



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

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# House of Commons Debates

Official Report  
(Hansard)

Volume 150 No. 092

Friday, April 30, 2021

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, April 30, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1000)  
[*English*]

### WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 9

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Finance, Lib.)** moved that a ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 19, 2021 and other measures be concurred in.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question is on the motion.

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

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded division.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

● (1045)  
[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 103*)

### YEAS

Members

Alghabra  
Anand  
Angus  
Arya  
Bachrach  
Bagnell  
Baker  
Battiste  
Beech  
Bennett  
Bérubé

Amos  
Anandasangaree  
Arseneault  
Ashton  
Badawey  
Bains  
Barsalou-Duval  
Beaulieu  
Bendayan  
Bergeron  
Bessette

Bibeau  
Blaikie  
Blanchet  
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)  
Boudrias  
Bratina  
Brunelle-Duceppe  
Carr  
Chabot  
Champagne  
Charbonneau  
Cormier  
Damoff  
DeBellefeuille  
Desilets  
Dhillon  
Drouin  
Duclos  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Dzerowicz  
Ehsassi  
Ellis  
Fergus  
Finnigan  
Fonseca  
Fortin  
Fraser  
Fry  
Garrison  
Gazan  
Gill  
Green  
Hajdu  
Harris  
Housefather  
Hussen  
Iacono  
Jaczek  
Joly  
Jordan  
Julian  
Khalid  
Koutrakis  
Kwan  
Lambropoulos  
Lamoureux  
Lattanzio  
LeBlanc  
Lefebvre  
Lightbound  
Longfield  
MacAulay (Cardigan)  
MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Marcil  
Mathysen  
McCrimmon  
McGuinty  
McKenna  
McLeod (Northwest Territories)

Bittle  
Blair  
Blanchette-Joncas  
Blois  
Boulerice  
Brière  
Cannings  
Casey  
Chagger  
Champoux  
Chen  
Dabrusin  
Davies  
Desbiens  
Dhaliwal  
Dong  
Dubourg  
Duguid  
Duvall  
Easter  
El-Khoury  
Erskine-Smith  
Fillmore  
Fisher  
Fortier  
Fragiskatos  
Freeland  
Garneau  
Gaudreau  
Gerretsen  
Gould  
Guilbeault  
Hardie  
Holland  
Hughes  
Hutchings  
Ien  
Johns  
Jones  
Jowhari  
Kelloway  
Khera  
Kusmierczyk  
Lalonde  
Lametti  
Larouche  
Lauzon  
Lebouthillier  
Lemire  
Long  
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)  
MacGregor  
Maloney  
Martinez Ferrada  
May (Cambridge)  
McDonald  
McKay  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
McPherson

*Government Orders*

Mendès	Mendicino	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Michaud	Miller	McColeman	McLean
Monsef	Morrissey	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Melillo
Murray	Ng	Moore	Morantz
Normandin	O'Connell	Morrison	Motz
Oliphant	Pauzé	Nater	O'Toole
Perron	Petitpas Taylor	Patzner	Paul-Hus
Plamondon	Powlowski	Poilievre	Rayes
Qualtrough	Ratansi	Redekopp	Reid
Regan	Robillard	Rempel Garner	Richards
Rodriguez	Rogers	Rood	Ruff
Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Saini	Sajjan	Scheer	Schmale
Saks	Samson	Seebach	Shields
Sarai	Savard-Tremblay	Shin	Shipley
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke	Sloan	Soroka
Schulte	Serré	Steinley	Strahl
Sgro	Shanahan	Stubbs	Sweet
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Tochor	Uppal
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard	Van Popta	Vecchio
Singh	Sorbara	Vidal	Viersen
Spengemann	Ste-Marie	Vis	Wagantall
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Vandenbeld	Vaughan		
Vignola	Virani		
Weiler	Wilkinson		
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Young	Zahid		
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PAIRED

Nil

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.**Hon. Chrystia Freeland** moved that Bill C-30, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 19, 2021 and other measures, be read the first time.

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

\* \* \*

**OFFSHORE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT****Hon. Chrystia Freeland (for the Minister of Natural Resources)** moved that Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Offshore Health and Safety Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.**Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am addressing the House from my home on the Robinson-Huron Treaty territory of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and Wahnapiitae peoples.

As members know, this is a very important bill. When we look at the oil-producing provinces here, with the minister's own province of Newfoundland, this is really an important issue to the minister. This is really an important issue that affects his neighbours and friends when we look at offshore issues that we have dealt with.

When the minister first started to work here, with former premier Brian Tobin, he was 20 years old, and that was 20 years ago. At the time, there was only one platform under construction, which was the Hibernia. When we look then and now, we know that developing the platform designs and fabrication work completely ensures that we could work safely in one of the harshest environments there is. Ultimately, achieving first oil was crucial for the financial future of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**NAYS**

## Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Atwin	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Calkins	Carrie
Chiu	Chong
Cooper	Cumming
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
d'Entremont	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Harder	Hoback
Jansen	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmieciak
Kram	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Maguire	Manly
Martel	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)

*Government Orders*

Today, we have a proud and mature industry, one that has accounted for 30% of the province's GDP, 13% of the labour compensation and 10% of employment over the years. It has been successful because of the people at the heart of this, the determined and proud workers, but also because of efforts by this government to support the industry. Let me be clear: There has been no government that has done more for the Newfoundland labour offshore than this government, not since the time of Brian Mulroney and John Crosbie.

In the face of challenges, we had our workers' backs. We introduced a dedicated offshore component to the emissions reduction fund to address our common mission to lower emissions, and we look forward to having more to say on this program soon.

We provided \$320 million to the provincial government to support workers and increase the environmental performance of the offshore, real action to maintain jobs and protect the future of this sector. We cut through a system that represented government at its worst, reducing regulatory hurdles and cutting down on a lot of the environmental assessments, from an astounding 905 days to 90 days, without losing an inch of the environmental integrity. We did this understanding how crucial the sector has been for Newfoundland and Labrador.

The industry provided the province, the provincial government, with more than \$20 billion in royalties between 1997 and 2019, funding key services and infrastructure, from health and education to highways and hockey rinks. A similar story could be told for the offshore impact of our neighbours in Nova Scotia. That province's two natural gas projects created jobs for Nova Scotians before they were decommissioned.

When we look at the capital spending, it was about \$8.5 billion over 20 years, and \$1.9 billion in royalty payments between 2000 and 2017. Most importantly, our offshore impacts people, supports workers, builds communities. In my province, in Newfoundland, where the minister is right now, and it also applies to Nova Scotia, this industry has created an opportunity to generate hope, reunite families and establish livelihoods.

Building this industry has not been easy. We have had to deal with the engineering challenges of safety, extracting oil in the unforgiving North Atlantic, where storms can cause rogue waves as high as 20 or 30 metres, in what the CEO of Exxon Mobil has described to me as a very harsh environment to operate in, one of the harshest places in the world.

● (1050)

The first was the *Ocean Ranger* tragedy in 1982, which left 84 people dead, 54 of whom were Newfoundlanders. The resulting royal commission led to many safety improvements. The minister was young at the time, but he remembers the delivery of *The Evening Telegram* newspaper, which carried the news. It was something that shook the minister and a lot of people in the community. Equally agonizing was the sense of helplessness and pain.

Despite these challenges, tragedy struck again in 2009. Mechanical problems sent a helicopter taking 18 workers to the offshore platform plunging into the Atlantic. Only one somehow miraculously survived. A public inquiry after the 2009 tragedy led to the

proposed reforms that were largely incorporated under the Offshore Health and Safety Act passed in 2014.

That brings me to the objective of the legislation we are now debating. Bill S-3, as amended by our colleagues in the other place, would give Canada, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland better health and safety regulations for our workers. Passing it would make sure that transitional regulations from 2014 would apply retroactively to January 1 of this year.

I realize this whole process is taking far too long and we are all frustrated. I will explain the reasons for the delay shortly, but let me first speak about the spirit of the act. The Offshore Health and Safety Act clarifies the roles of both levels of government, as well as regulators, in preventing accidents and injuries. It outlines the safety roles played by everyone involved, from owners, operators and employers to supervisors, employees and contractors.

In addition, the act added the following to the safety regime: a new appeal process when someone is accused of violating the rules; the establishment or clarification of employee rights, including the right to refuse dangerous work without the risk of reprisal; a workplace culture that makes clear that these safety concerns are a shared responsibility of everyone involved; an efficiency regulatory regime that contains no jurisdictions of inconsistency; and finally, the inclusion of the transportation of employees to and from these sites.

I want to focus now on the parts of the act that are especially relevant to today's discussion. I am referring to the creation of the 2014 transitional regulations so that three governments could take the time to do this right and finalize permanent regulations.

This transition arrangement was set to expire at the end of 2020. The Government of Canada is asking, through Bill S-3, for an additional year, to December 31 of this year, to get this done. I would be among the first to acknowledge that it seems at first glance rather surprising that we would take up to seven years to finalize this process. This is complex work. These regulations run close to 300 pages. They need to be translated. We need to go over them with a fine-tooth comb to ensure they are precise and consistent in both official languages.

*Statements by Members*

These regulations incorporate by reference 173 domestic and international health and safety standards, which are contained in a document totalling more than 15,000 pages. We need all three levels of government to vet and approve these finalized regulations, which would involve multiple ministries and two joint management regulatory boards. We have to respect our joint management framework. We have to work in partnership, and sometimes that takes more time, but that is how we develop the best legal framework in the world to protect our workers and how we constantly improve it. That is why it is the best. It is strengthened by consulting others, unions, companies and Canadians.

• (1055)

Other challenges are that while others on these permanent regulations—

• (1100)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am going to have to interrupt the parliamentary secretary. I should have given him a heads-up that we would be doing this partway through his remarks. We are going to Statements by Members. He will have the remaining time in this period for his speech when we get back to debate on this subject, likely later this day.

We will now go to Statements by Members. The hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### WORLD IMMUNIZATION WEEK

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, World Immunization Week is celebrated every year in the last week of April. Diseases once feared, like diphtheria, measles, polio and smallpox, are under control and in some places eradicated because of vaccines. However, the COVID pandemic is currently ravaging India through a severe second wave. This serves as a stark reminder of the importance of immunization through vaccination. We are all in this together.

Canada has stepped up to help India with \$10 million in funding through the Red Cross. Domestically, our government announced an investment of \$2.25 million to the immunization partnership fund. This is to support vaccine uptake by ensuring Canadians have access to credible vaccination information and to manage that pain and fear. Through sound public education, effective vaccination campaigns and robust international co-operation, let us make global vaccination a reality.

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### PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA

**Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Alex is a visitor from Israel who is staying in Vancouver to care for his sick 90-year-old mother. When he first arrived in Canada, he was detained and scheduled for deportation the next morning. When I intervened in person at the airport immigration office, I was told Alex had not applied for exemption to enter Canada, but in fact, he had applied twice. I asked Alex to apply again. He made

five more attempts, but Public Health Agency of Canada's system did not receive any of the submissions. After Alex made four more attempts the next day, PHAC's system finally acknowledged receipt of his application and Alex was allowed to stay in Canada.

I wonder how many visitors who came to Canada for compassionate reasons were sent home because of technical glitches on PHAC's system. How many are patiently awaiting exemption papers while PHAC has no idea they have applied? Could the minister please look into the efficacy of PHAC's online system to ensure visitors like Alex are not unduly deported and sick Canadians, like his mother, can get the care they need?

\* \* \*

### CANCER MONTH

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, April is Cancer Month or Daffodil Month. Nearly one in two Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. It was 32 years ago that my mom died of leukemia. My dad was a 25-plus year survivor of colon cancer and last year I talked about my sister, Jill, undergoing treatment for breast cancer. Well, she has finished and she is doing just great.

I was thrilled to see \$30 million in budget 2021 for childhood cancer research. I look forward to what pediatric oncologists like Dr. David Malkin can do with this funding so that we do not lose children like Ayverie Caster, Teagan Walsh and Carson Clapham.

I applaud the Terry Fox Research Institute and the Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network that received \$150 million in budget 2019, and the work of cancer researchers across Canada who are doing groundbreaking work to kick cancer's butt.

\* \* \*

### LUSH VALLEY FOOD ACTION SOCIETY

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to pay tribute to the board, volunteers and staff of LUSH Valley Food Action Society on central Vancouver Island. Created in 2000, LUSH Valley helps people gain the local food system's skills of knowledge and access to good food. They believe good food is a vehicle for empowerment, social justice, celebration and community well-being.

The scope of LUSH Valley grows each year and now includes a fruit tree and farm gleanings program utilizing volunteers to share the harvest to ensure good food does not go to waste. Programs include a share of the harvest community garden helping people to learn to grow their own food; healthy food programs teaching all ages to cook healthy meals and appreciate local food; a food share program providing hot meals and good food boxes to vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic; and importantly, ongoing advocacy with all levels of government to grow our local economy by supporting farmers and producers to address food security.

Thanks to all those who work so hard with LUSH Valley to ensure food security for so many in our communities.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### DISABLED SPORTS CHALLENGE

**Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, May 2 is sports and physical activity day in Quebec. I am ahead of the game this year, as I already participated in the Défi sportif AlterGo sports challenge, the objective of which is to promote adaptive sport and healthy living. The Défi sportif AlterGo also promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities through sports.

This year, the Défi sportif AlterGo reinvented itself with a hybrid formula, another big first for the challenge. It took place at Leblanc high school in Laval, which is in my riding. The agenda for the morning of sports included a mini-marathon for 50 young athletes. Regardless of the distance involved, they showed courage, enthusiasm and perseverance.

I commend all the young athletes who outdid themselves in the challenge. They are an inspiration. I look forward to next year's challenge.

\* \* \*

• (1105)

#### HÉLÈNE LECLERC

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the retirement of my assistant of the past five years in Rivière-du-Loup, Hélène Leclerc.

Hélène has been a pillar of the service we have been providing the community together since 2015. My constituents often commented on Hélène's excellent service. Her insights, her attention to detail and her careful approach over the years helped the entire team hone our work ethic. I thank her for her professionalism. I wish her a wonderful retirement with her friends and loved ones.

I would like to add that the past year has been tough on Quebecers and Canadians, but it has also been difficult on a professional level for all our employees both on the Hill and in our ridings. True to form, they poured their hearts into helping us stand up for the interests of our constituents.

I want to thank Hélène once again for her commitment to serving the community and the public and I want to reiterate how much her work in my riding meant to us.

#### Statements by Members

Happy retirement, Hélène.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### COVID-19

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Milton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this has been a really tough year on everyone, but recent research from SickKids Hospital has shown that children and youth have experienced a unique variety of negative impacts on their mental health because of COVID-19. Greater stress from feeling isolated; the cancellation of sports, other events and in-person class; and just not being able to hang out have all caused increased anxiety, depression and irritability.

COVID-19 sucks. It sucks for everybody, but that is especially true for kids and youth. It is so important that Canadian youth know two things. First, this is temporary. We are going to get through this. Things are going to get way better really soon. There is light at the end of the tunnel. Second, it is okay not to be okay. In fact, right now it is totally normal not to be okay and there is help available.

In Milton, the Reach Out Centre for Kids is at rockonline.ca. There is also wellnesstogether.ca; and Kids Help Phone, over text at 686868. It is free and 24-7.

For over a year, we have been apart, but children and youth are not alone. I ask them to please take care of themselves, take care of one another and always remember they are loved.

\* \* \*

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are nearing the ninth anniversary of the imprisonment of human rights advocate, Raif Badawi. Mr. Badawi and his wife fell under a fraudulent investigation in Saudi Arabia by Saudi authorities. These types of investigations occur as part of a crackdown on political prisoners in Saudi Arabia. This is not the first time that I have raised Mr. Badawi's case.

Canada has stood firmly in demanding the release of human rights campaigners throughout the world, especially those imprisoned in Saudi Arabia. I speak today at a time of renewed possibility for global leadership and collaboration on human rights, a potential for greater coexistence in the Middle East, and a step toward an effort to restore trust and respect in human rights.

Saudi Arabia must release Raif and Samar Badawi and Waleed Abu al-Khair. Waleed should be allowed to rejoin his family here in Canada.

*Statements by Members***MAYOR OF MISSION**

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday, the residents of Mission, B.C. voted in a mayoral by-election and selected Paul Horn as their representative. I congratulate Paul on his victory.

In all, six candidates put their names on the ballot and presented their vision for the future. It was an exceptional campaign. I thank Earl, Rhett, Dave, Colin and Nelson. All the campaigns brought forward new ideas to build a stronger community.

Mayor-elect Horn is well known in Mission as a committed community advocate, and I know he will bring that same passion to Mission council. I look forward to working with Paul to address the current and future challenges in our growing region.

This election especially reminds me how blessed we are. We have rivers; we have lakes; we have agriculture; we have ingenuity; and, most important, we have a vibrant community and so much to be hopeful for. I thank the people of Mission.

\* \* \*

• (1110)

**RAMADAN**

**Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark Ramadan, the holy month of fasting and revelation for those of the Muslim faith in my community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges. While activities may be virtual and Iftar, the communal breaking of the fast, will only occur with family this year, the light is no less dampened by these challenges.

[*Translation*]

Ramadan reminds us of the importance of the values of sharing and caring and being compassionate in our daily lives. On that note, I want to acknowledge the incredible work done by the Islamic Cultural Centre in Vaudreuil—Soulanges. Many individuals work very hard at this charitable organization to meet the spiritual and social needs of our Muslim community, including Aatif Abdelati, Issak Alid, Mohamed Elbardaoui, Mustapha Attebaa, as well as all the centre's administrators.

[*English*]

To all those practising Ramadan this year, and from my family to theirs, I wish a safe and healthy completion of their fasting and extend my sincerest wishes of peace and happiness.

*Ramadan Mubarak.*

\* \* \*

**OTTAWA VALLEY VOLUNTEER**

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize Mr. Delbert O'Brien for his many lifetime contributions that make the Ottawa Valley such a wonderful place to live. An esteemed member of the Ottawa Valley legal, political, business and agricultural communities, Mr. O'Brien's community contributions are many and varied. His recent nomination to the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame highlights his farming involvement and years of work with the Ontario drainage tribunal, which adjudicates disputes under the

Ontario Drainage Act on the impact of water management on farmland use.

Del is the calibre of appointee to head up the new Canada water agency as someone with much practical knowledge and common sense. When Del O'Brien speaks, people listen. Though retired for some years, Del is still very active in sharing his considerable institutional knowledge and years of experience, recently calling for a revolution in rural planning policies.

I congratulate Del O'Brien.

\* \* \*

**BILL C-10**

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in what countries do the governments control what people post on the Internet and what they can see, and punish content that does not match "the government's vision"? They are China, Russia and soon to be Canada, because that is precisely what the Liberal government's Bill C-10 would do. Comments about matching the government's vision are not those of a Chinese communist official, but of the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Former CRTC commissioner, Peter Menzies, has characterized this bill as a full-blown assault on freedom of expression and the foundations of democracy. It is no wonder the Prime Minister has expressed admiration for China's perfect dictatorship. This bill is Orwellian, it is undemocratic, it is un-Canadian and it must be stopped.

\* \* \*

**OPIOIDS**

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week another overdose advisory was issued in the Cowichan Valley by Island Health. Again, members of my community are at increased risk of overdose and death because of toxic street drugs. We have lost 498 people in B.C. in the first three months of 2021, a 48% increase from the same time last year. These are devastating statistics demanding action from our federal government. However, when both the B.C. government and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police request decriminalization, the Liberals respond with a declaration of principles. When municipalities and health experts call for a national public health emergency declaration, the Liberals respond with a paltry \$116 million over two years.

It is exhausting having to continually raise this issue in the House of Commons, knowing the policy solutions are there and having the Liberals respond with half-measures. We must do better.



[Translation]

### CLAUDE JASMIN

**Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Claude Jasmin, the multidisciplinary artist, author and scenographer of the famed novel and television series, *La petite patrie*, has died.

*La petite patrie* was influential in its day, and its appeal has proved timeless, as it was recently reissued as a graphic novel. Quite a few of Jasmin's many novels have been made into movies.

Jasmin was a leading light of Quebec's arts and literature scene and a passionate advocate of the French language and Quebec independence. He won numerous awards and made his mark in television and radio and as an art critic, frequently collaborating with his son and grandson.

Everyone knew him as a lifelong uncompromising intellectual, a man of energy and conviction. His work will live on long after his passing. He is immortal.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois and all Quebecers, I extend my deepest condolences to his family and friends. I am grateful to Claude Jasmin for being Quebec's steadfast champion.

\* \* \*

• (1115)

[English]

### MENTAL HEALTH

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, COVID has taken a toll on the mental health of Canadians. No matter where one comes from, no matter their age, race, religion or sex, concerns with mental health can affect anyone at any time. With what has felt like the longest year in history, compounded by never-ending lockdowns and restrictions, Canadians are tired and rightfully so.

This is why Canada's Conservatives have a five-point plan to secure the future of Canadians. It includes securing jobs, securing accountability, securing the country, securing the economy and, importantly, securing mental health by boosting funding to provinces for mental health care, providing incentives to employers to provide mental health coverage to employees and, crucially, creating a nation-wide suicide prevention hotline to help those who need it most.

Everyone is tiring in their life and everyone has trying periods, but let us get out of this crisis by securing our mental health and securing the future.

\* \* \*

### LOBSTER FISHING SEASON

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my statement today was to wish all lobster fishermen safety and success as they sail out from the shores of Prince Edward Island on this scheduled opening day for the spring lobster fishery. The traps have been on the wharves for days, the boats well-tuned and now loaded to the brim with buoys, traps and gear as fishermen and their crews expected to head out before dawn on what is known as "setting day".

### Oral Questions

However, in the two lobster fishing zones adjacent to the island, mother nature had a different idea, and in the interest of safety, DFO delayed the season until Monday.

By Monday, may the seas be calm with but a gentle breeze, and as fishermen set their traps on that day, may the catches be abundant and the prices strong as they arrive back to safe harbour. Islanders and those beyond are awaiting their first delicious feed of lobster from the clean, cool waters around our island shores.

Again, we wish our fishermen a safe and prosperous fishing season.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday's announcement from the Minister of National Defence regarding the problem of sexual assault in the military was nothing more than a smokescreen intended to distract Canadians.

It has been six years since the tabling of the Deschamps report, which identified problems in the military.

The fact is, this government has done nothing for six years. This self-proclaimed feminist Prime Minister failed to protect women.

Will he admit that?

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Ms. Arbour's review will allow us to move forward, taking into account current barriers and realities.

Ms. Deschamps said, and I quote, "I welcome the appointment of Madame Arbour. From what I read, her mandate appears to be broader than the one I was given. As such, this would not be a mere repetition of what I did."

We have to get this right.

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the press coverage this morning is unanimous. Yesterday's announcement is frustrating, cruel and disappointing right across the board. Do the Liberals really think people are that stupid?

Not only did the Prime Minister do nothing for six years about sexual misconduct in the military, he protected his boys club. The Minister of Defence was aware of this, and so was the Prime Minister's chief of staff.

How does he explain his government's complicity in the code of silence regarding sexual misconduct in the military?

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us review what we know.

### Oral Questions

Prime Minister Harper appointed General Vance in July 2015 even though he was under active investigation by the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service.

The Leader of the Opposition stated that he forwarded the allegations about sexual misconduct involving General Vance in July 2015, stating that they had been reviewed. Just a few days after his appointment, the investigation was suddenly abandoned. The officer responsible claimed he had been pressured. We wonder by whom.

• (1120)

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we do not expect much from the Liberal government, but we did expect it to deal with the important issue of sexual assault in the army.

With yesterday's announcement, the Prime Minister was not trying to protect women in the army, he was try to protect his chief of staff. This situation is shameful and disgraceful.

Will he let Katie Telford testify at the defence committee?

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are focused on listening to and learning from the survivors.

The member knows that committees are independent and that the national defence committee heard more than six hours of testimony from the minister.

While the Conservatives are busy playing politics, we are working tirelessly to make the Canadian Armed Forces safer for our women and men in uniform.

\* \* \*

[English]

### THE ECONOMY

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government's recent budget failed to deliver the hope for which Canadians had been waiting. Instead of delivering an economic growth plan, the Prime Minister delivered an inflation plan: bigger deficits and bigger debt, but no plan to manage the financial consequences of this pandemic.

The best the Prime Minister could come up with was an enormous spending plan, which is now beginning to stoke the fires of inflation. Does he not realize that this economic crisis is now his failure?

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning, the Conservatives have been arguing that it was too expensive to support Canadians.

My neighbour, who told me she could buy groceries because she had to access CERB when she lost her job, does not think that these were too expensive. Business owners in my community, who were able to keep the doors open and workers on payroll because of the supports we advanced, did not think this was too expensive.

The Conservatives should acknowledge that in the time of need that we are experiencing, the Government of Canada should be there to support households and businesses, so they can contribute to the economic recovery when COVID-19 is finally a thing of the past.

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have abandoned Canadians. They are now complaining about rising prices and the cost of living.

Groceries, gasoline, housing, and now long-term interest rates are going up. It is only going to get worse.

In his recent budget, the Prime Minister could have invested wisely. Instead, he spent his stimulus money on election goodies, adding to the inflationary pressures driving up prices. Canadians are literally paying the price for his management of our country's finances.

Does the Prime Minister not realize that this economic crisis is now his failure?

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is incredulous that the Conservatives would describe election goodies as things like supporting women so they can take part in the economy when COVID-19 is over. It is ridiculous that they think investments that will grow the green economy and put people to work is something beyond what the government should be focused on. It is incredible to me that they think supporting young people after the impact COVID-19 has had on their job prospects is the wrong approach.

Why do the Conservatives insist that supporting Canadians has been too expensive every step of the way?

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Ottawa now has a backlog of 50,000 immigration files for skilled workers in Quebec. Yesterday I asked the minister what he was doing to fix the problem and he told me that 56 more people had been welcomed compared to the same period last year.

It will take a lot more than 56 people during the same period to take care of the 50,000 backlogged files. What, specifically, is the minister going to do to fix this problem? It will not fix itself.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make a clarification about what my colleague said. We are not talking about 56 people, but 56% more people compared to the same period last year.

That is why we have welcomed more than 7,000 new skilled permanent residents to Quebec. Our government will continue to respect its immigration quota, thereby ensuring that Quebec gets all the skilled workers it needs.

*Oral Questions*

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government's lengthy immigration processing times are not new. Ottawa currently has a backlog of 50,000 applications from skilled workers in Quebec. In 2018, the backlog was 37,000 files. In 2011, it was 33,000.

That prompted the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to publish a report entitled "Cutting the queue: reducing Canada's immigration backlogs and wait times". In 2007, it took Ottawa 63 months to process applications for skilled workers. The more things change, the more they stay the same. How will the minister make up for decades of neglect?

• (1125)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the work our government has done on the immigration file. Working with the Government of Quebec, we have made a lot of progress. Every week, I work with my counterpart to move immigration files forward. We still have a lot of work to do, but we are doing it together as we make sure the immigration system continues to serve Canadians and Quebecers.

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**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals love to make themselves out to be champions of the French language, but in real life, federal organizations do not even submit the progress reports required under the Official Languages Act. The minister promised to reform that act, but she still has not done so.

The Liberals have been in office for six years and they still have not done anything, nothing at all. The rights of francophones are being violated in the public service, and Laurentian University is cutting its programs in French. When will the Liberals make it a priority to protect the French fact across the country?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising this issue, and I am very proud to be able to answer him. Like him, I am a Quebecer who is proud of French and proud of the role the government plays in supporting francophones across the country.

I am also very proud of the work that my colleague, the Minister of Official Languages, does, not just on this issue, as she has been doing over the past several days, but also on a broader scale to reform our actions, measures and programs to support francophones across the country, as we did with the Université de l'Ontario français, for example.

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[English]

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have intentionally broken their promise to veterans to eliminate the marriage after 60 clause. Created in the early 1900s, this clause blocks the partners of veterans and RCMP, if they marry after 60, of ever having access to their pension after death. Some veterans are refusing part of their pensions right now

to support their partners in the future, which means they are living in deep poverty. It is a very simple fix and a feminist government would do it.

Will the minister commit to filing eliminating this clause today or will Canada continue to punish veterans for finding love after 60?

**Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been working with Statistics Canada and the Canadian Institute for Military and Veterans Health Research to gather information about these survivors. Over the coming months, we will use the results of this research to inform how best to support these survivors. The well-being of our veterans and their families is always our number one priority.

\* \* \*

**THE ECONOMY**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during the great global recession, the Harper government refused to fund spending through money printing at the Bank of Canada. The result was that we ended up with growth that was better than the U.S., better than the G7 and better than the average of the advanced economies. Fast forward to the present and the government is funding its spending through money printing at the Bank of Canada, leading to the worst economic growth of any government since the Great Depression and now, predictably, inflation.

As Canadians struggle to find work, they are seeing food, fuel and housing prices skyrocket. Why is the government imposing an inflation tax right in the middle of a pandemic crisis?

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was at the same finance committee meeting I attended earlier this week with the governor of the Bank of Canada, who dispelled the very myth the member continues to perpetuate. I do not know what it is about the Conservatives. During an unprecedented public health and economic emergency, they refuse to acknowledge that the Government of Canada should step up and be there for Canadians in their time of need.

My message to anyone listening today is this: If they have been impacted financially or from a public health point of view, this government will be there for them, no matter what it takes, and for as long as it takes.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yes, the government has been right there next to people with its hands in their pockets as they walk down the grocery aisle. The government's inflation tax is raising the price of meat by 5% to 7% this year, the price of bakery by 4% to 6%, and the price of vegetables by 5% to 7%. Real estate is up 40%. That is great news for those who own a mansion, but it is terrible news for a working-class renter struggling toward the dream of home ownership.

Why is the government hitting Canadians with an inflation tax right in the middle of a pandemic?

• (1130)

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member accuses our government of having our hands in the pockets of Canadians. We have put, through CERB, direct income supports into the pockets of nine million middle-class Canadians. We have, from the very beginning, been supporting Canadians with programs, and not just CERB. If we go back several years, there was the Canada child benefit, which stopped child care cheques from being sent to millionaires, so we could leave nine out of 10 families better off.

Every time we put forward measures that help ordinary Canadians, the Conservatives can be counted on to vote against them. They continue to oppose our measures to support Canadians through this pandemic when we know they need support more than ever.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, wow. Is this guy ever out of touch. He better take a drive 25 minutes from here to a community called Riverside South, where a working-class family recently reported it was outbid nine times when trying to buy a house, the last time by \$400,000 over asking price. Working-class people cannot find a place to live, and he says the government will send them a \$2,000 cheque, for a \$400,000 bid over asking price on a home.

People cannot find places to live. They cannot afford food. Why is the government hitting the most vulnerable with an inflation tax right in the middle of a crisis?

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is extraordinary for the hon. member, of all people, to accuse me of being out of touch. It was our government that advanced supports such as CERB during people's time of need, which allowed them to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table. It was our government that, during their time of need, advanced programs such as the wage subsidy, which kept more than five million workers on the payroll, so they could retain a connection to their employers and access to their benefits. It was our government that advanced the emergency business account, which has helped nearly a million businesses keep their doors open during their time of need.

Our message to—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. This cannot become a debate while question period is going on virtually. I would ask members to hear what other members have to say and what questions are put in the course of question period.

We will now go to the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

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**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, President Biden addressed the U.S. Congress and stated his buy American measures will be tough and any potential exemptions to it have been “strenuously limited”. Buy America and the buy American executive order are of serious concern because the Liberals have still not received assurances that Canada will be exempt.

Can the Minister of International Trade confirm that Canadian businesses and workers will be exempt from these strenuous buy America rules?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure Canadian businesses and workers that we are absolutely standing up for them and working for them, and we are actively engaged with our American partners. I have raised this issue with the President, as well as with my colleague, the new U.S. trade representative. We are going to continue to work in the interest of our Canadian businesses, just as we have over the last five years.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what has changed? CBC reported in January that the first phone call between the Prime Minister and U.S. President was warm, friendly and collegial, according to a senior government official. The official reportedly said, “Many of the priorities are aligned. He's got a good rapport with us and wants to work with us, as we do with him”.

Here we are, about to enter May, and the U.S. stance on buy American has gotten even stronger. Can the minister explain why we are moving backward?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to the contrary, we have a plan, a road map between Canada and the U.S. We continue to work with the United States on building back for the benefit of Canadian businesses and workers, both in the United States and in Canada.

I want to assure Canadians that, should there be any efforts to expand or introduce new domestic content requirements, we will absolutely ensure it does not apply to Canada or affect our Canadian supply chain. We are an integrated market, where we have integrated supply chains, and we will continue to work with our American partners.

• (1135)

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, President Biden's comments clearly show the U.S. is not backing down from buy America measures. In January, a readout from the Prime Minister's Office stated, "the Prime Minister and President agreed to consult closely to avoid measures that may constrain bilateral trade, supply chains, and economic growth."

How is this working for us? It is obviously not. When will the minister get serious on the file, get on the phone and secure an exemption for Canadian exporters?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that the government and I are working at all levels with our American partners. They are our largest trading partner, and our supply chains are incredibly connected. We will continue to work with the Americans to ensure we reinforce this deeply connected and mutually beneficial economic relationship, so we can grow middle-class jobs here in Canada as well as in the United States.

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[Translation]

#### FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government has jeopardized the fishing season in the Magdalen Islands by closing 37% of the port in Cap-aux-Meules.

This week marks the start of the lobster season. There has been absolutely no change, as 37% of the port is still closed, there is no work going on, no plan, no compensation and especially no leadership for Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands.

When will the federal government take action on the port of Cap-aux-Meules to deal with the situation for the sake of the entire fishing industry?

[English]

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard and to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (B.C.), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we understand how important access to wharfs and fishing facilities are for fishers. This is a top priority for us. We want to make sure that the issues at Cap-aux-Meules are taken care of. We are working with our colleagues at Transport Canada to do just that, and I am happy to work with the member directly to bring her up to date on all the good work that is happening.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, that is not good enough. The fishing industry has been waiting decades for action, and it wants it now.

Right now, not only is the industry worried about the 2021 season, but it is also worried that the port will deteriorate to the point of jeopardizing the 2022 season. The Magdalen Islanders want the studies on the condition of the port to be made public. They want a second independent assessment, they want the federal government

#### Oral Questions

to compensate them for their losses and they want a federal administrator on site. In short, they want a plan, but there is none.

What will Ottawa do to solve the problem, and what is it doing for the people of the Magdalen Islands?

[English]

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard and to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (B.C.), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been working diligently to make sure there are alternative facilities available, so fishers can have access to facilities in order to continue to fish and have access. We understand how important fishing facilities are for coastal communities, especially in this case.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans is working diligently and directly with Transport Canada to resolve this issue. I look forward to providing continued updates to the member and to all the fishers who are affected in the region.

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[Translation]

#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' incompetence in managing this pandemic was on display once again this week.

On Wednesday, we found out that they were planning to make vacationers returning to Canada eligible for employment insurance, repeating the same scenario we had in January with the Canada recovery sickness benefit, where people were being paid to quarantine after breaking the public health rules.

Meanwhile, new mothers are seeing their benefits cut because they gave birth in the middle of a pandemic. This government calls itself feminist. Why did the Minister of Employment authorize this utterly ridiculous directive?

[English]

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. No one should be travelling right now. EI is there for people who lost their job or cannot work through no fault of their own. Taking a vacation against clear government advice is a choice.

We are focused on supporting workers who have lost their jobs, are sick themselves or who need to take time off to look after loved ones. That is our focus.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it took a call from a TVA journalist for the government to back down.

The directive was clear. It stated that in the case of quarantine after a holiday outside Canada, a client who would otherwise have returned to work immediately after their vacation were it not for the quarantine requirement should be deemed eligible.

### Oral Questions

The worst part is that this directive is retroactive to December 2020, but now, on Friday, we are being told that vacationers are no longer entitled to it. This is maddening. What made the minister think that vacations funded through EI were a good idea?

• (1140)

[English]

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, allow me to reiterate. No one should be travelling right now for non-essential reasons. EI is there for people who lost their job or are unable to work for reasons outside their control.

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### TAXATION

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is the tax-filing deadline, which is a day dreaded by millions of Canadians. Despite the third wave of a pandemic, nearly one million taxpayers locked out of the CRA online portal, record wait times to contact CRA, and the call of millions of Canadians, tax professionals and opposition parties, this government has stubbornly refused to extend the tax-filing deadline.

Will this government, which took two years to file a budget of its own, give Canadians a much-needed break and extend the tax-filing deadline?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government understands that this tax season is stressful for Canadians, and we will continue to be there for them every step of the way.

An update to the Canada.ca website temporarily disabled the website's web links necessary to access CRA portals. Let me be clear. At no point was CRA's IT infrastructure seriously compromised, and the glitch was very brief. The situation is now resolved, and Canadians can access those services, which have been restored.

**Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government's response to our ask to extend the tax deadline is absolutely tone deaf. We are not talking about a glitch on a website. We are talking about millions of Canadians, who are being told to stay at home, who cannot complete their taxes by the deadline. They are going to miss out on benefits. There will be gaps and continued chaos. They call CRA and are on the phone for four hours. They have asked for things to be mailed to them, but they have not arrived yet, and the deadline is here.

Our ask is very clear. Why will the government not show some compassion and common sense and extend the tax deadline to June 30 to give people the relief they deserve and need?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government understands that this tax season is stressful for Canadians, and we will continue to be there for them every step of the way.

In February, we announced that the recipients of emergency recovery benefits would be eligible for interest relief if they filed their 2020 income tax returns. The CRA also has strong taxpayer

relief provisions in place, which allow taxpayers to be relieved of penalties and interest if these were incurred for reasons beyond their control. These measures will ensure that Canadians who need help this tax season will receive it.

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### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this week in Alberta, we witnessed overtly racist lies from Jason Kenney, who blamed indigenous people for the rapid rise of COVID cases in Wood Buffalo.

Indigenous people in Alberta need help to fight this virus, not the blame for Jason Kenney's failures. Indigenous leaders, such as Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, have called for more safety measures to stop the rapid spread of COVID-19, but they have been denied.

When will the federal government step in and get vaccines into the areas hardest hit, like Wood Buffalo?

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I feel the comments by the Premier of Alberta cast aspersions on indigenous peoples in the province, who have been at the forefront of stepping up for vaccines.

I am proud of what our government has done. Vaccinations are under way in 614 indigenous and territorial communities. With vaccine production ramping up over the next month, I look forward to more indigenous peoples being vaccinated in our country.

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### SMALL BUSINESS

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have abandoned start-ups and new businesses when they need help the most. Jennifer, who owns tru MOVEMENT dance fitness and yoga in my riding, had just signed a lease and invested over \$30,000 in improvements when the pandemic began, and she has since been left without any support. She has had no rent support, no wage subsidy and no help at all because her business started after the pandemic began. Just like every other business owner, she has had to close her doors to protect public health.

*Oral Questions*

With nothing for start-ups in budget 2021, will the government admit that it failed new businesses and immediately expand its support programs to help people like Jennifer?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that we know how difficult it is for small businesses as they continue to contribute in this fight against COVID-19. We have been with businesses right from day one, ensuring they are supported.

Budget 2021 has expanded existing supports for small businesses. This includes more accessibility through the Canada small business financing program, which will cover start-up and digital option costs. We are also going to be lowering credit card fees for small businesses.

While our work is not finished, we will continue to work to assist our small businesses through this very difficult time.

\* \* \*

● (1145)

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Ms. Helena Jazcek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have heard from many people in my riding of Markham—Stouffville who agree that weapons specifically designed for military purposes have no place in our communities. Despite this, the leader of the Conservative Party has made numerous promises to the gun lobby to return military-style rifles to our streets and revoke enhanced background checks.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness please inform the House on what we are doing to protect Canadians?

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Markham—Stouffville for her tireless advocacy to promote safer communities in her part of the country and across the land.

Tomorrow marks the one-year anniversary since weapons designed for military use were prohibited, and since we moved past thoughts and prayers and acted. Of the Five Eyes countries that have prohibited these rifles, none have experienced mass shootings this year. The other countries are averaging one mass shooting per day.

Our plan to protect our communities is working, but we need to finish the job. With our new legislation, we will complete the prohibition and ensure that these rifles never re-enter our communities again.

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**CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my office has heard from many New Brunswickers who are very concerned about the Liberal government's plan to censor Internet content. Bill C-10 will have a chilling effect on local content creation, something that is increasingly important in rural communities, where residents use social media to share news and their stories.

Will the minister do the right thing and abandon this Orwellian plan?

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives appear to have chosen to take the side of social media web giants over the interests of our artists. They are our neighbours who work in an important cultural and economic industry in our country. Individuals who post to social media are excluded. Content is not moderated.

The amendment to the Broadcasting Act would require social media companies that make money acting like a broadcaster to be treated like a broadcaster. If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it is treated like a duck.

Why do the Conservatives want special treatment for social media web giants?

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-10 limits the freedom of speech of the Canadian people. Many immigrants and refugees come here to enjoy the freedom and liberty that they did not have the luxury of back home. This bill gives power to a big government institution that can use it to silence and oppress marginalized groups online.

Why will the Liberal government not stay out of the lives of consenting Canadians and let people live free from the hands of big government?

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Broadcasting Act regulates broadcasters, like CTV, the CBC and Corus, as we have known it for the past 30 years. The Conservatives are protesting that we are extending those same rules to web giants, including social media giants like Facebook, if they act like broadcasters. The Broadcasting Act does not moderate content. It did not before and it will not now. The act would require that any company acting in a similar manner as our Canadian broadcasters has to contribute similarly.

Why are the Conservatives seeking special treatment for foreign-owned web giants over our Canadian cultural sector and broadcasters?

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**HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, B'nai Brith Canada reports that over seven anti-Semitic incidents occurred every single day in Canada last year. Jews were shot at with pellet guns, and a student in Winnipeg was attacked and told that Jews should "go back to the ovens".

*Oral Questions*

The Prime Minister has said over and over again that he will stand up to anti-Semitism whenever and wherever it occurs, but this is the fifth consecutive year we have seen record numbers. When will he take action to end this disturbing rise of anti-Semitic attacks in Canada?

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government takes anti-Semitism very seriously, and we have always stood up against it. We have put in place an anti-racism action plan that specifically outlines a definition that is internationally accepted with respect anti-Semitism. We have beefed up the funding for the security infrastructure program to protect synagogues and other places of Jewish cultural significance. We are also taking action to combat online hate.

\* \* \*

• (1150)

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, budget 2021 proposes to provide \$300 million on a cash basis over the next two years to Fisheries and Oceans Canada to repair, renew and replace small craft harbours. This amount is ridiculous, as we know that in western Nova Scotia almost \$500 million is needed to address deferred maintenance and safety upgrades.

Fishers across our country have worked and continue to work tirelessly to contribute directly to their communities. They deserve wharves that are safe and that respond to their modern needs.

Can the minister tell me how much will be allocated to the ports that need it in West Nova?

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard and to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (B.C.), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government understands how important small craft harbours are all across our great country, from the west coast to the east coast to the member's riding. That is why we have consistently contributed to and invested in our small craft harbours. The last government took that funding away, but we have contributed over \$300 million in this budget, accumulating to more than \$1 billion of investments to make sure that the people on the east coast, including in the member's riding, have safe access to wharves so that they can pursue their livelihoods.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government has stopped using Switch Health to manage testing for temporary foreign workers because it is not able to provide services in French, which is causing delays.

However, Switch Health is still responsible for serving everyone who crosses the border, and it is a disaster.

How could a company that is unable to serve 500 workers be capable of serving all of Quebec?

When will the Liberal government replace Switch Health in Quebec?

[English]

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we agree that delays or not being able to provide service in both official languages is unacceptable. That is precisely why Health Canada and the Public Health Agency have moved forward with a new provider.

We are going to continue to work with Switch Health to address any additional concerns, but make no mistake. We will not hesitate to act, and we are constantly looking for additional providers to provide this service in a timely and effective manner.

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebecers are having to quarantine for up to a month because of Switch Health. They are forced to use this company because it is the only authorized provider for testing.

Switch Health is unable to provide services in French and unable to collect the tests quickly. It does not operate on weekends or in rural areas. On top of that, it manages to lose tests, so people are forced to start all over.

Switch Health is not working for Quebec. When will the government replace it?

[English]

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite does not take yes for an answer.

We agree that service levels are expected. We attempted to work with Switch Health to rectify these issues. However, we decided to move forward with a new provider in Quebec. We want to ensure effective, fast testing in both official languages. That is precisely why we moved forward with making a change.

We are going to continue to make sure that all Canadians have access to safe and effective testing in the official language of their choice.

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, among my constituents are Amish and Mennonite families. They need clarity on the hurdles they face returning to Canada after being in the U.S. for compassionate reasons or returning to Canada for a family illness. Nearly all aspects of travel into Canada require some sort of phone app or Internet access, which these Canadians do not have.



After being bounced from CBSA to PHAC to the federal COVID hotline to Ontario telehealth without answers, could someone tell me what procedures are in place for all Canadians to ensure that they have the necessary information to request quarantine exemptions for compassionate reasons without Internet or phone access?

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, of course, we understand that there are some compassionate needs for travel. However, let me clarify that it is crucially important that during this time, Canadians do not travel. In the event that they do have to, there are supports available to clarify the rules, but it is very important that we follow public health guidelines, ensure strict measures at the border and stop the spread of this virus. Ultimately, our goal is to save lives.

We will continue to put in place communications and supports to make sure that all Canadians understand the rules, but our fundamental goal is to ensure that Canadians are safe and that we stop the spread of this virus.

\* \* \*

• (1155)

[Translation]

#### AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, many agricultural producers and agribusinesses in my riding are anxiously awaiting the arrival of foreign workers.

Border security is paramount, and we need to be very careful about the variants.

However, essential workers must be able to enter the country quickly. Our farmers are very worried. They need these workers now. The production cycle for our fruits and vegetables cannot be put on hold.

Can the minister assure our business owners that they will be able to bring in their workers in the very near future?

[English]

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the integral role foreign workers play in Canada's agriculture and seafood sector. We have streamlined requirements and introduced priority processing for applications and work permits in these sectors. We have also launched a temporary measure that allows workers already in Canada to start a new job while their work permit application is being processed.

While COVID-19 has presented unique challenges to Canada's job markets, we continue to support workers, employers and our provincial partners to ensure the continued strength of Canada's food sector and supply chain.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government continues to parrot the same talking points on the temporary foreign worker file.

#### Oral Questions

Border security is paramount, and flights coming in from hotspot areas must be limited.

Many businesses in my riding have provided accommodations to quarantine their workers, and they are awaiting test results that are slow to arrive. This results in additional costs for businesses and farmers.

When will the three relevant departments work together to come up with a real solution?

Who is going to pay for the additional cost burden being put on these business owners?

[English]

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has taken a number of important steps to ensure the safe arrival and well-being of temporary foreign workers. Along with the mandatory 14-day quarantine, we have introduced more stringent pre- and post-travel requirements. The mandatory isolation support for temporary foreign workers program is an important part of our efforts to protect the health and safety of workers, employers and communities. With \$84.4 million invested in this program, employers are receiving support to manage the costs associated with the mandatory quarantines.

We remain committed to ensuring the health and safety of temporary foreign workers, employers and communities. We are committed to making sure that temporary foreign workers arrive safely and in a timely fashion.

\* \* \*

#### WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 containment led to an increase in gender-based violence across the country. From the start of the pandemic, frontline organizations have struggled to meet the increased demand for services. I was glad to see that budget 2021 increased funding to support these groups, but to be effective in ending gender-based violence, we must consider men and boys.

Can the Minister for Women and Gender Equality tell us what supports are available for them?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her advocacy for women and LGBTQ2 folks here at home and around the world.

### Oral Questions

The budget includes more than \$3 billion to address and prevent gender-based violence in all of its forms. We have the partnerships across the country to move forward.

Consider the Rowan House Society in Alberta. With a grant from our government, it has created a shelter for men who have harmed the women in their lives. Men leave the home, so women and children do not have to. Through this voluntary program, men learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour and build healthier relationships.

Increased investments for women's organizations and additional funds to engage men and boys will save lives.

\* \* \*

### CANADIAN HERITAGE

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in what has been characterized as a full-blow assault on freedom of expression, the Liberals amended Bill C-10 to give the government the power to control the social media content of everyday Canadians to ensure that it matched “the government's vision”. This is nothing short of Orwellian.

Why is it that when it comes to freedom of expression, the government's approach is that it can be damned?

• (1200)

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me be clear that the Broadcasting Act does not moderate content. It is about how broadcasters contribute to the creation of Canadian content, the discoverability of that content and the rules of that nature. People who post to social media are specifically excluded from being considered broadcasters. Social media companies that make money by acting like a broadcaster are not excluded.

May I ask why the Conservatives want to create an exemption to protect social media web giants from contributing their fair share?

\* \* \*

### HEALTH

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week, I had a disturbing phone call from Ben who just returned to Canada after doing paramedic work overseas. Gabriela, his pregnant wife, and 11-month-old daughter had to stay at one of the government's quarantine hotels.

After paying thousands of dollars, the hotel refused to provide food for their baby daughter only offering her oatmeal and then suggesting his wife share the deep-fried food they gave her. Thankfully, friends were able to drop off some baby food.

Why is the government treating returning Canadians so poorly?

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me acknowledge and thank the member for raising the work that his constituent has done.

When it comes to quarantine hotels, we expect the hotel providers to provide an adequate level of service. I take the com-

ments that have been raised back. We will continue to work with these providers to ensure they provide this level of service.

Again, the reasons for the mandatory quarantine are to ensure that Canadians are safe, we stop the spread of this virus and we save lives. However, I will raise these concerns and ensure—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Sturgeon River—Parkland.

\* \* \*

### INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the latest Liberal budget has revealed yet another Liberal broken promise.

In 2019, the Liberals promised to support communities where coal had been phased out with a \$150-million infrastructure fund. In today's budget, I found no reference to their promise to these communities. The Liberals are leaving communities and the families that live in them behind.

Why did the government break its promise to coal communities and not include the \$150-million infrastructure fund it promised?

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with respect, I live in a province that continues to rely on coal. I want to thank our premier for his commitment to accelerate the phase-out of this form of energy usage.

With respect to the use of coal, I would point the hon. member to the fact that supports are being administered today through regional development agencies to help communities that are phasing out coal. I look forward to continuing our work to support communities as they transition to a clean future. Indeed, there are very few things that are even close to being that important.

\* \* \*

### FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, British Columbians are concerned about the steep decline of wild Pacific salmon. When the people of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country elected me, they expected me and this government to take action to protect and restore this iconic species.

With this in mind, could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans please update the House on what our government is doing to protect and restore wild Pacific salmon?

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard and to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (B.C.), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend for his leadership on this issue. I would also like to thank my colleagues in British Columbia who work so hard to advocate for our iconic wild Pacific salmon.

Through budget 2021, our government is investing an unprecedented \$647 million to both protect and restore our wild salmon stocks. This is a historic investment at a crucial time.

Working together with our provincial and indigenous partners, we can ensure that wild salmon grow and prosper on the B.C. coast for generations to come.

\* \* \*

**CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this month, on the eve of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Chabad Centre in Victoria was defaced with anti-Semitic threats, clearly a hate crime. This week saw the release of a report on anti-Semitic incidents in Canada, which showed another annual spike of 18%, the fifth consecutive annual increase.

Canadians have been without an important and effective tool in fighting hatred since the repeal of section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act by the Conservatives, the section that allowed filing complaints about hate incidents with the Human Rights Commission.

When will the government table legislation to restore section 13 so we can move forward in the fight against hatred of all kinds?

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, anti-Semitism and all forms of hate have no place in Canada. Our government is unwavering in its commitment to diversity and inclusion, including tackling all forms of systemic racism and discrimination that is informed by lived experience.

Eighty-five projects worth over \$15 million have been selected through a call for proposals to support the anti-racism action program and its objectives, which will help combat all forms of racism and discrimination.

We will continue to be unwavering in our fight against racism, anti-Semitism and all forms of hate.

\* \* \*

● (1205)

**POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Mr. Speaker, students and young people in Canada have been greatly impacted by the pandemic. Mental health challenges and dropout rates have been rising in universities, colleges and trade schools, and students continue to be crushed by debt.

Northern European countries have built their knowledge-based economies on free post-secondary education. They invest in their people and have a highly educated workforce.

Will the government make tuition-free post-secondary education a pillar of the post-COVID recovery plan?

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his advocacy on this important issue.

Young Canadians and students must be at the centre of our recovery, not only to help them rebound today but to invest in their future and our economy. That is why through budget 2021 we are investing \$4.1 billion to make student debt easier to pay down and to provide direct support to students who need it most. This includes waiving the interest on federal student loans for an additional year, enhancing the repayment assistance plan, doubling the Canada student grants for two more years and extending disability supports.

We are proud that our response represents one of the largest youth support packages in the world.

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**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, two treaties.

The first is entitled “Annex V to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty”, done at Bonn on October 17, 1991; and amendments to “Annex II to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty”, done at Baltimore on April 6 to 17, 2009.

The second treaty is the Final Acts of the World Radiocommunication Conference of the International Telecommunication Union, done at Sharm el-Sheikh on November 22, 2019, known as the “Final Acts 2019”.

*Routine Proceedings***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, entitled “Igniting a crisis: The devastating impacts of COVID-19 on displaced populations globally”.

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**PETITIONS**

## FALUN GONG

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to be tabling four petitions in the House today.

The first petition highlights the passage of the Magnitsky act by the House, unanimously, in the last Parliament as well as the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, which has been going on for two decades, and, in particular, that Falun Gong practitioners are being persecuted in spite of their beliefs in truthfulness, compassion and tolerance. They have also been subjected to horrific practices of forced organ harvesting.

The petitioners call on the government to deploy all legal sanctions, including the use of sanctions under the Magnitsky act.

• (1210)

## HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition, on a similar issue, zeroes in specifically on the issue of organ harvesting. It is in support of Bill S-204, a bill that would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ without consent.

The petitioners are supportive of Bill S-204. They note that it has been before this House and the other place in various forms for over 10 years. They are hopeful that this Parliament will be the one to finally get it done.

## CONVERSION THERAPY

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition is with respect to Bill C-6 that would ban conversion therapy.

The petitioners are supportive of efforts to ban conversion therapy, but they are also very concerned about the definition of conversion therapy as written in the bill. They believe we should be seeking to ban coercive and degrading practices, but should not be restricting the ability of people to have conversations in which personal views on sexuality are shared.

The petitioners call for amendments to be made to the bill to clearly address these ambiguities in the drafting of the definition.

## ETHIOPIA

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fourth and final petition relates to the situation in Ethiopia, a humanitarian situation in Tigray region that has captured the attention of many and has been raised on multiple occasions by my colleagues and by others in the House.

The petitioners call on the Canadian government to be more engaged with the humanitarian and human rights situation in Ethiopia, to engage directly with the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments with respect to the conflict and to promote short, medium and long-term election monitoring.

## SECURE CERTIFICATE OF INDIAN STATUS

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Vivian Hermansen, the constituent who put forward petition e-3281, which I am pleased to table today with 1,164 signatures.

The petitioners point out that the Government of Canada's website says that the processing time for a secure certificate of Indian status is sixteen weeks when they know that it is between six months and two years, which, happily, the government corrected when it saw this petition. They are concerned that the process to receive a Canadian passport is on average 20 business days and that systemic racism is continuing to be perpetrated by the government, saying that its most important relationship is with indigenous communities.

The petitioners therefore call upon the Government of Canada to explore all options, including alternative solutions such as the hiring of additional staff dedicated to processing applications for a secure certificate of Indian status in a timely fashion, and that it take no longer than the equivalent time needed to process a Canadian passport, namely, 20 business days.

## FORESTRY INDUSTRY

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table this petition initiated by constituents in Nanaimo—Ladysmith. The petitioners are concerned about the logging of old-growth ecosystems in British Columbia. They note that old-growth forests provide immeasurable benefits, including carbon sequestration, biodiversity and cultural, recreational and educational values.

The petitioners call upon the government to work with the province and first nations to immediately halt the logging of endangered old-growth ecosystems, fund the long-term protection of old-growth ecosystems as a priority for Canada's climate action plan and reconciliation with indigenous peoples, support valued-added forestry industry initiatives in partnership with first nations to ensure Canada's forestry industry is sustainable and based on the harvesting of second- and third-growth forests, ban the export of raw logs, maximize resource use for local jobs and ban the use of whole trees for wood pellet biofuel productions.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to take the floor in the House of Commons virtually today.

On a historical note, the petitioners, whose petition I present today, initially raised this issue when the Hon. Lisa Raitt was the minister responsible for making the decision. They have been patient and they once again have asked for this petition to be presented to the House. It relates to the ecologically sensitive zone called the Saanich Inlet within my riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands. There is such a thing as being able to designate waterways as areas for zero discharge of raw sewage. The issue with Saanich Inlet is largely for recreational boaters, not a municipal issue.

The petitioners call on the Minister of Transport to please act to designate the Saanich Inlet, a very ecologically sensitive zone, as one for zero discharge.

#### FOOD SECURITY

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to table e-petition 3290 sponsored by municipal councillor Vickey Brown of Cumberland, B.C. The 1,118 signatories to this petition are calling on the government to create a national matching program for all provincial food market nutrition coupon programs across Canada that would match the provinces that are already contributing to their food market nutrition coupon programs and encourage provinces that do not have such a program to implement one, offering matching funding.

We know farmers' markets are a key tool for COVID-19 recovery as small business incubators, and domestic food system resilience and security builders. Farmers' market nutrition coupon programs are a key support for new and existing farmers, market development and their provincial associations or their equivalent. They help with food security and resiliency by providing vulnerable people access to healthy locally grown food and dietary education.

• (1215)

#### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it pleases me to rise and present a petition on behalf of more than 1,400 of my constituents, led by local businessman and community leader Mark Jansen. They are calling on the government, in light of the cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline and the threatened cancellations of Enbridge Line 3 and Line 5, to take immediate action to secure Canada's economic and energy sovereignty, and to protect Canadian industry by prioritizing the construction of new pipelines to ensure that all of Canada can be connected to our very ethical energy resources.

#### FARMERS' PROTESTS IN INDIA

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling two petitions.

In the first petition, my constituents are concerned about the safety of Indian farmers protesting changes affecting their livelihoods. They call on the federal government to condemn the use of violence and reaffirm Canada's international support for the fundamental freedoms of expression and assembly. Without farmers, we do not have food.

#### HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am presenting today relates to

#### Government Orders

human trafficking. The petitioners outline that the U.S. Department of State's 20th Trafficking in Persons Report indicates that Canada meets the minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking. Therefore, they call upon the Government of Canada to strengthen the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act.

\* \* \*

#### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

#### OFFSHORE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Offshore Health and Safety Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources has 10 minutes remaining in his time for his remarks, and that will be followed a period of 10 minutes for questions and comments.

We now go to the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

**Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will pick up where I left off before question period.

As I mentioned earlier, our government is consistently working to improve the regulatory framework, and we have to do this the right way. This is strengthened by consulting with others, by consulting with unions, companies and Canadians.

Stakeholders objected to a number of unnecessary administrative burdens. We agreed and scrapped them in order to cut the red tape. Another challenge is that not all interim regulations for 2014 complied with international standards because the government of the day cut corners in order to rush this through. That caused problems and uncertainty with rigs that came from other jurisdictions.

*Government Orders*

Therefore, in 2017, in the middle of this, we had to fix it, and it took time to clean this mess up. As well, we have to remember this is happening against the backdrop of a global pandemic, which changed everything. It changed how we work and where we work. It is not the reason we did not meet our deadline, but it has certainly exacerbated the delays.

For example, we were scheduled to start full-day, in-person drafting sessions the week of March 23 and then the pandemic hit. Suddenly, we were all working from home, with justice department drafters left to figure out how to do this virtually and securely. The pandemic, simply put, cost us time. All our technical advisers at both the federal and provincial levels are with their respective occupational health and safety departments. They have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 response.

Despite these factors, I agree this has taken too long, but I assure the House we will get this done in the right way. Natural Resources Canada has a detailed implementation schedule, working in co-operation with the Department of Justice and the two provincial governments. We are close, and the Minister of Natural Resources has directed his officials to get this done by year's end.

Bill S-3 would give us the breathing space to get there. Safety is paramount and any shorter time frame would mean shortcuts would be taken, and when it comes to the health and safety of workers, shortcuts are unacceptable.

• (1220)

[Translation]

We must provide these workers with the best protections by adopting a world-class safety regime. I believe in it, and I support it.

Bill S-3 will really help us, and I urge members to support it.

[English]

We have spoken to our colleagues across the aisle on the importance of passing this bill quickly, and I want to express my appreciation to them and to the House leaders for agreeing to that. We continue to do the necessary work of protecting our workers today and in the future.

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague who has recently been named the parliamentary secretary and I am looking forward to working with him on these very important files.

In the first part of his speech, which was regrettably split in half here, I did notice that he said this is an important issue to the minister as it is in his actual backyard, Newfoundland. However, the workers in the minister's backyard have had no regulations for four months. This was passed in the Senate in December 2020, on regulations that lapsed in December 2020.

When we pass this bill in the House of Commons, it has retroactive legislation. If this is so important to the minister, why has it taken him so long to bring it to this House for us to debate and get through the process?

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with my hon. colleague on the natural resources committee.

Yes, this is why we need to get the bill passed in the House as quickly as possible. It will be retroactive so that we make sure that we get all of these regulations that protect the workers' health and safety and also implement all these different labour codes.

I encourage all members in the House to ensure that we pass this legislation as quickly possible so that we can protect our workers and establish these health and safety regulations to be implemented.

• (1225)

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary explained the importance of this legislation and we agree with speedy passage, but he has not explained why it has taken six years since the government has been in power to actually develop these permanent regulations. He certainly has not explained why they were not keeping their eye on the ball and allowed the regulations to expire. There are no enforceable safety regulations in the offshore since January 1. That is a shame and the minister needs to explain why nobody had their eye on the ball. We cannot blame that on the pandemic.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Mr. Speaker, as we indicated as soon as the bill is passed, it will be retroactive to protect the workers, but these regulations are very complex. There are over 300 pages. A lot of work has been done. When we look at international standards, when we look at the co-operation and the dialogue between the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Nova Scotia, there are three governments involved. There have been a lot of stakeholder engagements to make sure we get this right.

Yes, in the last year there has been the pandemic, but we want to make sure we get this right and the consultation and the level of engagement by all levels of government is really important. We are taking this seriously. There have been delays. We have to move forward and I appreciate the support and co-operation of all the members of the House to get this passed.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I share some of the rage with the hon. member for St. John's East on this matter. I can remember the *Ocean Ranger* going down in 1982 with the loss of lives of 84 people, but more recently, the helicopter crash that took place, the *Cougar* flight 491. Let us all pause for a moment in memory of all those lives lost through the negligence of the regulations and the safety of the offshore and the Newfoundland and Labrador workers who go to work in the offshore. The *Cougar* flight crash in 2009 led to an inquiry. Mr. Justice Wells made specific recommendations. Yes, we have to get this passed, otherwise as the leader of the Unifor said, it is a #epicfail.

In the meantime, where is the independent safety regulator for our offshore? There is one in the U.S., U.K., Norway and Australia. Why is the government ignoring the recommendations from the safety inquiry of Justice Wells?

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Mr. Speaker, with the tragedies that have occurred offshore on the rigs, it is really important that we do this. We are getting Bill S-3 done and are getting it right. We are making sure that the safety regulations and labour codes will make sure that we get this right.

We are continuing from the framework of 2014, and we have to make sure that it is implemented in the right way. We will continue to look at other ways to protect the health and safety of our workers. It is important that we look to do this by December 2021.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member indicates that this takes a high level of engagement with governments and stakeholders and that everything will be retroactive, as if somehow that will make up for the lack of proper oversight here. It should not have taken years for the Liberals to finally decide to work on this. They are now putting our workers in such precarious circumstances.

What groups, stakeholders and governments have they already worked with, and what results have they had from those conversations?

• (1230)

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Mr. Speaker, for the engagement, we have not only looked to the provincial governments. There have also been many stakeholder meetings. We are now ready to move forward with implementing this.

For the workers, it is really important that we establish a framework to make sure that we do this in the right way. As I said, the bill is about protections, and within the next months we will make sure that it is implemented. With the co-operation of the House, we can do so by the end of this year, and then we will move forward with providing other supports to our offshore workers.

Consultation is important, and we have done extensive consultations. We need to continue to make sure that we get the bill right.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to come back to what was said about Unifor, which criticized the government for letting the transitional regulations expire.

I would like to draw a parallel and hear from the parliamentary secretary about how, once again, it seems that the Liberals let files languish while they drag their feet, as we saw this week with the Port of Montreal. There is this tendency to not take action when it is needed or, at least, to not act more quickly.

**Mr. Marc Serr :** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her important question about workers, Unifor and unions.

Obviously that is important. We are committed, and we are holding consultations with Unifor and many unions. It is important for us to move forward, while taking into account the 300 pages of regulations. We also need to take into account the Canada Labour Code, workplace health and safety, the consultations between the

### Government Orders

federal government and two provinces, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador, and a possible election.

It is really important to continue the work that we have already started. We said that the delay was unacceptable. However, we did the work and we will continue to do more.

It is important that the House support Bill S-3 with the changes made by the Senate so we can ensure that the bill passes by the end of the year.

[English]

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, a fundamental flaw here is the conflict of interest baked into the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board. Without an independent regulator, for now the safety of workers is in the hands of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, which by its very creation requires that it increase production of oil and gas in the offshore.

How can it be seen as a regulator that does not suffer from a conflict of interest when it obviously does?

**Mr. Marc Serr :** Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of the details of what the hon. member mentioned, so I will take this up. However, I want to assure her that our regulatory bodies are independent. They work closely to make sure they provide the best health and safety for our workers. I assure the member that we will do our best to make sure that the questions she has asked today will be addressed.

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as my first order of business, I will ask for the unanimous consent of the House to split my time with the hon. member for West Nova.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any objections to the hon. member splitting his time with another member?

Hearing none, there is consent.

We will go back to the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to finally have the opportunity to speak to Bill S-3 virtually in the House of Commons.

As I am here safe while doing my job, I am reminded that offshore workers do not have the same protections. In fact, it has been 120 days since offshore oil workers were stripped of their health and safety regulations because the Liberal government let the temporary safety regulations expire. Safety at work should not be a luxury or a privilege. It should be the most basic guarantee given to workers. By failing to keep workers safe on the job, the Liberal government is failing in its most basic responsibility.

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The Conservatives understand how important this is. In 2009, 17 people on board Cougar Helicopters flight 491 were killed when their helicopter crashed into the Atlantic Ocean. It was a routine flight carrying them to work on an offshore oil rig.

The Conservative government at the time knew that we needed to do whatever we could to prevent another tragedy, so we got to work without delay on completely overhauling the health and safety regime for the offshore oil industry. In 2004, we put in place world-class safety protections for offshore oil workers.

The Liberals have had five years to finalize permanent regulations after that regime was introduced. It failed to meet the deadline in 2019, and instead extended the temporary regulations by another year, until December 31, 2020. When the Liberals extended the deadline in 2018, they buried the time limit extension in an omnibus budget bill. They probably missed an opportunity to do this last year, because they decided not to present a government budget for two years.

The government brought this bill forward in the Senate in December 2020, days before the interim regulations for worker safety in the offshore were due to expire. Anticipating the inevitable reality that the House of Commons would not be able to see it through our legislative process prior to the end of the year, the legislation includes language to retroactively impose the transitional regulations that lapsed on December 31, 2020. In the interim, we have a regulatory void.

Today is April 30, 2021, and it has been 120 days since the Liberals let those regulations expire. Offshore oil workers are back where they were in 2009, when the Cougar crash happened. Frankly, it is shameful that the Liberals have allowed things to get to this point. Workers have gone months without protection. It is complete negligence of the government's basic responsibilities, and there is no reason for us to be in this position today.

Offshore oil workers do some of Canada's most challenging and, sometimes, most risky work, and they deserve better protection on the job. However, after six years, we are not here today to finalize permanent safety regulations for the offshore oil industry. Instead, we are just trying to get the temporary regulations back in place so that we can keep workers safe while the Liberals ask for more extensions.

I will be clear on our position on Bill S-3. As Conservatives, protecting workers is our top priority. We support getting this bill passed as quickly as possible so that workers do not have to go another day without safety protections. I have personally been asking the government, over the past several months, when it was finally going to move Bill S-3 forward, because every day that we wait is another day that offshore workers are unprotected.

● (1235)

[*Translation*]

These delays and excuses need to stop. There is nothing more important than Canadians' safety when they show up for work every day. We cannot end up back in that position again.

Offshore oil workers need permanent protection in terms of health and safety. We will not stop pushing until that happens.

[*English*]

In the meantime, Bill S-3 is an urgently needed stopgap to protect workers in the offshore oil industry. I want to thank the Senate for passing this legislation as quickly as possible, and I hope we can do the same here in the House of Commons.

We in the House need to recognize that even though the government is delaying, offshore oil work does not stop. There are people going to work every day in the offshore oil industry who are continuing to hold themselves to the highest safety standards, even without government regulations. Their work does not stop, and they are committed to keeping themselves and their neighbours safe, even when the government is failing to do its job.

I want to recognize my colleague in the Senate, Senator Wells, who proposed an amendment to Bill S-3 to shorten the extension time of the temporary regulations from what was originally introduced as a two-year extension down to a one-year extension. We know from committee testimony in the Senate that these regulations are pretty much completed, as they should be after six years. Based on the government's own planning in early 2020, a year is plenty of time to get these regulations finalized.

Members may not understand why we cannot just keep renewing the temporary regulations, but as someone who is very familiar with the oil and gas industry, I want to underscore how urgent permanent regulations are for the offshore industry. Technology in the oil and gas industry has advanced leaps and bounds since 2014. The temporary regulations introduced in 2014 were used as a stopgap measure while permanent regulations could be finalized to keep up with technological changes and keep workers protected in the long term. This is becoming more and more urgent as technology advances beyond what was available in 2014 and beyond the protections in that set of regulations.

It needs to be a priority for the government to implement permanent updated regulations as soon as possible. That is why it is important for this to be the last extension of the stopgap measures. Workers need up-to-date permanent regulations. They cannot go another two years without updated regulations, and they should never again go another 120 days unprotected by any health and safety regulations.



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• (1240)

I will end my speech today by reminding the government that these regulations are not some far-removed technical set of rules that can be put off another few years while it focuses on flashier legislation. These are regulations that directly impact people's lives and livelihoods. They mean that workers can do their jobs, that they know they will be safe and that families can trust that their loved ones will come home to them safe at the end of the day. Communities will be able to trust they will not experience a repeat of the absolute devastation of Cougar flight 491 in 2009, which killed 17 people, or of the Ocean Ranger disaster in 1982, which killed all 84 people on board.

The Liberal government needs to stop telling offshore workers, their families and their communities that they do not matter. No one can express this better than Robert Decker, the sole survivor of Cougar flight 491. Understandably, after what he experienced he rarely speaks in public, but he wrote to the Senate about Bill S-3. The fact that he had to relive his trauma to urge the government to act should tell us all we need to know about how dire this situation is.

What he has to say is extremely powerful, and I will leave members with his words. He said:

...those charged with the legislative oversight of safety in the offshore have not learned and don't care.

While I no longer work in the offshore, my friends and former workmates still do. I want them to have every opportunity to return home to their families. It is not a lot to ask.

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask the million-dollar question. Why does the member think it has taken six years for the government to get to the point that we need to give another extension before regulations are put in place?

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Mr. Speaker, we have been asking that question ourselves ever since this file landed on our desk. What is taking so long? It was five years, then a one-year extension and then a request for another two-year extension, which we managed to push back to a one-year extension.

We need these regulations done. There are 300 pages of them. This is the basics of governing, and the current government is failing at it. As we noted earlier, this is the minister's backyard, and if he is not paying attention to the workers in his backyard and making sure they are safe while they go to work, he is failing at his most basic responsibilities.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I send my thanks to the hon. member for emphasizing the failure to notice the fact that this regulation was expiring. This is absolutely shocking and a gross dereliction of the duty of the government, whatever excuses it might have for not getting it done, which I do not think would be valid either.

Would the hon. member also care to comment on the fact that we do not have an independent regulator of the offshore? His government's legislation did not allow for that, despite the recommendations of the government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Justice Wells and the offshore helicopter safety inquiry, as well as those of the unions involved. We have the examples of Norway, Australia

and the United Kingdom. Why do we not have an independent regulator for safety of the offshore, as is required to avoid conflict of interest?

• (1245)

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Mr. Speaker, the effort before us today is to pass the regulation to make sure the workers are safe. I think it is incumbent upon us to make sure we look at regimes going forward that will provide for independent oversight of that safety as well. I think it is something that we should consider going forward.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is lovely to see you in the Chair.

To my hon. colleague in Calgary Centre, the concerns that I have raised around the nature of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, I think, really need to be exposed in this debate, although I completely agree with him that it is egregious that these safety regulations have been ignored. The need for them is urgent.

The Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, as well as the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board, do have mandates built into their statutes to expand production of oil and gas. That is fine for a mandate, but they should not then also be in charge of environmental assessment, which they are. They should not be in charge of workers' health and safety. They have a record that does not inspire confidence.

Would my hon. friend from Calgary Centre agree, since all around the world, as my friend from St. John's East just pointed out, there is independent regulation for safety in the offshore, that Canada should do the same?

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that is much the same question as the one I just answered from the hon. member for St. John's East. I do agree that all governments in their practices need to look forward to what is the best regime to look after workers' safety, in combination with what we are looking at as far as the industry itself goes.

I will repeat that I do think it is something we can look at going forward. Today I am focused on making sure that our workers are protected in the offshore and that the government considers moving this legislation forward as quickly as possible a priority, so those workers would have that protection.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the response of my colleague to the last two questions presented to him. I certainly agree.

I would like to bring it up again that the fact that the government would ask for another two years just floors me. We so often find it in front of us with legislation that now has to be passed due to incompetence. Would the member care to comment?

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**Mr. Greg McLean:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is exactly right. Six years plus one year means we are talking about seven years of delays in implementing actual safety regulations. That is 2,190 days for 300 pages, which is seven days per page for getting regulations—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater):** We will now resume debate. The hon. member for West Nova.

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Calgary Centre for sharing his time with me today to speak to Bill S-3.

On December 31, 2020, our offshore oil and gas workers were instantly stripped of their health and safety protections. This date saw the expiry of a transitional, or what we could call temporary, safety regulations that had been in place for the previous six years. They came with the 2014 version of the Offshore Health and Safety Act.

Since then, for almost four months, there have been no codified regulations protecting offshore workers' rights to health and safety, despite the fact that our workers, day in and day out, are still engaging in challenging and sometimes risky work. In Canada in 2021, no worker who puts their safety at risk in their workplace should ever have to do so without being protected by health and safety rights.

Bill S-3 seeks to extend these same transitional regulations for two extra years to the end of 2022 in order to provide time for the government to finally implement the long-awaited permanent regulations. During the study of this bill, many witnesses were heard from, including the minister and his senior officials, from industry, the unions, and individuals.

To indicate to everyone how important this bill is and how seriously it has been studied, I will tell of Mr. Robert Decker. He has been mentioned a few times here today, and he was the sole survivor of the helicopter crash in 2009. He does not often speak publicly about it, but he shared a brief on his experience. For him to reach out and send the committee such a note, as he did, not only speaks to the importance of safety, which we all know and we have all heard about, but it also speaks to the necessity of getting this done and getting it done quickly.

Offshore health and safety requires our attention and speaks to the fundamental role of government, which is the protection of its citizens. Unfortunately, on this side of the House, we too often need to remind the government of its responsibility, and that is a shame.

Whether it is concerning the protection of our communities or the security of women regarding domestic violence, or the protection of our women in uniform, the victims of sexual misconduct in our armed forces, we still have to remind the government of its responsibilities and fight for that. Why is it so hard for the government to take responsibility for protecting its hard-working citizens?

Offshore workers should be able to arrive for their shift every day knowing that the government have implemented the proper regulations to ensure that they will be as safe as possible and that they will be able to return home to their families. For so many in our Atlantic provinces, just like in my beautiful province of Nova

Scotia, these issues are not just a matter of legislation. They are personal, affecting their lives and their loved ones' lives.

In recent decades, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador has had to face devastating offshore tragedies, some that have been mentioned a couple of times today. There was the *Ocean Ranger* disaster on Valentine's Day of 1982. The *Ocean Ranger* was a semi-submersible drilling rig, and it was described as indestructible. I would like to share a short but important and meaningful summary of this tragedy.

On February 14, 1982, there was a storm off the coast of Newfoundland, which capsized the rig, resulting in the tragic deaths of all 84 people on board. There were no survivors. This was Canada's worst tragedy at sea since the Second World War. A very good friend of Senator Wells, who supports this bill and has spoken passionately to it as well, Mr. Darryl Reid was one of the 84 who lost their lives. Gerald Keddy, a retired colleague from this House of Commons, also served on the *Ocean Ranger*. He lost a number of his friends that day.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, as in Nova Scotia, these tragedies hit directly because they are small, tight communities. Everyone is within two or three degrees of separation. I can certainly understand the feeling. Nova Scotia has had its share of tragedies during the last year, and everyone has been affected by them. Everyone knows someone who has been affected by one of them.

Later on, almost 30 years later, on March 12, 2009, Cougar helicopter flight 491 crashed into the North Atlantic after experiencing mechanical trouble. The helicopter was ferrying 18 offshore workers to oil platforms off the coast of Newfoundland. Tragically, 17 lost their lives and the only survivor was Mr. Robert Decker.

I completely understand and deeply share Senator Wells' frustration regarding the fact that the minister in charge of getting this done, and who has not done it, is also a Newfoundland and Labradorian. Once again, I find it sad that we have to speak out to ensure the protection and rights of the courageous workers who have more dangerous occupations than others.

● (1250)

Catastrophes, like the ones mentioned earlier, have brought so much devastation to Newfoundlanders. They are deeply rooted. Like the Portapique tragedy in Nova Scotia, no one ever forgets, even several years later. The victims of any tragedy should never be forgotten. Health and safety legislation and regulations affect so many. Bolstering offshore health and safety means decreasing the likelihood that these devastating events will happen and the likelihood that more parents, spouses and children will spend their lifetime grieving.

In Canada, prioritizing the health and safety of our workers should never be part of any debate; it should be a given. Many Canadian industries are investing time and money in implementing a safety culture and are working tirelessly to ensure that workers stay safe. Offshore workers deserve to know that we care about their safety.

Offshore petroleum boards, the one in Newfoundland and Labrador, the other in Nova Scotia, play critical roles in meeting our health and safety goals. However, these boards cannot do it alone; they require the co-operation of government to prioritize these issues and to push forward necessary legislation and regulations.

The 2014 Offshore Health and Safety Act was a promising step forward. Bill S-3 simply asks for the extension of two years. The government's legislative summary states that it is necessary because of the complexity of the regulations and the need to secure agreement from Newfoundland and Labrador, and from Nova Scotia, which I am sure are ready to go.

The 2014 Offshore Health and Safety Act outlines a path toward permanent health and safety regulations for our Atlantic offshore. However, I understand that the act of putting permanent OHS regulations into place is one that requires study and coordination, so transitional regulations were put in place when the Offshore Health and Safety Act was enacted, giving the government a five-year period of time to conduct the necessary analysis and to determine permanent regulations. These transitional regulations were necessary at the time, but critical elements were still delayed awaiting this five-year window, including the establishment of an occupational health and safety advisory council. What few people know is that an extension was already given in the second budget in 2018. That was a one-year extension tucked into the 884-page omnibus bill.

Offshore workers have been waiting for too long. Bill S-3 should represent the final extension of the deadline to adopt permanent health and safety regulations.

Furthermore, the Department of Natural Resources must submit an implementation progress report to the House before the end of the parliamentary session, including the implementation schedule to the expiry of the transitional regulations.

The government has failed our workers. I ask again: What is more important to the government than bringing safety to some of our most at-risk workers? In the past six years, the government could not find the time to develop permanent regulations, ones that are simple and clearly based on existing provincial and federal regulations, and the practices of the board, including the provisions of conditions of licence. Why has it taken so long and why are we scrambling for an extension mere weeks from the expiry of the transitional regulations and mere days from Parliament adjourning, back in December, until 2021?

The safety of citizens is a fundamental responsibility of government. Of course, we want to see this bill pass quickly in this House of Commons so workers can be protected. Again, the largest question that continues to go through my mind is this. Why has it taken six years for us to get here?

With those short comments, I am looking forward to a few questions before I have to get off to the health committee, which has already started.

• (1255)

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for speaking about workers and the important role we play in protecting them, especially this week, as here we

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are honouring those who have been injured and killed in the workplace, or who have become sick due to workplace-related hazards and occupational exposures, through the National Day of Mourning. Right now we do not have a national strategy in Canada for the reintegration of workers with physical or mental disabilities and those who are injured in the workplace. I really want to thank my colleague, because this should not be a partisan issue.

In 2014, we know this legislation was created under a federal-provincial safety advisory committee to advise on occupational health and safety composed of representatives for workers and employers in both governments. However, union representatives have not been consulted on who would represent labour at the table. Does my colleague opposite agree the government should have consulted with labour unions before choosing a representative?

• (1300)

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** Mr. Speaker, Wednesday was of course the National Day of Mourning, and I am sure many of us know people who were lost during the exercise of their dangerous job, or even not so dangerous job, because of lack of regulation or safety requirements in their workplace.

Unions should be consulted. Unions have a really good feeling of their membership, and they speak every day for their membership for a variety of reasons. The consultation should happen with them and it should be people they suggest sitting on that advisory council.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on a very worrisome aspect of Bill S-3.

Last year, the union condemned the fact that offshore exploratory drilling had been left out of the bill.

We know that the exploratory drilling in Newfoundland carries risks for the fisheries, the environment and workers.

What does my colleague think about the fact that these platforms are excluded from Bill S-3?

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Shefford for her question.

Strict regulations on offshore exploration are needed to ensure that the workers are healthy and safe.

I have concerns about the exclusions. We will have to keep a close eye on this.

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak in the House today about Bill S-3, which virtually everyone seems to agree on.

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However, I would like to voice a few of my concerns about the bill. I will start by summarizing the bill and the position of the Bloc Québécois. Then I will illustrate my position with a parallel before wrapping up my remarks.

First, I would like to point out that this bill merely amends an act so that two regulations can be repealed no later than seven years after the clause comes into force. It would allow extra time to do things right. Essentially, it is very simple.

This bill does not affect Quebec. Although I am sharing the position of the Bloc Québécois on the bill, it concerns Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, the federal government and the provincial governments because of the occupational health and safety initiative. We hope that the provinces themselves will speak out on the issue.

Nevertheless, as I often say, the Bloc Québécois is a party that defends workers and advocates for their health and safety. We have tabled many bills aimed at defending workers, including our federal anti-scab bills, aimed at solving a problem that Quebec addressed a long time ago.

We care about workers. I would like to remind the House that, last week, I was defending my bill that also aims to protect retirees and workers and their pension funds. This issue is one that the Bloc Québécois really cares about and that is part of our values.

I would like to draw a parallel to illustrate my concerns about Bill S-3, in that I hope that it will be adopted quickly in order to avoid leaving a gap. We know very well that leaving a gap hurts Canadians and their well-being by threatening their health and safety. As for my parallel, I remember the early days of 2020, at the beginning of the current government's term. We discussed Newfoundland and Labrador extensively for other reasons.

It was the beginning of the Ocean Decade, and the Prime Minister of Canada's way of celebrating was to authorize 40 exploratory drilling projects in a marine area recognized by the United Nations for its ecological and biological importance.

Now we are talking about Newfoundland and Labrador again, in another context, but we saw things moving very fast. The government authorized 40 exploratory drilling projects and also decided to abolish the environmental assessment process. It did not modify it, it did not reform it, it simply abolished it.

It is interesting to note that the government can green-light projects in as little as 80 days. Today in the House, we are talking about repeals within five or seven years. In my example, it was 90 days. Essentially, the government is saying that it is greener than the Green Party, that it wants to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and that it is doing a lot to achieve that very quickly, but we have absolutely no idea how it wants to go about it. The government has made a statement, but it is totally unsupported.

● (1305)

Even fishers in Newfoundland and Labrador expressed concerns at the time about what was happening. When we are talking about fishers, we are talking about workers and their working conditions. This is a protected area recognized for its diversity and richness. Very quickly, at the beginning of 2020, in the early days of its term,

the government authorized exploratory drilling projects. The unions also weighed in on the matter because they were concerned about the health of the people and workers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That is the parallel I want to draw. I would like to point out the government's double standard. When it comes to defending the oil industry, rather than workers, the government can move very quickly. When it came to the House in early 2020, it tried to smooth the way for oil companies, to put it mildly, or even eliminate all obstacles for them. It only works that hard for the benefit of oil companies, not for the biodiversity of this world-renowned protected area or for workers.

It should be pretty clear that the Bloc Québécois and I support the bill, but we do not want to see any further delays. The government has proven that it can move very fast when it comes to exploratory drilling, so I imagine it is capable of moving fast on Bill S-3.

Still, I am worried there might be delays. Back in 2020, the government managed to act very fast for oil companies, but it seems disinclined to do the same for workers. Here again, unions are saying they need protection, and Unifor Quebec said it has to happen fast.

Tragedies have happened to people. I have not yet talked about how there have been a lot of incidents in the oil industry. I have talked about fisheries, but these incidents are obviously going to have repercussions for people in the oil sector itself. As I just said, I would like to see the government work quickly to pass Bill S-3. Protecting employees and workers should take precedence over protecting oil companies.

I think this is going to take a lot of work. It is faster and easier to destroy than it is to build. This bill, Bill S-3, is an opportunity to build something that is absolutely doable. I think this bill will get the unanimous consent of the House. I would like to remind the government that it was capable of acting very fast in Newfoundland and Labrador on another issue for the good of someone other than workers. I hope it will side with workers this time.

● (1310)

[English]

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about the government being able to act very quickly, which it did of course in the last few days, very quickly indeed, to bring action to take away the rights of workers at the Port of Montreal.

Why does the member think the government did not have the same alacrity in dealing with the question of the deadline, of the expiry of these regulations in December of last year, despite the notice it had? What commitment does that show to the health and safety of workers on our offshore?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

I would like to pick up on the parallel drawn by my colleague, namely, the Port of Montreal, in Quebec. Once again, the government's failure to act has let the workers down completely. Instead, the Liberals are siding with the money, so to speak.

With respect to Bill S-3, we have known for quite some time that something would need to be done to establish regulations and protect workers. I therefore totally agree with the comment my colleague just made in his question.

[English]

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter into the debate today at second reading of Bill S-3, an act to amend the Offshore Health and Safety Act. This act deals with safety regulations in the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore oil and gas industry in particular. However, I am very concerned about the necessity of this legislation and what it reveals about the Government of Canada's commitment to safety in the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore oil and gas industry.

We support the speedy passage of the bill, because it will restore the offshore health and safety regulations put in place in 2014. They were established as interim regulations, with an expiry date initially of December 31, 2019, allowing five years for the relevant parties to develop permanent regulations. Five years is a long time, and they did have regulations in place.

The deadline was extended for one year, but the government has allowed the regulations to expire, leaving no enforceable regime in the offshore to protect workers who are expected to go to work every day with the expectation that a regime is in place to protect them, but it is not there.

It is very well for the minister's parliamentary secretary to say that the government will make it retroactive, but that is not good enough. The legislation before us today specifically says:

No person shall be convicted of an offence under a provision of a regulation revived under subsection (1) if the offence was committed during the period beginning on January 1, 2021 and ending on the day before the day on which this section comes into force.

That is clearly indicative that the government has no ability at this point to enforce these regulations, which supposedly will be revived. It is shameful that the government would allow that to happen, particularly given the history and the importance of marine safety in Canada and, in this case, of our offshore oil and gas industry.

Some who are looking carefully at their screens in this virtual hybrid sitting will notice that I am wearing a necktie that is peppered with images of lighthouses. These are, of course, the most ancient and iconic symbols of the need for safety at sea. Other recog-

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nized symbols of the dangers of maritime life and work are the images of the bright yellow Cormorant rescue helicopters of the Canadian Forces, the bright red hulls and the fuselages of the Canadian Coast Guard ships and helicopters with the white stripes.

These are important images for Canada, which is a significant maritime country, with three oceans and the longest coastline of any country in the world. The protection of mariners and all offshore workers, including those in the fishing industry and the offshore oil and gas industries, are of paramount importance to Canada.

We know, from the early history of offshore oil and gas development in Canada, the dangers that this industry exposed workers to from the monumental tragedy of the *Ocean Ranger* disaster, which has been mentioned by a couple of speakers today.

In 1982, the *Ocean Ranger*, a semi-submersible offshore oil drill rig, sank with the loss of 84 lives, including many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and other Canadians who died in that great tragedy. The memory of that February 14, 1982, date is carved in the memory of those affected and all those in Newfoundland and Labrador who received this shocking news and had to relive these events over many months of a royal commission of inquiry, seeking answers and detailing important recommendations to ensure the safety of workers in this harsh environment.

Unfortunately, the legal regime that was put in place for the health and safety of offshore workers was inadequate. The labour portfolios of the various jurisdictions had responsibility for occupational health and safety, but as the jurisdictional issues were sorted out, responsibility was taken from these departments of labour in 1992 and given to CNLOPB, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board.

CNLOPB comes easily off the tongues of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who have an interest in the offshore and how it is managed. However, giving it the safety responsibility for occupational health and safety was not a wise decision in my view and the handling of that since then has been inadequate.

● (1315)

In its supposed wisdom of the day, the Newfoundland board and the Nova Scotia board, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board, had in place draft regulations. They were not enforceable. It was not a situation in which somebody who did something contra to these regulations could actually be charged, treated as an offender, taken to court if necessary, fined or dealt with appropriately and be required to follow the regulations. It was a very different regime. The regime was there as draft regulations or really just a framework or a guideline.

That was entirely unsatisfactory to the workers involved. It was objected to by them and by the unions, by my party and both the Nova Scotia and the Newfoundland and Labrador legislators. There was very strong opposition to this approach.

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I have familiarity with these regimes, as a lawyer, having had a client who was on the *Ocean Ranger* and having represented his family in the aftermath, seeking to get some compensation for those who had lost their lives and looking closely at the regulations that were involved.

In the 1990s and the 2000s, up to 2006, I was in the Newfoundland and Labrador legislature as well. I am very familiar with the arguments as to how these regimes were supposed to work. In fact, they were unsatisfactory as was also agreed to by Mr. Justice Wells in the commission of inquiry that took place after another sad tragedy, the crashing of the Cougar flight 491 in the Newfoundland offshore, with the loss of 17 lives in 2009. This was a serious problem that was caused by a fault in the helicopter involved.

After the sad loss of those 17 individuals, there was an inquiry, which also looked into these questions of how the offshore safety regime was managed. Mr. Justice Wells concurred that the situation and the regime were unsatisfactory, and called for enforceable regulations. He also called for an independent body to enforce those regulations. It was recognized that these regimes had a built-in conflict of interest and that, in accordance with their obligations and mandate to foster the industry, there was an inherent conflict of interest, which was recognized in other jurisdictions.

He did a very comprehensive report and his most important recommendation, as he called it, was recommendation 29, which was that there be an independent regulator for safety in the offshore. That followed the circumstances that existed in Australia, United Kingdom and Norway. Norway may have been the first. These regimes would require that there be an independent regulator so the issues of health and safety of workers be paramount and the only responsibility for those in charges.

This regime that is now in place in Canada failed to undertake that recommendation brought in by the Conservatives in legislation that was before the House in 2013 and passed into law in 2014. All of a sudden, as a result of these recommendations, we did have enforceable regulations. Workers had legislated the right to refuse unsafe work, which they did not have before, except in accordance with collective agreements in some of the rigs. Established by this legislation and by regulations in 2014 was a provision for an offshore safety advisory council where the representatives of both the provincial governments involved, the federal government and the workers would work to provide advice to the safety regulator for offshore safety regulations.

There is another failing of the government since the legislation was put in place. Believe it or not, since 2014, the requirement for the establishment of an offshore safety advisory council has not been put in place in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Nova Scotia board was put in place in 2019, and it has met twice a year since then. No board is in place in Newfoundland and Labrador.

● (1320)

That is a shocking dereliction of following up on the importance of the safety regulations. I am told that the federal part of the board has been appointed, but the provincial board has not. Indeed, one of the requirements of the legislation is that the workers' representatives and unions, if there are unions, should be consulted in the appointment of the persons representing workers.

I am advised that there has been no consultation with either the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour or the relevant union representing two of the rigs offshore. That is another failing of the government in terms of taking its commitments to the health of safety in the offshore seriously.

The fact is that the regulations were allowed to lapse. An extension passed through legislation in 2018 to extend the deadline for putting permanent regulations in place to December 31, 2020. However, the government waited until December of last year to do that. It then brought in legislation in the Senate to get the extension it required to continue on past the expiry that was coming up.

That is a shameful dereliction of duty. How did that happen? We heard the parliamentary secretary attempt to give an explanation today about how many pages were involved and how many regulations there were, etc. However, this has been going on for six years. The government has had six years to do this. It is now asking for another year. It has to be done, obviously, so we will support the legislation.

However, the most serious issue has been the failure of the government to recognize that these regulations were expiring. In fact, they were automatically repealed at the end of that period. As of December 31 of last year, they do not exist. There is no opportunity to enforce these regulations right now. No one can be charged.

The shocking part is the fact that the government showed a lack of foresight, failed to notice that the regulations would expire, or somehow or other did not take it seriously enough to ensure that the legislation was before the House of Commons prior to the end of last year.

These are some of the reasons why we are very unhappy with the level of commitment by the Government of Canada to health and safety in the offshore. Workers in the offshore are rightfully outraged that the government has failed to take this matter seriously.

We do need to have enforceable regulations. We do need to have the right to refuse unsafe work. We do need to ensure that we can ultimately have an independent regulator. Unfortunately, it is not good enough to repeat a mantra about how safety is our most important and first priority, and all those comments which give lip service to the safety, when we have these instances where the regulations are allowed to lapse and there is a failure to take these responsibilities seriously.

We will support the legislation. It needs to be fixed. It needs to be replaced and put back in place as soon as possible. It is not good enough to have the situation where we are faced with this circumstance and a failure by the government to act quickly.

● (1325)

[*Translation*]

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

He talked about the issue of the safety that Bill S-3 brings and the importance of speeding up its implementation. I would like to come back to a point that was raised by my colleague from Manicouagan, namely exploratory drilling in Newfoundland.

When it comes to oil drilling, the question is not if there will be incidents or accidents, but when. These have repercussions on the safety of workers, on fish stocks and on fishers. How can the Liberals claim to be a green government while continuing to promote 40 or so exploratory drilling projects in Newfoundland?

[English]

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Mr. Speaker, I know it is an important issue. It is a bit of a diversion from the issue of safety, but one point I think the member may agree on is that our party has long been in favour of an independent environmental assessment policy, and that the regulation with respect to the environment ought to be undertaken by an independent body as well. That is both for health and safety and for environmental questions. The issue should not be determined by the C-NLOPB or the CNSOPB or the Quebec board that is also in existence, but by an independent environmental body.

I certainly agree with the member on that, and I believe that is the position of her party as well.

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for St. John's East laid out in very particular ways the way in which this government fixated on process but not outcomes. As a very learned legal mind himself, could the hon. member explain ways in which he feels we could have a deeper legislation that would result in better outcomes for workers in his community and Newfoundland?

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Mr. Speaker, this is an important question. There are two things that I think would be important.

One, there ought to be an independent body to enforce the health and safety regulations. We did hear the minister talk about how one of the delays was that the stakeholders worried about too much red tape or too many blockades. It seems to me that the companies are not very happy with some of the requirements that are part of this process, which is one of the reasons we need an independent body. The petroleum operators have a very large say in the operation of the petroleum board, with the necessity for production over issues of safety and the regulation that takes place.

Two, there ought to be greater participation of worker representation, not just on an advisory body but directly on the body that oversees offshore health and safety.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1330)

[Translation]

### FIGHT AGAINST TAX EVASION

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ)** moved:

That, given that the pandemic and the pressure it is putting on public finances has created the urgent need to close the loopholes being taken advantage of by some taxpayers through the use of tax havens, in the opinion of the House, the government should:

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(a) amend the Income Tax Act and the Income Tax Regulations to ensure that income that Canadian corporations repatriate from their subsidiaries in tax havens ceases to be exempt from tax in Canada;

(b) review the concept of permanent establishment so that income reported by shell companies created abroad by Canadian taxpayers for tax purposes is taxed in Canada;

(c) require banks and other federally regulated financial institutions to disclose, in their annual reports, a list of their foreign subsidiaries and the amount of tax they would have been subject to had their income been reported in Canada;

(d) review the tax regime applicable to digital multinationals, whose operations do not depend on having a physical presence, to tax them based on where they conduct business rather than where they reside;

(e) work toward establishing a global registry of actual beneficiaries of shell companies to more effectively combat tax evasion; and

(f) use the global financial crisis caused by the pandemic to launch a strong offensive at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development against tax havens with the aim of eradicating them.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I cannot tell you how happy I am to speak to this motion today. I would like to thank my colleague from Joliette for supporting me in this presentation.

As we face a major public finance crisis, we must look at how we could eventually balance our public finances. Two options are always available to governments: increasing taxes or reducing services. This means taking more money out of taxpayers' pockets or imposing austerity measures. However, while we are thinking of ways to make the people take their medicine, some people are avoiding doing their duty and not contributing according to their means.

In his speech to Congress this week, President Biden said that, according to one study, 55 of the largest businesses in the United States did not pay a penny in federal income tax last year, although they made some \$40 billion in profits during the same period. How can that be?

There are two mechanisms that allow companies to shelter income from taxes. First, there are tax loopholes, which are measures provided for by law. When people have enough money, they can hire an army of accountants and tax experts to find the best ways of avoiding paying their fair share. It does not matter whether we are talking about an individual or a business. President Biden referred to the wealthiest people in the U.S., whose tax rate is lower than that of the middle class. That is unacceptable, despicable and scandalous. We need to look at tax loopholes.

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There are also tax havens. What is a tax haven? It is a territory where income tax is almost non-existent. Businesses create satellite companies, and sometimes fictitious subsidiaries, in these territories to shelter their profits from the taxman. These subsidiaries exist only to enable companies to shelter their assets from taxes. They do not engage in any business activities or operations. They are empty shells that enable companies to avoid paying their fair share to society.

However transparent or opaque tax havens may be, everyone knows about them and about their impact on public finances. These schemes set up by accountants and other financiers or tax experts can go as far as tax evasion, simply hiding their clients' income and wealth from the tax authorities. All these mechanisms are ways that some people use to avoid paying their fair share to the government, while other taxpayers continue to pay.

What makes this even more troubling is that, in many cases, these tax havens allow for tax avoidance or tax evasion and often become essential links in international criminal activity, making it possible for organized crime to launder money. Governments are powerless in the face of these tax havens, which create, or are complicit in, tax inequity among countries.

• (1335)

With advances in technology it is very easy to instantly transfer information and money, which makes it much more difficult to track operations.

In 2016, economist and legal expert James S. Henry calculated that a mind-boggling total of more than \$36 trillion U.S. was in tax havens. We are talking about 36 trillion American dollars.

In 2017, no less than 40% of international financial transactions allegedly passed through tax havens, in one way or another, according to economist Gabriel Zucman.

The International Monetary Fund estimates that the use of tax havens cost governments a staggering \$800 billion. This represents approximately \$600 billion a year in corporate taxes and \$200 billion a year in personal income taxes.

Tax havens are therefore a political issue that the House must absolutely address. Eliminating them is in the interest of our citizens. We must no longer give a free ride to profiteers, who have a vested interest in keeping these tax havens in place.

Canadian companies are far from being above reproach, since one-third of all Canadian foreign investments are in tax havens. According to Statistics Canada, Canadian businesses invested \$381 billion in the 12 main tax havens in 2019.

That same year, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that these were not really investments, but actually accounting operations aimed at avoiding paying tax. The Canada Revenue Agency estimated that Canadian businesses' investments in tax havens deprive the government of \$11.4 billion in tax annually, and that large companies are responsible for 75% of this amount. That is four times more than the CRA estimated it loses to investments in tax havens by individuals in a report published a year earlier. I think that we need to recognize that there is a certain laxity, and that we need to react.

In 2018, the Minister of National Revenue boasted in the House that the Canada Revenue Agency was going to recover \$15 billion as a result of its international tax investigations. The CRA's annual report indicates a far more modest result. It mentions a paltry \$25 million, 600 times less than the minister estimated.

We recently learned that, five years after the Panama papers leak, the Canada Revenue Agency had yet to lay charges and had only claimed \$21 million in unpaid taxes for the entire country.

Revenu Québec, however, recovered \$21 million in addition to the \$12 million it claimed and that remains unpaid, for a total of \$33 million, for Quebec alone. It did so without the benefit of the international tax information the Canada Revenue Agency has access to.

It therefore appears that the Canada Revenue Agency and the federal government are among the most lax when it comes to prosecuting tax fraud. Moreover, the federal government is complicit in the increased use of tax havens because it literally legalized their use.

In 1994, Jean Chrétien's Liberal government allowed companies to repatriate the income earned in Barbados without paying a penny in tax. Paul Martin, who was finance minister at the time, took advantage of the regulatory change to register his company Canada Steamship Lines there.

Stephen Harper's Conservative government went even further, making a regulatory change that legalized 18 new tax havens. Five more have been added since then, 3 under the current Liberal government's previous mandate, which makes it 23 tax havens legalized through regulation.

• (1340)

The House of Commons never had a word to say about it. This major change was made by simple regulatory amendment, which the government tried to hide in a mishmash of documents.

As I said earlier, all of these changes were made by way of regulation. The House of Commons was never asked to consider the matter. Canada therefore plays a major role in international tax havens, but we wonder whether it is doing so for the right reasons.



There is a close connection between the federal government and certain West Indian tax havens, since Canada speaks not only on its own behalf, but on behalf of some of these tax havens. I am talking about countries like Barbados, Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia, for which Canada speaks at the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund. That is unbelievable.

It appears, then, that tax havens have decided that Canada should defend their interests before international financial institutions, but who is defending the interests of Quebeckers and Canadians?

In addition to this highly questionable situation, we see that the digital multinationals have VIP passes that allow them to do business in Canada without paying a cent in taxes. The budget contained some indications that this will change, but why did the government wait so long, when businesses in Quebec and Canada pay their taxes?

The federal government, with its careless and cavalier attitude, has been complicit in allowing this loss of revenue for our public purse. Quebec has no fiscal leeway because it needs to know an income exists to be able to tax it. However, it is the federal government that signs the tax agreements and information-sharing agreements so it is the only one authorized to request tax information, pursuant to the Income Tax Act.

Quebec, in particular, is losing out on revenue because of Ottawa's complacency, and, as I was saying, Quebec does not have much leeway. All of this lost revenue could be put towards much-needed investments in health care, education and infrastructure.

It is also unfortunate that the single tax return bill was not passed, because it would have given Revenu Québec direct access to foreign tax information. That would have been a good thing, because Revenu Québec has proven much more effective than the Canada Revenue Agency in recovering money hidden in tax havens. If Revenu Québec was able to do better than the CRA using only the information it obtained from media leaks, imagine what it could do if it had direct access to foreign tax information.

Motion No. 69 proposes several solutions. It proposes to:

(a) amend the Income Tax Act and the Income Tax Regulations to ensure that income that Canadian corporations repatriate from their subsidiaries in tax havens ceases to be exempt from tax in Canada;

We would also need to repeal subsection 5907(1) of the Income Tax Regulations, which I talked about earlier. The motion also proposes to:

(b) review the concept of permanent establishment so that income reported by shell companies created abroad by Canadian taxpayers for tax purposes is taxed in Canada;

We are talking about “shell companies” that do not engage in any real business activity but should be paying taxes in Canada. The motion also proposes to:

(c) require banks and other federally regulated financial institutions to disclose, in their annual reports, a list of their foreign subsidiaries and the amount of tax they would have been subject to had their income been reported in Canada;

In 2019, Canada's big six banks generated record profits of \$46 billion, 50% more than five years before. In 2020, despite the pandemic, they made \$41 billion. Their profits are going up, but

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they are paying less tax. We can only assume this is because they are investing in tax havens.

(d) review the tax regime applicable to digital multinationals, whose operations do not depend on having a physical presence, to tax them based on where they conduct business rather than where they reside;

(e) work toward establishing a global registry of actual beneficiaries of shell companies to more effectively combat tax evasion; and

(f) use the global financial crisis caused by the pandemic to launch a strong offensive at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development against tax havens with the aim of eradicating them.

• (1345)

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Montarville for that very inspiring speech.

I wonder if he could comment on this. The revenue minister boasts about investing \$1 billion in the fight against tax avoidance and tax evasion. As we know that has had only so-so results.

From my colleague's perspective, I would like to know what message that sends about the government's true intentions. Maybe it does not really want to crack down on companies that engage in tax evasion and tax avoidance. It could use regulations to do so at no added cost, after all.

• (1350)

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Saint-Jean just raised a very good point.

The government does like to brag about wanting to fight tax evasion and tax avoidance. It invests huge amounts of money, with mixed results, as I have talked about in the past. All it needs to do is simply outlaw what was legalized through regulation. The first step would be simply to amend the regulations that made Canada an accomplice to 23 tax havens simply via regulation, meaning that parliamentarians in the House of Commons could not even vote on the matter.

All it took was a quick cabinet meeting, and then they tried to hide it in a mishmash of documents to get it through. That would be a step in the right direction towards combatting tax avoidance and tax evasion.

[*English*]

**Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government has a tendency to measure its success in any matter of public policy by how much money it spends on it. Of course it is not a matter of what is spent; it is a matter of what results are achieved. In the last Parliament, the Auditor General remarked that the government's expenditures in the area of combatting tax evasion really did not bring in anywhere near the amount of money that it had promised or claimed it would.

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Would the member comment on the rhetoric that we hear about money spent on fixing a problem versus actually addressing a problem?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, that question seems to complement the one from my colleague from Saint-Jean.

As I was just saying, the first tangible move would be to amend the regulations that helped make it legal for Canadian companies to use 23 tax havens. Rather than combatting them, we are literally being complicit in these tax havens. The government can brag about investing \$1 billion, but as we have seen, the results do not justify the investment.

There is another thing we could do. The Biden administration is proposing a global minimum tax. Unfortunately, it would take unanimous agreement from member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the OECD, to proceed. Will Canada speak up for countries, like the United States, that want to get rid of tax havens, or will it continue to speak for tax havens at the OECD?

That is a good question that we should be asking the government.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Montarville, for his initiative.

We sometimes have differences of opinion on certain issues, but I believe that we will fully agree on this one. The NDP has also been fighting against tax havens for years.

My thoughts are similar to those of the member for Saint-Jean. As the title of Alain Deneault's book *Legalizing Theft* implies, a good part of the problem is that what we are condemning is not illegal. We are being robbed of money for our social programs and public funds. This has all been organized by Canadian governments, both Conservative and Liberal, and the big banks in large part. The Minister of Revenue can boast all she wants about having more inspectors, but when it is legal to rob a bank, putting more police in front of the bank will not make much of a difference.

What would my colleague say to the Liberal government about its hypocrisy on this issue?

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, I will just say that I completely agree with the member.

The government cannot claim to be combatting tax evasion and avoidance while at the same time creating all of the measures and mechanisms that allow this to happen.

That is what the federal government did, however, first under Jean Chrétien's Liberal government, then under Stephen Harper's Conservative government, and now, under the current Prime Minister.

The only way to stop tax evasion and avoidance is to get serious and take the bull by its horns, instead of grandstanding and claiming to be investing however many millions or billions of dollars to combat these practices.

As my colleague from Saint-Jean pointed out, a simple change to the regulations could address much of the problem with one stroke of the pen.

• (1355)

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to take part in today's debate on Motion No. 69.

Shutting down tax evasion and avoidance is a major priority for the government, and it is a priority we have made and been able to take great strides in advancing. It is only in its execution that Motion No. 69 would raise concerns. Canadians expect and deserve a tax system that is fair and effective in supporting their highest priorities. Canadian businesses should pay their fair share of taxes, but they should also be able to compete on a fair and equal footing with their international counterparts so they can grow, create jobs and pay taxes here in Canada.

It is in this regard that the deficiencies of this motion are most apparent. It includes elements that are poorly targeted at achieving their desired results and that could carry negative consequences for businesses and taxpayers. Moreover, the objectives it seeks to achieve would be better addressed through the government initiatives to address tax evasion and avoidance that are already under way.

I would like to discuss some of the consequences of Motion No. 69.

The motion proposes, for example, that income that Canadian corporations repatriate from their subsidiaries in tax havens ceases to be exempt from tax in Canada. In short, it would change what is known as the "exempt surplus treatment" within the income tax. These provisions allow foreign active business income earned by foreign subsidiaries of Canadian corporations to be repatriated to the Canadian corporation as dividends free from Canadian tax, provided the subsidiary is resident and earns the income in a jurisdiction with which Canada has a tax treaty or a tax information exchange agreement.

By changing these income tax rules, this proposal would represent a major change in Canada's international tax policy. At the same time, it would be well targeted toward achieving its apparent objectives and it could potentially have several other negative consequences.

First, the proposal would put Canadian tax rules out of step with international norms. Canada's exempt surplus treatment is longstanding and is consistent with the tax treatment that most other developed countries apply to active business income earned by foreign corporations owned by their residents.

Second, the proposal could adversely impact the competitiveness of Canadian businesses. Exempt surplus treatment is applicable only to foreign active business income. It ensures that foreign subsidiaries of Canadian companies carrying on business in tax treaty countries or countries with which we have a tax information exchange agreement face similar tax rates and compete on an equal footing with other businesses active in those countries. Restricting exempt surplus treatment could therefore undermine the international competitiveness of Canadian companies operating abroad.

Third, the proposal may not generate significant revenues, if any, and may at the same time reduce the amount of profits repatriated and invested in Canadian businesses. It would do so by encouraging Canadian companies that do not require access to their foreign profits in the short term to keep those profits offshore in order to avoid paying Canadian taxes on repatriation. This would result in less foreign profit being repatriated and invested in Canadian businesses, which would reduce taxable Canadian income generated from such investments or from distributions to Canadian shareholders.

It could also result in some Canadian companies paying more tax on their foreign profits to foreign governments and not to Canada. This would occur because the proposal would require setting a threshold foreign tax rate below which exempt surplus treatment would no longer be available. This would incentivize companies that need to repatriate their foreign profits in the short term and wish to benefit from exempt surplus treatment to earn those profits in subsidiaries located in foreign jurisdictions whose tax rates are higher than this threshold rate, but still lower than the Canadian rate.

- (1400)

This would leave less after-tax profits to be repatriated and reinvested in Canadian businesses, which would in turn reduce the taxable Canadian income that is generated when these profits are reinvested or paid out to shareholders. Moreover, the Canadian tax system already has a set of rules that are better targeted at shutting down the kind of tax avoidance at which this proposal appears to be aimed. These rules, known as the foreign accrual property income, or FAPI, rules, are designed to prevent taxpayers from avoiding Canadian taxes by earning investment income or certain types of highly mobile active business income, offshore in low-tax jurisdictions.

The FAPI rules subject these types of income to Canadian tax when it is earned by foreign corporations that are owned by Canadian resident individuals or corporations, thus ensuring that the tax treatment is the same as if the income had been earned in Canada. By targeting more mobile income, rather than active business income in general, the FAPI rules largely avoid the sort of adverse competitiveness effects that Motion No. 69 would entail, so what the motion is offering is a bad solution where a better one already exists.

Our government already recognizes the ongoing risks arising from tax planning arrangements used by multinational enterprises to minimize their taxes. The solutions we continue to implement are achieving their goals without hobbling Canadian businesses. Our government is currently working with the 138 nations of the

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OECD/G20 inclusive framework on base erosion and profit shifting, to develop a multilateral approach to modernizing the international tax rules. Part of this work involves the development of a global minimum tax regime, commonly referred to as “pillar two”. This new tax regime would ensure that large multinational enterprises pay tax at an agreed minimum rate by allowing countries like Canada to tax their foreign profits when they are earned, as opposed to when they are ultimately repatriated to Canada, if the profits have been taxed at a low rate in the foreign jurisdiction in which they are located.

Our goal is to discourage base erosion and profit shifting by reducing the benefits of earning income in low-tax jurisdictions, but do so through the multilateral consensus-based approach that is more effective than a unilateral action. That would mitigate many, if not all, of the concerns identified within this motion.

In conclusion, I have expended my allotted time addressing the serious problems related to just one element of this motion. This should be enough to give hon. members pause about supporting this motion. Should this debate continue, I would be pleased to present many more.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Montarville for moving this motion, even though I find it a bit odd that he is asking for the support of members of the House while criticizing the work that the Conservatives have done to fight tax evasion.

Today, we have another opportunity to show Canadians that the Conservatives are firmly resolved to combatting tax evasion. We believe it is important to maintain a sense of tax fairness at all levels. Simply put, those who avoid paying taxes, which is illegal, should not be allowed to get rich at the expense of honest, hard-working Canadians.

The world is still fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. As we know, economies have been hard hit and that has created a lot of financial uncertainty. It is therefore more important than ever that measures be taken to guarantee the security of our tax systems and the collection of taxes by governments.

The disproportionate deficit that the Liberal government is currently running only reinforces the urgent need to put an end to tax evasion. The money that is flooding into tax havens will be needed to help our children's great-grandchildren pay off the no-limit credit card the Liberal government has in its hands.

Various estimates suggest that Canada loses between \$5 billion and \$10 billion annually to tax havens. For instance, a November 2020 report by the Tax Justice Network suggests that Canada loses \$7.9 billion annually to tax havens. That is equivalent to the annual salaries of about 100,000 nurses. That is a lot of money.

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A report published by the Quebec National Assembly in March 2017 estimated that tax havens have prevented the Province of Quebec from collecting between \$0.8 billion and \$1 billion in taxes. According to the Institut de recherche en économie contemporaine, Quebec is actually losing between \$1 billion and \$2 billion. According to some estimates, the number could be even higher.

The Tax Justice Network report estimates that Canada is responsible for \$10 billion in losses in other countries. Although Canadians have a lot to lose because of tax evasion, it is important to realize that other countries are also significantly affected by these illegal and fraudulent practices. We should note that the poorest countries tend to suffer more from problems related to tax evasion.

Between April 2014 and March 2020, Canadian courts found 263 people guilty of tax evasion. Is that a lot of people or not many? We do not know. According to the sentencing, these 263 people hid \$118 million in federal taxes. Collectively, they were fined \$32 million and sentenced to 230 years in prison. That may seem like a lot, but if we compare this to the real figures on tax evasion in Canada, we realize that it is very little. This is no small matter, especially since we have not yet managed to reach the objective of having everyone pay their taxes.

We must continue to take measures to ensure that taxes are paid and that people who unfairly try to avoid their obligations are held accountable. Fraudulent companies established in tax havens have not only avoided paying taxes but have also stolen money from Canadian workers' personal funds. In a recent case, more than \$500 million was siphoned from Canada to the Isle of Man, in order to hide that money from creditors. This case involved massive amounts of money, including entire retirement funds, which were lost as a result of fraudulent activities.

Although the executives of the companies involved were found guilty of fraud, the majority of the money they had earned from their illegal activities was never found. The contributors to these pension funds were swindled. Unfortunately, these Canadians and many others were robbed of their savings, and they will never see that money again. We need to implement measures to ensure that fraudsters are never able to exploit Canadians like that again.

The Conservative Party believes that individuals and businesses must pay their fair share of taxes. Corporate tax evasion entails significant economic and social costs. It is unacceptable for the largest companies in the world and the wealthiest individuals to thumb their noses at Canada's tax system or any other system.

• (1405)

Billions of dollars in revenue are being stolen from governments, and inequality is growing. In the end, the biggest victims are consumers, small businesses and the economy in general.

Throughout its history, the Conservative Party of Canada has maintained a strong record when it comes to combatting tax evasion and cracking down on tax havens. In fact, the former Conservative government introduced more than 85 measures to close tax loopholes and improve the fairness and integrity of our system.

For example, budget 2013 introduced changes to the Canada Revenue Agency's compliance programs, which enhanced the ef-

fectiveness and integrity of the tax system by targeting tax evaders who were considered high risk. These changes generated over \$1.5 billion in additional annual revenue.

To go back a little further, as minister of finance, the late Jim Flaherty announced an initiative to crack down on tax havens in budget 2007. At the time, he said, and I quote:

When multinational corporations use this tax loophole, Canadian taxpayers are indirectly subsidizing their international operations. Our goal is to improve the fairness of our tax system and further reduce taxes for hard-working Canadians while preserving Canada's overall tax advantage...

This anti-tax-haven initiative was launched to prevent multinational corporations from using tax avoidance structures to generate two expense deductions for only one investment. This initiative also sought to appoint an advisory panel of experts to look for ways to generally improve and leverage the fairness and competitiveness of Canada's international tax system.

I also want to remind members that the Conservatives supported a 2016 report from the Standing Committee on Finance on tax evasion and tax loopholes. That report specifically recommended that the Income Tax Act be reviewed and that steps be taken to improve coordination between the Canada Revenue Agency and the Department of Justice in the investigation and prosecution of cases of tax evasion.

The Conservative Party has always stood strong in the fight against tax evasion in order to ensure fairness and prosperity for all Canadians. We will always continue to do so.

We still have a long way to go, though. A 2019 CRA report revealed that 20% of respondents believed the benefits of tax cheating outweighed the risks, 13% felt that tax evasion was no big deal, and 26% did not think they would be caught trying to evade taxes. In other words, it is going to take a lot of work to fight tax evasion. The government needs to send the public a clear message.

Getting back to Motion No. 69, I want to tell my hon. colleague that passing laws on these issues must be done with care and attention. Some parts of his motion call for more thorough consideration. That is for another day, however. Today, the Conservative Party also believes that, during a crisis, the government must ensure that all taxes legally owed by Canadians are duly paid. To do any less would be inappropriate.

I hope my colleagues will soon be able to thoroughly examine these issues during a Standing Committee on Finance study on tax evasion. Our party has an impressive record when it comes to fighting tax evasion. We will always stand up for the best interests of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

*Private Members' Business*

In conclusion, our party will support the motion so that it may be studied in committee. Fighting tax fraud and tax evasion is a tough task because the perpetrators have almost unlimited means to avoid paying the Canadian government what they owe. Parliamentarians have a clear role to play. They have to send a clear message that these practices are illegal, unjust and unfair and will never be tolerated.

• (1410)

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I hope you did not pay too much attention to the last two speeches we just heard, because they were rather hypocritical.

These people say one thing and do the opposite. They are grasping at straws, looking for excuses. When they find things that do not suit their narrative, they say it is too complicated, it would be hard to do, or we have to wait for the OECD. These people have incredible resources, but they look for excuses to get out of doing anything.

We see that from both the Conservatives and the Liberals. As far as tax evasion and the use of tax havens are concerned, the system was built under Conservative and Liberal governments with the support of Canada's big banks and major accounting firms, which have spent years having fun helping Canadian millionaires, billionaires and corporations profit from not having to pay their fair share of taxes.

I want to point out that the NDP has been monitoring and working on the issue of tax evasion and tax havens for years.

I have already congratulated my colleague from Montarville on Motion No. 69, which we are debating today. I also want to acknowledge the work of the member for Joliette, who has been passionate about this file for years and has spoken about it a number of times. I can assure him that we want the same thing.

I do want to caution my colleagues though. I moved a motion in favour of fighting tax havens during the previous Parliament. The motion we moved in the House was adopted, and the Liberals voted in favour of it. However, they went on to sign new tax treaties with other tax havens.

I wish my colleague from Montarville the best of luck, but I want to warn him that the Conservatives and the Liberals may sometimes vote in favour of a given declaration of intent or worthy principle with which we agree as a progressive, left-wing political party, but that does not always produce the expected results. Let us hope it will be different this time. My colleague can always count on the NDP caucus to demand more justice and equity in this area.

The principle behind tax havens is not very complicated. I spoke about it earlier. It has been explained by many people, including Alain Deneault, who wrote a book called *Une escroquerie légalisée: précis sur les « paradis fiscaux »*, or "A legalized scam: a closer look at tax havens". Contrary to what my Conservative colleague said, we must fight all illegal actions. That is obvious, but the problem is that, with all the agreements and treaties that have been signed over the years, the use of tax havens is largely legal. This is due to the principle of avoiding double taxation.

Based on that principle and the use of tax havens, the same income or profit cannot be taxed twice. Let me give a simple example, that of Barbados, which is the oldest tax haven with which Canada has had an agreement, since 1980, if memory serves.

People send their money, profits or income to Barbados, where they pay 1% tax on that income. Then they can bring that money back to Canada and say that they have already paid taxes on it, and they will not be taxed twice on the same income. If it is a business, it should pay a minimum of 15% tax here. If it is an individual, it would be 30% in taxes. I am giving these percentages as examples, but the principle is that income cannot be taxed twice.

However, why could we not eliminate the advantage of using tax havens by telling these people that although the tax in Barbados is 1%, when they return to Canada, repatriate their money and put it Canadian accounts, the difference will be taxed?

They would be made to pay the taxes they did not pay here, in Canada. If someone only pays 1% in taxes on their company's profits because they were sent to Barbados, why could we not make them pay 14% in taxes?

This would eliminate any incentive to use such schemes. In the end, they would not pay more tax, but they would pay exactly the same percentage as other Quebec and Canadian citizens and other businesses, small or large, in Canada. This would uphold the principle of tax equity and eliminate all the advantages of using these schemes, which Alain Deneault does not refer to as avoidance of double taxation but rather "double non-taxation", meaning these profits are basically not taxed anywhere. Someone pays a negligible amount of taxes in the tax haven, and then they pay nothing here, with the excuse that the revenue has already been taxed.

• (1415)

According to the member for Montarville, the traditional governing parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, sometimes say they cannot do anything about it. The NDP thinks they can. We think they are accommodating, complicit even, because they operate according to these rules. They want things to work this way, so they work hand in hand with the big Canadian banks. For years, those banks have had branches in tropical paradises, where it is warm and lovely, so they can help the super-rich, the millionaires and billionaires, avoid paying their fair share for our public services, like health, public transit, education and well-funded, public universities.

More than \$80 billion Canadian are hidden in Barbados alone, the oldest tax haven with which Canada does business. Canada cannot access that money. That is what happens when people use tax havens. It undermines the equality of individuals and our ability to act.

### *Private Members' Business*

Tax havens have multiplied over the years. One of the most obvious and glaring examples is the Cayman Islands, where there are more registered companies than there are residents. This means one of two things. Either their inhabitants are extremely entrepreneurial and own two or three companies each, or the Cayman Islands have become a kind of post office box where companies pretend to have a branch or office. Entire buildings contain nothing but post office boxes, so that companies can prove they have an address there, and therefore not pay taxes.

All of these schemes are well known, and yet Canadian governments, led by the traditional parties, have done absolutely nothing for years. This has serious repercussions, especially in these pandemic times, when huge investments are needed not only to fight COVID-19, but also to ensure an equitable, fair and green economic recovery that takes climate change and the climate crisis into account.

Government spending or investments are considerable and that is normal. We are living beyond our means, however, and at some point we are going to have to think about making cuts. Then it will be time for the Conservatives' favourite topic: austerity and making cuts to public services and services for families, seniors and students.

That is not the path the NDP wants to take whatsoever. If we look at government spending alone without looking at revenues, then we are getting it wrong. As the left-leaning progressive party, we are saying that we can bring in a healthy portion of revenues from the fight against tax havens.

We must seize this opportunity. A few years ago, the Department of Finance said that Canada loses roughly \$16 billion a year to tax havens and that was a conservative estimate. The Conference Board of Canada thinks it is more than \$90 billion. That organization is not known to have an international socialist bent that wants to bleed the big banks and the wealthy. Let us just say that we are talking about tens of billions of dollars.

Why can we not all work together and take this opportunity to say that enough is enough and put an end to this? We can accomplish a lot of things more effectively in a coalition or multilaterally with our OECD partners, and that is a good thing.

However, most of Canada's tax treaties are bilateral, between Canada and one other country. There is therefore no need to wait for the United Nations or the OECD to act. If they do, that is great and we will collaborate, but we can act on our own initiative. That would bring in more money and would be more fair for our businesses that pay their fair share of taxes in Canada.

The NDP has other measures to propose to increase revenues, such as a tax on wealth for those who earn over \$20 million a year and a tax on the excessive profits of companies like Amazon and Netflix. In that regard, a report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer indicated that a temporary tax on the excessive profits of these companies could bring in up to \$8 billion a year.

We therefore have to seize these opportunities, and the NDP will be very proud to support Motion No. 69. It is a step in the right direction, but there are still many other things we can do to improve

tax fairness. The NDP has all kinds of good ideas to share in that regard.

• (1420)

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to put the question on Bill S-3 at second reading.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed to the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands putting this proposition forward will please say nay. I hear none.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed will please say nay.

Hearing no objection, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### OFFSHORE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Offshore Health and Safety Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question is on the motion.

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 would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I request that the motion be carried on division.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried on division.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

### FIGHT AGAINST TAX EVASION

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by making a few comments.

In his speech, the Liberal member said that he was presenting the government's position, which made my heart sink. This is yet another example of how Ottawa is as terrible at combatting tax evasion and tax avoidance as it is on the world stage. We are already at a disadvantage since the government has a bias towards tax havens.

I also have a comment for the Conservative member. I remind him that his party, under Stephen Harper, legalized the use of 23 tax havens. It is incorrect to say that that government was the master of combatting tax havens.

My last comment is for the New Democrat member. I commend him for all of the work he has done on this issue. I simply want to remind him that the motion he moved in the House that got the support of the Liberal majority government at the time was written in a way that was not binding, unlike today's motion. I am confident that if our motion is adopted, it will bring about real change.

Over the past year, the government has supported all of the businesses that have been battered by the pandemic, including bad corporate citizens. I am of course referring to businesses that use tax havens to avoid paying taxes here in Canada. They do not pay, but they receive. That is unacceptable, and it has to change.

That is actually what will happen south of the border. The Biden administration is putting a major action plan in place to limit the use of tax havens. Our neighbour to the south is also asking other countries to take similar steps. The crisis has cost both Canada and the United States dearly. Our society can no longer afford to give plutocrats the privilege of avoiding their tax obligations.

Will the government follow the Biden administration's lead? From what we have heard, it does not seem so.

Will the Minister of Finance act in solidarity with Janet Yellen, her American counterpart? Based on what the Liberals have said, unfortunately, I would say no. The Prime Minister has only spoken once with the U.S. President since Ms. Yellen's call to take measures. The meeting summary shows that the Prime Minister did not raise the issue.

At the next annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund, the U.S. administration will likely put forward its proposal for a minimum tax on multinationals. Unless the Canadian government changes its mind, it will probably oppose this initiative to protect its interests and, need I remind my colleagues, those of the 10 tax havens it represents internationally.

The motion moved by my colleague from Montarville seeks to make the government change course. The motion sends the government a strong message. Much needs to be done to stop the use of tax havens. Measures must be implemented to truly intercept illegally diverted funds. What is more, it is urgent that we make the immoral illegal.

Bay Street banks have made astronomical profits every quarter even during the pandemic. They operate in a market that is heavily protected by the government, and every year, they save billions of dollars in taxes when they divert activities conducted in Canada by artificially recording them in Barbados or Panama. This is heart-wrenching.

### *Private Members' Business*

What makes absolutely no sense is that the government says that all of that is legal. This government kowtows to plutocrats. Given the current crisis, that needs to change now. That is why I am urging all of my colleagues in the House to vote in favour of the motion moved by my colleague from Montarville. It sets out six things that the government needs to do right now to create a fairer society, one that stops letting plutocrats get a free ride and makes them pay taxes. These six actions are very clear and will change things.

The first action would be to amend the Income Tax Act and the Income Tax Regulations to ensure that income that Canadian corporations repatriate from their subsidiaries in tax havens ceases to be exempt from tax in Canada.

The motion calls for subsection 5907(11) of the Income Tax Regulations to be repealed. This section, which was snuck in under the radar, enables Canadian companies to repatriate amounts from subsidiaries registered in one of the 23 tax havens with which Canada has a tax information exchange agreement without paying taxes. If it is repealed, that income will be taxed in Canada when the Canadian company repatriates it.

The second action would be to review the concept of permanent establishment so that income reported by shell companies created abroad by Canadian taxpayers for tax purposes is taxed in Canada. When a company registers a subsidiary or a billionaire establishes a trust abroad, that subsidiary or trust is considered a foreign national, independent from the Canadian citizen or company that created it, and its income becomes non-taxable.

● (1430)

In taxation jargon, these subsidiaries or trusts are referred to as permanent establishments, in other words, they have a taxable fixed place of business independent of their owner. In many cases, they are shell companies with no real activity. There is no justification for treating them differently from any other bank account and exempting the income they generate from tax. This has to change.

The third action would be to require banks and other federally regulated financial institutions to disclose in their annual reports the list of their foreign subsidiaries and the amount of tax they would be subject to if their income had been reported in Canada. For years that was a requirement. It has to be reinstated. The Superintendent of Financial Institutions could issue a simple directive requiring the banks to be transparent again. This very simple measure could be taken swiftly because it does not require any international negotiation or any legislative or regulatory change.

In 2019, the six Bay Street banks made a record profit of \$46 billion. That is a 50% increase over five years. In 2020, despite the pandemic, they made \$41 billion in profits. Their profits rise, but they pay less tax because they report their most profitable activities in tax havens, where their assets keep growing.

*Private Members' Business*

Until the door to the use of tax havens is closed shut, consumers would be able to choose their financial institution in an informed manner, and taxpayers would be able to judge whether the banks deserve government assistance.

The fourth action would be to review the tax regime that applies to digital multinationals whose business does not depend on a physical presence, and tax them from now on based on where they operate, rather than where they reside. The budget had some good news in that regard. On the one hand, the government will finally start collecting GST on services sold by these multinationals beginning July 1. This was included in the notice of ways and means we voted on earlier. Why did Ottawa wait so long? Quebec has been doing this for two years now, and it is going great. Better late than never.

The budget also announces the government's plan to tax multinational Internet companies on their activities at a rate of 3% of their sales in Canada beginning on January 1, 2022. We will remain vigilant. That is good news, but it might be merely hot air, since that date could be after the next election.

During the last election campaign, the Bloc Québécois proposed using this 3% to compensate the victims of web giants, such as the creators, artists or media outlets whose content gets stolen by these heavyweights. It will do for a start, but the budget could have gone further.

The fifth action would be to work toward establishing a global registry of actual beneficiaries of shell companies to more effectively combat tax evasion. We all know that in many cases tax havens are opaque and that it is impossible to know who really benefits from the trusts that are created. Often, we only know the name of the trustee that manages them or of the law or accounting firm that created them, but not the name of the person hiding behind them. Such a setup is a real boon for fraudsters who can hide their money with complete impunity.

The Panama papers and the Paradise papers, which were internal documents leaked from the firms that manage these companies,

showed us the extent of the problem and the amounts hidden in these tax havens. With regard to the Panama papers, Radio-Canada reported early this month that Canada's response has been wholly inadequate, as my colleague from Montarville said. Radio-Canada published an article about the Panama papers under a headline pointing out that Quebec has recovered more unpaid taxes than Ottawa. Canada has recovered 15 times less money than the United Kingdom, 12 times less than Germany, and 10 times less than Spain. It is a real scandal. This must change. We must put an end to the secrecy. We need a registry of the real beneficiaries of trusts and other shell companies, which will eradicate this fraud.

The sixth action would be to use the global financial crisis caused by the pandemic to launch a strong offensive at the OECD against tax havens with the aim of eradicating them. As we know, this measure was taken in 2008-09. It moved forward but then stalled. This type of multilateral initiative has obvious advantages, but it does have one disadvantage. Since the OECD operates by consensus, it only takes one holdout to stall progress. After the 2009 crisis, this initiative was moving along nicely, but it has since slowed down, as I just said. The COVID-19 crisis could speed things up, however, especially given the calls from the U.S. government. Ottawa needs to get on board now.

A vote in favour of the motion moved by my colleague from Montarville is a vote in favour of asking the government to take these six actions, which will make a real difference in the fight against tax havens and make the system a little fairer.

• (1435)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. The order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

It being 2:35 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:35 p.m.)

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