will also identify opportunities to build more resilient water and irrigation infrastructure.

Motion No. 34, which was moved by my colleague from Lac-Saint-Louis and would provide instruction to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development regarding fresh water, seems to be a diversion to delay the implementation of concrete measures to protect the environment and better regulate and protect our fresh water.

This is another example of the Liberals' doublespeak. They claim to be concerned about the environment, but then they tangle themselves up in procedure so that they can put off taking real action.

Madam Speaker, could you mute my colleague? There is some noise.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I did not hear any change here. Is someone else's microphone on?

An hon. member: Yes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Okay. It is now muted.

The hon. member can continue.

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, thank you for your help.

I would remind members that the government prorogued Parliament while the country was in the midst of the COVID-19 public health crisis.

As far as I know, few parliaments shut down during the crisis, but that is the bizarre strategy the Liberal government opted for.

Private Members' Business

We all know that protecting fresh water is crucial. We need to protect this resource. We need to take urgent action. We also know that climate change is affecting fresh water. According to Statistics Canada, Canada produces 3,478 cubic kilometres of renewable fresh water per year. That is twice the volume of Lake Ontario, or an average of 104,000 cubic metres of water per Canadian.

According to the website of Quebec's ministry of environment and climate change, fresh water accounts for 10% of Quebec's surface area. Quebec has tens of thousands of rivers and over three million bodies of water totalling 3% of the planet's renewable fresh water reserves. Almost 40% of all that water is in the St. Lawrence watershed. Numbers like that might suggest that this resource is not in jeopardy, but nothing could be further from the truth. Rising water levels and salinization of fresh water are real threats.

An article published in *Le Soleil* in January 2016 reported that Quebec City and Lévis were concerned about the salinity of the St. Lawrence. According to the article, the area where the salt and fresh waters meet is located at the eastern tip of Île d'Orléans, but scientists are saying that climate warming could push it towards Quebec City and Lévis. A study was launched to identify the danger to drinking water intakes in the St. Lawrence River, in particular to determine if and when salt water could make its way westward and into our faucets. None of this is new, and yet the Liberals introduced their bill on the environment just a few hours before the House of Commons rose for the holiday break. Once again, they did everything at the last minute.

For five years it has been the same old thing. The Liberals introduce bills with good intentions but no substance. They are driven only by their image. Let us not forget Bill C-69, An Act to enact the Impact Assessment Act and the Canadian Energy Regulator Act, to amend the Navigation Protection Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, which received royal assent in June 2019. They used a lot of words to accomplish nothing.

In December, the government certainly could have added something about water, a major resource for our country. We are here to talk about fresh water and its protection, but when it comes to water, we have our doubts about the government's promises.

Today, less than seven days after his inauguration, the new President of the United States, Joe Biden, signed an executive order on his plan for the environment. In the meantime, after five years in power, this government has been unable to get any tangible results for Canadians.

Here is a clear example. The federal government admitted that it would likely not meet its objective of putting an end to all long-term boil water advisories in indigenous communities by March 2021, and experts all agree that the government is still a long way from meeting that objective.

My colleague from Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, with whom I have the honour of serving on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, also expressed concerns about the management and protection of Canada's fresh water. On October 29, he said, and I quote: "Our survival and the survival of our communities depend on sources of safe, clean water. In my riding there are many rivers and lakes, such as Okanagan

Lake and Nicola Lake." He went on to say that he has repeatedly advocated for protections for the lakes and rivers in his region.

It is the same thing in the wonderful riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, which I have the great honour of representing. There are many lakes, rivers and other waterways in this beautiful region, which is located near the St. Lawrence River.

These precious resources add to people's quality of life and make an enormous contribution to the region's economy. One thing that I think is important and that I care about as a member of Parliament is doing everything I can to protect the environment. I would like to remind members that, we, the Conservatives, do not wake up every morning with the goal of destroying the planet, quite the contrary.

● (1945)

We are the best protectors and keepers of our land and of nature. We, the Conservatives, have an excellent record on environmental issues.

I am a father. It is important to me to leave a healthy environment and sound economy to my children, grandchildren and, of course, future generations.

I remind members that respect for jurisdictions is important to the Conservative Party. Our party is the only one that respects that principle in the House of Commons.

We agree that the study proposed by Motion No. 34 should go ahead. This is my colleague's motion. He is currently the chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development; when he moved the motion, he was a member of that committee.

However, my colleagues and I seriously question the government's tactics. The Conservatives have long been opposed to the dumping of sewage into our waters, and the motion would give us the opportunity to examine the government's ability to address this issue.

I share the concerns of my colleague from Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola about the motion, especially those he stated last October with respect to creating the Canada water agency.

The Constitution assigns much of the jurisdiction over fresh water to provincial governments. We must ensure that there is collaboration with the provinces and that the Liberal government does not dictate the provinces' course of action, as it is wont to do. We are seeing this with the management of the pandemic.

Quebec has an extensive hydroelectric power network, which is regulated by the provincial government. An attempt by the federal government to take control over fresh water would interfere in provincial jurisdictions. It is not surprising that the Legault government has already expressed concerns about the creation of this agency. As I was saying, our party is the only party in the House of Commons that respects provincial jurisdictions.

I want to conclude with a quote from an article published in November 2019, which rightly sounded the alarm. Bob Sandford, a co-author of a report by the Global Water Futures project, which involves 22 universities, said, “We’ve enjoyed the luxury of the myth of limitless abundance of fresh water in Canada.” The article concluded with the following statement: “We have to commit to changing what we do and how we do it. And we need to have done that yesterday.”

Now is the time to act. The current government has done nothing but make empty promises since 2015. To wit, not a single tree has been planted. Protecting the environment is not a priority. It is all smoke and mirrors.

I urge the government to reflect, respect the environment, take meaningful action to protect fresh water and respect provincial jurisdictions.

• (1950)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would like to remind the member that he will have just four minutes for his speech. Then the sponsor of the motion will have five minutes.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, that is a real shame, because I had a 10-minute speech prepared.

Everyone thinks water is important. More people agree on that than on apple pie. I am drinking some water tonight, in fact. Everyone likes water, including my hon. colleague from Lac-Saint-Louis. He likes water so much that he wants Parliament to take time, lots of time, to study a whole bunch of freshwater issues.

Our time here this evening, mine in particular, is limited, so I will get straight to the point: Quebec and the provinces have exclusive jurisdiction over freshwater resources.

I really want to emphasize the fact that our time is limited, because it is pretty clear to me that the government would like us to run out the clock before the election. It would be convenient to tie up the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development by telling it to study the fresh water issue instead of taking real action on the environment. Better still, instead of analyzing the risks associated with the offshore oil drilling that the Liberal government chose to approve, the committee would be focusing on what the provinces are doing and then telling them what they should be doing.

We are not fooled. If the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis and the Liberals had the same concern for salt water as they do for fresh water, they would be extremely surprised. It is crystal clear to me that we must protect water now. The best way to do that is not by undertaking a vast pre-election study in order to greenwash the

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government's record. The best way to do it is to listen to the scientists, the very ones that the Liberals keep saying over and over that they rely on to make decisions.

Fine words and studies are all well and good, but it is 2021. We are past the point of asking all these questions that scientists have already asked and answered. My colleague may have very good intentions for our waterways and may even still believe his government's claims of environmentalism. However, whether or not we set up a Canada water agency, if there were oil in Lake Saint-Louis, this government would dream up a good reason to extract it.

No one is better placed than Quebec and the provinces to deal with environmental issues relating to water or just environmental issues in general. Not only does each province have its own environmental ministry with competent expert scientists, but they are responsible for managing water resources within their borders.

I have some advice for the Liberals. They should start by respecting Quebec and provincial environmental laws before trying yet again to encroach on other governments' areas of jurisdiction. This Parliament can regulate the fisheries, shipping and navigation. That has been clear for over 150 years.

What my colleague seems to want is for Canada to become an armchair quarterback who criticizes everything the players do on the field. I am sorry, but that is not how this country is supposed to work. Once again, a sovereigntist is forced to remind the government of the basics of federalism. We should be keeping track of how often this happens.

I would like to suggest something, if I may. The Bloc Québécois, and more specifically, the eminent and outstanding member for Jonquière, who also happens to be a great guy, introduced a bill on Quebec's environmental sovereignty, Bill C-225. Unlike Motion No. 34, Bill C-225 does not analyze federal laws, but rather amends them. Let us be pragmatic for a moment. Anyone who acknowledges the importance of protecting the environment must also acknowledge that it is urgent. If it is so urgent, let us choose the fastest and most effective means of doing so, if they exist. In our case, Quebec and the provinces have the strictest rules, and they already exist.

Logically speaking, if the member for Lac-Saint-Louis and his colleagues are consistent, they will have to agree that when it comes to its own infrastructure, the federal government should respect provincial regulations and municipal bylaws instead of getting into jurisdictional squabbles.

I think people know me well enough by now to guess what I am about to say. Who do we work for? I will tell you who I work for and why I am here. I work for my constituents back home in Lac-Saint-Jean. On environmental matters specifically, I am working for my children's generation. I am working for young people who, just this afternoon, were telling me that they are sick of all the red tape. Young people are sick of the federal government slowing everything down and accomplishing nothing. What is the point—

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● (1955)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but the member's time is up and I tried to indicate that to him. I very much appreciated all of the speeches this evening.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, for right of reply, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we need the study on this motion because it is time we gave formal and comprehensive attention to the protection and management of our most precious resource, our fresh water. Clearly, this government has begun to do just that.

The recent throne speech reiterated the government's commitment to creating a coordinating and research mechanism called the Canada water agency. Consultations are well under way to inform the shape of this new entity.

The throne speech also committed to creating a national water strategy. The House owes it to itself to be part of the conversation around these important initiatives. The proposed study would make the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development the locus of Parliament's engagement on both initiatives. The committee is the ideal and rightful forum for an in-depth conversation on current and future federal policies and initiatives involving fresh water.

I know there are concerns in some quarters. These concerns have been expressed by my Bloc colleagues, notably the members for Repentigny, Jonquière and Lac-Saint-Jean. There is concern that an active federal interest in fresh water risks impinging on provincial jurisdiction, but this is not the case, neither in terms of the recent throne speech commitments nor in terms of the spirit of this proposed study.

First, the Canada water agency would not be a regulation-making body. Its purpose would be to explore fresh water issues for the purpose of information sharing with stakeholders, which includes various federal departments, provincial governments, academic institutions, private sector companies and international bodies.

Second, the federal government has clearly proven it is open, where appropriate, to involving provinces in fresh water management, even where there is a clear federal constitutional responsibility.

For example, in regard to the 2012 federal waste-water system effluent regulations under the Fisheries Act, these do not apply in Quebec, since equivalent waste-water regulations are in effect in that province. Moreover, there are currently bilateral waste-water administrative agreements between the federal government and the provinces of New Brunswick and Saskatchewan.

I compare the water domain to the free market in economics. I do not mean this in the sense of water being a private good. It is not and should never be. I mean that, like the economic free market, there is a large number of actors, too large to inventory, working simultaneously toward the objective of optimally protecting and managing this vital resource.

These efforts are, in a way, guided by an invisible hand working for a common good and not by central government planning or direction. That is the boon, but it is also the challenge. Just like with the free market, some measure of coordination is always needed, so too is it in respect to fresh water.

Finally, when we speak of a national water strategy, we are really speaking of a federal water strategy, not an invasion of jurisdiction by a national government intent on implementing a uniform vision for water. We are speaking of a long-overdue attempt to rationalize disparate, and too often disjointed, elements of water policy in federal jurisdiction.

Canada is a water nation worthy of a focused discussion in Parliament on the clear and rapidly emerging issue of water security at a time of galloping climate change, rapid industrial development and sustained global population growth. I thank all members who participated in the debate on this motion.

● (2000)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the amendment.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the amendment be adopted on division, I invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

For the sake of clarity, I invite a member present in the House to rise to indicate that the motion is agreed to on division or to request a recorded division.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to have the amendment carried on division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Amendment agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The next question is on the motion, as amended.

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

For the sake of clarity, I would invite a member present in the House to rise to indicate if the motion is agreed to on division or to request a recorded division.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[*English*]

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 3, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to be here at the late show tonight to speak about farmers, ranchers, the carbon tax and clean fuel standards. A carbon tax hike is set to make things a lot harder for Canadian farmers and ranchers. A tax hits farmers from many different directions with very few exemptions.

For inputs and fertilizer, add a carbon tax. For seeds, add a carbon tax. Equipment, machinery and parts cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, and a combine is close to \$1 million. Add to that a carbon tax. For grain drying, which costs tens of thousands of dollars, add a carbon tax. For heating buildings, and there are many, add a carbon tax. We have a crop, and now what do we do? We have to truck it and deliver it, with a carbon tax added on. For grain companies and elevators, add a carbon tax. What about the railway? Yes, we have to move things, so add a carbon tax.

Producers pay all the downstream costs with no ability to increase the price they receive. Agriculture sector producers use the most energy-efficient and innovative means in the world. Agriculture producers are also carbon sinks.

As Brian Cross noted in *The Western Producer*, Alberta Federation of Agriculture President Lynn Jacobson said, “the carbon tax increase highlights the need for additional carbon tax exemptions for prairie farms.” He also noted, “The establishment of a national carbon credit system that allows farmers to capitalize on carbon sequestering activities would go a long way”.

The government is hiking the carbon tax, or the clean fuel standards tax, without a comprehensive plan to address the damage it is going to cause to our agriculture sector and supply chain.

Speaking of challenges on the Prairies, the cancellation of the Keystone pipeline is devastating to real people, families, businesses and communities. We need jobs and growth, and the pipeline supplied both. The Prime Minister talks about support for the resource sector, but killed northern gateway and added barriers to energy east that killed it. The government legislated Bill C-48 and Bill C-69, which did in pipelines as well.

The Liberals also bought a pipeline from a private company that just wanted to build it and wanted the government to get out of the way so it could do it. Now it is many billions of dollars over budget and years behind completion. Will it get built? Is Enbridge Line 5 through Michigan next on the hit list? It would mean thousands of jobs in Ontario and Quebec.

Post-COVID-19 jobs in the resource sector are an essential part of getting Canadians back to work and recovering Canada's economy. We need this sector working. Where is the plan to do it?

Speaking of plans, was the COVID-19 plan a Canada-focused plan? We all know the first thing the government should have done was protect the most vulnerable and protect front-line workers.

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How do we do that? It is with rapid testing, tracing and isolation. Instead, the government's plan was lacking significantly, and we slowed down the economy to almost a crawl. Then it was basically closed twice.

Sadly, many vulnerable families have been lost forever. Many businesses are closed and many more will be. Students have lost an academic year, and hundreds of thousands of jobs are lost. Mental health challenges are now exploding.

Now in January, 10 months later, the government has started asking for COVID tests. Where was that 10 months ago? Where was the support for Canadian industries to develop rapid testing and vaccines?

We need to protect lives and livelihoods. That is the key to getting out of this crisis and getting people back to work. The government's handling of this situation has prolonged the economic damage and is risking lives.

• (2010)

Mr. Neil Ellis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Bow River for the opportunity to address the strong measures our government has put in place to support our farmers.

Our government is maximizing our trade opportunities for our farmers. We have been working hard to diversify our trade through agreements with key trading partners, including the European Union, North America and the countries of the trans-Pacific partnership. Most recently, we did so through the trade agreement with the United Kingdom.

The results speak for themselves. The 14 free trade agreements we have in place cover 51 countries, connecting our farmers to 1.5 billion global consumers. Together these agreements give Canadian farmers a competitive edge in over 60% of the global economy. Today, we are the only G7 nation to have a free trade agreement with the other six nations. That puts us in a very powerful position internationally.

We know that strong farm business means a strong economy. That is why we are focused on strong business risk management programs. Building on all emergency supports we have rolled out this year to support farmers during the pandemic, our government stands ready to step up with improvements to the BRM programs.

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We are seeking a national consensus with the provinces and territories to make enhancements to the AgriStability program that would significantly increase the amount paid out to our farmers through the program. As a starting point, our government is looking to remove the reference margin limits, and is prepared to look at further immediate enhancements to AgriStability. As well, we are looking to increase the AgriStability compensation rate from 70% to 80%.

With regard to the hon. member's reference to the review of neonicotinoid insecticides by Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency, the government has engaged with producers and other stakeholders to examine impacts and identify potential alternatives to neonics, including through research. We have submitted to the PMRA new scientific papers and additional information from the public, the province and the agriculture industry, as well as our working group. The PMRA is currently reviewing the submitted information and plans to provide federal decisions in the spring of 2021.

We support the rigorous science-based regulation of pesticides in Canada to ensure they continue to meet modern health and safety standards. We will continue to make sure our farmers have the tools they need to feed Canadians and the world.

Mr. Martin Shields: Madam Speaker, as I am on the heritage committee, I know the topic of free speech is now very alive and part of what we are doing. Have members ever heard of Hyde Park in London? It is famous for "Speakers' Corner", where anyone can come to speak about whatever topic they like.

The heritage minister recently indicated that he intends to introduce legislation to regulate speech on the Internet. Hate speech is already illegal in Canada and has been for years. The Criminal Code makes it illegal to incite violence and promote hatred. I have received many communications from my constituents expressing interest about what this plan might look like.

The minister's intentions are probably great, but this needs to be approached very carefully, with input from members of all parties. Freedom of speech and freedom of religion are crucial foundations of our country's democracy.

Mr. Neil Ellis: Madam Speaker, for farmers to take advantage of new market opportunities on the world stage, they need to meet consumers' demands for sustainability. That is why, over the next 10 years, we will invest \$350 million to help farmers continue their stewardship of soil, water and biodiversity.

Carbon pollution pricing remains an important part of Canada's plan for a cleaner and more innovative economy. Since the beginning, we have recognized the special role our farmers play in Canada, which is why we exempt farm fields, greenhouses and farm fuel obtained from cardlock facilities. Alongside these promises, we will continue making investments in the sector to improve the energy efficiency of agricultural equipment.

We are also investing \$1.65 billion in the new agricultural cleantech program and \$200 million in the climate action incentive fund, financed through proceeds from the federal carbon pollution pricing system, which has already supported more than 200 energy efficiency projects in agriculture, such as helping a farmer replace an

old and inefficient grain dryer or install solar panels for watering systems.

We are also developing a greenhouse gas offset system. It could offer opportunities for farmers to generate carbon offset credits through on-farm practices that reduce emissions and store carbon.

Canadian farmers are—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member's time is up.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

TAXATION

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, throughout this pandemic the government has been very clear: Workers who lost their income due to COVID-19 were going to receive support, the Prime Minister assured us. Again and again, in statement after statement, the Prime Minister told Canadians "We're here for you." Those were the words that meant everything to Canadians who did not know how they were going to pay the bills and put food on the table.

Today, however, those words ring hollow for hundreds of thousands of Canadians and their families, people who put their faith in this government and believed that the Prime Minister had their backs, only to discover that it was not true.

More than 400,000 Canadians who applied for the CERB in good faith, who were told by the government that they were eligible and who were in fact eligible according to the CRA website, who received CERB in order to survive, have now received a letter from the CRA informing them that they have to pay that support back. Why? It is because their government changed the rules on them. It is not just wrong: It is a betrayal. It is a betrayal of the House and a betrayal of Canadians.

We spent a lot of time working together in a committee of the whole to get Canadians the help they needed to get through the pandemic. The NDP pushed the government at every turn to do better, and often the government listened to us. We recognized that provinces and territories had to implement strict public health measures to combat the transmission of the virus. We knew that these measures would cost people their jobs. We knew that if we did not act, our economy would be devastated and lives would be ruined. I and my fellow New Democrats called immediately and repeatedly for help for those who needed it, and the government listened and made that critical promise to Canadians that help would be coming.

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When the government finally brought the CERB forward for a vote, the legislation, Bill C-13, defined those who would be eligible for support as "...a person who...for 2019 or in the 12-month period preceding the day on which they make an application under section 5, has a total income of at least \$5,000", and the CRA website listed the eligible sources of income to include income from self-employment. That is the bill that I and other members of the House voted for, but that is not what self-employed Canadians are getting from this government.

Canadians should be able to trust their government, and if they follow the rules, so should their government.

The CERB was a lifeline for millions of Canadians. It was a way to make it to the next month, and the next and the next. It is the difference between paying rent and becoming homeless and the difference between hanging on and bankruptcy. Now the government has taken that lifeline away from hundreds of thousands of self-employed Canadians. Worse yet, it is throwing them back overboard.

It is inhumane and, quite honestly, ridiculous, and it does not have to be this way. The government can decide right now to reverse this inane decision. Just apply the legislation the way it was written, which means allowing self-employed Canadians to use total income rather than net income to determine CERB eligibility. It means counting income from grants to artists and performers the same way it is counted for tax purposes.

Will this government restore Canadians' trust and reverse this disastrous CERB clawback?

● (2015)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Edmonton Strathcona for advocacy on behalf of her constituents.

I want to be clear. The Government of Canada is there for Canadian workers and continues to be there for them. The CERB was the keystone piece of that support. During the darkest months of the pandemic crisis, we helped more than 8.9 million Canadians who lost their income.

Our goal at the beginning of the first lockdown in the spring was to get money into the hands of Canadian workers and Canadians as quickly as possible. This included the self-employed.

We used the definition of self-employment income that was consistent with how people interacted with the Government of Canada for other benefits like the GST and the Canada child benefit. However, as the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion said, we know that some people misunderstood that definition. The Government of Canada strives to be accurate in all its communications with Canadians, especially at call centres. Employees have done a stellar job at helping Canadians throughout this crisis.

We all know that in the initial weeks after the CERB was launched, some of the information provided was at times unclear. We are actively looking at options to respond to the concerns raised by self-employed Canadians about the eligibility criteria and the information they received. Again, I want to be very clear about the

fact that no one is being asked to make a repayment at this time. The CRA is only looking to confirm people's eligibility for the CERB.

We know very well that for some individuals repaying the CERB could represent a significant financial hardship and that is why we are taking a compassionate approach to the issue of repayment. If individuals choose to start repaying amounts for which they were not eligible, flexible repayment options are available based on their individual financial situation. The CRA will work with them on a case-by-case basis.

We know that workers and their families continue to face uncertain times as the pandemic wears on and different jurisdictions face lockdown restrictions. The Government of Canada will continue to be there for Canadian workers and their families until the pandemic ends and beyond.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, this is so disheartening. I feel like the member does not understand the stress and hardship that we are asking Canadians to go through. How will they repay funds when they do not have jobs? The schedule does not matter. If they do not have the ability to do that, it is nothing but a slap in the face. Nobody should be penalized for a mistake made by his or her government.

This new interpretation of the rules should be reversed. It was a mistake made by the government, not a mistake made by the people, with CERB. It is not right, it is not fair and it is not what we voted for. The government can stop this inhumane CERB clawback today if it chooses to. It is simple. If the member is looking for solutions, I can offer them.

The government should just live up to the promises it made to Canadians and apply the legislation the way it was written. It does not even have to admit it is wrong, just do the right thing and cancel the CERB clawback now.

● (2020)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Speaker, as the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion has said, it is unfair to say that we are going after workers. The CERB was there to support workers who had lost their income because of COVID-19.

People who received a letter from the CRA should not assume that they are ineligible for the CERB. It just means that the CRA is trying to confirm eligibility, and it will work with individuals on potential repayment plans.

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[Translation]

I thank the member for Edmonton Strathcona for her question. She is a staunch advocate for her constituents.

● (2025)

[English]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, when COVID-19 forced an economic lockdown in March, this Parliament took a team Canada approach to ensure that Canadians received the financial support they needed.

The government introduced the Canada emergency response benefit, CERB, in a hurry, and it passed with unanimous consent from all MPs and all parties. Speed was necessary under the circumstances, but it created a situation where eligibility requirements were unclear. This was particularly true for individuals who are self-employed.

In December, the Canada Revenue Agency sent out more than 441,000 letters advising some CERB recipients that they may not be eligible for the benefit and may have to pay back as much as \$14,000. Many of the people who received the letters are low-income self-employed Canadians.

On the CERB application, the government did not specify whether eligibility would be based on gross or net self-employed income. The CERB Act did not define self-employed income, and did not mention expenses or deductions. The government website stated multiple times that income of at least \$5,000 may be from employment and/or self-employment for CERB eligibility. There was no mention of gross or net income.

Immediately after the CERB act was passed, the finance minister stated, both in press conferences and in testimony before the Senate, that CERB eligibility would be based on earned revenue. Revenue, in business terms, means income before expenses, or gross income. It was not until late April, weeks after people started applying for the CERB, that the CRA quietly added a clarifying statement that eligible self-employment earnings were “net pre-tax income”, which is gross income less expenses. This clarification is buried in one of the frequently asked questions on the government website, near the bottom of the page.

There have been many reported examples of CRA agents providing incorrect information about whether eligibility was based on gross or net self-employment income. The union representing CRA workers stated that agents were not given clear directions. Even MPs from the governing party provided incorrect information to their constituents. Clearly the confusion was widespread.

The government has acknowledged that CERB eligibility guidelines, and government advice, failed to clearly specify that income for people who are self-employed meant net income after deductions.

Home-based businesses can write off a portion of house expenses, such as rent and utilities, against their business income. This helps people make ends meet. However, these home-based businesses were not eligible for the Canada emergency rent subsidy.

People who are self-employed or own small businesses will often incur additional expenses in one year versus another for capital improvements, to expand a product line or to start a new business. I have heard from a number of people who were in this situation.

During the pandemic, many large corporations used wage subsidy programs to pay employees at the same time as they increased shareholder dividends and CEO bonuses and as their wealthy owners raked in billions. This should not have been allowed.

If the government needs to recoup emergency benefits, it should be going after the wealthy who took advantage of these programs, not after self-employed Canadians. The government made a serious error, and it needs to own that mistake. Self-employed Canadians applied for CERB in good faith and should not be penalized. The government needs to retroactively allow self-employed Canadians to use their gross pre-tax income before business expenses when determining their CERB eligibility.

It is absolutely a matter of justice and fairness, and the government needs to own—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to respond to the question by the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith regarding the Canada emergency response benefit.

The Government of Canada has worked quickly and diligently over the past few months to administer the programs related to COVID-19 in order to quickly deliver emergency payments, including the CERB, to Canadians who needed it the most in this most extraordinary time. In collaboration with Employment and Social Development Canada, the Canada Revenue Agency designed the CERB application process to be attestation-based. This is similar to the approach used in tax filing, where individuals attest to the information they provide when they file their taxes, and the CRA may verify this information at the time of filing or at a later date.

We know that the vast majority of Canadians are honest and forthright, especially when it comes to dealing with the CRA. In order to account for application errors made in good faith, the government has indicated that there will be no penalties or interest in cases where the CERB needs to be repaid.

We regret that communications regarding the eligibility criteria may have been unclear in the first days after the CERB was launched. The CRA was eager, and it was important, to disburse funds quickly to those in need under the exceptional circumstances of a global pandemic. However, we recognize that there was some confusion in the very early weeks of the program that may have led some individuals to mistakenly apply for the CERB. In fact, the CRA has adopted an educational approach regarding cases where the agency lacks sufficient information to determine if an applicant was eligible for the CERB. The CRA has sent letters to certain recipients in order to confirm that their income met the eligibility threshold of employment and/or net self-employment income of at least \$5,000 in 2019 or in the 12 months prior to the date of their application. The letter strongly encourages those individuals who have not filed their 2019 tax returns to do so as soon as possible, as this is the simplest way to confirm their eligibility.

I would like to reconfirm, as stated by our Prime Minister in late December, that we recognize that for some individuals repaying the CERB could represent significant financial hardship. As also stated by the Prime Minister in December, we will work with the impacted individuals on a case-by-case basis. The government has developed an approach for how we will address the situation for impacted individuals, and we will be in a position to announce the details of this approach in the coming days.

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, I want to reiterate that the government needs to take responsibility for its own error. I have heard from self-employed single mothers and people with disabilities who have home-based businesses and have received these CRA letters. They are stressed out from receiving these letters.

The self-employed people who received the CERB used that money to pay their rent and their bills and put food on the table for their families. The money is spent, and it is not fair to ask people who did their due diligence and applied for the CERB in good faith to pay back the money. Many self-employed Canadians will never

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be able to repay these large debts to the CRA, no matter how flexible the terms are. The request for repayment is unacceptable. The government made a serious error, and it needs to own its mistake.

Self-employed Canadians need a break during this pandemic; they do not need additional stress. If the government wants to re-coup benefits that were abused, it should be going after wealthy Canadians and corporations that lined their pockets with government relief funds.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, the government recognizes the economic effect that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have on both individuals and businesses. For this reason, the CRA has been working throughout the pandemic to provide services and support to those in need of assistance. If individuals receive a letter related to their CERB claim, they should not interpret it as a determination that they are definitely ineligible, nor should it be interpreted as a requirement to make a repayment. The letter simply means that the CRA does not have the information needed to confirm their eligibility.

I would like to emphasize that no repayment deadline has been established to date. People who believe they are not eligible for the CERB may make a repayment any time. In fact, as of today over 1.1 million voluntary repayments have been made. I want to remind members that the government has developed an approach for how it will address the situation of impacted individuals, and we will be in a position to announce the details of this approach in the coming days.

• (2030)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:30 p.m.)

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