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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 19, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 11 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

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PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AND REVIEW COMMISSION ACT

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-20, An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, entitled "Main Estimates 2022-23: Votes 1, 5 and 10 under Department of Citizenship and Immigration, and Vote 1 under Immigration and Refugee Board".

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, entitled "Main Estimates 2022-23".

[Translation]

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities in relation to the motion adopted Thursday, May 5, 2022, on the International Civil Aviation Organization.

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[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-273, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (Corinne's Quest and the protection of children).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present this important legislation today, an act to amend the Criminal Code with regard to Corinne's Quest and the protection of children. I would like to give special thanks to my seconder, the dynamic member of Parliament for Nunavut.

As we well know, physical punishment of children is still legal in Canada, despite the fact that dozens and dozens of countries around the world have banned the practice. This bill seeks to repeal section 43 of the Criminal Code, which allows for physical punishment of children.

Corinne's Quest comes from Corinne Robertshaw, a lawyer for the federal government who saw first-hand the results of allowing physical punishment of children and the death and injury of children throughout the 1970s and 1980s. She started Corinne's Quest and it continues today. Despite her death, Corinne's Quest continues to advocate on behalf of children.

I would like to give special thanks to Kathy and John Lynn, constituents of mine in New Westminster—Burnaby, who are shepherding the push to ban physical punishment of children and repeal section 43.

I hope that all members of Parliament will support this important legislation.

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

*Routine Proceedings***CRIMINAL CODE**

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-274, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (detention in custody).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. This bill addresses a central issue when it comes to street crime affecting Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo and all areas of Canada. It responds to the decision in *Regina v. Zora* from the Supreme Court of Canada, which dramatically altered the bail landscape and made bail essentially a given.

This bill would permit the courts to detain somebody who is alleged to have committed three indictable offences, serious offences. That would make the person presumptively detained, except in exceptional circumstances. I am confident that this bill would help protect Canadians in a balanced and nuanced way. I thank my seconder, the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

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

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FOOD DAY IN CANADA ACT

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill S-227, An Act to establish Food Day in Canada.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to introduce at first reading Bill S-227, an act to establish food day in Canada. I am very proud to sponsor this initiative, which would formally establish food day in Canada on the Saturday before the first Monday in August, making it fall on a Saturday on which most provinces hold a holiday long weekend. I am especially proud that, through this bill, Parliament is honouring the legacy of the late Anita Stewart for her lifetime of devoted advocacy for Canadian food.

I would like to thank the hon. Senator Rob Black for sponsoring this bill in the other place, where it passed unanimously. I appreciate the support that this bill has already received, including from the members for Wellington—Halton Hills, Durham and Guelph. I hope that, with the support of all parties, this bill, Bill S-227, can pass quickly through this House. Now, more than ever, it is important to champion the healthy local food that hard-working farmers and farm families grow throughout Canada.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

• (1010)

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and, if you seek it, I hope that you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, during the debate on the business of supply pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) on Thursday, May 19 and Monday, May 30, 2022:

(a) the time provided for consideration of the Main Estimates in committee of the whole be extended beyond four hours, as needed, to include a minimum of 16 periods of 15 minutes each; and

(b) members rising to speak during the debate may indicate to the Chair that they will be dividing their time with another member.

(c) no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay. Hearing none, it is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

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PETITIONS

VICTORIA CROSS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to present petition e-3636, calling on the government to award veteran Jess Larochelle the Victoria Cross for his valour. Every year, we take one day to remember our veterans: Remembrance Day. We might remember them on the anniversary of a battle or conflict, but we do not do enough to recognize veterans' sacrifices.

Other countries have recognized this and have reviewed the citations given to veterans who ought to be appropriately recognized for their valour, but here in Canada we have not done that appropriately. In fact, a Canadian has not been awarded the VC since 1945. Over 14,000 Canadians who signed the petition are clear that this must change.

I want to acknowledge the unprecedented grassroots movement bringing together the veteran community, including organizations such as the Royal Canadian Legion, members of the military community, municipalities and grassroots Canadians, who together are calling for Private Jess Larochelle's citation to be reviewed and to award him the Victoria Cross he deserves.

Veterans who have served heroically and have been ignored for reasons such as their race must also be considered for the Victoria Cross. It is time to recognize their valour.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is hard with an e-petition to split some of the signatures that were brought forward by my colleague, the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, and I want to thank her for doing that. This is a bipartisan effort, so we cannot split those 14,129 signatures, but as a veteran and a former minister of veterans affairs, I want to pledge bipartisan support for the work done by Valour in the Presence of the Enemy, which gathered these signatures.

Routine Proceedings

All veterans groups, including the Royal Canadian Legion, want a proper review, because valour in the presence of the enemy was demonstrated by Jess Larochelle, who in 2006, while injured, defended against 20 to 40 insurgents. The 12-year mission in Afghanistan was our longest. We need a process to review the valour of our citizens, much like all of our major allies have.

• (1015)

[*Translation*]

I support the efforts of our veterans and my colleague. We need a fair and transparent process to review the valour of soldiers like Jess Larochelle. Now is the time to do that.

[*English*]

UKRAINE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I present a petition where the signatories are asking for the government and all members of Parliament to continue to support and advocate for Ukraine, in particular on the issues of lethal weapons and ongoing support in terms of supplies of lethal weapons, continuing efforts and doing whatever we can for displaced persons and, of course, humanitarian aid.

It is with pleasure that I present this petition today.

[*Translation*]

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Development and Peace-Caritas Canada, today, I am pleased to present a petition that has been signed by residents of my beautiful riding of Madawaska—Restigouche. The petitioners are calling on Parliament to pass a law on Canadian companies operating abroad.

This law would require such companies to prevent adverse human rights impacts and environmental damage throughout their global operations and supply chains.

It would require companies do their due diligence, including by carefully assessing how they may be contributing to human rights abuse or environmental damage abroad and by providing access to remedy when harms occur.

It would provide for meaningful consequences for companies that fail to carry out and report on adequate due diligence.

Finally, it would establish a legal right for people who have been harmed to seek justice in Canadian courts.

[*English*]

VACCINE MANDATES

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the signatories of this petition are calling on the radical ultra-left socialist coalition to stop the demonization of people it finds unacceptable and lift the mandates, together with all restrictions, so our nation can get back to normal and begin to heal.

OPIOIDS

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions.

The first is a petition from Calgarians concerned about the deadly opioid crisis. In 2016, I participated in the health committee's extensive study into the opioid crisis, and we made a number of recommendations to the House.

The petitioners are calling on the government to take the necessary steps to stop the needless death and overdose injuries occurring in every community in Canada. They also want to see the federal government work with the provinces to develop a national overdose plan. The petitioners are asking the government to consider alternatives and reforms used in other countries that have been proven to work in tackling this public health challenge.

• (1020)

UKRAINE

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from many concerned Canadians. Of course, we are all horrified by the situation in Ukraine, and Canadians are looking for Canada's government to take a strong stand against Russia.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to provide military equipment and arms for the defence of Ukraine. In addition, they are calling on our government to work with our NATO allies to close Ukraine's airspace to the Russians. Finally, they are asking Canada's government to take a leadership role in any future peacekeeping mission in Ukraine. Like all Canadians, they hope that this war comes to an end soon.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by several dozen people in British Columbia, including constituents in my terrific riding of New Westminster—Burnaby.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to support Motion M-1, a green new deal, which is an initiative that I tabled before the House of Commons on behalf of the NDP. As members well know, the climate crisis is upon us. We need to have solutions put into place, and the green new deal is part of those solutions.

OPIOIDS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present a petition on the urgent matter of the opioid crisis.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners cite statistics that are well known in this place. The overdose crisis is a public health emergency, and more than 13,900 people have died from opioid-related deaths since 2016. They call on the Government of Canada to recognize that this is a public health emergency and to reframe the overdose crisis as a health issue rather than a criminal matter.

There are a number of other points, but to summarize, I will reference a private member's bill, Bill C-216, from the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, which also calls for this really critical point. It calls for drugs to be decriminalized in Canada in order to reframe the issue as a health crisis and not a criminal matter. In closing, the petitioners are also grateful to the organization of Moms Stop the Harm.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to introduce two petitions signed by constituents in Kitchener—Conestoga.

The first petition requests that the Government of Canada address the climate emergency by enacting just transition legislation, which would reduce emissions by 60% below 2005 levels by 2030, end fossil fuel subsidies and create good green jobs.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I have the pleasure to present requests that the Canadian government work to require governments to prevent adverse human rights impacts and environmental damages throughout their global operations.

TAXATION

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and table a petition on behalf of thousands of constituents from Kelowna—Lake Country and from across Canada. The petitioners are supporting wineries, breweries, cideries and distilleries, of which 95% are small businesses.

The petition says, “inflation, labour shortages, supply chain issues, increasing business debt and federal tax increases on businesses are already increasing costs at an unmanageable level for small businesses” and asks the government to recognize “that small business have been hit particularly hard during the COVID-19 pandemic and as a result of a volatile open-and-shut cycle”.

The petitioners are calling on the government to freeze the automatic escalator excise tax on beer, wine, cider and spirits.

UKRAINE

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this Vyshyvanka Day, I am honoured to present a petition supported by the fine residents in my riding of Brantford—Brant and many Canadians who are very concerned about Russia's unprovoked war and genocide against the people of Ukraine. They are also concerned about the Liberal government's slow and inefficient response.

Knowing that Canada was the first western country to recognize Ukrainian independence, people are calling on the government to show leadership in helping Ukraine in the fight for its sovereignty 31 years later. We can and must do much more to support Ukraine

and its people, including providing funding and the direct military assistance needed to liberate all territories from Russia, including the Donbass and the Crimea.

Slava Ukraini.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following question will be answered today: No. 457.

[Text]

Question No. 457—**Ms. Heather McPherson:**

With regard to sanctions imposed by Canada under the United Nations Act, the Special Economic Measures Act and the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, broken down by type of asset and type of sanction: (a) what is the dollar value of assets frozen since February 23, 2022, belonging to (i) Russian, (ii) Belarusian, nationals; (b) what is the dollar value of assets frozen since February 24, 2022, belonging to (i) Russian, (ii) Belarusian, nationals; (c) how many individuals have had assets frozen since February 24, 2022, belonging to (i) Russian, (ii) Belarusian, nationals; (d) what assessments, including the dollar value, have been done on the amount of Russian and Belarusian assets in Canada owned by sanctioned (i) Russian, (ii) Belarusian, nationals; and (e) as of which date is the information provided in response to this question current?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following reflects a consolidated response approved on behalf of Global Affairs Canada ministers.

In response to parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question, in coordination with allies and partners, Canada will continue to escalate sanctions and close loopholes to maximize pressure against the Russian regime until President Putin stops his war on Ukraine and turns to diplomacy. The measures the Government of Canada has put in place are designed to hit at the heart of Russia's economy and limit its ability to fund its illegal and unjustifiable war.

Under Canada's sanctions, it is prohibited for persons in Canada and Canadians abroad to engage in activities related to the property of sanctioned persons, including the provision of financial or related services. As a result, the assets of sanctioned persons are effectively frozen. They cannot be sold and they cannot be transferred, making transactions involving them simply impossible.

Through budget 2022, the Government of Canada is proposing amendments to the Special Economic Measures Act and the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act that will allow courts to order seized or restrained property belonging to sanctioned persons, including Russian elites, oligarchs and their proxies, to be forfeited to the Crown.

Business of Supply

The proceeds generated from forfeited assets may be used for the reconstruction of a foreign state adversely affected by grave breaches of international peace and security; the restoration of international peace and security; and the compensation of victims affected by grave breaches of international peace and security, gross and systematic human rights violations or acts of significant corruption.

The management and disposal of assets are expected to be handled by the Minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada under the Seized Property Management Act. These changes will make Canada's sanctions regime a leader in the G7.

Federally regulated financial institutions, or FRFIs, are regulated and supervised by the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, OSFI. This includes foreign banks operating in Canada. OSFI expects FRFIs to comply with all relevant Canadian sanctions legislation and to ensure they have adequate procedures in place to comply with the existing and any future laws on an ongoing basis.

Disclosures on the existence of sanctioned assets are made by reporting entities, such as Canadian financial institutions, to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the RCMP.

Global Affairs Canada is not in a position to provide the requested figures, given that they may not fully reflect what has been effectively frozen under Canadian sanctions and would represent only those assets that have been reported to the RCMP. Such an exercise could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

In response to part (d) of the question, G7 finance ministers released a joint statement on March 17, 2022, outlining their commitment to take all available legal steps to find, restrain, freeze, seize and, where appropriate, confiscate or forfeit the assets of those individuals and entities that have been sanctioned.

With regard to part (e) of the question, the information provided in response to this question is current as of March 31, 2022.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 456 and 458 to 460 could be made orders for return, these return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 456—**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:**

With regard to the Royal Canadian Air Force's CF-188 Hornet or CF-18 aircraft: (a) what have been the total costs related to aircraft maintenance on the CF-18 since 2016, broken down by (i) year, (ii) type of expense; (b) what are the projected costs to maintain the CF-18 aircraft, broken down by fiscal year from present until 2032-33; (c) how much has been spent on improvements, either directly for or related to the jets, including (i) radar improvements, (ii) communications gear, (iii) equipment, (iv) other expenditures, broken down by fiscal year since 2016; and (d) what are the projected costs of improvements, either directly for or related to the

CF-18 aircraft, broken down by fiscal year and type of improvement, from the present fiscal year until 2032-33?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 458—**Mr. Dan Albas:**

With regard to changes in government policies, regulations, and taxation measures that came into effect on April 1, 2022, broken down by department and agency: what are the details of all these changes, including, for each, (i) what the change was, (ii) the reason for the change, (iii) the costs or projected costs associated with the change, (iv) the additional revenue or loss projected for the government over the next five years, broken down by year, as a result of the change?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 459—**Mr. Dan Albas:**

With regard to vehicles owned, rented or leased by the government, since 2016, broken down by year and by department, agency or other government entity: (a) how many parking tickets, or similar types of citations, were received by government vehicles; (b) what was the cumulative amount of fines of the parking tickets referred to in (a); (c) how many of the parking tickets referred to in (a) were paid for by the government; (d) what is the total amount paid by the government for parking violations; (e) why did the government pay for the tickets in (c) rather than the government employee or other individual who parked illegally; (f) how many traffic tickets, or similar types of citations, were received by the government, including those received by mail or email, such as from red-light cameras or speeding cameras; (g) what was the cumulative amount of fines of the traffic tickets referred to in (f); (h) how many of the traffic tickets referred to in (f) were paid for by the government; (i) what is the total amount paid by the government for traffic violations; (j) why did the government pay for the tickets in (i) rather than the government employee or other individual who committed the traffic violation; and (k) what is the policy regarding who pays the (i) parking ticket, (ii) traffic ticket, when it is unclear who committed the infraction?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 460—**Mrs. Kelly Block:**

With regard to the government's procurement of COVID-19 vaccines, including boosters: (a) how many doses has the government procured, broken down by the year the doses are, or were, scheduled to be delivered, from 2020 through 2028; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by manufacturer and specific vaccine; and (c) what is the breakdown of (a) by the number of doses intended for (i) domestic use, (ii) foreign use through COVAX, (iii) other foreign use?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Finally, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1025)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—RULES AND SERVICE LEVELS FOR TRAVEL

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC) moved:

That, given that,

Business of Supply

(i) Canadians are currently experiencing unacceptable wait times at Canadian airports, even though airports are still operating at reduced capacity,

(ii) current restrictions have been cited by experts as ineffective and contributing to additional delays, costs, and confusion, as well as acute labour shortages,

(iii) Canada's international allies have moved to lift COVID-19 restrictions at airports and other points of entry,

(iv) Canada is losing business and economic opportunities,

the House call on the government to immediately revert to pre-pandemic rules and service levels for travel.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

I am always honoured to rise on behalf of the constituents of Thornhill.

More than two years ago, travel and many other parts of normal life came to a complete standstill. Countries around the world shut their borders, their airports and virtually everything else, and it was necessary to do so. We were faced with a new virus that we knew very little about. We had to do this until we found a way to live with COVID. We had to do this until we learned more.

Two years ago, all of our allies were in the same place. We all shut our borders. We all had restrictions in place. Today, that is no longer the case. Countries around the world have dropped their restrictions and have cancelled mandates. Canada is no longer in line with the rest of the world. Canada is an outlier. We know that most governments make decisions based on science, research and advice from the experts. All of our allies are lifting the restrictions, so surely they cannot all be wrong. Surely the science cannot be different in Canada than anywhere else.

We might be able to understand the government's thought process on this, if it would share the advice it has received and when it was received from the experts it claims have given them this advice. However, it has refused to tell Canadians what metrics it is using, what plan it has and what evidence these rules are based on. In fact, we have not been able to find anyone who has told the government to keep the legacy health restrictions and the assault on mobility rights in place. That leads us on this side of the House to believe that there is no evidence, there are no metrics and there is no good reason, other than the ideological drive to punish those who do not agree with the government.

Not only are these restrictions vindictive and discriminatory, which we have said a lot in this place, because it is true, but they are causing chaos at our airports, which the House and the Minister of Transport ought to be concerned about. We have all seen photos of passengers lined up for hours and hours on end, with no chance of making their flights on time. They wait on the tarmac, only to be shepherded into a lineup that exceeds the size of the terminal or the CBSA hall. Passenger processing times have quadrupled, and in committee this week, industry experts told us directly that these restrictions and mandates are, in part, to blame.

Our airports are famous for all of the wrong reasons, and we can fix that today, at least in part. The world is opening and people are finally travelling, which is a good thing. Businesses are growing again. Canada should be a world-class destination for people to work and play, but what do people abroad see? They see long lines,

chaos and a place they want nothing to do with. They see COVID restrictions that their countries did away with months ago. They see lineups that take longer than the flights themselves. They see a big neon sign at the border saying that Canada is closed for business. They will choose to go elsewhere.

The Toronto Region Board of Trade said that about 50% of travellers at Pearson, my home airport, as well as that of the Minister of Transport, as it is the airport he goes to most often, had "extensive delays" last week. How does that create a good first impression? Our tourism sector cannot afford this. Our small businesses cannot afford this, and our country cannot afford this.

It has been two long years. They need as much help as they can get, and it is not just dollars and cents. These are peoples' livelihoods, their years of hard work and their life savings. It is simply hypocritical for the government to claim that it has businesses' backs when it continues to dig in its heels and stand by the measures that are now affecting everyone, not just those who opposed its views in the first place. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, tourism associations, the Canadian Airports Council and now doctors have all called for an end to border restrictions, vaccine mandates and the broken ArriveCAN app. They just want their livelihoods back.

There are acute labour shortages in this sector, we know that, and while the minister blames travellers, saying that they are out of practice, we know the problem lies in part with the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, which is under his purview. Of the security workers lost during the pandemic, 10% to 30% were never replaced.

● (1030)

Surely a room full of people, many of whom use airports on a regular basis, would show an ounce of humility and listen, instead of doubling down on outdated practices and more outdated talking points.

The Ottawa airport alone needs 350 staff to operate properly. Right now, it has 172 who are fully trained and cleared. That is less than 50%. In every sense of the word, that is a failure, and we saw it coming.

Canadians should know that CATSA is a user-pay model. That means those who use it actually pay for it. It is not a run-of-the-mill government agency. It should be the best.

Business of Supply

The government runs a profit off travellers. What are travellers buying with their money? They are buying longer lineups, some of the most archaic screening in the western world, and missed flights. Airlines in Canada are fined for delays and poor service, but what is the government's liability when it is responsible?

Even the president of PHAC told carriers and airports it would remove testing from airports in January. It is May. Instead, the government launched a new strategy consultation this week. I cannot think of a more worthless remedy in this environment: A government that cannot provide services that have already been paid for by the traveller is going to develop a strategy for people it has punished and blamed already.

The workers who have not been fired yet are subject to this incompetence as well. They are being forced to keep families on airplanes in 30° weather. There is more outrage when a dog is found locked in a car in the summertime in a Costco parking lot.

Why will the Liberals not listen? We know they have problems accepting diversity of thought and differing viewpoints, but are they seriously vindictive enough that they will continue to allow our economy to suffer, just to prove a point?

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, they are laughing at this. We are hearing laughter on the other side of the House at the suffering of Canadians.

The people's voices this party brings forward in this House each day might seem like strangers to the people laughing on the opposite side of this House. They are not strangers.

Some of the hon. members forget that those they have othered, the ones they continue to actively disparage and look down upon, are people too. They are parents and grandparents and they are nurses and tradespeople. They are everyday Canadians whom we know in our communities. They have missed birthdays, weddings, anniversaries and funerals. They are hurting. Now the ideological crusade on them has crossed into affecting everyone else. It is affecting everyone who did everything they were asked to do throughout this pandemic.

The vaccine mandates imposed by the federal government do not just restrict travel. They restrict our workforce.

The Minister of Transport acknowledged that the issues we are seeing at airports would not be solved immediately. Some say those delays and long lines could last until Christmas or later.

We are not saying removing the restrictions is a magic bullet. It is not going to solve all of the problems overnight, but surely airlines, associations, unions, chambers of commerce, businesses and now doctors cannot all be wrong that these restrictions are causing delays. We owe it to them to support them after two years of closures and lockdowns in this country.

We owe it to our constituents to listen to their concerns. We owe it to the millions of struggling Canadians who just want to see their economy reopen and start getting real paycheques again. We owe it to travellers to allow them to finally travel quickly and easily. We

owe it to everyone in this country and everybody coming to this country.

Surely the government trusts Canadians enough to allow them to travel freely. Surely members in this place want to see our economy back on track. Surely they want to support our tourism sector and our small businesses. Therefore, surely they will vote with our party to lift the mandates, end the restrictions and immediately revert to prepandemic rules and service levels for travel. Our economy depends on it.

• (1035)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I regret this opposition day motion has been overshadowed by recent events within the Conservative Party, but I did find it very interesting that the member used words like Liberals do not understand the “diversity of thought”. She also said the government likes to “punish those who do not agree” with it. I find that very interesting, given the news that the member for Abbotsford was removed from his critic portfolio as a result of his diversity of thought and that diversity of thought being counter to that of the member for Carleton.

I am wondering if the member would like to comment on the fact that diversity of thought and punishing those who do not agree with them is alive and well within the Conservative Party, as we witnessed just last night with the member for Abbotsford being removed from his critic position for disagreeing with the Conservative leadership.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, I am actually sad to answer this question, because I would hope that the member opposite would have a question related to what we are speaking about today and related to the punishment that the government has imposed on over four million Canadians who still cannot get into an airplane. There are 4,000 tests happening at an airport all day, and it is happening only in Canada.

I would hope that in the future, the member opposite would have a question that relates to something that is happening in the House today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

The motion states that “current restrictions have been cited...as ineffective”. The science, however, says something completely different.

This morning, the papers were reporting that Canada's third-dose vaccination rate ranks second last among G7 countries. Our vaccination rate is apparently 54.3%.

What is my colleague's response to that?

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member to look at everywhere else in the world. I would ask him to ask himself why the science is actually different in this country and whether mandates have increased vaccination on the third dose. The answer is, not really.

We have heard from public health experts and doctors who have said that these mandates do not work. We have heard from the travel industry, which said they are bottlenecking our airports. We have heard from nobody that these restrictions are working.

I would hope that the member opposite watched the Edmonton Oilers play the Calgary Flames last night with over 20,000 in an arena, unvaxxed and unmasked because it did not matter, or that he goes outside of this place, takes off his mask and goes to any restaurant. The science does not make sense. The science cannot be one thing here and one thing there, and Canadians ought to know that.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there was a lot in my hon. colleague's speech that I agree with, and she made some excellent points.

However, she, too, was at the transport committee when we heard from the Canadian Airports Council that the number one factor contributing to delays at the airport is the staffing issue. Removing all of the pandemic measures and pandemic rules is not going to address the massive staffing shortage.

Why did she not include a proposed solution to the staffing crisis in this motion?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the member's interventions and I like the work that we do together on the transport committee. We did speak about the labour shortages, and it is a very real issue in airports. One of the ways we can solve that is to bring back all of the people that the government fired because of the federal vaccine mandates. We heard from witnesses in the committee that there are people out there waiting to work. That is a solution to the labour shortage.

• (1040)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like my hon. colleague's opinion, because, from a public health standpoint, vaccines should provide sterilizing immunity, and these shots do not. They do not stop transmission. From a public health standpoint, vaccine mandates make scientific sense only if they stop the transmission.

The Prime Minister was in Moncton in July 2021, with the members for Fredericton, Beauséjour and Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe. He basically said that one can still pass on the virus if one is fully vaccinated. He knew almost a year ago that this still could be passed on.

Does my colleague think that the Prime Minister and the Liberal government should have any public discourse, or is there anything the House can do if they are not giving the true facts to the Canadian people as regards the validity of these vaccine mandates?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, what I do know is that the government has not shared any data. We have asked it consistently

to table any of that data and public health advice. What we know is that the Prime Minister wears a mask in the House and in parts of this precinct, but he does not wear one in Ukraine.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I salute my colleague, who does incredible work on her transport file. She speaks on behalf of thousands of Canadian travellers who are asking themselves a lot of questions about why the federal government truly wants to maintain the health measures in airports and at land borders. We have a lot of questions.

We have been asking for evidence and documentation from the beginning and have been calling on the Minister of Health to table any advice in the House that he has received telling him to maintain the restrictions. We are unfortunately not hearing anything from the government, which has no justification for maintaining the many health measures that are no longer required here in Canada. The government is not listening to experts, who are saying that we must now start thinking about transitioning back to prepandemic times.

Like always, the Prime Minister and his government are doing nothing, which is the main reason our airports have been plunged into chaos—not to mention the chaos with immigration services at Service Canada and with every single public service that the Liberal government has its hand in. The government cannot deliver.

What we have seen at airports in recent days and weeks is particularly concerning: long delays, endless lineups, never-ending processing delays, bottlenecks and missed flights. People are missing their flights while others have to wait for hours on an aircraft before being able to disembark. That is the new reality. If we let the Liberals continue, this will unfortunately be the new Liberal standard at Canadian airports.

This spring, Toronto's Pearson Airport even advised passengers departing for other countries to arrive a minimum of three hours before their flight to make sure they do not miss it. For some travellers, that is longer than the duration of the flight itself. That is completely unacceptable, but that is what the government has unfortunately brought us to.

I remind members, as did my colleague, that for months, the United States and the main allies of the European Union have been gradually eliminating the restrictive health measures imposed on passengers. They are even talking about eliminating the requirement to wear a mask during flights and in airports, among other things. The situation is evolving everywhere else, but, here, in Canada, we remain attached to measures that the government was late in implementing at the start, and we should remember that. In fact, when the time came to protect people, the government was slow to act.

Now, however, the time has come to realize that the measures adopted, such as vaccination—which had a lot of uptake—and mask wearing have had the desired effect and we have begun another stage. However, the government is not moving forward. It is sitting back, to put it mildly, and prefers to wait for everything to sort itself out, just like the budgets. The Prime Minister has previously stated that the budgets would balance themselves.

However, the pandemic is not going to resolve itself, and people's freedom to resume their activities and the life they lived before the pandemic will not return by itself either.

Tourists arriving in Canada, foreigners and business people are extremely disappointed when they arrive in our country and have to face extreme delays at the airports because of the government's inaction. Then there is the infamous ArriveCAN application, which asks them to answer personal public health questions and complicates their arrival.

On that topic, let me tell you about something that happened in my riding, not at an airport. These situations happen to real people who want to travel. My riding, Mégantic—L'Érable, borders the United States and includes a border crossing.

● (1045)

A man from Lac-Mégantic came to our office to get the infamous ArriveCAN receipt that border officers at the Woburn crossing asked him to obtain. However, he did not have his passport with him and was forced to come back to the office, the first unnecessary step.

Mr. Paré, who is 85 and does not have a smart phone or a computer at home, also had to come to our office. We had to open an account for him and fill out the ArriveCAN papers so that he could travel from one side of the border to the other. If we had not helped him out, he would not have been able to go see his relative, who lives 15 or 20 minutes away on the other side of the border. That is the reality. At 85, will he have to buy a computer and a smart phone? No, he will not. He came back to our office to get his paperwork filled out to be able to cross the border again. That is the reality.

The government is not considering that reality, what Canadians have to go through. It is unacceptable how disconnected this government is from reality. Their many measures, now unnecessary, are causing delays and inconvenience to Canadians, particularly at airports. Who is affected by them and who is suffering? Travellers, tourists, business people, that is who. Plus, it is easy to forget, but the people working at airports have to endure the wrath and anger of the public, of everyone who is kept waiting. They have to enforce the rules that this government is imposing, even though they know full well this should not be the case. That is the reality.

As we know, the last two years have been very hard on the airline and tourism industries. Both have suffered greatly from the pandemic as they were among the hardest hit. For the past two years, my Conservative colleagues and I have been staunch defenders of these two sectors that are vital to our economy, especially because they are also vital to Canada's economic recovery.

Business of Supply

Unfortunately, once again, the Liberals seem to be completely blind to this reality and to all the damage they are doing now, which will have long-term consequences. The Liberals, with their harmful policies and their usual who-cares attitude, are a real threat to the Canadian tourism industry. Something has to be done before this Liberal government completely destroys Canada's reputation as an international tourism destination of choice and as an investment destination for business people.

In 2019 and 2020, before the pandemic, it took about 15 to 30 seconds for a Canada border services officer to process an international passenger on arrival. Now, health questions and COVID-19 measures have increased to the point that processing takes two to four times longer. Sometimes it can take as long as two minutes. If we multiply two minutes by thousands of people, that makes for endless wait times and people complaining and dreading having to travel by plane.

Instead of accepting full responsibility for this, the Minister of Transport chose to blame delays at various entry points on out-of-practice travellers. That is how the Liberals always operate. When they do not have an answer or a solution, they find someone else to blame. This time, they are pointing the finger at travellers, the people receiving services from this government.

I hope members of the House will send a clear message to the Liberal government that enough is enough. We have to do what other countries around the world are doing. Those countries have experts and scientists too, and they understand that we need to get back to a more normal prepandemic period for everyone. I encourage all my colleagues to vote in favour of this motion. In particular, I encourage the Liberal government to show us why this motion should not be adopted. The Liberals will not be able to do that because they like chaos and they like not being able to deliver services.

● (1050)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his speech.

I also want to share some information with Canadians who may be watching us right now regarding the ArriveCAN app. Up to 72 hours before arriving in Canada, or before making a short trip outside of Canada, travellers can log on to ArriveCAN from a computer to obtain a receipt, print it out and have it on hand while travelling. Individuals may also submit travel information on behalf of someone else.

I find it remarkable that many members of the Conservative party supported the anti-vax protesters who blocked critical infrastructure earlier this year, slowed down our national supply chain and occupied downtown Ottawa for weeks. The protesters made life miserable for residents and caused significant economic damage to local businesses. It is also worth noting that most of his party's leadership candidates are now competing with each other to pander to these blockaders and their supporters.

Business of Supply

Is it not the case that the Conservatives are quite selective when it comes to their concerns about economic damage? Will the member clearly denounce the protesters who caused so much economic harm earlier this year?

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to point out that the faster members ask their questions, the faster we will get the answer. Everyone wants to take part in the discussion.

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, the message just delivered by the Liberal member was picked up and paid for by the Liberal government's department of misinformation. That is the reality.

As I said in my speech, I have a constituent in my riding who is 85 years old and does not have a smart phone or a computer. The parliamentary secretary just told us that the gentleman can use his computer to get his receipt up to 72 hours before travelling. He does not have a computer, and he cannot do that.

Instead of answering the question, trying to find a solution and responding to Canadians, the Liberal government continues spreading misinformation and obfuscating. I understand why: The Liberals are unable to answer us when we simply ask them to give us any scientific evidence that justifies maintaining mandatory health measures at the border. They are unable to name the experts who have recommended that these measures remain mandatory. We cannot get an answer.

Meanwhile, the Liberal government's department of misinformation is working overtime right now. I think it is the only thing that is more or less working on the Liberal side.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

We agree with several aspects of his analysis. However, when talking about a pandemic that caused many deaths, we must be responsible. Both sides must avoid politicizing—in the least noble sense of the word—a debate like this one.

I sat with my colleague on the Standing Committee on Health. Earlier, he said that we should go back to the way things were before the pandemic, but I would like to qualify that statement. We know that the world's population is far from fully vaccinated. As long as vaccination rates are low and people are travelling, there is the potential for a variant that could completely compromise the benefits of vaccines, particularly in terms of the possibility of developing a severe form of the illness. I am sure my colleague agrees with me on this. In any case, I hope he will mention that.

The tourism industry's GDP has dropped 50%. This is serious. We have been asking, but the government has yet to table a plan to lift the health measures to give some predictability to the tourism and airline industries and to the travelling public. How does my colleague explain that?

• (1055)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable has 30 seconds to answer the question.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would like to take at least as much time as my hon. colleague took when he asked his question, which was fairly long and very specific.

My colleague from Montcalm and I were both members of the Standing Committee on Health. He is right about one thing, but I do not share his concerns about the other. We have to be able to take all the recommendations and see how we can learn to live with the pandemic. I think that is the goal when we talk about getting back to a prepandemic normal. We have to learn to live with the pandemic. Unfortunately, as my colleague said, and I fully agree with him, the government does not seem to have a plan for learning to live with the pandemic. What criteria is it using?

We know the government said that 75% of the population would have to be vaccinated for herd immunity. Then they raised that number to 80% and then they raised it to some unknown point because there was no threshold. There was no benchmark.

I just have one little thing to add. If the government were less focused on misinformation and more focused on transparency, we would have a plan to get back to normal and an explanation for why airport public health measures are still in place. Unfortunately, the government does not care about that. It is holding fast to its ideological ideas.

Mr. Speaker, I can see that you are standing to cut me off—

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: I want to get this one right off. The shorter the questions are, the shorter the answers are and the more people who can participate. I see two members standing who are wanting to ask a question, but we are completely out of time.

There are a number of members who would like to ask questions, so let us try to do our best to make sure that everybody can participate in this great conversation.

[*Translation*]

Resuming debate. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Thornhill for having raised this important question, which I know is a concern for many Canadian travellers.

I will begin by saying that I understand and share their frustration. I myself am a traveller, and I have experienced delays at the airport. I know it can be aggravating. I also know that airport delays have an economic cost and that they do not help the recovery of our airline and tourism sectors, which are major economic drivers for our country. I also recognize that all Canadians, myself included, are tired of the COVID-19 protocols and hope to return to a prepandemic normal.

Business of Supply

Since the vast majority of Canadians are vaccinated, and since we have observed an improvement in the situation in our hospitals and communities, it is understandable that many Canadians are increasingly eager to see the remaining public health measures relaxed so they can return to their prepandemic lives. COVID-19 fatigue is a real thing and a perfectly normal instinct. Like many of my colleagues in the House and many Canadians from coast to coast to coast, I do not want these measures to stay in place any longer than necessary.

[English]

I hear every day from Canadians who are angry that some mandates remain in place. I am sure we all do. Like them, I would like to put this long ordeal behind us, and yet COVID is not behind us. It is very much still in our midst. One lesson that many Canadians learned over the course of this pandemic was the danger of relaxing public health measures prematurely. Over and over, we saw this play out in different jurisdictions across the country and around the world.

Policy-makers, eager to deliver a return to normal to their constituents, eased measures prematurely only to be faced with a new variant: a new wave of disease that started filling up ICU wards again. It was overwhelming our health sector and prompting new, sometimes stricter, lockdowns. This back-and-forth pattern was very damaging for our economy, as it made it difficult for businesses to make future plans and to retain workers and customers. What is more, it sapped hope and exhausted Canadians.

Luckily, the remarkably quick development and deployment of very effective vaccines has greatly improved the outlook we currently face. However, we should remember the hard-fought lessons we learned. Countries such as Canada may have successfully vaccinated much of their populations, but lower-income countries have not had the same access to vaccines, which is providing opportunities for new variants to emerge. While we know much more about COVID than we did a couple of years ago, much remains unknown about aspects of the virus, such as long COVID.

● (1100)

[Translation]

Given these unknowns, let us remember the benefits of a cautious approach. That has been the approach taken in Canada in general, and by this government in particular. By deploying a series of public health measures, including in the airline sector, we were relatively successful in protecting Canadians' lives and health.

COVID-19 claimed the lives of approximately 40,000 Canadians. That is tragic, but let us compare our situation with that of our neighbours to the south, where more than a million Americans died of COVID-19. Even if we take the different populations into account, the difference is staggering. According to the latest estimates published by Our World in Data, the United States suffered three times more deaths per million people than Canada.

Lastly, here is the most important yardstick: Although we need to take into account the inconveniences and economic disruptions caused by airport delays and find solutions to minimize these impacts, we also need to weigh them against the lives of Canadians, our grandparents, our spouses, our children and our friends.

[English]

Let me turn now from the big picture to the more specific topic raised by the opposition motion today dealing with airport delays.

First, let me say that Canada is not alone in seeing such delays. There are, in fact, reports from all over the world of similar delays. They are not always caused by the same factors. Sometimes there are shortages of baggage handlers, sometimes of border agents and sometimes of security screeners, and sometimes large numbers of flights are cancelled unexpectedly. It all amounts to passengers stuck in long lines, some of whom miss their flights and all of whom experience frustration and stress.

For example, in April, The New York Times wrote, per The Latch, that “the post-pandemic return to travel has simply swamped unprepared airlines”. The Latch continued:

[They] have been unable to hire adequate staff due to the financial pressures brought about during lockdowns. The big picture is that airlines simply didn't predict people would be travelling again in such huge numbers so soon. Layoffs or resignations, in the tens of thousands across the global industry, have just not been made up for.

Similarly, on May 5, Euronews reported that:

Although air travel is still below 2019 levels, traffic peaks are in fact higher than pre-pandemic levels at many larger airports.

“Coping with this sudden increase and concentration of air traffic has been challenging for airports and their operational partners—in particular ground handlers,” says the joint statement from [Airports Council International] Europe....

“This has resulted in an increase in flight delays and cancellations, and more generally a degraded passenger experience at many airports.”

Along the same lines, NCA NewsWire in Australia reported this on May 9:

Sydney airport has once again descended into chaos as staff shortages continue to create massive queues due to closed security gates.

Both international and domestic terminals are impacted by the delays forcing thousands of passengers to wait in queues.

Many have taken to social media to vent their frustration at the travel chaos as the airport enters its third month since international borders reopened and increased the number flights moving in and out of the major airport.

The article also notes, “A spokesman for Sydney Airport predicted at the time that major delays would run through the school holidays, peaking over Easter and Anzac Day with passenger levels close to 90 per cent pre-pandemic.”

Business of Supply

This may sound familiar to consumers of Canadian news over the last couple of weeks. The fact that other countries are also experiencing similar problems does not make things any less frustrating for Canadian travellers. However, it does provide some necessary context in the face of commentators who claim that we have never seen the chaos we are experiencing at Canadian airports currently or that Canada's reputation will be irreparably harmed.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

With a view to providing the necessary context, let me explain why there are delays at Canadian airports. The simplest and most common explanation is that the delays are caused by a shortage of CATSA screening officers. However, there are other factors that also come into play.

CATSA is indeed having difficulty rehiring staff in pre-pandemic numbers. However, as Minister Alghabra recently pointed out, CATSA's staffing levels have returned to approximately 90%, while the travel volume has returned to only about 70% of pre-pandemic levels. It is more than a simple labour shortage issue.

What appears to be happening is that the airlines are providing less accurate information about anticipated passenger volumes, and in a less timely manner. It is therefore difficult for CATSA managers to properly plan staffing levels. I am not saying that it is the airlines' fault. It is not surprising that they are finding it hard to predict how fast the number of passengers will increase and to plan the number of flights accordingly. This highlights the need for better communication between the various stakeholders in the airline sector, and that is exactly what the minister and Transport Canada are working on. I will get into more detail shortly.

[*English*]

Another example of the complexity of the problem is that U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers are also having problems rehiring staff to pre-pandemic levels. This sometimes results in U.S. officials asking CATSA screeners to slow down or pause the security screening of travellers. CBSA is also experiencing similar staffing issues, resulting in longer than usual lines for travellers arriving from international destinations.

In fact, worker shortages being experienced all across airports, the air sector and the labour market more broadly are affecting how efficiently our airports work. For example, some CATSA employees who were laid off during the pandemic have since been hired by airport subcontractors as baggage handlers or in other roles at airports. Again, I offer this to provide necessary context so that Canadians can understand what is behind some of the delays at our airports.

My friends on the opposition side will oversimplify things and suggest that it is only public health measures that are slowing down air travellers and clogging our airports, but that is simply not the case.

[*Translation*]

They are also unaware of the advantages of the measures still in place. For example, random testing in airports helps us detect in a timely manner new variants that might be entering the country and

to trace their origins. This will not prevent variants from entering Canada, but it will provide invaluable data and help our health care sector prepare for any changes. It could help slow the spread of new variants and save us precious time. Contrary to what some have suggested, we cannot get the same result simply by analyzing the general population's wastewater.

Other measures such as mandatory vaccination, ArriveCAN and mask wearing provide travellers and airline workers with additional layers of protection, while offering Canadian travellers peace of mind, since they know they are travelling with other people who have chosen to be vaccinated. Vaccination is the best protection against the most serious consequences of COVID-19.

• (1110)

[*English*]

My Conservative colleague from Thornhill has selectively chosen to quote from testimony heard from business groups, but she neglects to mention that when asked at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities whether they would disregard advice from public health officials to maintain certain public health measures, they demurred, acknowledging they were not public health experts. I think this is important for Canadians to retain. They should weigh this when considering calls to immediately dismantle public health protections and should consider who is proposing such a step and what that person's qualifications are.

This also reminds me to consider another source: the Conservative Party of Canada itself. I think it is important for Canadians to remember this is the same party whose former leader allowed unvaccinated candidates to go into seniors' homes during the most recent federal election. It is a party that had in its ranks an MP who presented a petition calling on the government to suspend the use of all COVID-19 vaccines.

Another Conservative member claimed his own research showed that people were "13 times more likely to die from the delta variant if [they] were double vaccinated than if [they] were unvaccinated." Needless to say, this was completely false.

The Conservative member for Sarnia—Lambton was ultimately forced to apologize after minimizing the risks of COVID by comparing it to polio, a disease that at its peak in 1953 claimed the lives of 500 Canadians. Let us remember we are now tragically at over 40,000 lives lost due to COVID.

The Conservative leader at the time remarked about these comments, stating:

There's a big difference between advocating for your constituents who may need reasonable accommodation and creating confusion about public health measures. It's a great example of why members of Parliament of all stripes should let the professionals, let the public health officials, let the physicians answer questions about the efficacy of vaccines.

Business of Supply

I agree. Let us let our public health experts determine the most appropriate time to phase out the remaining public health measures at our airports.

[*Translation*]

With this essential reminder out of the way, I will now address what Minister Alghabra and our government are doing to help our airports and Canadian travellers.

For now, I will leave aside the many billions of dollars our government has provided to help support the airline sector during the pandemic, including some \$1.4 billion earmarked exclusively for airports under the airport critical infrastructure program, the airport relief fund, the enhanced airports capital assistance program, the rent relief for airport authorities, and broader initiatives from which airports benefited, such as the Canada emergency wage subsidy.

[*English*]

As I mentioned earlier in my speech, at first glance, many of the problems currently being experienced in our airports seem to stem from more than a simple shortage of security screeners. The larger problem seems to be that different parts of the system are not communicating effectively with one another and not working together to better plan for increased passenger volumes as the air sector recovers.

As I have mentioned throughout, we recognize the impact that wait times at some Canadian airports are having on travellers and we are working with our partners to take action and find solutions. CATSA is working to increase the number of screening officers at passenger screening checkpoints. There are currently approximately 400 new screening officers in different phases of their training across the country.

Last week, Minister Alghabra met with Mike Saunders, the CEO of CATSA, and in the previous week he met with the four major airports to hear—

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. parliamentary secretary is aware, as are all members in this place, that we refer to members of Parliament by their riding or position. That is the second time she has used the proper name of our Minister of Transport.

• (1115)

The Deputy Speaker: It is actually the third time. I was going to mention that at the end of her speech.

[*Translation*]

I want to remind the parliamentary secretary not to use members' last names.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising that important point. It is duly noted.

[*English*]

With four major airports to hear directly about what was happening on the ground and to discuss solutions, airports, airlines and

CATSA are working to make sure communication to travellers is clear so they can better anticipate processing requirements. TC, PHAC and CBSA are working with airports and air carriers to identify efficiencies that can be gained throughout the travel journey and reduce wait times upon arrival.

Our government will continue to work together with all partners to address wait times as a matter of priority. We will continue to take clear and decisive action to ensure the safety, security and resiliency of Canada's transportation system, its employees and its users while supporting economic recovery.

[*Translation*]

We will always be there for Canadians, just as we were during the pandemic. We will continue to protect public health. We will continue to take measures to help our economy recover, and we will continue to help people get from their point of departure to their destination.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: That was the first point. The second point was to make sure that we have short questions and short answers, so that everyone can participate in this discussion.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank the parliamentary secretary for reading that speech prepared for her by the PMO. It was really interesting.

The question I have for her is twofold. First, she talked about following the science and the data. Could she please give the House the data that shows these mandates are still necessary and that we cannot go back to prepandemic-level travel?

Second, does she believe that, in Canada now, it is fair that three million people cannot travel within their own country to see their family, to see their friends or to go on a vacation within Canada because of a personal health choice? Does she think that is fair and equitable treatment for all Canadians?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, vaccines are an important tool to protect Canadians and stop the spread of COVID-19. Science is clear on this matter. Vaccines are safe and effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19, as well as reducing severe cases and hospitalizations and protecting health. On this side of the House, we will always look to science to help us monitor and mitigate all unnecessary risks to the Canadian population as COVID-19 evolves and changes with the various variants.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the Liberals' management of the borders, I think we can agree that they dragged their feet a lot. They dragged their feet when it came time to close the border, and they are still dragging their feet on implementing an effective reopening plan. I would like to hear what the parliamentary secretary has to say about the government's border management, because the Auditor General issued a number of rather damning reports. They talk about a lack of testing at the borders, a lack of response to the emergence of new variants, a lack of quarantining when waves were at their peak, a lack of service in French from the companies responsible for screening, a lack of coordination with quarantine hotels, delays in providing screening test results, a shortage of staff to ensure compliance with home quarantine orders, and little or no follow-up with travellers who failed to follow quarantine orders.

I would like to hear the parliamentary secretary's comments on that. She could read the notes that her party gave her to tell us how the government is responding to that report from the Auditor General.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for that important question.

As we have said before, since the beginning of the pandemic, our government has focused on the health and safety of Canadians by following the latest science. Canada's border measures will remain flexible and adaptable, guided by science and prudence. We are currently reviewing the Auditor General's report. I have no doubt that Transport Canada and the minister will do the right thing.

• (1120)

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, numerous constituents of mine have asked me if I know when the government plans to lift the restriction on unvaccinated Canadians from accessing air travel, given the current evidence on transmission. I noticed a recent article from Dr. Zain Chagla in *The Globe and Mail*, suggesting that the current restriction makes no sense.

I understand that the mandate is under review by the government, so I wonder this. Could the parliamentary secretary indicate to the House when that review will be complete, and how the results of that review will be communicated, both to this place and to all Canadians?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, as we have said numerous times, this is an evolving situation. We follow the guidelines of public health. The emergence of the omicron variant and others was a clear reminder that the pandemic continues to evolve. That is why we continue to require vaccination to travel when departing by train, plane or cruise ship.

Again, from day one, our public health measures have been based on the science. We will continue to follow the very sound advice of our public health professionals.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with much of what the hon. member had to say, and particularly with what the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley also point-

ed out: that current delays in Canadian airports seem to be more of a staffing problem.

I am concerned that the premise of the motion before us today, and much of the debate, has been that somehow Canada is an outlier and that everybody else has stopped having restrictions. All morning, while I have been waiting for my chance to speak, I have been checking out websites to see what countries we could go to where there are no restrictions at arrival. I cannot find any countries I could visit like that. I did find Ireland, but not the vast majority: for example, Mexico, Germany, France, Italy or Morocco, and I could go on and on.

Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have a reliable list that would tell Canadians there are these countries that no longer require people to be vaccinated to visit, that no longer require any tests or documentation of any kind? There are very few. The vast majority still have roughly the same restrictions as Canada.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, ultimately, each country is responsible for the safety and security of its own people. Each country is experiencing unique factors, such as vaccine availability, as per my speech, the vaccination rate and the number of hospitalizations. Each country adjusts its measures to best fit its unique context.

I agree with the hon. member that perhaps there should be a list compiled of all the various countries and what their requirements are, because a one-stop shop to find this information would be very beneficial not only to Canadians wanting to travel, but also to everyone around the world who needs that information at a moment's notice.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague could provide her thoughts on another issue, related to the idea of what is happening around the world.

Canada is not alone in terms of labour shortages in certain sectors. In fact, there is a bit of a labour shortage today. Not only is it affecting our airports, but it is affecting other airports around the world. Could the member provide her thoughts in regard to the need for additional labour?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member states, this is a problem that is not specific or unique to Canada. There are labour shortages throughout.

There are committees looking at labour shortages. There is communication among departments and allies around the world to make sure that we are well aligned and answering the needs of the labour shortages. As we see, it is not only transportation, airports, airlines or the aviation sector in general that are plagued with these labour shortages. It is also throughout every sector we can think of.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in listening today and in responding to the member's last comments, we have countries around the world that have lifted all restrictions, including the U.K., the U.S., Sweden, Norway and Mexico.

Business of Supply

I am going to ask the parliamentary secretary a specific question. What specific advice are we getting from our health experts that is allowing Canada to make the decision to continue restrictions? What is the specific advice we are getting?

• (1125)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate that ultimately each country is responsible for the safety and security of its own people. They have their own public health experts that provide them with information. We have our own public health professionals who are world-renowned scientists and researchers. We take guidance from our public health professionals, and we will continue to do so.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague would agree that the Conservative Party always wants everything a little too quickly. We have seen this with the last few motions the Conservatives have moved during their opposition days, calling for all health measures to be lifted immediately. It is the same thing today.

Could some sort of compromise be reached, if the government were to submit a plan to gradually lift these measures? Would my colleague agree to that? We still have not seen a plan for a gradual lifting of health measures, and I think the public deserves to see one.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for this important question. Our government is always ready to work with all parties in the House to come up with solutions and reach compromises. We are always ready and willing to work together.

I would therefore invite my colleague to contact me or Transport Canada.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will start by saying that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Jonquière.

I am grateful for the opportunity to address this subject today. I was very happy to see the hon. member for Thornhill's motion. There is a lot of talk in the media and from our constituents about wait times for passports and delays at the airport. People pretty much everywhere, including in my riding, are eager to get back to normal. The pandemic is winding down, and people want to start travelling and visiting sun destinations again after two difficult years.

That is why I think this is an important matter. Moreover, we have been in a pandemic for more than two years now. That has forced governments to implement measures that may have curtailed our freedoms, but that were needed because they were there to protect the health of the population.

The Conservative Party has always opposed these measures. It has constantly tried to limit their scope. We saw this with the many questions they have asked in the House since the beginning of the 44th Parliament, as well as with the opposition days they devoted to the issue, when they demanded the immediate lifting of all measures. They did not adopt a gradual approach. They really wanted to lift all measures immediately.

Although it is true that the Conservatives were pandering to libertarians on this matter, it is also true that the Liberals also did not hesitate to politicize the issue and to use unvaccinated people for political purposes. We saw this in the last election campaign. The government suddenly announced a vaccination requirement for all federal employees, while still refusing to present a plan for lifting the health measures. At every turn, the two parties accused each other of dividing the population, on the one hand with health measures, and on the other with disinformation. I think that it is crucial to avoid politicizing this issue. As members of the Bloc Québécois have said many times, the only thing we should do in this situation is listen to the science. We are not the experts. We must listen to the public health experts.

As I mentioned earlier, the member's motion addresses problems at airports. Just this past Monday, the Canadian Press reported long lineups at airports and even said that it was taking four times longer to process incoming passengers than it had before the pandemic. It seems likely that the more travellers there are, the worse the problem will get. The Conservative Party is therefore asking the government to immediately revert to prepandemic travel rules and service levels. According to the Conservatives, the problem is the restrictions, the mandates they have been condemning for months. Their solution is to lift them all.

In my opinion, the Conservative Party is misguided in laying all the blame for airport wait times on the COVID-19 restrictions, when that is not necessarily the case. Just yesterday, the Customs and Immigration Union publicly called on the Minister of Public Safety and the Canada Border Services Agency to increase the number of border officers assigned to passenger operations at Canadian airports, in order to alleviate the pressure on both airport staff and passengers. Union president Mark Weber said that there are simply not enough officers.

These delays are a source of frustration for everyone, but the union's solution is to bring in more officers, not to get rid of measures that are designed to keep the public and travellers healthy. The union said that this situation was foreseeable, noting, "Over the past decade, the number of officers assigned to passenger operations has decreased dramatically". At present, at Toronto's Pearson International Airport, it is estimated that fewer than 300 officers are active in the passenger operations section, which is nearly half of the number needed to process inbound travellers in a timely manner. This is not unique to Toronto, either, with both Vancouver and Montreal facing similar issues.

• (1130)

One sentence caught my attention in the press release I read this morning. To quote Mr. Weber:

Business of Supply

The reality is that even with the eventual lifting of current public health measures, significant delays will likely persist, not only due to the critical shortage of officers in most border operations across the country, but also due to an over-reliance on inefficient technologies.

Mr. Weber said that an officer can process a traveller twice as fast as the automated primary inspection kiosks. Essentially, he attributes the excessive delays at the airports to the staffing shortage and the inefficient technology.

At the end of the day, these delays should come as no surprise. They were foreseeable. Mr. Weber says that we could have seen them coming for the past 10 years, having watched the situation deteriorate. What he is asking the Minister of Public Safety and the Canada Border Services Agency to do is to add more staff.

We are seeing the same issue in almost every domain. I met with representatives of the National Police Federation last week who told me the same thing: The police is short on human resources, staff and security officers, including at the borders and at airports. Lifting the health measures will not necessarily make the lines shorter. There needs to be more people on the job.

I would like to come back to paragraph (iii) of the member for Thornhill's motion, which states that several countries "have moved to lift COVID-19 restrictions at airports and other points of entry". That may be true, but only partially. Some countries have gone ahead and lifted all restrictions, but most still have some restrictions in place, particularly when it comes to people who are unvaccinated. For instance, the United Kingdom and Ireland have lifted most of their measures. However, in France, only fully vaccinated travellers can arrive in the country without having to be tested, and those without proof of vaccination must show a negative test upon arrival. In the U.S., our biggest partner, travellers must be fully vaccinated in order to enter the country. It is the same in Spain.

No matter what standard of comparison we use, I think that it is reasonable to say that so far, Canada has followed the science and public health advice on what should be done to protect the public. However, if anyone asked me whether the government has managed the borders properly since the start of the pandemic, I would instantly answer no.

I refer to what my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue said about the Auditor General's comments on border management over the last 27 months. There is a pretty long list of things that did not go well: a lack of border testing; a failure to respond properly to emerging new variants; a lack of quarantines during peak waves; a lack of service in French from testing companies; a lack of coordination with hotels to provide accommodation for quarantining travellers, and members will recall that the chaotic quarantine situation at hotels made the headlines several times; delays in getting test results, as many people took a test and sent it in, but never got the result, leaving them unsure about their status; no follow-up for travellers who complied with their quarantine; and a lack of staff to enforce the requirement to quarantine at home.

I am not even going to delve into the passport saga because I will run out of time. Passport Canada is in total chaos right now. Call volumes have doubled or tripled because, as I said, people are itching to travel again. They realize that their passport expired and want it renewed quickly, but that is impossible because there is not

enough staff. The fact that the government decided to keep these offices shut for so long, while public servants worked from home as a precaution, may also explain the current situation. In some cases, the government waited until May 17 to call employees back to work to open service points. This could have happened more quickly, considering that it has been demonstrated that certain businesses and service points could provide services to the public without endangering the workers. This government's failure to be proactive could very well explain this whole thing.

Unfortunately, we are experiencing a labour shortage, which is why I do not fully agree with all the points raised in the Conservative Party's motion.

As I said a little earlier when I asked the parliamentary secretary a question, I think we could work out a compromise instead of demanding the immediate lifting of all health measures, even if it is stressful to arrive at the airport and have to wait, and even if we are fed up with all that. We were very happy in Quebec when the mask mandate was lifted last week. I think it is still important to listen to and respect what public health experts are telling us.

I believe that the government could come up with a plan for gradually lifting the health measures. The Bloc Québécois will therefore be moving an amendment to the member for Thornhill's motion to ensure that we can find common ground.

• (1135)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder what my colleague tells her community when she is asked why the health measures at Canada's airports are different from those in other countries.

Is she aware of specific government health advice suggesting that the health measures are still effective?

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I think it is difficult to make comparisons, even within Canada. The provinces did not all have the same measures in place. Quebec was the last to lift the mask mandate. I think that it really listened to Quebecers, while monitoring the number of cases and the number of deaths. Although these numbers are dropping, they are still high.

If we had lifted the mask mandate and other measures too quickly, we might have faced another wave. That was the case in recent months; each time we thought we saw the light at the end of the tunnel, another wave hit. I think we need to listen to what public health has to say. To a certain extent, that is what the government did. Is an update needed? Yes, absolutely. I think that we have reached that point. However, that is different from saying we need to lift all measures right now. I think it is a bit too soon, despite the fact that, as I mentioned, we are all tired of the measures.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would have loved to hear the member for Thornhill answer the question the member concluded her speech with, which was about whether or not the Conservatives are open to the idea of gradually phasing in some kind of plan.

I am wondering if my colleague from the Bloc can comment on that. If such a plan were to be developed, would she expect it to be done in close consultation with public health officials so that it comes from a place of science and proper data and they inform the concept she is recommending?

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I think it is absolutely necessary to do that, not only in consultation with the experts, but also by listening to what the experts have to say. That is what we have done in recent months.

I will take the liberty of comparing Canada's management with Quebec's. The Quebec government held almost daily press conferences to explain the situation, the next steps and the reasons why some measures needed to remain in place, while providing assurance that the situation could gradually get better. I saw less of that at the federal level. There is a lot of uncertainty among the public, and people keep asking for clear information.

We still witnessed a wave of solidarity: 83% of Quebecers are vaccinated, compared to approximately 82% of Canadians. These are great numbers relative to other countries. People made the effort, and what the government owes them in return is a bit of transparency and a long-term vision. It would be nice to give the public that.

• (1140)

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked a bit about transparency and sharing information. Just recently, I asked the parliamentary secretary a pretty straightforward question about a review that is under way. I asked when that review will be completed and how the information from that review will be shared with the Canadian public. She answered with the same old mantra that had nothing to do with the question.

Does the hon. member agree with me that this sort of mantra-based public policy actually erodes public trust at a time when we need to be strengthening it more than ever?

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I think that we need to set an example and show solidarity as elected members. We can sympathize with our constituents, tell them we understand the problems they face and that we, too, are tired of it all.

Spreading information that is not necessarily wrong but that is completely different on one side and the other divides people or, in any case, certainly does not unite them. It might not be the best way to handle things.

If we had a somewhat less partisan approach based on the opinion of public health experts, I think it would benefit everyone.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by telling my colleague from Thornhill that I think she is a very dynamic person and that I think highly of her. I hope she will not take offence at the comments I am about to make.

On the last Bloc opposition day, my Conservative colleagues talked a lot about the relevance of our motion, which had to do with prayer. They wondered why we had raised that subject at a time when no one was talking about prayer and when, in their opinion, we should have been talking about inflation and gas prices.

I am therefore surprised that my Conservative colleagues have not put forward any motions on gas prices or inflation on their last two opposition days. I do not hold it against them, but I would like to do the same for them. I may not talk about the relevance of their motion, but I would like to talk about their intent. What is my Conservative colleagues' intention? What is motivating them today to call on the government to immediately revert to pre-pandemic rules and service levels for travel?

First, I believe that, before we can immediately revert to pre-pandemic rules, we must necessarily rely on public health guidance. Here, I would like to make a first distinction. On the one hand, there is the science and public health objectives, which involve establishing truths that are sometimes difficult to establish, especially during a pandemic. On the other hand, there is political partisanship or the desire to promote a political ideology, which often involves advancing a political agenda.

In my view, the purpose of the motion before us today is to advance the political agenda of the Conservatives rather than really determining whether the public health situation permits a full reopening and the lifting of certain measures.

I do not want to hurt the feelings of my Conservative friends, because, after all, I am a caring person. That said, the reason why I am talking about the Conservative political agenda is because I think that there is a phenomenon that is plaguing my Conservatives colleagues, and that is populism. There seems to be a form of populism embedded in Conservative Party rhetoric, and the proof of that is in the favourite topics of the member for Carleton, whom I admire. In the cut and thrust of debate, the member for Carleton is exciting and interesting, and we want to hear him, but, unfortunately, the issues that he brings up often relate to some form of populism. I am thinking of all his speeches about the need to take back control of our lives. I will come back to that later.

I do not know what other people are going through, but I for one have not lost control of my life. I may have lost control of my weight, but sooner or later I will be able to get that back under control. However, I have not lost control of my life.

Business of Supply

I am also thinking of that word “justinflation” that the member for Carleton is always mentioning, and, of course, his rhetoric about freedom. Shouting “freedom” four or five times does not necessarily imply an understanding of that concept. I could refer to some concepts of freedom—

• (1145)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I very much enjoy the speech that is being given, so I regret to interrupt, but the member did refer to a term that, at least in English, you have ruled to be out of order, and that is using the Prime Minister's name in conjunction with the word “inflation”. At least, through the translation, it came across in the way it is regularly used.

Perhaps the member could rephrase that.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: I believe we have already said a few times that that word is not allowed in the House.

The hon. member for Jonquière may continue.

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, that was a judicious intervention. I apologize for offending my colleague. It is an unflattering play on the word inflation and the Prime Minister's name that I feel conveys that populism.

Before I go on, I would like to define the word “populism”. Generally speaking, it is a style of politics that divides by attempting to simplify issues and amplify antagonism. It is us versus them. In this particular case, there are travellers on one side and the government on the other. A simplistic interpretation is that the government is preventing travellers from moving freely and that all it has to do is change the rules to solve the problem. That is simplistic because we know this is a public health issue.

When we talk about populism, we can also say that we are talking about personalized speech and behaviour that relies on rhetoric that combines utopia and demagoguery. In an ideal world, we are not affected by the pandemic. It does not affect us, and everyone can come and go as they please. If we were to take a demagogic approach, we would say that all of the border crossings can be reopened tomorrow morning, and there will be no problems. Generally, this sort of thing is done to pander to the people and pit them against the elite. The travellers, the people, the truckers, to use a term dear to my colleague from Carleton, have a view of society that is against the elite. That is populism.

Populists usually condemn institutions that do not sufficiently consider the public's aspirations. The government and public health do not care about the aspirations of the average person. Populists characterize political opponents as elites who care very little about the ideas of the people and popular common sense. Generally, when it comes to populism, the truth is in popular common sense.

That sets the table for a debate which, in my opinion, is a perfect example of what is wrong with politics today: the democracy of opinion. Those of us who know a bit about philosophy make that distinction. On the one hand there is opinion and *doxa* and, on the other, *episteme*, the sciences. Opinion is based on appearance. You

say “it appears to me that,” without having checked the facts. On the other hand, science involves a deeper reflection.

I feel that that is what today's debate is about. Conservatives are saying that it appears that the measures in airports are far too restrictive and that we are further along in the pandemic, but they have not taken care to consult a public health expert.

I said that I wanted to help my Conservative colleagues, who are poisoned by populism. I would like to cite Pierre Rosanvallon, an author I particularly like. When he speaks of populism, he says we must beware of the “threefold populist simplification”.

I would like to explain what threefold simplification means using my friend and colleague from Carleton. First, according to Pierre Rosanvallon, there is political and sociological simplification, where “the people” is a defined homogeneous subject. Considering the people a defined homogenous subject is the same as saying “Canadians think that”; for example, all Canadians think that we should immediately lift all measures in airports. It defines the people as different from the elite, in other words, from other politicians who think differently, as if the people were a monolith. On the one hand, there are truckers and unvaccinated people and, on the other, a form of elite that is completely disconnected from reality and that is hostile to freedom.

There is also, according to Pierre Rosanvallon, procedural and institutional simplification. This involves attacking institutions and politicians who think differently. I will give you an interesting example. My colleagues may have followed the debate between the hon. member for Carleton and Jean Charest. In the debate, my colleague from Carleton said to Jean Charest, “to hear you talk about law and order is a bit rich, given that your party, your [Quebec] Liberal Party, took a half-million dollars of illegal donations when you were the head of that party. The average trucker has more integrity in his pinky finger than you had in your entire...Liberal cabinet.”

• (1150)

We can see here that this is a populist discourse that attacks, in a manner of speaking, populist adversaries.

Let us take this a bit further, and consider what we heard from the hon. member for Abbotsford, who finds that what our friend from Carleton is doing on cryptocurrency is entirely inconsequential. Moreover, in response to a recent direct attack on institutions by the hon. member for Carleton and his threat to dismiss the Governor of the Bank of Canada, the hon. member for Abbotsford said, “We lose some credibility when we do this. It is fair to ask questions, to demand solutions to the skyrocketing cost of living. But we also have to respect the institutions that have been granted independence to ensure that they function apart from political interference.”

Members can then see a dynamic that reflects the lowest form of populism, which can even lead a member to call our colleague from Carleton to order.

I will conclude by addressing simplification that arises from populism. The hon. member for Carleton said in the House, “We are going to give Canadians their freedom back and make them the authors of their own stories. That is the approach we will take as Conservatives. Everybody has their story, and the story that I am hearing right now is that people feel like they are losing control of their lives.”

In my opinion, this is what is poisoning my Conservative colleagues in today’s debate: They want to make people believe that institutions are preventing them from taking control of their lives, and they are doing it to the detriment of science. It is a very dangerous game.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech, in which he took multiple shots at the concept of populism.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the fact that hundreds of sovereigntist voters in Quebec who vote for the Bloc Québécois often ask the same questions as Conservatives on issues like the vaccine mandate and airport management. There are a large number of Bloc supporters on social media who are asking the same questions Conservative voters do. Is asking questions strictly a Conservative trait, or do sovereigntists do that too?

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's thoughts were poorly expressed. A person can ask questions whether they are a member of the Bloc, a Conservative, a papist or whatever else, but those questions have to be rational. We need to listen to the science.

You can please somebody by saying that global warming does not exist and that they can keep burning gas until the end of time and nothing will ever happen to them. I have people asking me about the price of gas, but I think it is important to be honest with them and answer them in a reasonable way.

Populists do the opposite and present simple solutions to complex problems. A public health issue like COVID-19 is complex, so we cannot just propose a simple solution like lifting all restrictions. I often hear people calling for an end to the mandates, but that is completely irrational and does not follow the science. That is what I wanted to explain to my colleague.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to the theme of the opposition motion before us today and ask my colleague a more philosophical question.

In his opinion, from a scientific perspective, where does the burden of proof fall with regard to the effectiveness of public health measures? Does it fall on the government, who imposes those measures, or on those who challenge them? Does he think the burden of proof has been met?

• (1155)

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, I know that we need to listen to science, but pandemic science is not a monolith. There is not one united opinion and many experts disagree. It is up to the government to sift through the opinions, but it is certainly not required to base its decisions solely on the rumblings of some people who feel that their freedom is being violated by the restrictions on travel and on how we live our lives.

Business of Supply

We need to listen to what scientists are telling us. Not too long ago, people were told that smoking was good for their health; cigarettes were associated with sports. We need to keep listening to science, because if we only listen to our first instincts then our society would be more or less unsustainable.

[*English*]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I wonder if the member for Jonquière agrees that to move away from populism and to unify Canadians, it is better to employ Canadians. Is it better to create and implement a plan to hire more screening officers to reduce wait times?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, one thing the evidence does show is that we need to increase screening measures. I agree with my colleague that all members in the House need to do some soul-searching and move away from populism, which is eating away at our democracy and plays too big of a role in our debates. I think that is the best short-term solution.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's speech on populism was very interesting, but I want to talk about what was happening, for example, this weekend in Montreal and at the airport. It is hard for constituents to understand. When they go to the airport and realize they need a mask, they have to go back to get a mask, and then they go through all these checks that they do not normally have to go through. How does the member explain to his constituents why, when they are outside of the airport, they do not need a mask, because the Quebec government says it is safe, but inside the airport they do?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: What a mind-boggling question, Mr. Speaker. What does this mean? Does it mean that every restriction that people do not understand must be lifted? If someone wants to drive at 200 kilometres per hour because they think that they are a good driver, should we remove speed limits because this person does not understand that there are restrictions in society? I cannot believe that question.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise. I will be sharing my time with the excellent member for Vancouver Kingsway this morning.

It is a pleasure to rise and speak about the situation in our major airports, a situation that I think by now pretty much every Canadian across the country is familiar with. It is a situation that is chaotic, and it is a situation that is having real impacts on a lot of people.

Business of Supply

For over two years, Canadians were asked to put off travel plans. They could not visit family members; they missed major life events; they had to cancel long-awaited holidays; they could not travel to other parts of Canada or other parts of the world. People made significant sacrifices to protect each other, to protect their loved ones and to protect their communities. They helped buy time for frontline health workers before we had vaccines, and they kept it up when new variants emerged and threatened to derail our collective efforts. The vast majority of Canadians did their part, and for that they deserve our thanks.

With many restrictions now lifted, people are excited to travel again, which is understandable, and they are returning to our airports in huge numbers. Last week, an average of 120,000 travellers went through our major airports each day. That is a huge number, but once at the airports, they are being stuck in long screening lines. Planes are stuck on the tarmac without passengers able to leave. People are missing flights, and much more. Of course, people are rightly frustrated by this situation. These delays are creating stress and anxiety for travellers and they need to be addressed. This situation was foreseeable. It has been going on for weeks and the government needs to fix it.

Why is this happening? As we heard at the transport committee from the Canadian Airports Council, the biggest factor is staffing, especially the lack of screening personnel needed to move passengers through security. Screening capacity is a federal responsibility through the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, CATSA.

Like many sectors of our economy, aspects of the air transport sector have struggled to rehire employees laid off earlier in the pandemic, and we have heard about that challenge in today's debate already. As the hospitality industry has experienced, some staff simply are not available to hire back because they have moved on to other positions with better work conditions, better compensation and better terms of employment. The minister needs to ensure that the terms of employment related to these positions, the positions at our airports that are needed to screen passengers, are adequate to attract and retain the skilled workforce that we need to ensure safe air travel for all those who fly.

The other issue, of course, is the fact that the pandemic is still very much with us, and it is hard to maintain staffing levels when employees are catching COVID and leaving work because they are sick.

The government should have been able to predict that these challenges would emerge. It should have hired sufficient staff, and if it struggled to find people to do the work, it should have reviewed the terms of those positions to ensure that they are competitive and able to attract and retain the people it needs.

The Liberal government first announced it was relaxing travel restrictions on February 15, with mandatory arrival testing and quarantine scrapped at the end of February. Liberals were happy to go around saying how exciting it was that travel was back and Canada was reopening in time for the tourism season, but over three months have passed since those announcements, and it is clear that the government has not done enough to ensure that our airports are ready. Now Canadians are facing the consequences of the government's

mismanagement and lack of preparedness. This was entirely avoidable. It should have been anticipated and it needs to be fixed.

We have seen the same mishandling from the government with passport applications. I am sure everyone in the House has heard from constituents who are facing incredibly lengthy delays and long lines at Service Canada offices because the government failed to anticipate an increase in demand for travel when the restrictions were relaxed. The same folks who were left scrambling to get their passports on time a few weeks ago are now at the airport experiencing long lines at security screening. They are frustrated and anxious because of the delays they are seeing.

● (1200)

Instead of acknowledging the government's failure to prepare, the transport minister had the audacity to blame the travellers themselves, saying that it was their lack of practice and the slowness with which they took the liquids out of their bags that were leading to these long delays at the airport. Frankly, that is offensive.

Shifting to the riding I represent, I am particularly mindful of tourism operators in northwest B.C. and across Canada, who have looked forward to a season of welcoming back clientele from across Canada and around the world. I think of operators in the Bulkley Valley, the Bella Coola Valley, Haida Gwaii and Prince Rupert. They are looking forward to finally getting their business back, and the last thing they need is their clients hearing that travelling to Canada is a hassle because of the delays at our airports. That is going to hurt the tourism business right across Canada, and it needs to be addressed.

The Conservatives have brought this forward because they see a very particular opportunity in this crisis, which is the opportunity to once again try their hand at removing every health measure, every restriction and every tool we have to protect Canadians and safeguard our country against future waves of the virus. We disagree with that approach.

We disagree because the pandemic is still very much with us and because there are some public health measures, we believe, that are likely still advisable for the ongoing protection of Canadians and the detection of the virus at our border. Most of all, we disagree because we believe important public health measures should be informed by public health science, not by politics.

The motion before us makes the claim that Canada's international allies are removing all travel restrictions. Simply put, that is not the case. Just to the south of us, the United States still requires a predeparture COVID test. That is more restrictive than here in Canada. Almost every country requires proof of vaccination to enter. Saying that our international allies are lifting all restrictions is simply not accurate.

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We have an opportunity to strike a balance between enabling the mobility of Canadians and keeping in place tools that allow us to respond to future public health threats. The question is, do the current pandemic travel measures strike the right balance? Are they defensible? Are they based on the best available evidence? How are they better than other, similar measures that have been proposed as alternatives? This is where the blame goes back to the Liberal government, which has been less than forthcoming of late when it comes to these pandemic measures.

In fact, the NDP wrote to Dr. Tam in March and called on her to conduct a full re-evaluation of Canada's pandemic measures and report back to Canadians. The letter from the member for Vancouver Kingsway and the member for Elmwood—Transcona simply highlighted that creating trust in public health measures requires explaining the arguments and sharing the evidence on which they are based.

I have asked questions on this topic in this very debate today. I have asked the government to tell us when it will be reporting back from its review and how that information will be shared with Canadians, yet we do not get a response.

The questions are growing. Just last week, infectious disease expert Dr. Zain Chagla from McMaster University published an article stating that, in his view, Canada's "current rules for travel do not make sense". A few days ago, a Globe and Mail editorial asked whether the measures in place are still needed.

The government needs to be more transparent with Canadians about the evidence behind any remaining public health measures. It needs to clearly communicate the data and the science informing these decisions. The government needs to stand up and answer. The truth is that it has become less transparent and less forthcoming precisely at a time in the pandemic when the public needs answers more than ever.

It was not always this way. We remember the beginning of the pandemic, when Canadians received in-depth explanations of every measure and the evidence justifying it. The result was high public trust, high compliance with restrictions and guidelines, and a sense that we were all pulling in the same direction.

The situation at the airports is frustrating. People who are having their travel plans cancelled are under extreme stress. The government should have seen this coming and it should have fixed it. We need more answers and more transparency from the Liberal government.

• (1205)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know my colleague was dissatisfied with my response to his previous question about reviewing public health measures at airports. I would like to clarify that a review of measures is ongoing and constant. Health Canada is always reassessing the latest public health data to better dictate our decision-making at airports. There is no completion date, as this is ongoing. It will also likely vary depending upon the scientific measure: vaccine mandates, masking, random testing, etc.

What would my colleague do differently? Would he set an arbitrary date for when measures should be lifted, or should it be as soon as possible as new data is assessed?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, a review that has no terms of reference, no scope identified, no timeline and no date on which the results will be reported back to the public really is not a review at all. To say that things are constantly being reviewed really undermines the whole concept of having something called a "review", which most Canadians understand to be a process that has a start and finish and a process through which results are communicated.

The parliamentary secretary said some things that I do agree with, one of which is that we need this to be based on science, but we need the government to be instilling public trust by providing answers to the basic questions. These are reasonable questions that, in fact, public health experts themselves are asking, and Canadians deserve answers.

• (1210)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, for many things, the member and I have some agreement on. He talked about foreseeable and anticipated aspects of things, and he is right. Being proactive is one thing the government has failed to do.

One of the comments the member made was that, unfortunately, people who were in line three weeks ago for their passports have not gotten them. They are not even in line at airports at this point in time.

The member also talked a bit about evidence and science, which are very important and are in my background. Ultimately, my question for him, because I have not gotten a clear answer from him, is this. Does he not feel that evidence and science should be presented to Canadians today and that a plan based on them should be put forward to Canadians today?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, I am not an infectious diseases expert, and many of us in this place are not, so I will go back to the basic principle that the government has a responsibility to communicate the basic rationale for the measures that it puts in place in a way that Canadians understand. It should also respond to the independent public health experts, who have asked very rational and important questions. That is how we build public trust at a time when we need it more than ever. The reality is that unfortunately at this juncture in the pandemic, public trust is at a very low level. We need to correct that and we do that through transparency and communication.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, since I have been in the House, I have often seen the Conservatives add something to the wording of their motion that makes it so that that only they will vote in favour of it, since it includes inaccurate information.

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It says here that, “Canada's international allies have moved to lift COVID-19 restrictions”, when one of the worst infection hot spots on the planet has been our neighbour to the south, with whom we share one of the longest borders in the world and who has not lifted restrictions at all.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments about that being added to the motion when the Conservatives are looking for everyone's support.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, my colleague, the member for Montcalm, makes a great point. It is one that I made earlier today, and I agree with him wholeheartedly.

To the premise of his question, the idea that there are things in the motion that are unsupportable simply because they are inaccurate and false is really a challenge. We have three opposition parties on this side of the House that I think agree on many aspects of this debate. If we had gotten together, established where that agreement lies and put forward a motion that really holds the government to account and calls for things that are rational, defensible and evidence-based, we could have made some real progress. It is sad that this is not the case.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, as always, it is a privilege to rise in the House to speak to important issues of the day, not only on behalf of the great people of Vancouver Kingsway, but on behalf of Canadians from coast to coast.

I want to start with an observation. As health critic for the New Democratic Party of Canada, I have had a front-row seat to the issues, unfortunately, since the beginning of this pandemic, having sat on the health committee way back in 2019 to 2020 when COVID-19 first emerged. One thing I can say for sure over the last two-and-a-half years of policy for COVID-19 is that Canadians are never well served when any political party plays politics with the pandemic. I think we have seen that practised by the government at various times. In fact, government members themselves have publicly stated that their own government has sought to use the pandemic and abuse the pandemic for partisan political purposes. I think we see it here today.

Any time that politicians prey on frustration, ignore science and data, use partial facts or misleading statements and practise poor public health policy, Canadians are not well served. I regret to say to the House today that this motion really has all of that. As my great colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley just stated, this motion does contain some things that are true, but unfortunately it also contains some statements and conclusions that are dangerously false.

It is interesting to me that this motion was introduced by the Conservative transport critic, not the health critic. As the underlying issue here is public health policy and the pandemic, that speaks volumes about the motivation behind this, because the motion ignores fundamental truths and facts from the health world and attempts to exploit the frustration of travellers to result in what would be an incredibly ill-advised health policy decision.

I want to start with some things I agree with. I agree that the vaccine mandate ought to be questioned and replaced if it proves ineffective. There is growing and significant evidence that there is little impact of vaccination on the ability to transmit the virus, at least post-omicron. It is also the case that Canadian public policy has failed and continues to fail to recognize infection-acquired immunity. There is overwhelming evidence that infection-acquired immunity is real. There is substantial evidence that it is as strong and durable as immunity achieved from vaccination, and perhaps even more so.

Countries such as Austria have recognized this for many months. Citizens in that country can access public facilities and services by proving they are vaccinated, as we require in Canada, but if they can produce serology tests that prove they have been exposed to COVID and recovered, that is accepted as well, because it is basic vaccinology 101 that no matter how we recover from an infection and how our bodies produce antibodies, it has the same result.

Those two facts suggest that disallowing unvaccinated Canadians, particularly those who have been exposed to COVID and recovered from travelling, may not be science-based any longer. That, to me, should be explored and changed based on data and evidence. In fact, I have spoken to many constituents, as recently as last night, who question the vaccine mandate policy today in light of the mounting evidence.

Unfortunately, that is not what this motion before us states. It goes far beyond that to indefensible and unsafe areas. It wants us to agree that we should revert to all pre-pandemic rules. The motion says:

the House call on the government to immediately revert to pre-pandemic rules and service levels for travel.

● (1215)

That is completely irresponsible and belied by the science. For example, requiring foreign travellers arriving in Canada to be vaccinated is absolutely still necessary for one major reason, among others: to protect our strained health care system so that travellers do not get sick and clog up our ICUs. It is still the case, as we know, that being vaccinated significantly reduces one's chance of becoming seriously ill or dying.

Here is another example. Mask mandates are probably the single most effective measure we have for helping to reduce the spread of airborne viruses. This is especially the case in crowded indoor places, where physical distancing is not possible. I would venture to say that airplane cabins are, perhaps, the quintessential example of this, yet this motion introduced by the Conservatives states we should have no rules in this regard.

Every single expert who has appeared at HESA and been questioned on this issue has agreed that we need to maintain masks as a precaution. Not a single one has said it is wise or time to abandon them, yet the motion and the Conservatives ignore this fact. It is only common sense.

We know COVID is spread in aerosolized fashion as a respiratory illness. It is well established that masks help to stop the spread of such viruses. It is no surprise that the Conservatives would ignore that fact, as they continue to refuse every day, and in fact today, to wear masks in the House, a crowded indoor place, despite public health advice to do so—

An hon. member: Why aren't you speaking with one?

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, someone asked why I am not wearing one. We take masks off when we speak, and they know that. It is for the interpreters. The Conservatives understand that, but the fact that they would heckle on that point shows how bereft of rationality and evidence they really are.

Again, this motion calls for the policy to immediately revert to pre-pandemic rules. That assumes things have returned to normal. Like every Canadian, I wish that were so, but it is not. This motion presumes to refer to experts, but not one epidemiologist or public health expert has testified at the health committee that we are in an endemic phase. The Conservatives know that or they should know that.

I predict there is a high probability we will see a resurgence, perhaps a seventh wave, in the fall. Why? It is because nothing has changed. The virus is still present, mutations are occurring, the omicron BA.2 variant is still in circulation and there is detection of others, including something called the “deltacron” variant.

Vaccination in the developing world is still shamefully behind. We know vaccine efficacy wanes, and it does not prevent infection. Sloppy habits, like the Conservatives refusing to wear masks in crowded indoor rooms like this one, help contribute to the spread of airborne respiratory illnesses.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, I hear the Conservatives laughing at that. Maybe they should go back to medical school and take a beginner's course in virology.

This motion also attempts to blame the problems of Canadian airports on public health rules. This fundamentally misunderstands what is happening.

The core problem is that there are few flights due to reduced traffic and, more importantly, reduced staffing due to the shortages of workers, especially in security and baggage handling. The causes of this are poor pay, poor hours, shift work and poor working conditions. Airports are having trouble attracting workers back to work because of these things.

Did I say that? No. People in the airline industry say that, yet the Conservatives vote against every attempt to improve workers' conditions. They will not raise minimum wages, they oppose better unionization rules, they fight occupational health and safety improvements and they even wanted workers to work until they were

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67 years old before they could retire, which would be especially hard on blue collar workers, who find physical work and shift work more difficult as they age.

If we want to do something to help workers and get airports flying better, let us get improved conditions for workers in every airport in this condition. We are never going to get that from the Conservatives, but we will get that from New Democrats.

• (1220)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think the member hit the nail on the head. It is pretty clear that he was getting under the skin of the Conservatives, because they could not stop heckling him.

He raises a really interesting point in his discussion, and I was thinking about it. When it comes to the Conservatives' approach to vaccines, they have always taken the approach that the vaccine only has to do with them: It is their choice because it only has to do with them. In reality, the science behind vaccines is really about not just the individual, but how a community is affected by individuals making a choice.

I am wondering if the member could comment on the importance of vaccines as it relates to communities as a whole and protecting an entire population, as opposed to this just being about an individual.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague raises a very poignant and, I think, foundational point, which is that, when we engage in breaking new ground and experiencing something as unprecedented as a global pandemic, it will raise very difficult public policy issues concerning the rights of individuals versus the protection of public health.

That is why playing politics with a pandemic is so harmful and dangerous. Seeking to exploit an individual sense of grievance and frustration at the risk of public health absolutely ought to be rejected by any right-thinking person in the House and in Canada. We need to find that balance but, first and foremost, we have to always remember that public health rules are meant to protect the public, and we should only craft them, lift them, remove them or put them into place when the science and data supports that, not when politicians such as the Conservatives try to exploit people's frustrations.

• (1225)

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, what is pretty clear is that the NDP is parroting the Liberals. They are hand in hand. The member is talking about science, but the health authority where he is from, the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, has publicly provided documentation that vaccines do not make any difference as far as a person being able to transmit COVID, and they do not make any difference as far as protecting someone from being able to get COVID. There is no difference.

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Maybe the member should do research to see what his own health authority says and what Bonnie Henry has also said about transmitting and getting COVID. On this side, we are following the science.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, I think the essence of science and research is to listen. If he were listening, my hon. colleague would have heard me quote in my speech research that shows that being vaccinated now appears not to have any significant impact on preventing or transmitting COVID. I said that in my speech. Had he been paying attention, he probably would have caught that.

That is why I think it is so vital that we base public policy decisions on science, and on a rational, calm and data-based review of the current evidence. It is only by doing this that we will keep Canadians safe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway for his speech. I serve with him on the Standing Committee on Health, and what he said about the science is absolutely correct.

It is clear that vaccination still protects against developing the serious form of the disease, which is why we must protect our health care systems. That is the main thing.

However, does he not think that the government should eventually, for the sake of the tourism industry, present a progressive plan to lift the measures, even though we know full well that we are not in the endemic phase since the planet is not vaccinated?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, I would like to also say what a pleasure it is to sit on the health committee with my hon. colleague from Montcalm. I appreciate his contributions there and in the House.

I absolutely agree with the need to recognize the horrific impact that COVID has had on the Canadian economy and, in particular, industries such as tourism and hospitality. I get letters about that constantly, and I think we absolutely have to have effective measures that are based on public health and only based on rational data and science.

I do agree—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Unfortunately, we have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for South Surrey—White Rock.

It is an honour for me to rise in my place today to speak about a pressing issue facing Canadians and international travellers entering and exiting through Canada's various ports of entry, including airports, land border crossings, bridge border crossings and even CBSA marine reporting sites for small vessels.

My hon. colleague from Thornhill has brought forward an excellent and timely motion today, one which I will be fully supporting.

Ultimately, it calls on the government “to immediately revert to pre-pandemic rules and service levels for travel.” In short, the Liberal government's outdated COVID-19 protocols at airports and other international ports of entry are causing extreme delays, line-ups, bottlenecks and missed connections. Worst of all, they are acting as a disincentive for those wishing to travel to Canada.

While the focus of our opposition motion today is on airports, it is very important and relevant that other international ports of entry are mentioned and included as well, because they are all connected in our economic ecosystem. These ports of entry support businesses and economic opportunities in many sectors, including tourism, which is very important in my riding, as we have the city of Niagara Falls and the towns of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie.

My Niagara Falls riding has four international bridge crossings. They are managed by the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission and the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority, respectively. These are the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge, the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge, the Rainbow Bridge and the Peace Bridge. All have been hit hard by the two-year pandemic, and the federal government has done nothing to support these bridges, despite the heavy hardship of lost traffic due to extended border closures.

One of the biggest issues I hear about at our international bridge crossings is that of backlogs and delays being caused by the ArriveCAN app. In an email from March 24, 2022, the general manager of the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority warned local politicians that their analysis showed the continued mandatory use of the ArriveCAN app would result in much longer processing times and lengthy border waits, which would significantly depress cross-border traffic at a time when we were moving into the 2022 summer tourism summer season.

Fast forward two months, and here we are. His prediction was right. I raised this issue with the federal government as soon as I could. What did it do to prepare for these border backlogs? It doubled down and decided to spend \$25 million more in budget 2022 to continue to support the mandatory use of this application.

Along my border community riding, there are also a number of CBSA marine reporting sites for small vessels. They include the Niagara-on-the-Lake Sailing Club, the Smugglers Cove Boat Club, the Greater Niagara Boating Club, Miller's Creek Marina, Bertie Boating Club, and the Buffalo Canoe Club, amongst others. Out of all these sites I just listed, only one is operational. Miller's Creek in the upper Niagara River and Fort Erie is open, but all the other sites are closed.

Members can imagine, if someone is boating on the lower Niagara River in Niagara-on-the-Lake, they would have to travel all the way to Port Weller in St. Catharines to report in with CBSA. If they are on the upper Niagara River but closer to Chippawa and Niagara Falls, then they have to travel all the way to Fort Erie and all the way back just to report in with CBSA. This adds many kilometres to a voyage and is a huge waste of time and money for boaters, especially as fuel prices skyrocket to record highs.

These closures are a huge issue for local recreational boaters, especially as we approach the May long weekend and enter the summer boating season. We need the government to reopen all sites immediately. There is no time to waste.

Tourist businesses in my riding were hit first. They were hit the hardest, and they will take the longest to recover from COVID-19. The effect these failing Liberal policies are having on our boaters will only make recovery take that much longer. Tourist businesses in Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie depend on domestic and international visitors travelling to our communities, spending their time and dollars and enjoying all that Niagara has to offer. The operation of attractions, historic sites, restaurants, wineries, craft breweries, cideries, casinos and many other businesses depend on this visitation.

In communities such as Niagara, international visitation is important. While they make up approximately 25% of our total visitor base, these international visitors account for over 50% of the dollars spent in our tourism communities. This spend helps support over 40,000 jobs that are reliant on a strong tourism industry, which we had in Niagara before this pandemic. That is why it is essential we welcome back our international friends, guests and visitors. That starts by giving them a great, quick and efficient experience at our international ports of entry.

• (1230)

No one is going to choose Canada as a travel vacation destination if they have to risk waiting hours upon hours in stressful and frustrating lineups at an airport or a border crossing. Economic damage and missed opportunities are already being incurred. As the world reopens from COVID and other countries lift their restrictions, Canada looks to be stuck in the past and out of touch with reality. For example, the European Union and the United States have dropped their mask mandates for passengers on flights and in airports.

As countries around the world are reducing red tape and making it easier for citizens to travel again, the Liberals in Ottawa continue to impose their outdated and unjustified mandates, which are leading to longer lines and a slower recovery. As an example, fully vaccinated travellers arriving in Canada are still subjected to random COVID-19 testing, and in some cases, these travellers are not even told they have been selected until they get a surprise automated phone call or email a few days later from Switch Health.

This happened to Kathryn and her daughter, two constituents of mine. On May 10, they had an uneventful Nexus border crossing at the Blue Water Bridge in Sarnia. They were never informed that they were selected for random testing, nor were they given a random test on their exit from their Nexus inspection. Three days later, they received multiple phone calls and emails from Switch Health

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warning them to get a day-one random test or else risk contravening a public health order with severe penalties, including fines upwards of tens of thousands of dollars and mandatory quarantine. It seems illogical for people to be told they have to take a random test and then wait for Switch Health to send it to them by courier so they can complete it a few days, if not weeks, later. How is this in the best public health interest of Canadians? Simply put, the incompetence of the government knows no bounds.

Many experts have called for the end of these ridiculous requirements. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has called for a step back to improve regulations in order for Canada to become more competitive. The president of the Canadian Airports Council has called for the removal of legacy public health protocols, noting that mandatory testing is leading to bottlenecks and hurting Canada's competitiveness. These requirements are stifling our hard-hit tourism industry and are leading to long delays for Canadians just looking to travel after a long two years of obeying government-induced lockdown measures.

All of these terrible travel experiences at our airports and border crossings are hurting Canada's economy, competitiveness and international global reputation as a top tourist destination. Since the world started reopening months ago, Canada has lagged far behind our international tourism destination competitors due to these bad federal government policies. On a scale this large, every port of entry across our country is negatively impacted, and this ripple effect negatively impacts every riding of the House of Commons, especially those, like Niagara Falls, that depend on tourism as a major economic driver. We all benefit from a strong tourism industry, and we all lose when it is weak and chaotic, like it is now.

After two long years of government shutdowns, lockdowns, border closures and stringent travel restrictions, many tourist businesses in my riding are counting on a significant rebound this summer. Unfortunately, due to these travel measures and issues at airports and borders, government policy is working to stifle, rather than support, an urgently needed recovery in our tourism economy in 2022. Through their lack of preparedness to keep Canadians safe and preserve our economic best interests, the Liberals and NDP are abdicating their responsibility to govern.

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In my opinion, before COVID, Canada was the best place to visit and vacation. We can get back to being the best, and we should strive for nothing less, but we have a lot of work ahead of us, and it starts with objective of this motion, which is to get the federal government to immediately revert to prepandemic rules and service levels for travel. Niagara badly needs to achieve economic recovery this summer, and that is simply not going to happen if ArriveCAN and other federal travel and health restrictions continue at our airports and borders. It seems as though everyone wants to achieve economic recovery from this pandemic and a return to normalcy, everyone except the Liberal-NDP government, but it should know there is still time to save the 2022 tourism season if it acts quickly, and it should start by supporting today's common sense and timely motion.

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, how fortunate the Conservative Party is. After all, it has the member for Carleton. The member for Carleton is better than the health experts or science. He has made the proclamation that we do not need to have mandates at airports. In fact, he has been talking about getting rid of mandates for months now.

Now we have the Conservative Party abiding by one who could be the future leader of the Conservative Party, who has made the decision that mandates are no longer required, even though the Province of Quebec only recently lifted the wearing of masks. Does the member opposite have more faith in the member for Carleton than he does in science and health experts?

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, during this pandemic we have asked the current government to share the data and to share the science. It has continued to refuse to do so over two years.

Going back to just this February, Dr. Zain Chagla, an infectious disease physician at St. Joseph's hospital in Hamilton and an associate professor at McMaster University, said that singling out travel for COVID-19 testing "does not make any sense" since it is no riskier than any other activities. These are other stakeholders. The Canadian Tourism and Travel Roundtable has said that it is time to end and move back these harmful restrictions. They are hurting tourism. They are hurting the 40,000 people in my riding who depend on it.

• (1240)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, on the one hand, we see that the Conservatives tend to question all health measures and cozy up to anti-vaxxers. On the other hand, we see that the Liberals do the opposite and tend to provoke anti-vaxxers.

I would like to know whether my colleague would be open to an amendment to the proposal: Rather than having the measures be lifted "immediately", they could be lifted "gradually".

[English]

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, I am here today to speak on behalf of my constituents: the 40,000 people who work in the tourism sector. Situations like ArriveCAN are harming the tourism

industry. There is no need for the tourism sector to continue to arrive at situations that disincentivize travel.

The federal government has ended all support programs for the tourism sector, and this past budget contained no support for the tourism sector. It has tied the tourism sector's hands behind its back. It should allow it to do what it does best, which is to welcome people from throughout the world to enjoy all that Niagara has to offer. It is time to do so.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, through you, I want to ask the hon. member this. There are countries and allies, such as the U.K., that have entirely removed their border measures and restrictions, yet have witnessed similar scenes at airports that we are witnessing and that the hon. member and many members across the aisle have mentioned today. They have long delays. They have missed flights. Can he explain why that is the case if they have removed those measures? Why is that the situation in the U.K.?

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, to respond to the member's question, I think one of her colleagues mentioned the lack of preparation on behalf of the current government. It is not prepared for this time. It has had two years. During COVID, it hired thousands of workers, so why is it that we are facing these lineups? Our constituents should not be facing lineups at the passport office, or with border services agents or at Service Canada offices. This should not be happening. Why is it, when the federal government has workers who could be servicing Canadians at home? Why did it fire thousands of government workers? Let us bring them back to work to do what they do best, which is helping Canadians.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am curious. As the member goes into the summer tourism season, and as we see U.S. border protections being reduced by 20%, and as we see a lack of Canadian customs officials in place at this point in time, and as we see the lineups that keep getting longer at every border as travel increases, how is that going to impact his tourism sector and his riding in general?

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, earlier I mentioned the general manager from the Fort Erie Peace Bridge Authority. He wrote to us on May 10 and shared some statistics that are staggering. Even after COVID testing requirements to enter Canada were lifted on April 1, auto traffic for the month of April was down 52% at the bridges of the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission and 43% at the Peace Bridge compared with prepandemic—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, almost every week, I have the privilege of travelling across this great country, from Vancouver to Ottawa and back. With a three-hour time zone difference, it is basically a day in travel each way. It can be a tiring part of a cross-country commute job, as it would be for any Canadian, but now it is gruelling. I am witnessing first-hand the Liberal government's outdated COVID-19 protocols at airports. They are causing extreme delays, lineups, bottlenecks and missed connections.

Travellers are frustrated and unhappy. They can watch a hockey game with thousands in an arena without a mask, but must wear that mask on a flight in between Canadian destinations, and in and out of Canada, with sometimes well over 150 other people. It is not rational or even logical.

The European Union and the United States have both dropped their mask mandates for passengers on flights and in airports. Meanwhile, travellers arriving in Canada are still being subjected to random COVID-19 testing and must answer personal, private health questions on the ArriveCAN app. Why is Canada's science different from the science followed by many of our international allies?

These unnecessary protocols are causing severe delays at Canadian airports. Customs has become so backed up that there is not enough physical space to hold the lineups, leaving passengers stuck on planes for over 75 minutes. I recently had the experience, on my Washington trip with the Minister of National Defence, of having to deal with the ArriveCAN app. Imagine seniors like me dealing with the issues on this app when trying to come home.

Every airport and airline is complaining that it is severely understaffed in all aspects. At YVR on Sunday, there is now a sign at the screening entrance stating, "Limited capacity due to staff shortages".

Bags are not making the transfers between flights if a person has a layover in Toronto, despite long layovers. Security lines are ridiculously long. They do not have enough staff to open all the scanner lines, despite having the traveller traffic to warrant that level of operation. Meanwhile, airlines are ramping up their schedules very slowly, because they simply do not have the staff to service that many flights. I was told by one airport employee that Toronto's Pearson alone is 600 staff short. This means that if a person checks a bag and it gets on the flight, but the person does not make it because they are stuck in security, they may not see that bag for a long time. It may be days. Then, when the person misses that flight because security lines are so long, they cannot get another flight for several hours or they get one with a long, multi-hour layover.

Vancouver, like most international airports, has standard and express security lines, but even the express line was taking over one and a half hours last weekend, with people lined up way down to the international check-in areas. That means, for domestic flights, which usually recommend being at the airport 90 minutes in advance, we now need to allow for arriving two hours or more in advance to get our bags checked and through security on time.

Staff at the airports are so overworked and confused, with scarce resources and so many flights, that they are sometimes giving trav-

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ellers false information about flights being held for them when they are not. Not only do we have the frustration of waiting, but then we have the surprise of no flight at the end of the security check-in process. I cannot even imagine travelling with young kids and dealing with these major hurdles. At YVR on the weekend, I saw a very pregnant woman with three kids racing through the airport, because the screening had taken so long, and no one was helping her.

It will come as no surprise to anyone in this place that the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, or CATSA, is a federal Crown corporation responsible for all passenger security screening, and it is experiencing ongoing staffing shortages. CATSA said that it has been actively supporting its contractors to recruit and develop new staff. Screening resources are scheduled according to airline traffic.

Prior to the pandemic, resources could be utilized across the board between domestic and international checkpoints due to staggered passenger peaks, but as air travel has recovered we are observing simultaneous peaks with passengers flooding more than one security checkpoint at a time. Because of uncertainty about baggage handling, passengers are also travelling with more carry-on bags, resulting in additional time required to process them at screening and creating storage issues on board.

● (1245)

A CBC News article stated:

Mike McNaney, chief external affairs officer at the Vancouver International Airport, said an ongoing staffing shortage at the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) is contributing to the long lines and lengthy delays in processing passengers through security at the airport.

He went on to say these were "delays that we have not seen here before and were worse than anything that we have previously experienced throughout the pandemic."

Anyone travelling even domestically knows this to be true.

The article continued:

He said the airport has been welcoming about 45,000 passengers per day and they expect that number to increase with the busy upcoming summer travel season.

He added there are "serious concerns about the summer schedule, when the demand will increase", and whether CATSA even has a management plan, short and long-term, to address the challenges.

Business of Supply

The aviation and tourism industry in Canada has been hit hard. We need to be supporting economic recovery in Canada instead of needlessly restricting travel. Airports are facing major staffing issues that the government is refusing to remedy.

CATSA itself said that at the beginning of the pandemic it employed 7,400 screening agents. Today, there are only 6,500, despite travel increasing. Our global reputation as a top travel location is at risk.

Recently, at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Mr. Robin Guy, who is a senior director with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, testified that the Canadian aviation and tourism industries were particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. We know this.

He said:

The myriad of public measures taken to dramatically stem the transmission of the virus has resulted in a decline in travel by...95% of 2019 levels. The protracted pandemic will result in Canada's airports losing more than \$4.6 billion in revenue in 2020-21, and adding \$3 billion in debt to stay open and maintain safe and secure operations....

Prior to the pandemic, he said, Canada's airports contributed to major economic development. In 2016, those airports directly contributed \$48 billion in economic output, \$19 billion to GDP, almost 200,000 jobs and \$13 billion in wages.

The government must work with industry to address the challenges the sector faces as it rebuilds itself post pandemic. First, the government must review all regulations introduced during the pandemic. With high vaccination rates and an easing of most public health measures, these pandemic regulations are now outdated and no longer required. There are massive delays in processing passports and NEXUS that are being felt across the transportation system.

Should a Canadian citizen renewing a passport really have to arrive in the middle of the night to wait and then still be told they did not make the top 10 list for processing?

Second, we need to invest in our airports' infrastructure, technology and innovation. Low-traffic volumes over the past two years have meant airports delayed much-needed capital projects.

We must recognize that air travel delivers a spectacular double-line benefit to the economy. Air travel is key to the travel and tourism industry, and that part of our national economy. Industry experts from a large variety of disciplines are calling on the government to abandon the travel restriction that causes numerous negative repercussions on our economy and international reputation.

The Liberal government needs to ensure that passengers have a seamless experience from couch to cabin and check-in to arrival at Canada's airports. It is time for us to get with the times instead of selective and secretive Liberal science that is hampering Canadians' lives and their ability to see loved ones and their families.

• (1250)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have been hearing a great deal of what I would suggest

is somewhat misleading information for Canadians coming from the Conservative Party. I will be addressing that shortly.

Are the Conservatives actually suggesting we look at ways we could be cutting back on security measures? Is that what they are suggesting, either directly or indirectly? Around the world, we are seeing delays very similar to the ones we are experiencing here in Canada.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, it is hard for me to really understand that question, to be honest. I do not believe I said anything like that in my speech. We are not suggesting at all that security measures be lost. What we are saying is that they should be reasonable, logical, rational and based in science. If, as the Liberal government says, it has science to back up these ongoing restrictions that other countries are abandoning, then it should tell us what it is. It should tell us who it is listening to. It refuses to answer those questions.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, last week, the Conservatives and the Liberals criticized the Bloc Québécois on its opposition day, when it discussed dropping the prayer in the House of Commons. If I were a bad sport, I could also criticize this particular opposition day on lifting health measures in airports. Since I am not a bad sport, I will not do so.

I will, however, ask my colleague to tell me whether she honestly thinks this opposition day is really about politics or whether it is not rather about public health measures we should be staying away from.

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I have to applaud my friend for bringing the issue of prayer into airports. If I understand the question correctly, he is asking if this is based in policy, and we are saying it is absolutely based in policy. Every provincial health authority in every province has lifted vaccine passports and mask mandates. We see our own Prime Minister travelling abroad in countries with low vaccination rates and he is unmasked, with groups of people, anywhere from bars to restaurants to formal meetings. We walk out of this place, out of Parliament, take our mask off, and we can go to any restaurant and to any place we want to shop without a mask. It is simply unreasonable, and the Liberals refuse to tell us what the science is that they claim they are relying on.

• (1255)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am glad that the member mentioned CATSA, because it is facing a labour shortage. To fix that requires better wages and more support for workers.

Do the Conservatives acknowledge that we need to support public servants, like the workers keeping the flying public safe every day, by supporting them with good wages?

Business of Supply

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I am a big believer in paying people for the work they do, and border security and security at our airports are very important jobs. However, the fact is that the staffing shortages, and I think in my speech I alluded to their being at least 1,000 lower than they were, are just not acceptable.

I am not intimately knowledgeable about the union issues with CATSA right now, but I would say this: If there are union issues, then it needs to deal with them and it needs to care about the experiences of the travelling Canadian public, whether it is within our own country or going to another country. People want to get back to seeing relatives; they want to get back to being able to travel, and they do not understand why there are more restrictions in an airport and on an airplane than anywhere else where they spend their time.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about a pregnant lady going to the airport with her kids. I came across an experience in Montreal where four ladies came to the gate and just missed their plane. One was a diabetic and she was in tears. She was begging to be let on the plane. She could see it. The reason she could not get on the plane is she spent three-and-a-half to four hours going through security.

What can we do to alleviate some of those concerns?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, there have been many suggestions made by people with knowledge. Rachel Bertone from the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, for instance, emphasized that international arriving passengers are being delayed by public health requirements. Others are saying that they need more hiring; they need to get more staff, and they need to pay attention to this. It is not only one thing. It is many things that need to come together in a prudent and rational approach to travel and to the recovery of our tourism economy.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if I may, today is Vyshyvanka Day. That is why we will see members on all sides of the House from all political parties wearing these beautiful embroidered shirts, as the people of Ukraine and people well beyond the borders of Ukraine get an appreciation of Ukrainian heritage in a very beautiful way. This morning we had members of Parliament, as I say, from all sides of the House, along with interns, showcasing the embroidery and an appreciation of Ukrainian heritage.

Having said that, and Mom always says to try to say something nice, I would like to get into the meat of what we are talking about today. There are a couple of things that I want to focus a bit of time on.

If we listen to the Conservative Party, that could be a bad thing, because we get this impression that Canada is alone in the world, that we are the only country in the whole world that has any sorts of mandates in place in our airports. That is what we would be led to believe. That is the Conservative spin, or the member for Carleton's spin, I should say.

I just did a very quick inquiry and found out this. The U.S., Japan and Israel continue to require predeparture testing. Italy, Japan, Australia and Israel require intercountry testing for some travellers. The U.S., Japan, Australia and Israel require some form

of vaccine in order to enter the country. France, Italy, Germany, Japan, Australia and Israel still require masking in their transport sectors.

If we listen to what the Conservatives are saying, not only today but for a long time now, it is this: We do not need mandates. It is as simple as that. That is the Conservative Party's line. Is it based on health or science? No. It is based on the member for Carleton. The member for Carleton has said mandates are not necessary. That should not surprise us; he has been saying that for months.

Mr. Dan Mazier: He is consistent, anyway.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, he is consistent. The member is right. I will give him that much. The member for Carleton is consistent. If someone is a Conservative member of Parliament, they do not need to listen to health experts. They do not have to look at science, but just look to the member for Carleton and they will understand why it is they do not need mandates.

Members will understand why it is that everyone else in the chamber is more skeptical in terms of what members of the Conservative Party of Canada are saying. We believe that we should have more faith in health measures, with the experts and the science. Therefore, as the members of the Bloc and the NDP and the Green Party and, yes, the Liberals, we will continue to follow the science and listen to the health experts. We will do what is right for Canadians.

We are very much aware that Canadians are feeling frustrated with regard to the lineups and the delays at airports. We are very much aware of that. In fact, not only am I aware, but I will be sharing my time with the member for Pickering—Uxbridge, and members will find that she will no doubt even be embellishing on some of the points I am making.

Before I get back to some of the other things that I was going to say, I will just pick up on the member for Carleton. It is an interesting thing when the member for Carleton will say “freedom” and “speaking truth to power”. Do members remember him saying that? What happened to the member for Abbotsford? My goodness, did members catch the news lately? What happens there if someone voices their opinion?

The member for Abbotsford and I often disagree, but I agree with him in terms of it being a dumb idea to fire the Governor of the Bank of Canada. I am inclined to agree with the member for Abbotsford. Speaking that kind of truth to power and having the freedom to be able to say that has been kind of lost within the Conservative Party under the leadership potential of the member for Carleton.

● (1300)

Is it any wonder now, considering the member for Carleton says we do not need mandates, that Conservatives are jumping up from their seats saying we do not need them? They do not have to listen to the health experts or science. I think that is wrong.

Business of Supply

We have recognized that what is happening in Canada is not unique to Canada alone. There are airports around the world that are experiencing the same sorts of issues we are facing here in Canada. It is not to try to marginalize the issue. Whether someone is the Prime Minister, the Minister of Transport or any other member of this House, they are concerned about what is taking place in our international airports. The Minister of Transport is actually getting committees together. Transport Canada is working with stakeholders.

We understand the importance of the tourism industry to our country a whole lot more than the Conservatives do. In fact, we were there to support them during the pandemic. We provided direct support to airlines and industries such as restaurants, and to a festival that I often make reference to, which is a great tourist attraction in my own province of Manitoba, Folklorama. Talking to restaurant owners or reps in the hospitality industry, one of the most common comments I receive is that they were very happy and grateful to see that there was a wage subsidy program. They understood the importance of a government taking action to support the hospitality and tourism industry.

We understand that the peak season is around the corner. We would like to get back to our new normal as quickly as we can, but we are not going to do what the Conservative Party of Canada/member for Carleton has to say on the issue. Rather, we are going to continue to look at the science. We are going to continue to listen to what the health experts say. At the end of the day, that is where we are going to fall on the issue of policy.

If colleagues take a look at our record as a national government, working with Canadians and other levels of government and stakeholders, they will find that Canada is doing quite well going through this pandemic. The Conservatives might like to think that we can just wish it away, but it does not work that way. There is a process in place to ensure that it is done in an orderly fashion, so that we can, in fact, ensure that the health and well-being of Canadians in all regions of our country are being taken care of. We continue to look forward to the weeks and months ahead.

Earlier this month, in May, the province of Quebec lifted the mandatory masking requirement. Quebec is not alone. There are other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world that still have some form of mandate out there. It seems to be only the Conservative Party of Canada/member for Carleton that believe mandates have no role at all. I would hope that the membership of the Conservative caucus will have the freedom to get onside with science and health experts and defend what is important: the health and well-being of all Canadians. That would be my recommendation.

We have seen the hiring of 400 people to help out with security clearances. Airports are working with airlines and Transport Canada on ways in which we can speed up the process. We understand the issue, and we will do what we can to try to fix it as quickly as possible.

• (1305)

Mr. Kyle Seebach (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think the frustration that stems from most reasonable people in this chamber is about the fact that when a question is asked, what experts are you relying upon? What is the advice that has been giv-

en? Share that advice with Canadians. If you have reports or expert advice saying we cannot open this airport or we cannot remove restrictions and here is why, why not share it?

The fact of the matter is that they do not have it, and that is why they will not table it. If you had it, you would table it. Any reasonable person would, but we are not dealing with reasonable people or rationality. Why will they not table this advice now?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the hon. member that I cannot table anything.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I can tell the member that the one health expert we are not listening to is the member for Carleton.

At the end of the day, we have health experts from across the country. We have individuals who have a background in science, and we will continue to work with those individuals in ensuring that the public policy we present is sound.

As the chief public health officer of Canada has indicated, we do have reviews that are ongoing. Why? That is the responsible thing to do. To throw their hands up in the air months ago and say mandates are useless and not necessary is highly irresponsible.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague from Winnipeg North that his mother always told him to try to bring something positive to a conversation. I remember that.

On a more serious note, I would like my colleague to explain what ArriveCAN is. I came back from a mission a few weeks ago and was met with what, in my opinion, was totally useless bureaucracy. Therefore, I would like him to explain to me what the purpose of ArriveCAN is.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, members will recall that at the beginning of my comments I talked about today being a special day, Vyshyvanka Day, and that is why we are wearing these wonderful shirts and blouses. Right after saying that, I said that my mom always told me to try to say something nice, and that was the nice thing I had to say. The rest was just to try to enlighten my Conservative friends in regard to the negatives of following blindly the member for Carleton, because what he is talking about is not in the best interests of the health and well-being of Canadians.

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Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would offer that when legitimate questions are not answered directly, it erodes public trust at a time when we need public trust more than ever. I support vaccination and public health as much as anyone in this place, but there are legitimate questions about the vaccine mandates for domestic air travel, and the government refuses to provide the basic information that we need to defend those policies. Why is that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am not 100% sure exactly what the member is getting at. I believe we have been very clear as a government that we continue to listen to what the department and health experts and science are telling us. If the member is saying that he needs to hear first-hand some of that, he might want to approach the Minister of Health or the parliamentary secretary and we might be able to accommodate him. I am sure the member can appreciate that other jurisdictions also have health experts and there have been times when they, too, have had lockdowns, curfews and mandatory masking indoors or outdoors. There is quite a smorgasbord of activities dealing with mandates and I am more than happy to sit down personally—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad to rise today and follow my friend and colleague, the parliamentary secretary, on this important debate. The challenge here is that, continuously, we see from the Conservative Party this idea of trying to politicize the health and safety of Canadians throughout this pandemic.

I had the great pleasure and responsibility of being the parliamentary secretary to the former minister of health during a large portion of the pandemic. I sat through committee meeting after committee meeting with our health officials and with experts, witnesses and members from all sides of the House. Instead, in the heart of the pandemic and of dealing with some of these most crucial issues, the Conservatives chose to be obstructionist and chose to just attack and “own” the Liberals at every stage of this pandemic.

When I sit here and see the opposition day motion that we have in front of us, it brings me back to those days, remembering what the Conservatives actually brought to the debate and brought to our country during one of the most challenging times that I think many generations will see. I am reminded of those days when I had the opportunity to serve our government in that role. I remember the Conservatives screaming and shouting, saying that we need to close the borders, that we need stricter mandates and that we need all of these things, and then, when we do those things, they scream and say to get rid of mandates and get rid of masks. At no point did they ever base it on science, facts or evidence. They based it only on “owning” the Liberals. If they had any ability to actually govern in this country, Canada would be in serious trouble, because their policy playbook is simply the opposite of the Liberals.

The members continue to heckle me because they cannot stand a member standing on this side of the House “owning” them, and that is precisely what—

• (1315)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I apologize for interrupting the parliamentary secretary, but can we have some order in the House?

The hon. member for Prince Albert is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, she “owns” me? I find that very offensive.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry, but I did not hear that.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, the member opposite misheard. I did not say I own him. I said that when it comes to the policy debate, we are “owning” the Conservatives on the legitimate policy debate.

While I am sorry I have hurt the member's feelings, if that is his issue—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Prince Albert is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, I think I have to pursue this, because she is trying to regenerate a different dialogue. What she said was, “We own him.” If we could please check the Hansard—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on the same point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, as the expression is known, the expression “we own you on this” does not mean that we literally own—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are getting into debate.

I ask the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs not to use those expressions.

The hon. member for Prince Albert is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, between that and “just inflation”—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are getting into debate.

I am asking the hon. parliamentary secretary to refrain from using those expressions. They are exciting matters.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, that is not a problem. I will not use things that excite the members, when they are unable to control their emotions in this House. I will move on to the rest of the point, because I clearly upset the members opposite.

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What I will speak about is simply the fact that the Conservatives have not based policy decisions in this House on experts, on science or on the testimony we heard at the health committee, when I was a member of that committee. We stand here today and members opposite talk about listening to the science. Time and again we heard experts. Our chief public health officer, Dr. Tam, was personally attacked by Conservatives when they disagreed with her expertise.

I find it a bit rich to stand in this place and to hear the Conservatives say, “Bring out the experts; bring out the testimony.” When we do that, when we table that information, when we have witnesses at committee, when we have reports and when we have that expert testimony, the Conservatives make personal attacks against our chief public health officer. I notice that the heckles went silent, because the Conservative members know it is true, that there are those on their benches who made personal attacks against public health officials who disagreed with them.

In addition to that, we talk about the mandates or any protections across the country throughout the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, we constantly said that there is no silver bullet and that vaccines are the safest, most effective way for us to get through this pandemic, but there are also layers of protection, and that is crucially important. Those layers of protection are going to help prevent people from getting severely ill and clogging up our emergency rooms and hospitals, and that is what the Conservatives do not understand.

There are layers of protection, not only to protect the most vulnerable, but to protect businesses by not having to enter lockdowns. If we remove every layer of protection throughout this pandemic and businesses have to close, where would the Conservatives be to defend and support those businesses? I know Conservatives did not support them when we moved measures in the budget and in Bill C-8. They voted against the supports those businesses needed.

We put in place layers of protection to help ensure, as the pandemic unfortunately is not over and COVID is still around, that we protect society, protect individuals, protect businesses, and protect our health care workers and our health care system. These are the very people those members call heroes and then attack at committee and try to discredit on social media.

I find that, while the Conservatives might try to position or package some of their motion to act like they are on the side of people, throughout this pandemic they have flip-flopped consistently whenever they felt the political mood suited them.

I turn to some of the comments I heard in this place earlier that accused the government of simply trying to punish people who have differences of opinion or who want the freedom to have a different view on things. I find this incredibly rich, considering what we all saw last night. Among the Conservative benches, they do not have the freedom to listen to science, and they do not have the freedom to speak out and have their own opinions. I heard heckles yesterday when members of our side voted in a free vote. The Conservatives criticized our members for having free votes, yet yesterday the member for Abbotsford rightly pointed out the dangers the member for Carleton was spreading about our democracy and the

independence of the Governor of the Bank of Canada. What happened to the member for Abbotsford? He got the boot.

• (1320)

When it comes to Conservatives, the only freedom of choice they have is to listen to whatever leader happens to be running the show at the time. Therefore, it is really hard to take the Conservatives seriously when they talk about mandates, the health and safety of Canadians, and freedoms, when the Conservative benches do not even have freedom of opinion or freedom of speech. Frankly, the member for Abbotsford spoke truth to power, and he got booted to the backbench.

It is really hard to sit here and listen to Conservatives try to defend the health and safety of Canadians when they themselves are not open to listening to experts and scientists or understanding the layers of protection in place to help keep Canadians safe, keep businesses open and keep travel available. They speak about restrictions around the world, but Canadians going even to the U.S. still require testing. There are protections there. There is nothing wrong with the Canadian government doing everything in our power to ensure that there are no lockdowns in this country, that businesses can stay open, that Canadians can remain safe and that our health care heroes can have the ability to keep our health care system functioning well.

The key here is that, if we truly believe in freedom and supporting Canadians across this country, then we should not be listening to the Conservatives, who block freedom of speech and ignore when their own members speak truth to power.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will read a quote and then ask a quick question of the parliamentary secretary.

“I can’t help but notice with regret that both the tone and the policies of my government changed drastically on the eve and during the last election campaign. From a positive and unifying approach, a decision was made to wedge, to divide and to stigmatize.” That was said by the Liberal member for Louis-Hébert back in early February speaking about who decided to politicize getting vaccinated in this country.

The president of the Canadian Association of Professional Employees has talked about the fact that back in early March the mandates were a temporary measure, and he has asked the government when it was going to release a plan that explains the rationale and milestones to remove vaccine mandates.

• (1325)

Ms. Jennifer O’Connell: Madam Speaker, I sincerely thank my hon. colleague for reading that quote because he made my entire point, which is the fact that on our side, on our Liberal benches, there is the freedom for a difference of opinion. I disagree with some of the things that the member for Louis-Hébert said, but I respect him as a colleague and as a friend. The fact is that a difference of opinion actually makes our debate and discussions in our caucus healthier and richer.

I wish the Conservatives could learn from that, but they had better be careful. They may end up on the backbench if they disagree with the member for Carleton.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, since our colleague from Winnipeg North could not answer my question, I will try again and ask my other colleague.

The Liberal government implemented a new, extremely bureaucratic measure: ArriveCAN. Travellers must download the application, enter data before they leave, and enter new data when they arrive.

Can she tell me what this measure, which I find useless, actually does? What is its purpose?

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I was parliamentary secretary to the minister of health when we started to have these conversations. Around the world, we were anticipating that there were going to be requirements for travel documentation for Canadians, and our government said that we wanted to ensure that vaccinated Canadians could share that information, have the ability to travel and prove vaccination status, but we also knew that we wanted to make sure there was a secure source available for Canadians to do this so their information is protected.

ArriveCAN was developed to help ensure that Canadians still had access to travel and that they could provide their quarantine information, making the process of travelling easier while allowing them to upload that information in a secure way that would allow Canadians access to international travel if those requirements were required when they arrived at their destinations.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I think the impetus behind this motion is really important, but I think the perspectives are quite skewed. The solution needs to be practical. We in the NDP are very much focused on the workforce.

Can the government explain why it continues to undervalue the vital work in keeping the flying public safe as performed by security officers, and does it acknowledge that it is simply not doing enough to recruit new staff?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I do agree with my hon. colleague that we need practical solutions. We need to ensure that Canadians understand the rationale for the layers of protection I spoke about. With recruiting and hiring more employees, we absolutely need to work with partners. As the member knows, some of this work is done through Crown corporations or airline industries that are independent, but we absolutely need to be at the table. We need to ensure that the workforce is hired so that Canadians can move in a safe way as this pandemic continues.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

I have had the misfortune of listening to this debate for the past hour and a bit. When I use the term “misfortune”, it is because of the absolute opacity of the government. It refuses to answer even the simplest of questions during debate. Liberal members give

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speeches where they are obsessed with the member for Carleton, when we are supposed to be discussing the very serious issue of chaos at airports and the restrictions that are in place.

Rather than talk about that, the Liberals are going on long diatribes about independence, other members and leadership matters. I think we have to ask ourselves why. If they cannot talk about the subject matter before us, it is probably because they have almost nothing to say. That is the absolute problem with the government and these members participating in the debate.

Why are we here? Day after day, questions are asked about when the mandates will end, and what circumstances are needed in order to do that. These are not ridiculous partisan attacks, as the members across seem to suggest. I did not know they were so fragile that a direct question would be seen as a terrible partisan attack.

We keep coming back and asking reasonable questions. We brought forward a motion ages ago, just asking what conditions, metrics or benchmarks the country had to hit so restrictions could be removed. This is not asking for them to be removed. It is asking what the benchmarks are and what Canadians could look to. The Liberals would not even vote for that. The government cannot do anything reasonable with respect to things like this.

When we ask questions, we get answers like the one from the Minister of Transport, who said that travellers are out of practice and that is why the airports are backed up. Actually, that is, unfortunately, probably the best answer we have had from a minister or a member of the government with respect to what is going on, because at least it was an answer.

We have questions, real questions, the questions Canadians are asking. I know these members get the same emails from Canadians. They cannot live in some strange Liberal bubble where everyone thinks things are perfect. They must get questions about what is happening at the airports and what are they going to do to fix it. I know I get them. I bet the Speaker is getting them as well.

We put forward a motion like this to say that Canadians have had enough, that they want to see some action. They want something done. We would expect a reasonably serious response. However, for some reason, Canadians are not entitled to that. When we are here, we are the voice of not only our constituents, but also of other Canadians as well. These are the serious questions that are being asked. It is so insulting to them. I do not care about the insults that government members throw at us. We can take it. Over here, we are not so fragile. We can take the insults, but Canadians deserve those answers.

We heard the member for Winnipeg North giving his speech. I had the opportunity to ask him what the advice was, whose advice it was, what was the actual advice is, and if he could table the advice. They were insane, ridiculous questions. How dare I ask the Liberals to share the advice they had with Canadians to show why they would not remove any of the restrictions.

Business of Supply

We have heard the terrible stories, which is why we are asking the questions. We heard the member for Prince Albert talk about a terrible experience he witnessed at the airport. I have seen that as well. People who are desperate and missing their flights. People who are having all kinds of trouble. There is not even a semblance of regret from the government about that.

That is fine. If the Liberals do not want to say to Canadians that they are sorry they are going through this, then that is on them. However, Canadians deserve an explanation.

● (1330)

The Liberals must have meetings. They must be talking to experts, because they say, “We follow the experts’ advice.” How hard is it? Throw Canadians a bone. They could give us a scrap of information, or maybe put a tenth of the report on the table so that we can see that there actually is a report, but they will not. If they will not do it, we have to ask ourselves why, right?

When a child goes to school and says, “The dog ate my homework”, the teacher asks, “Show me the shredded pieces and then I will believe you.” That is what these guys are doing all the time. They are saying, “The dog ate my homework.” Well, they should show us the scraps, but we cannot even see that. They are not going to give us even that little tidbit.

Canadians are frustrated. There are a lot of Canadians who cannot travel. I do not know if members have heard the stories, but I certainly have in my riding about people who cannot travel and miss all kinds of things. The Liberals might say, “Well, get in a car.” However, an 80-year-old unvaccinated woman from my riding cannot drive 1,800 to 3,000 kilometres to B.C. The Liberals’ answer is: “We do not care. We refuse to give any information on when that person is going to be able to travel. We refuse to give any information as to why we are saying that person will not be able to travel. We refuse to give any information as to when that person can travel.”

It is as though we are asking for the most unreasonable, unrealistic things. That is how the Liberals paint the debate. They cannot answer the debate directly. They cannot answer the debate forthrightly. If they really wanted to debate this issue, they would put their advice on the table so that we could all see it and debate it like adults, but they do not want to. They would rather give speeches talking about the former shadow minister for finance. They want to talk about the member for Carleton, because that is so pertinent to the debate. It is so childish and insulting to Canadians who are asking the very serious questions that we are raising in this motion to have members over there treat them with so much disdain and disrespect.

I cannot believe it. Canadians who are unable to travel, unable to visit family and relatives, are watching this debate and listening to the kinds of speeches that these people are putting out, joking and laughing about the member for Carleton. It is beyond shameful. It is embarrassing, and they should be embarrassed for participating that way.

We want things to move forward for Canadians. We want answers. We tried for a motion to ask the Liberals to put the benchmarks out for everyone to see: When we get to this, we will do this,

and when we get to that, we will do that. The Liberals voted down the motion, unfortunately, with help from the NDP. We had a wonderful NDP member asking some great questions, but they voted down that motion as well, and I am disappointed about that.

We have to ask ourselves: Why will the Liberals not do any of these things? It is probably because they have not set that plan out, because this is a government that cannot do more than one thing, as we have learned. They sort of stumble from one crisis to another. We choose to joke and say: “You cannot walk and chew gum at the same time.” That is kind of what we have happening here.

Now, we are back to another motion saying, “You would not give us the benchmarks, all the rest of the world has moved forward, they are lifting all these things, so let us get on with it.” Let us get on with it. Let us actually say that this is what we are going to do.

I, of course, will be voting in favour of this motion. I know that the Liberals will not be, but I am hoping other parties will. I am hoping that other members listening today will decide not to talk about the member for Carleton and will actually stand here and debate this issue, because if they do not, it tells us exactly what we need to know about them, which is that they have nothing to offer on this subject.

● (1335)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, if members listened to that speech, they would think that this motion today was about providing sources of information to make decisions. It is not.

I do not know if the member is aware of what is in the motion, but I will skip right to the resolve clause, which says: “the House call on the government to immediately revert to prepandemic rules and service levels for travel.” That is it.

The motion is not asking about providing information that made us make the decision, but that is what the member spent his entire speech talking about. The motion is about pretending that the pandemic never happened, and going back, or in the Conservatives’ words, “reverting” back to the way that life used to be.

Did the member read the motion before he decided to stand up and speak today?

● (1340)

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, again we see an example of what we get with this member in particular and the current government. They do not want to have an honest debate about subjects. When I say give the information, it is because just about every time they get up to speak they talk about how they are following the science, which is why they are going to vote against this motion. It is the crux of their argument as to why they will not support the motion. They say, “We are going to follow the science, so we are not going to remove any restrictions.” However, when we ask them for that science, there is none. It is a shock. They have nothing to actually add to the debate.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have been listening closely to today's debate—

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask the hon. members to stop having conversations while another member is asking a question.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue can restart his question.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I have been listening with interest to today's debate and have been wondering something. I think it is obvious that the Liberals have failed repeatedly in terms of managing the borders and in the measures they wanted to implement over the past year, but I would like to know what the Conservatives would have done had they been in power. What kind of situation would we be in now?

We are at the tail end of a sixth wave, quite possibly because measures were put in place and they worked.

What state would the borders be in if the government were Conservative? What would they have done so differently?

[English]

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, I cannot go over what we have done differently for the past two and a half years because I have only a few moments, but what I will say we would do differently right now is this. We would have released what the benchmarks are to get back to normal, because Canadians want to get back to normal. We all want to. I would release the science we are relying on to say we cannot open up now. We would say where we are, where we need to be and at what points we would remove certain restrictions.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Where is your science for the motion, then?

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, the member keeps heckling and asking where my science is. We are not the government. We do not have access to the science it has at the Ministry of Health. Why will it not produce it? It probably has not done it, because it really cannot do much.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague down the way made some excellent points in his speech and there was much that I agree with.

Going back to the motion at hand, it calls for a return to pre-pandemic rules at our airports. I would submit that, in the same way that 9/11 changed forever our approach to security at airports, there may very well be some pandemic measures at our airports that are worth considering as long-term improvements in the way that we protect our country when it comes to public health. Would the member agree?

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, I struggle to understand what those would be. I think many of them served a purpose and we all acknowledge that, but I do not know what we want to keep in place forever because of the chaos it is causing right now at airports. If we keep these measures in place forever, how are we ever

going to get back to normal? That is the issue. Canadians want to get back to normal. They want a plan to get back to normal. If the government is not going to give us a plan, we are going to put forward a motion to get us back to normal.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, every province has now lifted its mandates, and we are in a situation where they are not even wearing masks in Quebec. Is that enough science to maybe justify what we are doing?

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, this is exactly it. We can go to a stadium and watch a hockey or basketball game without a mask. These members go to receptions every night in crowded rooms without wearing masks, but they wear their masks in the chamber. Yes, things have moved on. It is time for us to move on with these restrictions, as well.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I rise to support this motion and add my constituents' voices to the growing concern about the legacy of Liberal-made backlogs. Canada faces massive delays for passports, veterans and seniors' services, and 2.1 million people are stuck in the IRCC's backlog. Now, we are seeing the same backlogs happening at airports due to inconsistent policies by the Liberal government. If there is one thing the Liberal government is good at, it is making everyone miserable.

The government's biggest example of mismanagement is the mess in our immigration system. This is just an example that I will use to lead to the mismanagement happening at the airports. People looking to come to this country face growing processing times and absolutely no communication. Their applications disappear into a great bureaucratic black hole, along with their emails and phone calls. Newcomers can end up stuck waiting for months, if not years, to have their cases processed. As a result, families are left separated from their loved ones and refugees are left stranded in the hands of the Taliban. This is the reality that backlogs impose on real people.

Our country faces a labour shortage crisis and there is a real need for new immigrants to help fill these gaps, yet instead of taking action the government has economic-class newcomers waiting in limbo. The economic-class backlog stands at over 235,000 people. That is 235,000 lives that are now on hold: workers who are unable to contribute to Canada's economy and families who do not know if they will have a future here.

Business of Supply

For families of new Canadians, family sponsorship is also a nightmare. The backlog there now stands at almost 109,000. That means families remain separated, their mental health suffers and divorce and suicide rates are going up. I imagine all MPs' offices hear about these cases every single day, as mine does. I speak to constituents who tell me they do not know when they will see their spouses or children. They do not know how to go on, and it is heartbreaking.

Backlogs are also hurting Canadian businesses and our economy. Employers and businesses share with me that the work permit and temporary foreign worker situation in Canada is alarming. My office heard from a small business owner in northern Ontario. She cannot get workers, and is now relying on one person on a work permit to help her husband run their mechanic shop. In tears, she explained that her last employee has been unable to renew his work permit because of this Liberal-made backlog. Most likely, he will lose status and have to leave. She told me that she would have to close her shop because it is impossible to quickly get LMIA's and work permits. The hospitality and tourism sector are other industries hit hard by this backlog, but if no one can travel or afford to go on vacation, I guess the government does not really care.

Inflation is now at 6.8%, which is a new 31-year high, yet as inflation for food grew by the largest increase since 1981, and shelter and fuel inflation increased by 22% and 64%, respectively, the Prime Minister and his finance minister ignored Canadians' pain. Experts warn that inflation will continue to rise while wages barely grow and fall way behind.

If inflation was not enough, the government went ahead and increased the carbon tax yet again. That is after years of kicking the energy industry when it was down and hating on it when it made gains. Those negative effects on the oil and gas sector directly affect our ability to afford groceries and home heating, or to drive ourselves to work; that is, if a person even has a job. The government's unscientific and vindictive COVID policy has made millions of Canadians second-class citizens. That includes public sector employees and workers in federally regulated industries. For people exercising their freedom to make their own medical decisions, the government will take away the right to work, travel and be an everyday Canadian. Not only is it not enough for the government to make everyone's life miserable economically, but it is also discriminating against our fellow Canadians.

For those who can travel, the misery does not end. If Canadians planned on getting away from the high inflation and division of the Liberals, they apparently should have planned that back when they first got their passport. For some reason, the government could not figure out that if someone got a five-year passport five years ago, they would need to renew it now. After two years of lockdowns, it is no surprise that Canadians would want to travel and get away from the mess these Liberals have created, but they have even made that hard to do. The fact that, in 2022, someone must line up for three or more days or pay hundreds of dollars for someone else to stand in line to get essential government services is ridiculous. What choice do people have? The hotline has gone cold and people cannot get through to a human who can answer their questions or provide status updates. The website tells people to call, so the only option is to stand in line.

• (1345)

Like in the immigration system, people's applications for passports are now disappearing into the system. They cannot even get an estimated time when the government will send their passport back to them. Canadians are paying higher fees and extra payments to expedite applications, but then nothing happens. This should not be the way it works. Instead of letting public sector workers come back to the office, the government's solution is to throw more money at the problem and promise to hire more workers. It makes for a nice announcement, but we have seen what this promise has done in IRCC; the backlog has only grown.

The reality is that the Liberals have both failed to plan and planned to fail. After keeping public service employees at home and putting unvaccinated workers on leave, the government failed to prepare for the influx of travellers and passport requests. Now we see that failure impacting the lineups at airports. The out-of-date mandates and COVID policies are forcing significant delays. The ArriveCAN app, random testing and other protocols mean customs services have become so backed up that there is not enough capacity at some airports to accommodate the lineups. That is leaving passengers stuck on planes on the tarmac, because they have nowhere else to go.

Before the pandemic, CATSA had 7,400 employees and now, even after bringing back its staff, it has only 6,500 employees. Airports are also facing staffing shortages because of the mandates. This is at a time when the air travel and tourism industries in Canada usually reach their busiest season. Instead of working with the industry and addressing the real issues, the Minister of Transport would rather blame passengers. People are sick of the long lines and never-ending flight delays, and of the Liberals blaming them for the government's failures.

Even airports and airlines are calling for eliminating out-of-date, unscientific restrictions on travellers. The EU, the U.K. and lots of other countries worldwide, many with lower vaccination levels than Canada, have scrapped the mandates. In these countries, families can reunite with their loved ones, people can work without government discrimination, and travel is not the chaotic mess that we see here in Canada. As the Liberals continue to discriminate, divide and promote fear, Canada, our economy and Canadians are the ones that suffer. The government seems to want to make as many people miserable as possible.

Business of Supply

We still face an immigration system unable to meet our labour demands, let families reunite or even get our friends and allies out of war zones. The financial situation for Canadians is devastating, and inflation and affordability have hit a crisis point. Our travel and tourism sectors are in chaos. Passports are impossible to get, and lineups and delays at airports are never-ending. This is the result of a government that is failing to plan and planning to fail.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected all of us, but we now need an approach that will fix this disaster for all Canadians. We have an opportunity today to support this motion and show our support for the people of this country. I ask my colleagues in the other parties to do the right thing and join the official opposition in calling on the government to revert to pre-pandemic rules and service standards and to begin the process of cleaning up its mess, ending the misery for all Canadians.

• (1350)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I find the premise of a lot of this debate unfortunate, because I also, as other members have mentioned, decry using public health issues as a wedge issue to divide Canadians. I know we would like to put this together and not be feeling that the country continues to fight a sort of ideological divide.

I certainly agree that the mandates in place should be examined and re-examined based on public policy and the best information we have from public health experts. However, it is unfortunate that the hon. member decided to say that these measures were put in place because the governing Liberals, with whom I have many, many points of disagreement, were motivated by trying to make people miserable. The measures may in fact make many people miserable, but I do not think that is the Liberals' intention, nor do I think it elevates debate in this place to say so.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, I would argue that the member continues to support the government in helping to make Canadians more miserable. Whether that is our hard-working energy sector workers or the bad policies of the Liberal government, she continues to support the Liberals. Every step along the way, I have seen the member support all the bad policies of the Liberal government.

In turn, Canadians are miserable. We see that every single day. I do not know what science or what proof the Liberal government can provide to anyone or to Canadians that can prove that its vindictive mandates should still be in place today. Look at the mess the Liberals have created in every sector.

The point of my entire speech was that it does not matter what industry or what sector. The government is great at making everyone miserable. If people are trying to come to this country, it is hard enough to get here. The ones who are here are miserable because of high rates of inflation, because of the economy and because they cannot afford a home. The ones who are trying to leave cannot even do that. The government is great at making everyone miserable.

• (1355)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will bite. If the member wants to talk about tabling scientific information to support certain policies, could he

please indicate to the House what scientific evidence the Conservative Party has to bring forward this motion that life return immediately to pre-pandemic rules and service levels for travel? Can the member tell us what scientific proof he has and table the information that led to this motion being introduced?

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, there is a very easy answer to the question, because Canadians continue to see the hypocrisy from the Liberal government.

I went to Europe with the immigration minister, and we were maskless there. Whether it was on planes or trains, we were all maskless, yet when we boarded the plane to come back to Canada, we had to put on a mask because of the government's weird policies that are outdated now.

Just this morning in the House, a picture was taken of people from all parties without masks on. How can the member ask any type of question when it comes to mandates or restrictions, when his own party members do not even follow their own set rules? That is what I ask this member.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on something we have been talking about throughout this debate, which is the inconsistency and hypocrisy we are seeing from the Liberal government. I am wondering if the member can elaborate on his frustration that we cannot get a straight answer on what data or science it is following in order to continue the use of these mandates.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague used the word "frustration". A lot of people were frustrated that when a fourth wave of COVID was ravaging this country, the Prime Minister called a very selfish election and put the entire country into a health crisis. He was okay with doing that. At the same time, he was abandoning the Afghan interpreters who served Canada and kept our troops safe. It totally shows the hypocrisy within the government.

The government was okay with all of that, yet when it comes to locking down people who made health choices that are not the same as the Prime Minister's or those of the Liberals, they must be punished. However, he was okay with launching everyone, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, into a selfish election. What ended up happening is he spent the most amount of money on an election for an expensive cabinet shuffle. Hypocrisy runs rampant within the government, and Canadians see it all.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to grab the opportunity to correct the record. I do not support the Liberal budget; I voted against it. There is an idea that I continually support the Liberals. I am a Green Party member, not an NDP member.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]***ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH**

Mr. Paul Chiang (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, I am proud to stand in the House today to recognize May as Asian Heritage Month and to thank Canadians of Asian heritage for their immense contributions to our country.

In Canada, diversity is a fact and inclusion is a choice. There is still work to be done to make Canada a country that is truly equal for everyone. For the last two centuries, immigrants have come to Canada from East Asia, Southern Asia, Western and Southeast Asia, bringing with them rich heritage representing many languages, ethnicities and religions.

While the Asian community itself is very diverse, we are also united in helping build stronger communities and standing up to hate and discrimination in all its forms. I have been proud to celebrate Asian Heritage Month with friends, colleagues and constituents this month, and I look forward to continuing to represent Canadians of Asian heritage in the House.

* * *

• (1400)

WORLD HUNGER

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Madam Speaker, abroad, drought, conflict and war leave millions hungry every day. Much of this suffering is completely avoidable. My daughter is currently working in Ukraine with the United Nations World Food Programme. They do wonders, under the most dangerous conditions, just to get someone in need their next meal.

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, they have fed 3.7 million people there alone. Millions in Ukraine and around the world will go hungry this year because of Putin's war. Russia's war, waged by a megalomaniac leader, will drive up food costs around the globe. Already we are seeing the effects, and it will get much worse later this year, with the first missed crops.

Quashing the Russian war machine is the fastest and quickest way we can help reduce the number of hungry around the world. Let us do our part to reduce world hunger.

* * *

*[Translation]***NOVA OCULUS**

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, last week I met with representatives of Nova Oculus, a Canadian company that has developed a promising new medical device to treat age-related macular degeneration, or AMD.

This incurable disease is the leading cause of blindness for more than two million Canadians over the age of 50. Nova Oculus is currently awaiting regulatory approval from Health Canada for a new form of AMD treatment that uses microcurrent technology in a waveform applied directly to the retina.

In the recently completed clinical trials, participants saw immediate results and optimal visual improvement after just four four-minute treatments. They saw improvements in their ability to watch television, recognize faces and function in their environment.

Our government recognizes that one of the most important issues affecting seniors is when they cannot remain in their homes and maintain a good quality of life. That is why I commend Nova Oculus for its passion and determination to give Canadian seniors with AMD the ability to improve their vision and enjoy the golden years of their lives.

* * *

WORLD FAMILY DOCTOR DAY

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, May 19, we are celebrating World Family Doctor Day.

I want to congratulate them all for the essential work they do at the heart of our health care system. Family doctors are the closest to patients, with whom they build personalized and lasting relationships focused on prevention. It takes a special person with a lot of empathy and compassion to play this role at the crossroads of medical science. They are on the front line and they deserve to be commended for the crucial role they play, especially after years of dealing with the pandemic and having to constantly adapt to new data with unending dedication.

We need more of them, of course. To get there, the least we can do is start by sincerely thanking them. I thank family doctors from the bottom of my heart.

* * *

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR CELLULAR THERAPY

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the international hubs for cellular therapy research is located at the heart of Hochelaga. The Centre of Excellence for Cellular Therapy is one of the only centres of this scale in Canada.

I congratulate Dr. Denis Claude Roy and his team for their exceptional work and their commitment to changing the lives of many patients. The research seeks to do nothing less than healing the unhealable. Cellular therapy involves using living human cells as medicine to destroy cancerous cells, replace a defective immune system or, one day, eliminate leukemia. It is a real revolution in medicine, and it is opening the door to innovative treatments for illnesses such as Alzheimer's, genetic illnesses, heart failure and other diseases. Cellular therapy is the medicine of tomorrow, and it is happening in Hochelaga.

Statements by Members

• (1405)

RENAUD FOURNIER

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I wish to pay tribute to a great Canadian entrepreneur who recently passed away.

Renaud Fournier is the perfect example of the economic diversification of Thetford Mines. In 1960, the asbestos mines and its “white gold”, as chrysotile fibre was then called, were vitally important to the local economy. It was at this time that Mr. Fournier founded his tinsmithing and metal welding shop. Back then, the mines were his only customers. He quickly became indispensable, and thanks to his hard work, he was able to realize his entrepreneurial ambitions.

Over the next six decades, Fournier Steel Works became Les Industries Fournier and, today, Fournier Industries Group. Renaud Fournier was a visionary investor. His reputation in the mining industry is now worldwide. Developing new products allowed him to diversify his production. In 1999, he prepared his succession and, thanks to him, Fournier Industries has maintained its role as a major economic developer for the Thetford Mines region.

On behalf of my colleagues in the House of Commons, I extend my condolences to his wife, Janine, to his children, Pierre, Daniel, Brigitte and Josée, and to all the employees of Fournier Industries.

* * *

*[English]***KANNADIGAS**

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): *[Member spoke in Kannada and provided the following translation:]*

Mr. Speaker, I feel happy for the opportunity to speak in my mother tongue, Kannada, in Canada's Parliament. For a person from Dwaralu village in Sira taluk in the Tumkur district of Karnataka state, India, getting elected as a member of Parliament in Canada and speaking in Kannada is a proud moment for about 50 million Kannadigas.

In 2018, Canadian Kannadigas celebrated Kannada Rajyostava, or state day, in Canada's Parliament.

I close my statement with a few words of emotion poetry written by national poet Kuvempu and sung by the emperor of actors, Dr. Rajkumar: “Wherever you are, whatever you are, be a Kannadiga.”

[English]

* * *

ATTACK IN BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again a community has been absolutely devastated after a white supremacist opened fire in a Buffalo supermarket, killing 10 and injuring three more. Most of the victims were members of the Black community.

[Translation]

We have to acknowledge the pain, the fear and the trauma that Black communities here are experiencing as a result.

[English]

This was an abhorrent hate crime motivated by anti-Black racism and the so-called “white replacement theory”. Some on this side of the border were quick to say that this happened across the border and we do not have the same issues as the United States, but Buffalo is only a 90-minute drive from my riding of Milton and events like this do happen here in Canada. The Afzaal family was murdered in London only a year ago.

This far right wing, violent extremism is the greatest threat to public safety in North America, and it disproportionately impacts Black and Jewish communities, Muslims, indigenous people and other people of colour. Canada is not immune to white supremacy. One ideologically motivated hate crime is one too many. We must find ways to put an end to these hate-fuelled attacks. I refuse to accept that they are inevitable in today's society.

We are leaders. In the House, we are obligated to denounce hateful rhetoric at every turn unequivocally with our words and our actions, but also with better policies and better laws. Thoughts and prayers are not making our communities safer.

* * *

VYSHYVANKA DAY

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, traditionally, Vyshyvanka Day is a time to celebrate Ukraine's rich culture and traditions and share them with the world, but this year it is a time to stand with Ukraine in solidarity.

Today, while we enjoy our peace and security here at home, often taking them for granted, our beloved Ukraine suffers from the illegal and unjustified full-scale invasion by Vladimir Putin. Ukrainian soldiers and civilians have already been bravely fighting and sacrificing their lives for 87 days to protect the basic values that we all believe in.

It is time to ask ourselves this: What is the cost of not supporting Ukraine in this fight? It means that dictators and despots around the world can redraw the lines on a map by force and get away with it.

Ukraine is valiantly defending against the Russian invaders. Canada must match this bravery by providing what Ukraine needs the most: more lethal weapons.

If we believe in protecting dignity, freedom, democracy and human rights, then we must recognize that this is our fight as well. Canada must always stand with Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini. Heroyam slava.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

CANADIAN INNOVATION WEEK

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian Innovation Week is a five-day celebration recognizing and supporting Canadian ingenuity across all sectors. We salute entrepreneurs and innovators who are changing the world one idea at a time.

Canadian innovators are well positioned to take on and overcome challenges, including our most pressing global challenge: climate change.

The city of Vaughan is an example of thriving innovative creativity. As a key hub for the manufacturing and food processing sectors, Vaughan is home to Canada's first smart hospital and new business incubators.

Innovation is essential to our society and our economy. Innovators and entrepreneurs strengthen Canada's innovation ecosystem, and we will always be there to help them improve and be more competitive.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

INFLATION

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, inflation is not like the weather. It is not something that just happens like a snowstorm in May. The inflation that Canadians are suffering from today is a direct result of the deficits the Prime Minister racked up, bankrolled by the money printing of the Bank of Canada.

When the Prime Minister ran out of other people's money to borrow, he turned to the bank, and the governor was only too happy to oblige. The Bank of Canada created over \$400 billion in brand new money to purchase the government bonds to pay for the out-of-control Liberal spending.

Any time we get more dollars chasing fewer goods, we get inflation. The decision to bankroll the government's deficit spending undermined the bank's independence. It has one main mandate: to keep inflation at 2%. It has completely failed and Canadians are right to demand accountability.

To restore the bank's independence, the leadership at the bank needs to stop acting like it is the Prime Minister's personal ATM. As Milton Friedman said, "Inflation is always and everywhere a monetary phenomenon". We cannot expect the Prime Minister to know that. He brags that he does not even think about monetary policy.

* * *

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next week marks one year since the discovery of 215 unmarked graves at the former Kamloops residential school. The announcement sent shockwaves through the country and around the

world. It opened up the eyes of thousands of Canadians and others to the horrors of residential schools.

I offer my deepest condolences to residential school survivors. I thank those who have shown incredible bravery by sharing their stories. Their experience matters, their voice matters and their history matters.

The Secwépemc have a word for those who never returned from residential schools: *le estcwéy*, translated as "the missing". At this time, our country grieves alongside those who lost a friend, family or loved one.

May eternal light shine upon *le estcwéy*. They will never be forgotten.

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WINNER OF SHAUGHNESSY COHEN PRIZE FOR POLITICAL WRITING

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to rise in the House today to honour the winner of the Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing, which was presented at the 35th annual Politics and the Pen gala earlier this week. This year's winner, who was from a super talented lineup of finalists, was Joanna Chiu, a Canadian journalist who won for her debut novel, *China Unbound: A New World Disorder*.

I want to thank the sponsors and the amazing Politics and the Pen organizing team for putting on such a fun evening and for raising \$300,000 for the Writers' Trust of Canada, a very important organization that advances, nurtures and celebrates Canadian writers and writing. I also want to give a special shout-out to *China Unbound's* publisher, House of Anansi Press, based in my Toronto riding of Davenport.

Canada has such a rich literary culture and so many talented writers. It is important for us to recognize and honour their work and their contribution to political discourse both in Canada and abroad.

Congratulations to the Writers' Trust of Canada for hosting a successful event and to Joanna Chiu for this fantastic achievement.

● (1415)

The Deputy Speaker: While I am standing up, I will make a comment for anyone in the lobbies or outside the lobbies. Let us tell our friends who happen to be out there to keep the noise down, because it does bleed over into this chamber. As much as we are having fun and laughing at certain jokes and being happy to see each other, we are having serious moments here in the House of Commons.

The hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

CLIFFORD EVANS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I want to pay tribute to Clif Evans, who passed away earlier this month. Clif was known for being many things: a hotelier, the mayor of Riverton, MLA for Interlake, ministerial assistant to former minister Steve Ashton in the NDP government and, most recently, an invaluable member of our constituency team.

Clif accomplished a lot. He was a strong mayor and an MLA who fought for all his communities, his legacy including flood protection, highway improvement and support for fishers.

Clif was a proud New Democrat. Even though he was on the receiving end of a PC vote-rigging scandal in the 1990s, he had an incredible ability to reach across the partisan divide. He was proud of his work with the Association of Former Manitoba MLAs.

What we will always remember about Clif is how he connected with people and how he was welcomed in so many rural communities and first nations, where he was like a member of the community. Clif was also a great mentor and a mentor to many. Clif was one of my mentors. I was proud to work with Clif Evans and proud to have known him. He will be missed by many.

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[Translation]

WORLD BEE DAY

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on May 20 we celebrate World Bee Day.

This year, this day is especially significant because many of our beekeepers lost a large percentage of their bees, with mortality rates of up to 80%. No producer can afford such a loss.

Producers held a press conference yesterday to sound the alarm. They need support. Higher temperatures due to climate change are having a devastating impact and producers are asking for emergency assistance. We must be there for them.

We must also find long-term solutions to save our precious pollinators. Our crops depend on them. That is why I moved a motion in that regard in committee.

Bees play a key role in the environment, agriculture and food. It is our duty to protect them.

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[English]

VACCINE MANDATES

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the perpetuation of his punitive vaccine mandates, the Prime Minister is in fact prolonging the pain of COVID. The hypocrisy is evident and everyone is watching. His mask is on in Canada, but it is off when he is gallivanting around the world. His mask was on when he met with Prince Charles yesterday in Ottawa, but it was off when he met with the Queen in England. Instead of inspiring confidence and strength, he continues to stoke fear and division.

Oral Questions

Many Canadians are asking why. Well, I suppose it is because he is more easily able to control people when he keeps them worried and fearful. Talk about an abuse of power.

The Prime Minister keeps telling Canadians that he is following the science and listening to experts, but two questions arise: What science and which experts? The provinces have followed the science and have lifted the mandates. Countries around the world have done the same. Therefore, the question is this: Is there some secret science that the Prime Minister is privy to that he is not letting the rest of us into?

The reality is this, folks. Canadians deserve better. Canadians are calling on the Prime Minister to put aside his obstinate ways and act in the very best interest of Canadians. It is time to lift the mandates.

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VYSHYVANKA DAY

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is Vyshyvanka Day, the day of the Ukrainian embroidered shirt, and today I am very proud to be wearing the vyshyvanka that my grandparents Ivan and Olena made for me many years ago.

In the past, I have worn this shirt to honour my grandparents and celebrate my heritage, but this year is different. For Ukrainians, the embroidered shirt is not just a garment, but a sacred emblem of Ukrainian culture, tradition and history since ancient times. The embroidery tradition has been passed on from generation to generation of Ukrainians, as has the desire for freedom and the courage and resolve to fight for it. Ukrainians have demonstrated that courage and resolve since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24.

This year, on Vyshyvanka Day, people around the world are wearing a Ukrainian embroidered shirt to show their support for the people of Ukraine. This year, we not only honour our ancestors and we not only celebrate Ukrainian heritage, but we stand even more firmly with the Ukrainian people. I have never been prouder to wear my vyshyvanka.

*Slava Ukraini.***ORAL QUESTIONS**

● (1420)

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for two years now, Canadians have been making sacrifices to combat COVID-19. They stayed home. They got vaccinated in large numbers. They got tested. They wore masks.

Oral Questions

Two years later, the majority of governments have listened to the science and lifted the health measures to give their citizens a bit of a breather. All the governments have done so, except one. Just one government refuses to acknowledge all of the sacrifices that people have made. Why is that?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know more about COVID-19 now than ever. That said, we have come a long way since March 2020.

We have safe, effective vaccines and we have high vaccination rates. Our government will continue to make decisions informed by science and will adjust its guidelines and public health measures as this wave of the virus evolves.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' ideological stubbornness, which is not supported by science or any recognized scientific opinion, is hurting Canadians.

What is happening in Canada's airports clearly shows that this NDP-Liberal government is out of its depth, and travellers are the ones paying the price. They are the ones who have to wait in huge lineups and who are being held captive on planes for hours.

This chaos was foreseeable, but once again the Liberals did not see it coming and did not do anything. Oh yes, they are doing one thing. They are blaming travellers. When will the Prime Minister lift the public health restrictions in airports?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have testing and surveillance tools that allow us to identify new variants of concern and track the spread of this virus. We also have new treatments that can help patients from getting seriously ill.

The Conservatives have a choice to make today.

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GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us take stock of the government's record: passports, chaos; Service Canada, chaos; immigration, chaos; employment insurance, chaos; House management, chaos; border management, chaos; inflation management, chaos.

Everything this Liberal government touches is a dismal failure. Can the minister responsible for this chaos please rise?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we know, we were in a pandemic for two years. We are now in a period of transition. Canadians followed the rules. They did everything they could to keep themselves and their friends safe.

We thank Canadians. The Government of Canada will be there to help them. We are putting measures in place to ensure that Canadians receive the services they need.

[English]

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is another day, and there are more horror stories from Canada's airports. While the Minister of Transport blamed out-of-practice travellers for the bottlenecks at those airports, the parliamentary secretary now says that it is a global phenomenon. It is not.

The government has not acknowledged any responsibility. It still has not shared any specific advice it claims to have for the restrictions in the airports.

When will the government apologize to all of the travellers who have missed their flights due to its incompetence?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand how frustrating it is for Canadians to experience long lines and delays at airports. Canadians can rest assured that we are working to resolve this issue as quickly as possible. As I said earlier in the House today, we have hired approximately 400 new screening officers who are currently in different phases of their training across the country. We are taking affirmative action by forming working groups with CATSA, CBSA, PHAC and other aviation partners, and they are meeting multiple times a week to find and address the bottlenecks leading to these delays.

We ask that Canadians remain patient as we work hard with CATSA and the air sector to find a solution.

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HEALTH

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the airports across the country are still grinding to a halt, and the government says that it is people's fault. There are people who are waiting months and months for passports, while the government tells them they have to line up at 4 a.m. For basic government services, the government says it is sorry and to take a number. The parliamentary secretary has said testing 4,000 travellers a day and keeping four million Canadians from domestic travel is based on public health advice.

What specific advice has she seen that nobody in this House has?

• (1425)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that after two years of staying home and making sure that they are doing everything they can to protect themselves and their loved ones, Canadians now want to travel.

We understand that there is a huge demand. There are unprecedented volumes, in fact volumes we have not seen since 2006, when the United States asked Canadians to have a passport to travel there. We are doing everything we possibly can to ensure that Canadians can access those services in a timely fashion, and we will continue to maintain these measures so that Canadians can have access to these services.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government has decided to appeal the court ruling on the unconstitutional appointment of a unilingual anglophone lieutenant governor in Canada's only bilingual province, but not everyone in the Liberal caucus agrees. Three New Brunswick MPs, or half of the province's Liberal MPs, have since had the courage to speak out against this decision.

Does the Minister of Canadian Heritage find that his colleagues who are defending French in New Brunswick are just a bit too radical?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to protecting and promoting Canada's beautiful official languages. That is why, on March 1, I was so pleased to be able to introduce Bill C-13, which seeks to modernize the Official Languages Act. We will do our job. I hope that the Bloc Québécois and all parties will help us pass this bill.

Our government is committed to ensuring that all lieutenant governors appointed in New Brunswick will be bilingual going forward.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, there are Liberal members defending French in New Brunswick. On the other, there are Liberal MPs protesting the defence French in Quebec. It is pretty much the same gang that refused to recognize French as the official language of Quebec. It is the same gang that is criticizing the Bloc Québécois because we want private, federally regulated businesses in Quebec to be subject to Bill 101, and yet it is the Bloc that is considered radical. It really is nonsense.

Who will the Prime Minister listen to, those fighting for French or those fighting against it?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois regularly speak. They have the right to do so because they are real Quebecers. Liberal members who speak to the same issue do not have the right. The Bloc is deciding who is a real Quebecer and who is not; that is where they become radicalized.

They are also becoming radicalized when they say that, if someone asks a question about Bill 96, they are against Bill 101. We support Bill 101. We have always supported it, and that is our party's position.

Oral Questions

They say that a person who takes part in a march wants to anglicize Quebec. No, we are there to defend French and respect the anglophone minority.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last month, inflation hit a 31-year high at 6.8%. Meanwhile, wages increased by an average of just 3.3%. I doubt anyone needs a diagram to understand the resulting decrease in purchasing power.

The worst part is that while the big chains are making hundreds of millions of dollars in profits, everyone's grocery bills are going up by 9%. More and more families are turning to food banks.

When will the Liberals tax the excessive profits of big grocery stores and oil companies?

When will they double the GST tax credit?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that inflation is partly caused by Putin's illegal war in Ukraine. That is why we are focusing on affordability for Canadians.

We have cut taxes for the middle class twice and raised them for the wealthiest 1%. We created the Canada child benefit and made sure it was indexed to inflation.

We have been focused on affordability.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that when we bring up inflation, the government likes to talk about things it did five or six years ago, but the fact of the matter is that we are experiencing record inflation now.

We are experiencing that in a context in which a number of companies, including oil and gas companies right now, are receiving huge windfalls. The question is this: Is the government prepared to tax that excess profit and return it to Canadians in the form of an additional GST rebate or not? Yesterday we saw the Liberals side with the Conservatives to vote against a measure like that.

We want to know, are the Liberals going to get with the program and provide relief to Canadians now?

• (1430)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that inflation is taking a toll on the lives of Canadians and their pocketbooks. That is why, once again in this tax season, the basic personal income amount has grown again: another 500 bucks in the pockets of Canadians. A family right now that has been able to take advantage of our child care benefit in Alberta will save almost \$6,000 a year. We have indexed the Canada child benefit to inflation.

Oral Questions

We are focused on affordability and the needs of Canadians.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last time we saw the price of groceries jump 10% was in 1981, when another big tax-and-spend Liberal prime minister was in office. What was his name again? It is like déjà vu.

Doug Porter, the chief economist at BMO, said that inflation “is spreading much more broadly, and at clear risk of getting firmly entrenched”.

Will the Liberal government acknowledge today that its big tax-and-spend policies are entrenching inflation? When will it start to address the cost-of-living crisis that we are in?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the first things we did when we formed government in 2015 was to lower the taxes on the middle class twice and tax the wealthiest 1% more. In budget 2022, we have increased taxes on Canada's banks.

The illegal war in Ukraine that Putin has started is driving up inflation. If the Conservative Party is serious about supporting Canadians, it can start supporting smart legislation and smart results, stop blocking the BIA and finance, get it to a vote and put money in the pockets of Canadians.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is still using talking points from 2015. He has the time machine. He is going back to 1981 with those policies.

Other energy-exporting countries, like the United States and Australia, are taking action to protect their consumers from record-high gas prices. Trevor Tombe, an economist at the University of Calgary, has found that when Alberta dropped its gas tax, it successfully reduced its inflation rate in April.

Since the Liberal government obviously has no ideas about how it can improve gas prices, will it at least reconsider the Conservative proposal to exempt the GST on fuel? Will it at least do that?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that inflation is affecting the lives of Canadians, and that is why our budget stepped up to the plate. I know the Conservatives do not like it that we have been delivering for Canadians for seven years. I know it offends their sensibilities, but the reality is that in our budget we have dental care for Canadian families, a doubling of support through the first-time homebuyers credit, a multi-generational home renovation tax, and 500 bucks to those concerned with housing affordability.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, they can scream and shout. We are going to keep delivering for Canadians.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Yelling does not help.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Richmond-Arthabaska.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that inflation has reached 6.8%. The last time it was that high was 31 years ago in 1991.

This year, Canadians are paying 10% more for groceries than they did last year, and that is not to mention skyrocketing gas prices.

Will the Liberal government take real action now to address the rising cost of living that all Canadians are currently experiencing?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I respect my hon. colleague's question.

We know that inflation is affecting the lives of Canadians. That is why we once again increased the basic personal amount in budget 2022. That means that Canadians will keep hundreds of dollars in their pockets starting this year. We reduced taxes for the middle class, while raising them for the wealthiest 1%. We indexed the Canada child benefit to inflation.

We will continue to focus on affordability. While the Conservatives seek to block the business of the House, we are focusing on making life more affordable for Canadians.

● (1435)

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, inflation keeps going up and the government keeps doing nothing about it.

Gas prices across the country were at over \$2 a litre this morning and the price of diesel keeps going up. It is 35¢ more than it was just a month ago. This is having a direct impact on the cost of transportation, which automatically affects the cost of consumer goods, including groceries, which everyone needs.

I will repeat my question. Will the government get its hands out of its pockets, start working for Canadians and lower the cost of living for once and for all?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we well know, as do all Canadians, that inflation is caused in part by Vladimir Putin's illegal war in Ukraine. That is why we are focusing on affordability for Canadians.

In budget 2022, we proposed dental care for Canadians, doubling the tax credit for purchasing a home, and a one-time payment of \$500 for seniors.

We will continue to focus on affordability. While the Conservatives focus on picking fights, we are focusing on the lives of Canadians.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week's diesel prices averaged \$2.30 per litre, compared to just \$1.45 last year, and prices are still on the rise. Diesel is a fuel that powers our economy and powers our critical supply chain from coast to coast. This is going to impact the cost of food, clothing and other goods. This is going to lead to an economic catastrophe.

When will this tone-deaf government provide immediate relief to Canadians by cutting the taxes and ending the crippling and punitive carbon tax?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the other side knows, eight out of 10 Canadians get more back than what they pay for the price on pollution. That is verified in the numbers, and that is why we are using a market mechanism. There is no evidence that reducing taxes on fuel is passed to consumers.

At a time when this House should be focused on getting Vladimir Putin and his army out of Ukraine, the other side is playing games. We are focused on making life more affordable for Canadians, and that is exactly what we will continue to do.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals keep blaming Russia's war in Ukraine for the big price difference for gasoline between Canada and the United States, but that is Liberal disinformation. The objective of Canada's carbon tax is to make gasoline more expensive, and it is working. The Liberals should be taking credit for making energy more expensive with their punitive carbon tax.

After the exchange rate, gasoline in my riding is \$2 a litre, and it is only \$1.50 in the state of Maine. That difference is all tax. What does Russia have to do with that?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue, and Canadians deserve a fact-based discussion, not partisan talking points from the Conservatives. The fact is that this global phenomenon is caused, in part, by the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Putin.

We continue to propose concrete measures to make life more affordable for Canadians. The Conservatives focus on political talking points. We are focused on Canadians.

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*[Translation]***CLIMATE CHANGE**

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the Paris climate change targets are not met, Canada and its carbon bombs will be partly to blame. These are projects that will result in billions of tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions. We are not talking megatonnes, but gigatonnes. These projects will create so much pollution that it will be impossible to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

Researchers have a solution. These projects must be cancelled. Will the Minister of the environment do it?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

As she is well aware, just over a month ago we presented our plan to fight climate change. It clearly shows how Canada will meet its greenhouse gas reduction targets by 2030. Our plan will work regardless of whether oil production goes up, down or remains constant. Our emissions in 2019, before the pandemic, show that greenhouse gas emissions dropped, despite the increase in Canada's oil production.

● (1440)

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, something that we are hearing about is climate bombs. If all the climate bomb projects were to go ahead, the planet would be in big trouble. We have learned that global warming could reach 3°C, which is double the Paris target of 1.5°C. That is dangerous.

Canada has 12 climate bombs. Researchers say that defusing these bombs should be a priority in a climate change mitigation policy. Of those 12 bombs, several have not yet been developed. Will the Minister of Environment make a clear commitment to prevent the development of any new climate bombs in Canada?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my hon. colleague that the issue of climate bombs is not new. When I was at Greenpeace in the 1990s, we actually published a report on this. This is not a new issue, for one thing.

The other thing is that we made a commitment to cap greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas sector, and we are working on that. This is one of the things that will allow Canada to meet its greenhouse gas emission targets by 2030. They include cutting emissions by 40% to 45%, whereas the IPCC is calling on countries to cut them by at least 43%. We are doing exactly what the science is telling us to do.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada is one of the 10 worst countries in the world for climate bombs. It is on the same list as Russia, China and Saudi Arabia, the list of rogue countries that together threaten our climate future. Canada is also one of the countries that has the most to gain from the green transition, and yet the development of fossil fuels still comes first.

These gigatonne carbon bomb projects must be scrapped altogether. We also need to ask ourselves why, in 2022, the fossil fuel sector is still receiving public funds.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

Oral Questions

As she is probably well aware, the independent international NGO Energy Policy Tracker has shown, quite independently, that the Canadian government is investing more in clean technology and renewable energy than in fossil fuels. Our recovery plan is the greenest of all G7 countries and the second greenest of all G20 countries.

That said, we have committed to eliminating all fossil fuel subsidies by 2023, two years earlier than all our G20 partners. That is exactly what we are going to do.

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HEALTH

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two of my constituents, Audrée and Nicolas, contacted me about a very serious issue. Each of them has a baby with serious allergies to breast milk and regular formula, so they absolutely have to use hypoallergenic formula. A product recall caused a shortage, and now, extremely worried parents are seeing empty shelves. Apparently Health Canada has implemented an interim import policy that will get the product back on store shelves in a month, but that is too late.

Is the government telling families they will have to wait a month before they can feed their children?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is certainly a very sensitive issue. I can assure my colleague that the Minister of Health, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Health Canada and I are taking the situation very seriously. We are doing what needs to be done. I can also assure my colleagues that, here in Canada, we are lucky to have a number of suppliers, and we are doing what must be done to avoid a shortage in Canada.

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[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is the fifth-largest agri-food exporter in the world. In fact, we ship healthy food all over the globe. However, increasingly in Europe non-tariff trade barriers are restricting our access. Can the minister assure the producers in the agri-food industry that these tariffs will be eliminated or will not be applicable in the upcoming Canada-U.K. agreement?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that we have some of the most amazing exporters here in Canada and we have incredible trade agreements, including in the European Union, that give our producers access to over 500 million customers. We continue to work with our trading partners to make sure those markets are open. Indeed, we are seeing results, because we are seeing trade increase into the European Union. We are at the table with the United Kingdom, and those exporters are also getting access to that market while we are negotiating the agreement.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned this week that India has placed a ban on wheat

exports as a result of poor crop yields. It is Canada's responsibility to step up to the plate and meet this new global demand, but because of the current government's failed policies, like the carbon tax and a failure to grow our export markets, our farmers are now left with their hands tied. Why has the minister failed to secure greater market access for Canadian wheat, which would allow our farmers to step up and meet this looming global food shortage?

● (1445)

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have access to 1.5 billion customers in the global marketplace through Canada's excellent trade agreements today, whether it is here in the North American market through the newly negotiated CUSMA, the European Union through CETA, or the CPTPP, which is another 500 million customers in the Asia-Pacific. We are at the negotiating table with the U.K., Indonesia and ASEAN. We are opening up markets and working with businesses, especially small businesses, so they can get access to these markets. I am very proud of the fact that Canadian exporters are growing and are growing around the world because of the great work that we are doing.

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HEALTH

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is now clear that long COVID cases are spiking across Canada. Half of all Canadians infected with COVID-19 are expected to develop significant long-haul symptoms. Experts are warning that this will create a mass disabling event with serious and debilitating impacts on patients, yet the Liberals have ignored long COVID in their public health policy and guidance. What concrete steps is the government planning to take to help people suffering from long COVID?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his collaboration on the health committee.

The government recognizes that some Canadians who have contracted COVID-19 are facing a long recovery. Our government is actively working with national and international experts to build the evidence base on post-COVID-19 conditions to support Canadians experiencing longer-term effects. Increasing our understanding of COVID-19, including its longer-term effects, is key to addressing and recovering from the pandemic.

To that end, since March 2020, the Government of Canada has invested more than \$250 million in critical areas of COVID-19 research. Budget 2022 also proposes over \$20 million over five years, starting next year, for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to support additional research on long COVID and the effects of COVID-19.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I have asked the government many times about programs and services towards the betterment of Inuit, first nations and Métis. Indigenous people do not have adequate housing, proper investments in education and mental health supports. This is systemic discrimination from the federal government.

Now the Parliamentary Budget Officer tells us that the government is accomplishing less than in previous years. Why does the government keep failing to deliver results for indigenous people?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first let me thank the member opposite for her constant advocacy for equity.

That is exactly what our government is pursuing. We made historic investments in indigenous communities and with indigenous peoples. We passed legislation to empower indigenous communities to reassert control over their own child and family welfare. We have settled negotiations with indigenous people in terms of land and treaty obligations. We will continue to work, because we believe that when everybody has a fair chance to succeed, our country is so much stronger.

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DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May is Asian Heritage Month. This year marks the 20th anniversary since the Government of Canada officially declared May as Asian Heritage Month in our country. This milestone stands as a tribute to a proud legacy that members of many Asian communities continue to build on.

Could the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion please update the House on how our government is supporting Asian Heritage Month celebrations from coast to coast to coast?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Richmond Centre for his important work on this issue. This year's Asian Heritage Month is continuing a legacy of greatness, and throughout this month we celebrate the countless Asian Canadians who have contributed so much to our country.

Earlier this month, our government also celebrated the 20th anniversary of Asian Heritage Month. I encourage all Canadians to join with Asian communities across Canada as we celebrate a legacy of greatness that has helped make our country what it is today.

Oral Questions

HOUSING

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago, if people worked hard and saved some money, they would probably be able to afford a single-family home, but today so many young Canadians are being squeezed out of the housing market, barely able to afford rent, let alone a down payment. Not everyone has access to the bank of mom and dad. The Minister of Housing is failing young Canadians. Should they just simply give up on ever owning a home?

● (1450)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really interesting to hear the Conservatives talk about the dream of home ownership, because every time they get a chance to actually do something about it, they vote against it. When we brought in measures to increase housing supply, what did they do? They voted against it. When we brought in measures to enable first-time homebuyers to save up to \$40,000, what did they do? They voted against it. When we put together a plan to top up an extra \$500 to support vulnerable renters in Canada, what did they do? They voted against it. They can say one thing here, but Canadians can see through their rhetoric.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians of my generation are giving up completely on the dream of home ownership as a result of the minister and his government's failures. Under his watch, housing prices have doubled and supply is not meeting demand, and as a result many young Canadians are being pushed out of the market altogether. By every measure, the minister has failed to get the job done, but he continues to double down on the same failed policies. Why?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently at the HUMA committee, the Canadian Home Builders' Association called our \$4-billion investment in the housing accelerator fund "a once-in-a-generation opportunity" to build more housing supply. What did the Conservatives do when that came on the floor of the House of Commons? They voted against it.

They talk about more supports for municipalities to build more housing supply. In fact, the member for Sarnia—Lambton is calling for that, but she should have consulted her leader, who is against supporting municipalities and providing more housing supply. The member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon wants us to walk away from that and just give the money to the provinces.

*Oral Questions***CHILD CARE**

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are seeing 30-year-high inflation. A single dad in my riding tells me he was looking at an illegal 18-by-18 foot rental unit for \$1,500 a month and competing with dozens of others.

My daughter and her husband rent in east Vancouver. Their small one-bedroom has no storage and no parking for \$2,200 per month. How can young people save for a down payment on a house when their entire pay is going to rent and food?

When is the government going to get serious and help working Canadians with this cost-of-living crisis?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have good news for that member, because British Columbia has signed on to the \$10-a-day child care agreement. That single dad is going to receive up to \$6,000 a year in child care reductions if his child is in day care. There is also the Canada child benefit, so for him, as a single parent, he could be earning up to \$6,000 a year to support his children. We are there for families every single day, and we will continue to be there, whether they are in British Columbia or right across the country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the price of houses in Canada has jumped from \$434,000 to \$868,000. That is basically double.

Young families who hope to one day buy a reasonably priced home close to work and near schools to raise their children find themselves in a completely impossible situation. The dream of home ownership is being shattered by the exorbitant cost of housing.

However, the government keeps repeating the same line: This is a global problem. It is the same old story. Can the minister explain why families have to pay for their failures?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it hard to understand the Conservatives. They tell us to do things to help Canadians and when we do just that, they tell us to stop.

We are investing in child care. This is real money going back into the pockets of Canadians. We are funding education for Canadians. These are real supports for Canadians. We are here to help them. That is exactly what we are going to do in Quebec and across the country.

* * *

● (1455)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with the rise in shootings, the Bloc is calling for the creation of registry of organized crime, a registry that would allow police officers to immediately question any known member of a criminal group.

Yesterday, true to himself, the Prime Minister dismissed the idea. He said it was simplistic and that different approaches need to be taken. Of course they do, but one such approach, and it is essential, is to facilitate the work of police officers. Gang wars will not stop on their own. We have to act.

Why are the Prime Minister and his ministers stubbornly rejecting the evidence?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague. This is a major challenge, and we have to work together to advance the fight against gun violence.

As I have already mentioned, there are some extremely strict provisions in the Criminal Code to ensure that those who commit crimes are brought before the courts. We will work on other tangible solutions to reduce gun violence.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the existing legislation and other tangible solutions the minister is talking about have in no way stopped the gang wars. At some point, we have to judge the measures taken by their results. Well, the results speak for themselves: Montreal is on track to break gunshot records that date back a quarter of a century.

The police are calling for more resources to stop more people for questioning. It is hard not to agree with them when we see the number of bullets being fired on our streets every week. When will the minister create an organized crime registry to facilitate police work?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, proof of progress is that, last year, CBSA seized a record number of firearms. This is part of our strategy to strengthen our resources at the border. It is done with investment and resources.

The next time there is a vote in the House, I hope the Bloc will support it, showing the kind of co-operation that will lead to more progress in the fight against gun violence.

* * *

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Fort City Church is working to bring a family of Ukrainians to Fort McMurray. There is good news: The parents and grandma have now received their travel documents from immigration, but the family still cannot come to Canada because six-month-old Joseph's paperwork is still being processed.

My question is simple. What is it about a six-month-old baby that scares the minister?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very sensitive to the issue that is raised by the member. Certainly, as we move forward on numerous measures, we want individual Ukrainians to come as fast as possible.

I am happy to report in the House that over 24,000 Ukrainians have made their way here. I had the privilege of meeting with some of them last week when I visited Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Let us not forget our new measure: charter flights will be arriving here on May 23, in Winnipeg, as the first flights to Canada.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us make sure we cut the red tape.

Vladimir Putin has been waging a brutal and illegal war in Ukraine for almost three months. Unfortunately, the Liberal government has been slow to act and even slower to send to Ukraine the lethal weapons it needs to survive. It has refused to send Ukraine our soon-to-be-retired light armoured vehicles, such as our Bisons, our Coyotes and our M113 armoured personnel carriers. All of these LAVs will end up on the scrap heap if we do not give them away.

The Americans are sending their M113s to Ukraine. Why are we not?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue our efforts so that Ukraine can win this war. That is why, very recently, the Prime Minister announced an additional \$50 million in military aid, which includes 18 drone cameras, \$15 million in high-resolution satellite imagery, up to \$1 million in small arms and related ammunition and additional ammunition for the M777s.

Ukraine can continue counting on Canada to support its fierce resistance against this illegal war by Vladimir Putin.

• (1500)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Vyshyvanka Day celebrates Ukrainian culture, but it is bittersweet today for the 22,000 Ukrainian Canadians in Lakeland. In Ukraine, their loved ones are in bomb shelters and their homes are in ruins. Lloyminster's sister city, Nikopol, is ringed in barbed wire and barricades. Sixteen-year-old Mykita was in Vegreville when Putin attacked. His mom and sister got here, but his dad is still in Ukraine. Visas take months, zero federal flights have arrived and almost 13 million Ukrainians are displaced.

While Putin murders civilians, his ambassador is cozy on the Rideau, 10 minutes away. Why on earth is he still here?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think everyone in the House is united in our support for Ukraine and we are doing everything possible in a military sense, in a humanitarian sense and in immigration as we continue to help Ukraine.

At the same time, we have an unprecedented set of sanctions on Russia. We are suppressing Russia. We are bringing Russia down to

Oral Questions

level this playing field. This war will be won, and Canada will be there to help Ukraine.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in March 2019, two Canadian companies with operations in several Canadian provinces had their canola seed exports to China suspended by Chinese customs authorities.

Can the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tell the House if there have been any recent developments?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know how important Canadian grain is. Canadian grain is of high quality and is also important to world food security.

When two Canadian companies had their exports suspended in China, we took all the necessary action and worked closely with the industry.

I am pleased to tell the House that these companies can now resume their canola exports to China.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two years ago, Iran shot down flight PS752. Many Iranian Canadians in my community continue to grieve. In the midst of their grief, the Iranian football federation has been invited to a friendly match in Vancouver. It is no secret the Iranian football federation has heavy political connections to the Iranian revolutionary guard. They are the same people who shot down this plane and killed 176 passengers.

Will the government stop this match from happening?

The Deputy Speaker: I have not called anyone yet, so let me call the right one here.

The hon. minister online.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. government House leader.

Oral Questions

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was obviously a very good question that we, as a government, are in a state of pondering and we will get back to the member very shortly.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year, we unanimously passed my private member's bill that would help Canadians register as organ and tissue donors through their annual tax returns. The minister told the House three months ago that the CRA would consult with the provinces and territories in the coming weeks to get this done. It is three months later, and people from multiple provinces and territories are telling me that they have heard nothing from the minister or her department.

Canadians needing a lifesaving transplant are also waiting. Can the minister tell Parliament what she will personally do today to get this project on track?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe this is a question for the minister responsible for CRA, but as the parliamentary secretary for health I agree with my hon. colleague opposite. Organ donation, encouraging organ donation and ensuring these things are available to Canadians are of the utmost importance, and I am happy to support the member and have further conversations.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 37(2), my question is for the spokesperson for the Board of Internal Economy: the member for Red Deer—Lacombe.

Last fall, a question of privilege was raised in the House about troubling allegations of Liberal partisanship by the Clerk of the House, benefiting the government with insider tips and helpful arrangements. The Chair ruled that the Board of Internal Economy was seized with the matter, so it was better placed to address the allegations. Since then, the board has held eight meetings, but there have been no reports, no consequences, no investigations and no news whatsoever.

Can the spokesperson for the Board of Internal Economy please update the House?

• (1505)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for reminding me about that rule. As he may know, the board is required by law to discuss employment and legal matters in private, so I cannot say what, if anything, has been decided or discussed at those eight meetings. I would note, though, that the board's July minutes, which have been tabled in the House, indicate that my predecessor asked for an internal review but that the board did not approve. Of course, my friend is experienced and savvy about Parliament and would know that the board works on a consensus basis, so if any single political party were to veto taking

action on the allegations of Liberal partisanship, there would be no board action or decision to report.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, seal predation has been a major issue in my riding and across the province of Newfoundland and Labrador for years. It was our colleague, former MP Scott Simms, who brought forward the National Seal Products Day bill, and it was our government that established the Atlantic Seal Science Task Team. Now, with the release of the report, it is our government that will tackle this issue.

Can the minister please update the House on our government's recently announced plans to address this critical issue for the benefit of our oceans, our fish stocks and the people who depend on them?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador's fish harvesters have no louder or prouder champions than the member and his Liberal colleagues. Seals eat fish. Last week, we released the Atlantic Seal Science Task Force report, and the very next day in Corner Brook, I announced immediate action on its recommendations. These included hosting a seal summit in the fall and how to include seal impacts in fisheries management decisions. Canada's fish and seafood industries have no stronger champions than this government.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, recent polls tell us Canadians are deeply concerned about the threat of nuclear war in Ukraine. Nuclear disarmament is more important now than ever. The world cannot be held hostage by madmen like Putin.

Before they were elected, the Liberals promised to play a leading role in nuclear disarmament, but like so many other promises, nothing has been done. The Canadian government has an obligation to use its power and influence to make the world a safer place. Will the minister, at the very least, commit to sending an observation delegation to the disarmament meeting in Vienna this June?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona for her commitment and leadership on this very important issue.

Canada shares in its unwavering commitment towards a world free of nuclear weapons. We agree that we need to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all places at all times. While we acknowledge that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons reflects well-founded concerns about the unacceptably slow pace of global disarmament, our concern right now and our focus is on working with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the NPT, and on the Stockholm initiative for nuclear disarmament.

We will continue to engage in all multilateral fora.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to follow up on that question from the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

If we have an unwavering commitment to end nuclear weapons, why is Canada not even a signatory to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons? Why would we not send a delegation to the first meeting of the parties, now that that treaty has come into force legally?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the ongoing and unwavering commitment of this member as well.

Nuclear proliferation is a concern to all Canadians. We are very well aware of this. We are well aware of the various multilateral fora that are working on this issue. We will continue to monitor them every day because we know that a nuclear war can never be won and should never be fought.

• (1510)

The Deputy Speaker: That is all the time we have for question period today.

We have a few points of order. The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

* * *

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I am sure you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, given we are approaching the one-year anniversary of the discovery of 215 unmarked graves at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, the House

(a) recognize the harm done to Indigenous peoples and the need for healing as demonstrated by the discovery of the 215 unmarked graves, and

(b) call on the Government to affirm their commitment to lower the flag to half-mast on each and every September 30th in recognition of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and for each child whose life was stolen at residential schools.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay. Hearing no dissenting voice, it is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

Business of the House

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Earlier, in response to a question from the Bloc Québécois, the Minister of Canadian Heritage misled the House when he said that the Liberal government supported Bill 101. I would like to reiterate the words of the president of the Liberal Party in 2020 who—

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of debate between two members of the House.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence to recognize the approaching one-year anniversary of the discovery of 215 unmarked graves at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School.

I now invite hon. members to please rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know we are coming up to a break week, and I want to wish everyone well. I know there is still work to be done in our constituencies. It has been four weeks, and I am sure the work has piled up, so I wish everybody a great week, and a restful week as well, because we are heading into the final stretch before the summer break.

Could the government House leader advise the House of the business when we get back on May 30 and, of course, the business of the remainder of the week?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will associate myself with my hon. colleague in wishing all members a productive week in their constituencies as the weather improves and we are able to participate more and more in events.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the House for the important progress that has been made on our legislative program over the last week. I know we have had a lot of late nights, but we are seeing a lot of important legislation being adopted, so I am appreciative of the House and the work it is doing.

This evening we will consider, in committee of the whole, the estimates of the Department of Public Works and Government Services. Tomorrow it is our intention to call Bill C-13, regarding the Official Languages Act. I would also like to inform the House that we will be tabling supplementary estimates tomorrow.

Business of Supply

When we come back from working in our constituencies during the week that was aforementioned, we will be entering into the most intensive part of the parliamentary calendar, as we look toward the end of June. On Monday we will return to second reading of Bill C-18, respecting online news remuneration. The second estimates debate, this time for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, will take place that evening as well. Tuesday shall be an allotted day, and I will be in further communication with the members opposite about additional business for that week, including our intention to hold a debate on the procedures of the House pursuant to Standing Order 51.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1515)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—RULES AND SERVICE LEVELS FOR TRAVEL

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am gratefully sharing my time with the member for Ottawa Centre.

For me the coming moments will be filled with deep emotion, as I rise to present my farewell remarks in the House of Commons. I thank my colleagues across all parties for the opportunity today to share my profound gratitude.

[Translation]

The opportunity to serve the residents of Mississauga—Lakeshore as a member of Parliament since 2015 has been a lesson in humility and the most transformative experience of my career. I am extremely grateful to the Prime Minister of Canada and to our community for the trust they have placed in me during this period.

[English]

I will back up briefly to the beginning of my journey to our magnificent country that I have come to call home.

I was born in Cold-War West Berlin and then lived just outside Hamburg, Germany until my mid-teens when one day my mom and dad, Jutta Spengemann and Michael Spengemann, announced to my sisters, Lily and Maya, and me that we would be moving to Canada to a city called Mississauga. If anyone had, at that time, told me that I would one day represent a district of that city in our Parliament, I would have laughed or perhaps shuddered in disbelief.

However, my parents created wonderful and cherished opportunities for us. There were opportunities to study, explore, travel and become involved in the community. Membership in the 845 Royal Canadian Air Cadets Squadron created an appreciation of service. Student government led to an interest in politics on my part and to volunteer positions within our party. The seed was planted.

I am enormously grateful to my mom and dad for the courageous, bold decision they made to leave our previous home in Germany to come here. I thank them today and every day. It was the

best decision they made for us, and there were many excellent decisions. Their love and encouragement along a series of twists and turns in my path ultimately led me to an opportunity to serve with the United Nations in Iraq from 2005 until 2012. It was from that position that I entered Canadian politics.

This will be about as partisan as I will ever get, but it was at the moment when the Liberal Party, my party, had been pushed up against the wall after the 2011 election, and when there were whispers that there may no longer be a space for the Liberal vision in the tapestry of Canadian politics. It was then that I decided to come home and get into the political trenches.

Along with my parents and my sisters, who strongly and quietly supported my journey into politics, I would like to thank all of my family and loved ones in Canada and in Europe, and my friends and teammates for their tireless encouragement and support over the course of three elections and the much more important time in between.

I have a very special and particular word of thanks to the members of my constituency team, who have served the people of Mississauga—Lakeshore with incredible compassion, patience and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic: Dulce Santos, Hanan Harb, Cassandra Fiore, Brenda Armstrong, Adam Larouche, Yaseen Abdulhai, Zelia Bukhari and Rafeef Kilani. I thank them for their extraordinary and tireless service in unprecedented times. They have the deep gratitude of our entire community.

To our amazing volunteer teams, including the Mississauga-Lakeshore Constituency Youth Council, the Mississauga-Lakeshore Council for Seniors, the faith leaders' dialogue, the Mississauga-Lakeshore Federal Liberal Association, and groups of environmental leaders, including shoreline cleanup crews and youth advocates against plastic pollution, such as the 1st Port Credit Sea Scouts, and so many others, I send my sincere thanks for their leadership and for everything they have done and will do for our community.

Alongside them are leaders in many other extraordinary organizations and initiatives in our community doing their part to build a better tomorrow. There are indigenous organizations, such as the Eagle Spirits of the Great Waters. In the BIAs, there are heritage sites such as the Small Arms Inspection Building; farmers' markets; The Compass food bank; Armagh house and Interim Place, which are working tirelessly to protect women and children at risk of violence. There are also sports organizations, such as the Mississauga Canoe Club and PCYC's learn to sail program; faith-based organizations and places of worship; ratepayer groups; environmental organizations, such as Credit Valley Conservation. There is also Epilepsy South Central Ontario, as well as our many festivals and cultural organizations, and countless others.

To each and every one of these extraordinary leaders, I send my profound thanks for contributing so much to the spirit, strength and resilience of our community. It has been an absolute joy to work with them, and I know that their exemplary service will continue in the times to come.

• (1520)

[Translation]

I would like to thank my colleagues in every party in the House. I thank them for their service. I thank them for their camaraderie, their friendship and the extraordinary opportunity to work with them in committee on important bills and during times of celebration and remembrance. I have learned a great deal from all of them, directly and indirectly, individually and collectively. I will bring this experience with me to my new role.

[English]

I will also give a word of thanks to fellow parliamentarians who belong to the Inter-Parliamentary Union for their service in tackling important challenges.

[Translation]

The Inter-Parliamentary Union, or IPU, is well known to many members in the House, and it is one of the oldest international organizations in the world. Founded in 1889, it now comprises 179 member parliaments.

It was an extraordinary experience to meet and work with many parliamentary colleagues in the IPU and its committees, in particular the Committee on Democracy and Human Rights and the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

Parliamentary diplomacy and international advocacy have become very important in many respects, and I am grateful for the work we have been able to do together.

[English]

Let me offer a word of thanks to the extraordinary diplomatic community here in Ottawa. I thank the ambassadors, high commissioners, *chargés d'affaires* and embassy personnel from over 120 countries for being here, working closely with us, promoting strong relationships and alliances, communicating important priorities and tackling new challenges.

Never before have these friendships and relationships mattered more than they do now in these times of unprecedented crisis. They will endure as important foundations for building a much better tomorrow.

Canada is an extraordinary country, and if we get it right, our brightest days are still very much ahead of us. We have the world's longest coastline, the world's second-largest land mass, abundant natural resources, rich and diverse histories, important ecosystems, the world's top talent, cutting-edge technologies, a compassionate society and staunchly defended values and institutions that support our democracy, including the House of Commons.

[Translation]

There is still much to do in the areas of reconciliation, climate action, diversity and inclusion, social and economic investments, energy diversification, security and defence, international development and peace building, to mention but a few.

I am deeply honoured to have had the opportunity to work on each of these issues and others in the House of Commons, and I

Business of Supply

wish each and every one of my colleagues the best of luck as they continue to serve our country and move us forward.

[English]

I look forward to serving once again with the United Nations, re-connecting with former colleagues, meeting new teams and remaining connected with each and every member. Our country is in good hands.

Chi-meegwetch. Thanks from the bottom of my heart. Much love.

• (1525)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are few interactions that are memorable in this place for a new member and even fewer that are genuine, especially for a new member, and that describes the few interactions I have had with the member opposite.

I would like to thank the member for his service to this country and this place. I look forward to seeing that continued service in the next place.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, I was not prepared for questions and answers, but I am grateful.

This comment reflects that at key moments, this House is one. It is one in my heart. We have our own parties and our own political vision, but that is what makes us strong.

There are times when we need to show the division and need to show Canadians the options that are available. That is a constructive way of engaging in democracy. However, as everyone can see, the friendships here are deep. The respect across party lines is deep. The respect for the House is deep here at home and abroad. I am deeply grateful to have served with all members. I thank my colleague for her comment.

As I said in my speech, I leave with a full heart, with many memories and with many friendships that I will carry with me, including with the hon. member across.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to wish my colleague the very, very best on behalf of all New Democrats.

The member and I are not on the same team, but I will say that when we speak together, we see things very similarly. I have enjoyed learning from him and working with him at the interparliamentary committee and the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association. I really cannot say enough about his patience, calmness and impartiality as the chair of the foreign affairs committee, which colleagues can imagine has become fiery on several occasions.

I want to thank him for his service to this country, and I also want to thank his family for their sacrifice and commitment.

Business of Supply

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona for her service, her friendship and her vision of making not only Canada better but the world better. She and I share much common ground and many commonalities on the project that she is pursuing. I may not have been able to pursue it as vigorously within my own camp until now, but we share it profoundly.

I deeply appreciate her comments on behalf of the NDP. I look forward to remaining in close contact.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as a new member representing the Bloc Québécois in the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and on behalf of all my colleagues, I would like to wish him the very best in his new endeavours at the United Nations.

In a world context that reminds us that we must work as much as possible across party lines to promote peace, I sincerely wish him good luck and thank him, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, for all his years of service.

I simply regret not having had the chance to work longer with him in the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my Bloc Québécois colleague for her service and her commitment to a better world, here in Canada and abroad. I am deeply grateful for my relationship with my Bloc Québécois colleagues, including the members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

I thank my colleague for her words of encouragement.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is a wonderful thing to feel in this place a sense of deep respect that is shared by all colleagues on all sides of the House. I just want to send from the Green Party of Canada to my dear friend from Mississauga—Lakeshore the best wishes.

I have a genuine question, if he is able to answer it. What are his duties with the United Nations? Where is he going? Is he allowed to tell us? I want to stay in touch. I want to keep working together.

• (1530)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, briefly, first of all, I give a profound thanks to my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands and the Green Party.

The service is in a far part of the world. It is in the Asia region that deals with humanitarian and development issues. I will have more to say and will be happy to explain some of the details in person. I very much look forward to serving in that part of the world, a region that I have not worked in before. There is a whole host of challenges there that are facing the organization and its member states.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am standing here with a lot of mixed emotions. The member for Mississauga—Lakeshore is a very close personal friend. I met him in 2015. I really value the class, grace and intelligence that he

has brought to the House and to each and every one of us, and the advice, level of respect and quality of debate that he has brought to this place.

I will be very, very sad to see him go. It has been an honour and a privilege to represent the residents of Mississauga with him over these past almost seven years now. I am really looking forward to bigger and better things from our friend and colleague, the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and friend from Mississauga—Erin Mills for her kind comments. We were both elected in 2015. Team Mississauga is a tight-knit team.

I want to thank her for her service and for her incredibly important role and voice in the field of human rights, diversity and inclusion. She has done tremendous work. She is not just a leader in Mississauga; she is a national leader. I look forward to hearing much more from her in the months and years to come. I thank her so much for her kind comments.

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too arrived here in 2015 with the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore. I had the honour of knowing him before we were elected. I share a boundary with him; his riding is next door to mine.

Most politicians, in my experience, arrive here very impressed with themselves. The member, on the other hand, is very rare. He has the combination of a massive intellect and humility.

I want to thank him for everything he has done here. I thank him for being a good neighbour and, most of all, I thank him for being a very dear friend.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my good friend and neighbour from Etobicoke—Lakeshore for his kind comments. Again, this is about working together. It is about collegiality. However, at the core, within our camp and across the aisles, it is about friendship. This is an example of a long-standing friendship.

There has been tremendous service on his part as a leader in caucus, as the Ontario caucus chair and in so many other ways. Yes, our ridings abut and our residents visit each other frequently and regularly. We share a waterfront. I look forward to remaining in very close contact with him.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as chief government whip, I want to speak on behalf of all Liberal colleagues in the House, and hopefully indeed all colleagues in the House, to say the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore represents the very best of us. He was a member elected in what will prove to be an incredibly productive class of 2015 in this place. He is going to serve Canada with great distinction, with great honour and, as my previous colleague said, with great humility across the world.

His respect for this institution and for the people in it is manifest today. I know he is a deep, abiding and lasting credit to the great institution that is the Liberal Party of Canada, and I know he will return to it often. I thank him.

Business of Supply

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the chief government whip, for his kind comments. Again, this is about service. In his case, it is long-standing service, not only in the House but also for our party, our vision and the values we defend. All colleagues look to him as somebody with tremendous experience, which he shares very openly and willingly. We all benefit from his accomplishments, his vision and his ability to pull people together across the aisles. I very much appreciate his words and friendship.

• (1535)

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really want to wish the member and his family all the best as they move forward. He has had a great career here and is going to have a great career going forward.

I know this is going to be his last question period, so I thought I would ask him a question just so he would have a chance to answer. What does he think of the lineups at airports?

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure to work with my colleague and all colleagues on the Conservative side of the aisle. I look forward to resuming my service with the UN. It is a service that is very closely connected, as my colleague can imagine, to air travel.

I look forward to the lines shrinking as well, and looking ahead, I am proud of the work our government is doing to do that. We could always step on the gas a bit more. As officials who are part of the global commuters group that travels regularly between headquarters in New York and the field, I very much look forward to the full post-COVID resumption of air travel in every country, not just ours.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I first met the hon. member, who is now leaving us, when he and I both worked at the Privy Council Office. It was a great honour for me to be elected and be in the same chamber as him, and—

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the—

The Deputy Speaker: The member is not wearing a tie.

I will let the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore respond.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, with the concurrence of the House, I would like to respond to the comments of my good friend from Vancouver Granville.

It was a pleasure and privilege to serve with him in the civil service. This goes back a number of years, to the early 2000s, but I think that experience as civil servants has really instilled in us not only an ethic but also a good understanding of how government works in a non-political way.

Civil servants across the country who are serving now, especially during the pandemic, represent the best of the best. I thank my colleague for his service in that regard, but also for his continued service as the member for Vancouver Granville and for his friendship.

The Deputy Speaker: As all things do, good things must come to an end. I want to thank the member for his hard work in the chamber and, of course, wish him well in his future endeavours. He can always come back and visit any time he wants.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a tall order to follow. Before I get into talking about the motion at hand, I want to take a moment to thank the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore for his service in this place. I am confident that his community is better for it, and definitely our country is better for it.

It took me down memory lane when he was talking about immigrating from Germany and his parents telling him and his siblings that they were coming to Canada.

I had a similar experience when my family and I were immigrating to Canada. My parents came in one day and said that we were moving to Canada. As I was a teenager at the time, that was obviously big, life-changing news. We probably did not understand the full impact of it, but it was one of the best decisions that my parents made for my siblings and me. Living in this great country definitely changed our lives.

I want to come back to this motion and speak about it. I think it is an important conversation that we are having in the House around the impact of the pandemic that we all have faced in our lives. Now that we are getting, hopefully, to the tail end of the pandemic, there are questions around how we get back to resuming our lives. As for all of the different functions that the government performs and that we had done before the pandemic, how do we get them to a normal place, as they were before?

I think it is important to note, and it is important to remind all of us, that we are still in the midst of a global pandemic. I often hear debate in the House and it sometimes feels as if we have forgotten that the pandemic is not yet over.

We still do not have complete control over this disease. This virus has taken countless innocent lives from us, not only here in Canada but around the world. I believe that the number is about a million or so. I may be understating it, but it is a large number.

We are still in the midst of this global pandemic, so we have to be mindful about that particular important fact and be able to work together, not only as parliamentarians but also as members of the society of citizens of Canada, to put an end to this pandemic. That is why our government here in Canada, federally, and the provincial and territorial governments, in line with global governments around the world, took the important steps they took over two years ago to control the spread of this highly transmissible disease: the coronavirus.

As a result, we all recall, our entire system got shut down. It had to be done overnight. Nobody did that because that was what they wanted to do. Nobody did that because it was part of some grand conspiracy, which some people out there believe but is absolutely false. It was done so that we could protect lives.

Business of Supply

Members can just imagine for a moment if those important steps had not been taken to shut down our airports, to limit travel and to make sure we worked from home as opposed to going into large, congregating settings. Members can imagine how many more lives would have been lost.

All of those steps, and all of those precautions, were taken on the advice of public health officials so that we could protect each other. There is nothing more valuable, as we know, than human life. That is why we all took those steps.

Thanks to our scientists here in Canada and around the world, and how quickly they worked to develop a vaccine that could then help us immunize ourselves from COVID-19, which is another remarkable achievement, a vaccine was created in a very short period of time. It got tested. It was proved that it actually saves lives. There was a massive effort here in Canada, which is ongoing around the world, to vaccinate ourselves so that we could fight this virus as well.

• (1540)

Can members imagine if that had not happened? How many lives have been saved because Canadians really stepped up and got vaccinated with both shots? The number for the booster shots is continually rising. Hopefully, more Canadians will get their third shot, as I have, and I am sure many members of the House have. That is being done so we can protect lives.

The question now is what do we do next? Perhaps that is the essence of this motion we are debating today as we are hopefully at the tail end of this pandemic. We have to continue to listen to the advice of public health experts, who are telling us that we cannot rush to lift the mandates when it comes to requiring people to get vaccinated, to wear masks or to make sure they keep a proper distance.

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

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I know I am in the far corner, but I am having trouble hearing the hon. member who is speaking due to some interruptions.

The Deputy Speaker: I could hear a few interruptions as well from a few members in the chamber.

The hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, as we look at next steps, we need to keep listening to the advice of public health officials because they are telling us that we cannot rush into ending the requirements for people to get vaccinated or to wear masks, or to ensure we keep a safe distance from each other. I again remind hon. members in this place that we are still in the midst of a global pandemic. Just because we wish for it to be over, and I am sure everyone wishes that, including me, it is not done yet. We are not fully immune to COVID-19, and we need to continue to work hard because it is about saving lives. This is not about politics or ideology: it is simply and purely about saving lives. We have to do everything in our capacity. That is what compassionate societies such as ours do to save lives. Therefore, let us make sure that the mandates with respect to travelling and vaccinations are maintained until we feel comfortable that we are all protected.

• (1545)

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: We do feel comfortable.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite heckled to me that he does. It is good for him if he does. Wishing does not make it so, because the scientists and experts around the world have not told us that.

We need to start getting prepared to open up the world and our society as we start to resume our lives thanks to the high vaccination rates and the fact that Canadians stepped up and followed all the rules. We need to make sure we bring back the resources to open our airports, that all government services with respect to passports and the like are fully available, and the government is doing so.

Can we do better? Of course we can do better, and we will continue to do better so that as this pandemic comes to an end we can resume our lives the way we used to live prior to the beginning of this pandemic.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to applaud the member for the performance he just gave. It is interesting that the Liberals who sit here with their masks on during the debates in the House of Commons are the same Liberals who go to receptions all over downtown Ottawa with their masks off, where there are hundreds of people. I would ask my colleague across the way why it is the Liberals wear their masks in the House of Commons, but not when they go to receptions such as the Sir John A. Macdonald one last night? If they are concerned about their safety and the safety of others, why is it okay for them to not worry about wearing their masks in public when they are not on Parliament Hill?

Why is it okay for health officers across the country to say we do not have to wear masks in Alberta, Saskatchewan or anywhere else in the country but on Parliament Hill? Can he tell me what advice the Liberals are following? It is not scientific: It is political, as this member has talked about throughout his whole speech.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, I try to do my very best to wear my mask because I want to keep myself safe and I want to keep my family safe. In fact, when my two young children go to school, they wear masks, even though they are not required to. They know better. They are six and 10 years old, and they continue to wear their masks. I do not even have to remind them and they do so because they want to protect themselves, but most importantly, they want to protect others. Do members know who my children talk about protecting? They talk about protecting their grandparents and their well-being.

This is about compassion. This is not about politics. Members opposite can choose to sit in the House and not wear masks. They do so every single day, and that is their call. We will continue to take steps and precautions and we will continue to protect Canadians to ensure that we get through this pandemic safely.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Ottawa Centre for his speech.

I would like to hear what he has to say about the amendment proposed by the Bloc Québécois. We want to replace “immediately revert” to pre-pandemic rules with “gradually revert” to them.

During the pandemic, I consulted with cultural and tourism organizations in Shefford on various emergency committees. They were calling for predictability. They wanted a clear reopening plan. The government failed to come up with one, making it difficult for many businesses to anticipate what will happen next. Both of these sectors have been hit hard by the pandemic. Now they want to recover from it.

What does my colleague think about the importance of proceeding gradually, while presenting a reopening plan and providing predictability to the cultural and tourism sectors? That is what they are asking for.

• (1550)

[English]

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, I concur with the member opposite. She is absolutely right: We need to develop plans. We need to have predictability and certainty as to the next steps as we come to an end to this pandemic. That is exactly what I was talking about. It is very similar to conversations I had with my constituents in the tourism sector that exists right here in Ottawa: the nation's capital.

We agree that we need to work together to develop those important plans, and I will continue to urge all government ministers to do so. I believe the government has been doing that. We are developing those plans. We need to make sure that we bring resources back into our services that were thinned out during the pandemic so that Canadians can get the services they deserve.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the important point made by my colleague. The pandemic is still very much with us. He made the critical point that vaccines have saved lives here in Canada and around the world, but the reality is that so much more needs to be done to ensure vaccine access around the world and Canada is not doing enough.

We should be supporting the TRIPS waiver. We should be allowing pharmaceutical companies here to work with countries in the global south, such as in Bolivia, to produce vaccines during this pandemic that has proved to be particularly deadly for many countries in the global south.

Does the member agree that Canada ought to be doing more to ensure vaccine justice around the world?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for finding common ground with what I was saying, which is that the mandates and the requirements for vaccines have saved lives, and we need to ensure that it happens around the world. I want to let the member know that I will continue to advocate for Canada to play an engaged role globally so that vaccines are available around the world and people, especially those who come from poorer countries, have access to this lifesaving vaccine also.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, who I know has a very important speech to give after me.

Business of Supply

This is a very timely motion, considering what is going on in our airports across Canada and the fact that many have had the privilege to pair off with a minister to the U.S. I could draw some comparisons to how the U.S. is doing things in light of post-COVID, or endemic COVID, versus how we do it here in Canada.

To be travelling here in Canada, people have to be vaccinated. Let us make that point very clear. Let us look at the way people go through the process. In Saskatoon, I get to the airport and walk into the airport, but I do not have a mask. I have been out and about in the community all weekend without a mask. I do not have one in my pocket and have to run back to my truck to find one in the glove box, because I need one at the airport. I do not need it anywhere else in Saskatchewan, but I need it at the airport.

I find an old mask, dust it off and away I go through security. I show my NEXUS card. In Saskatoon, a NEXUS card does not get people into their own lane. It actually just gets them to the front of the line. That must make the people who have been waiting in line for an hour and a half really happy to watch me walk by them to go to the front of the line—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: So don't do it.

Mr. Randy Hoback: That is a good point, but not when you do not have enough time. If you get to my point, Mark, and listen to me, you might get some ideas on how you can improve things—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I want to remind members that they are not to have conversations across the way. I do want to remind the parliamentary secretary not to interrupt parliamentarians when they have the floor. I do want to remind members that they are not to use first or last names of members who are in the House.

The hon. member for Prince Albert.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, I do apologize for that mistake.

I guess what I am saying is that when people are in a rush to catch their flight, they use their NEXUS card and go through security, but they go through the exact same security process as everybody else. In the U.S., people have a preferred traveller status, so when they go to the U.S. and they have their NEXUS card or a global entry card, they get into a separate line. They put their luggage on the rack, put their jacket on the rack, although they do not necessarily have to take their jacket off, it gets pushed through and away they go.

People do not have to take their liquids out of their one-litre Ziploc bag and put them into a Toronto-approved Ziploc bag. They do not have to take their shoes off. They do not have to take their belt off. They do not have to take their computer out. They do not have to do any of those things, because they have already gone through the security screening process up front. They are not viewed as a threat. It is just like every time people apply for a NEXUS card, which is also a global entry card in the U.S.

Business of Supply

Here is an example of what the government could do right now with labour shortages. It could have a specific line for those members, because they are not a risk. They are zero threat. Why would we not take the best practices out of the U.S. and apply them here in Canada to speed up the line? If we speed up that line, we could give more resources to the other lines that are lacking resources at this point in time.

In Saskatoon, as I said, when people go through the screening, first of all, they take their jacket off, they take their belt off, they take everything out of their pockets, they take their computer out, they take the liquids out and put them into the one-litre bag they have to use, and then they go through the screening. Then, they get to the secondary screening. There is one thing we are noticing in the airports. For example, in Toronto, with the new system, I call it the scatter system. People go into a line, right next to four other people, and they put their stuff into their bucket. The bucket goes, and then another person's bucket goes, and another. There is actually four to five times more secondary screening in that process because of how it is going through the system. More people are waiting for their bags at the other end, and they are all scattered.

How is this becoming more efficient and faster? How can this work when people are bumping into each other and going around each other trying to figure out where their luggage is, where their bags are, where their shoes are, where their belt is and trying to keep their pants up while they are doing it? It is craziness at its greatest. We see that here in the Ottawa airport over and over again. There are some little things that could be changed to make this a lot smoother and a lot more efficient, if the Liberals wanted to.

I mentioned the NEXUS card. I go to the gate. I go to board the plane, and I show my NEXUS card. The Air Canada agent says, "Wait a minute, that is an expired NEXUS card." Yes, I know it has expired. I was told I could use an expired NEXUS card. The agent says I cannot use it for ID. I say that is fair enough and go to apply to renew my NEXUS card. I did it two years ago, and I am still waiting for that interview. I have been online checking to see where I could get an interview done in Canada. I cannot. I live in the Prairies, just north of Saskatoon. Before COVID, I had to go to Calgary or Winnipeg, and now, after COVID, they are saying I would have to go to Buffalo or New York in order to get the interview to get my NEXUS card renewed. Does that make sense? Is that proper planning, knowing that we are going to come out of the pandemic at some point in time? Why is it that way?

Coming through the airport, I have seen lots of things, looking at the way things have been operating. I saw one of the more horrific scenes when I was coming in through Montreal. I walked through Montreal airport and looked at the lineups, and they were outside the door, not a line straight outside the door, but weaving back and forth, going around the counters and out the door, to get through security. I asked the security guard what was going on and why it was that way. He said that some of the workers were unvaccinated so they got fired and could not work, some of the workers were laid off and have not been rehired, and the workers who were there were getting so stressed that they were not showing up for work. They are being overworked. He said they are finding it frustrating. They are tired of people yelling at them, because people are at their wits'

end by the time they get to the security screening process. I can understand why they are frustrated and why it is a problem.

People get through that process, and then they get through secondary screening. I was at the gate at 9:30 at night, waiting for my flight at 10:30, and I saw these four ladies running to beat the devil. They were sweating and they were upset, because they had just found out their flight had gone without them. The door had just closed. In fact, they were looking out the window at that plane. They were trying to get back to Toronto to their family on a Sunday night. They could not spend the night. One lady said out loud that she was a diabetic and she did not have any more insulin with her for the evening. They had spent four hours in the lineup. They took it out on that poor agent. They were mad, and rightly so. They were yelling and screaming and demanding action. What could he do? The plane had left.

• (1555)

The reality is that the fault lies with the government. It lies right at the Liberals' feet and it lies at their feet in so many aspects of what is going on right now. The government cannot be proactive on anything. It will not react until the crisis hits such a level that it is forced to react. We knew this was coming. We knew that Canadians were going to start travelling again. There is no question about that. The airlines knew that. If the airlines had been given a bankable schedule, they could have scaled up accordingly. They are doing the best they can to accommodate the number of people who want to travel again. Now the bottleneck is our airports, our airport security and the processes that we have to go through in order to board that plane.

The Liberals could have preplanned that. For example, on passports, the Liberals could have said, "We have a lot of people who have 10-year passports coming up for renewal. Maybe we should start approving and processing passports." They could have said that a year ago. Maybe they should have had things in place so they would not get bottle-jammed right until now and try to do it all at once.

When I hear people tell me that they get faster service if they go through their Liberal MP's office than they do through a Conservative MP's office, I get very concerned because that should not happen. I have heard of two instances of that happening now.

When I look at that, I think that if they had planned properly, they could have avoided that. If they had properly planned for NEXUS cards being renewed, they could have avoided people not having interviews and waiting and waiting for their interviews. If they had properly planned for bringing the airports back into service, we would not have seen the lineups we have in place today. CBSA would have been able to start hiring and training people sooner if the Liberals had a proper plan. These people do not plan. When they do not plan, what do they get? They get failure, and that is what the government has produced time after time.

Business of Supply

What can the Liberals do now? They say they are protecting Canadians and they are following the science. They say it is very important to follow the science, and they think they are doing everything right to protect Canadians, which is fair enough. The Saskatchewan public health officer does the same thing. It is the same with the person in Quebec, in Alberta, in Ontario and in B.C. They are following the science, and they are actually being transparent with the science. They are saying that based on the science they can do this and they are allowed to open it up to this level or that level. We have seen that just lately in Quebec, where they made decisions based on what their needs were to reopen their economy accordingly. It was transparent. People knew what was going on, when it was going to happen and why it was going to happen.

The government will not give us a plan. Not only that, it will not give us the dataset or the points it is using to make the decisions it is making. Then the Liberals wonder why people are suspicious. They wonder why people do not trust them. All they need to do is show some transparency, which the Prime Minister, in 2015, said he would show an abundance of.

With this issue, when it is health-related, why would the government not have transparency? What is the reason the Liberals want to hold back the dataset they are using to make their decisions? There should be no reason. They should be able to do that without any type of qualms. If they showed the dataset and said, "Here is the justification. This is why we have to do what we are doing today", and showed the science to back that, we probably would not be having this debate today, but they are not. The hypocrisy is that the Liberals are saying that the science says we need to do all this stuff, yet they are letting everything go back to normal and they are not following with it.

Yes, we needed to have lockdowns. I can remember being in the Toronto airport in November of last year, I think, and looking down the hallways. I could have said my name and it would have been echoing through the hallways because there was nobody there. There was nobody travelling. Let us also keep in mind what we did not have then. We did not have any therapeutic treatments. We did not have vaccinations. We did not know what we know today.

There are lots of things the government can do. I will end it there and I look forward to the questions.

• (1600)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, when the member was speaking, in particular earlier on in his comments, at the beginning of his speech, he was focusing on and telling his stories about going through an airport and the various screening and security measures that were there. Then he seemed to suggest that one way to fix the problems that have been associated with the increase in travelling, in particular with some of the rules around COVID, was to drop some of those screening requirements that are there for security purposes. I do not understand where he is going with this. Is he saying to drop the security in favour of trying to move things faster because of the protocols that are there for COVID?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, I am not surprised the member is confused, but what I was actually saying is that there are best practices in other areas of the world that the Liberals could adopt here to have a more efficient screening process. If people have already gone through the NEXUS process and done their pre-screening beforehand, the chance that they are a risk is very small, so why are we worried about the containers, the shoes, the belts, the jackets or the computers? If somebody had thought through that process, yes, they go through the full screening.

This is the system that is being used in the U.S. The U.S. went through worse terrorist attacks by airplanes than any other country in the world, so if it is good enough for the U.S., should we not at least consider it?

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I currently serve on the Standing Committee on Health. Two or three weeks ago, the committee heard from public health officials, including Dr. Tam. We asked her whether she thought that Canada was in the endemic phase of the pandemic, and she told us that she did not think so.

My colleague says that he wants to follow the science, but I think public health officials have a lot more expertise than he does in that area. I would therefore like to ask him whether he no longer has any trust in public health experts.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, Dr. Tam had some suggestions. What I have to square off with those suggestions is how they square with every province moving forward with the removal of restrictions. How does that square off? If her suggestions are what we should be following, then why is every other province not doing that? Provinces manage our health care system, by the way. It is not the federal government; it is the provinces that manage health care. If they are saying that it is good enough for them and that they are willing to move forward and live with the risks that are associated with COVID, then maybe the national adviser needs to get with them, too.

That is something the public health people need to settle, but I will say that we should look at what is going on in the provinces. We cannot say the provinces are not following the science, because they are.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to talk about this government's inability to deliver basic services. The immigration department has been a disaster for years. There are incredibly long, intolerable delays. We recently saw that the government is unable to issue employment insurance cheques, making people wait three or four months.

Anyone who wants to travel abroad must first have a passport. However, getting one right now takes forever. People are really worried about next year's vacation. Passports have predictable, set expiry dates. How is it that this government is unable to predict that more resources are needed to produce more passports?

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, everybody could see this coming. Everybody understood that 10-year passports were going to come up for renewal this year for the first time. We could have anticipated a lot of the problems we are facing now six months ago, and we could have prepared properly for it, but the government does not prepare unless it is in a crisis. It does not act until it is in crisis mode.

Let us take the Canada Revenue Agency. This is another example where people cannot get through to talk to somebody in person. We are talking about four- or five-hour wait on telephone lines. Then there is Passport Canada. We are going to have four passport clinics in my riding next week, just to help people out. We know they want to travel, so we are going to do what we can to accommodate them. I wish the government would do the same.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, just as with most problems in this country, Liberals are the cause. Over the past seven years, it feels like they have removed common sense from the dictionary.

They will try to deny it, and they will try to shift blame. They have blamed out-of-practice travellers for the delays, backlogs and travel-associated horror stories that we see coming out of Canadian airports right now, even for domestic flights. Certainly, their globally outdated mandates, red-tape-bundled policies and general lack of compassion is not at fault.

They are vindictive. They are smug, and their leadership is power hungry. The government is the root of the problem.

If I have not been clear enough already, the rest of the world is moving past the pandemic. Even Canada's provinces have learned to live with COVID, but our federal government has not. This is no longer about safety. It definitely is not about common sense. It is about control. Once the Liberals took control, they did not know what to do with their new-found power, and Canadians have suffered long enough for their half-witted initiatives. It is way past time for Canada to return to prepandemic rules and service levels for travel.

Lack of staff is not an excuse. They have had plenty of time to plan for reopening, just like they have had years to plan for passport renewals, another thing the Liberals have dropped the ball on hard.

I am hearing from many constituents about the delays they are experiencing at the passport office, how people wait for hours in line to get to the door just to be told to go home. They then phone, and the phones ring and ring, but they never get answered. I am also being told that Passport Canada is no longer accepting electronic documents and is telling people to go to their MP's office to print the documents. Where is the common sense in that?

It gets worse. It gets a lot worse, and I wonder who or what the government will blame next for the mistakes this time.

The provinces have dropped their mask mandates, yet federal buildings still require people to wear a mask regardless. People wait in those long lines at passport offices, sometimes for hours, get

to the door and then they find out that they are required to wear a mask in order to get service.

When they get inside to find out they need a mask, the federal offices have none to give them and there are none to be found. What is a person supposed to do? People are sharing masks. Multiple people, strangers, are using the same mask because the government refused to have a plan.

I am no doctor, but I am pretty sure that wearing a used mask from someone else is far worse than not wearing a mask at all. It seems like the Liberals prefer to have conflicting, arbitrary rules that cause outrage and confuse people.

Do people want more proof of Liberal political theatrics? The drama teacher in charge is ready to act stern and frighten Canadians into compliance. Afterward, when the cameras are all turned off, he is happy to rip off his mask, smile, socialize and jet set around the world just as though restrictions no longer exist. There is one set of rules for the people in power, and one set of rules for the rest.

The rules are different for people like Julie from my riding. She did the responsible thing. She applied for her family's passports months in advance of their trip, but since then, Service Canada has delayed responding to her inquiries, sent her for new passport photos multiple times and told her that she needs to pay \$95 per person just to speed up processing times.

The government is using backlogs caused by its own incompetence to extort Canadians who played by the rules. It is simply shameful and unbelievable, and again, there is no common sense. If members thought that passports was a wild ride, it gets far worse.

Let us take a look at what the Liberals have been doing to boaters. Southwestern Ontario is bordered by the Great Lakes, and my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex sits on the beautiful southern shores of Lake Huron. Other parts of my riding are along the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair.

As boating season starts, boaters are wanting to go across the river to Michigan. Before the pandemic, the number of small vessel reporting sites was 400. That number has now been cut to 84. As boating season opens up, boaters will have to travel out of their way to report their vessel.

Do members not believe me? Constituents like John have written to me to say that, instead of taking their boat across an 800-metre wide river to get to and from my riding and Michigan, the CBSA wants them to reroute for 76 kilometres round trip just to check in. This is ridiculous.

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John has calculated that it would cost him over \$1,200 per trip just to meet this requirement. He has even calculated that this will create an extra 1,140 kilograms of carbon emissions just for one trip for him. The hypocrisy is that the government is pretending to care about the environment and Canadians but, in practice, it is needlessly adding emissions.

• (1610)

I just found out, minutes ago, that the government actually announced that it is going to reopen those reporting sites, but that is only after Conservatives pushed it for common sense and to lift these restrictions from the boaters.

Federal restrictions are being made and enforced without common sense. These mandates unfairly punish Canadians, and the government is giving no indication that it will ease off any time soon. It has consistently missed the mark on marine travel, from Walpole Algonac Ferry in my riding, which was shut down due to marine transportation not being included in cross-border travel exemptions earlier this year, to those recreational boaters who are not going to have points of access entry this spring. Canadians are being left behind. Continuing temporary closures for over two years is unnecessary, costly and irresponsible.

When I previously asked the minister if they will allow CBSA's regular points of entry to be reopened, he laughed. I will spell that out again: Liberal ministers are laughing at the pain they are causing Canadians. They are taking joy in the prospect of crippled tourism and empty rural small town shops during what would normally be a busy season and the busiest time of the year, which will hurt small businesses in communities such as Mitchell's Bay, Port Lambton, and Wallaceburg. This is not a joke.

The behaviour displayed by these ministers was despicable and very telling of how little a priority the concerns of my constituents are to the Liberal government.

Did members know that Canada is the only country in the world where non-vaccinated people are not allowed to travel domestically? Let that sink in. That is not okay. Requiring a type of passport for Canadians to travel domestically, creating second-class citizens, needs to end. The government is going out of its way to punish fully vaccinated travellers, no matter if they cross by land, sea or air.

I have had personal experience with this when waiting in line for security at airports, watching people struggle with delays and fighting the mandatory use of the barely functioning ArriveCAN app, something that the government insists on using.

Remember how I mentioned earlier how it would only take paper documents? Well, now it wants an app, something that is totally digital, which is another decision that spits in the face of common sense-loving Canadians.

Liberals refuse to compromise. They will not give people the choice to use paper or electronic documents. That would make too much sense.

At the land border crossings, what is happening late in the evening? Well, there is one overworked stall that is still open. Americans do not know about the ArriveCAN app when they are crossing and the requirement to use it. The government has failed to

explain to them and to advertise to would-be border crossers of this requirement. This makes for frustration and delays for tourists coming to support our economy and for Canadians returning home.

For example, I spoke with a senior couple in my riding who are fed up with how little is being done to help them. They are in their 80s, and they are very cautious. They care about the rules, and they want to try to follow them. They asked their son for help to buy a phone, their very first smart phone, something that they were forced to buy, because they were excited to resume day trips across the border.

When they put the ArriveCAN app on, it was not working and they did not know what to do. They told me that they took time and drove down to the store to see if the young clerk could help them. Unfortunately, though, they all tried, and it still did not work. They returned their new phone, they shelved their excitement and returned home wondering why the government would make visiting loved ones for a day so hard for them.

I know that Conservatives are asking for the Liberal government to do something that is very difficult for them, which is to finally adopt some common sense and listen to Canadians instead of to themselves. People want their lives back and one way to start giving them this is to return to prepandemic rules and service levels for travel.

Everything the government touches is an absolute failure. On behalf of all Canadians disappointed with how their plans are being ruined, I will ask this: If Canadians do not have a smart phone, can they get a smart government, or at least one with common sense?

• (1615)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was listening to the hon. member across the way, trying to sort through the obviously emotional comments she was making about the frustrations she is feeling about the pandemic, frustrations that, indeed, many Canadians are feeling.

I wonder if the member could comment on, post pandemic, what the role of masks might play in preventing other diseases that might be passed from person to person?

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, we continue to follow the health advice of the provinces. The provinces have medical health officers, and they are in charge of health care in this country.

My question to the member opposite and to the government, actually, is this: What information do they have that they are not telling the provinces? Why do they still have mask mandates in federal buildings when the provinces have removed restrictions everywhere across this country? I am sure Canadians would like to see that information to know if they are hiding something from Canadians and from our public health officers in the provinces.

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Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I really appreciate a lot of the comments from my colleague. I too share her frustration. I mean my office right now is getting absolutely inundated by calls from people who are waiting for their passports. As well, the time that they are waiting at airports is completely unacceptable. We know that none of this is a surprise. People were planning on travelling as soon as the travel restrictions eased.

Can my colleague speak to how important it is for the government not only to hire staff but to ensure that the public service is fully resourced and that employees of the public service are paid good fair wages, especially in a labour market shortage like right now?

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, that was a great question.

My office staff as well have been very frustrated since the beginning of this pandemic. My office has turned into a Service Canada office. We are happy to serve the people of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. In fact, I am going to take the time right now to thank my staff who have worked tirelessly for constituents to help them with any of their needs while the Service Canada offices were closed. I send my thanks to Yvonne, Todd, Kim, David, Anna Marie and Jordan. I appreciate all the work that they have done to help my constituents.

In the future, I would hope that the government would hire more people, reopen its offices, drop the mandates, get people back to work in their offices so they can do the jobs that we are paying them to do as taxpayers in Canada and restore the services back to prepandemic levels so we can get on with our lives.

• (1620)

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. However, I find it a bit ridiculous that we are talking about masks and the fact that people are wearing used masks.

The government has not come up with a postpandemic plan. I am well aware of that. However, there are still solutions, and there are restrictions that must be kept in place at airports.

I would like to know why my colleague does not support our experts when they tell us to be vigilant because there could be another pandemic.

[English]

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, as far as I can see with the provinces, the experts at the provincial level have said that we do not need to have a mask mandate any longer and that it is a personal choice. If the member wants to wear a mask, I am totally fine with that, but I think it needs to go both ways. We need to have respect for each other, continue to follow advice we hear from public health officials who say we do not need to have these mandates any longer.

What we really do have a problem with in this place is a real Liberal leadership crisis problem. That is the biggest problem right now. They are not showing leadership on this. They need to do the right thing and drop all the mandates.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge today.

I found that last comment about a leadership crisis to be quite amusing coming from Conservatives, given what is going on in their party right now. When the member for Abbotsford tried to speak his truth to power yesterday, he was silenced by the individual who is not even the leader yet.

The member for Carleton has not even been anointed formally yet, because that is not going to happen for three months, but he is already pulling the strings, in terms of who is allowed to say what and who is allowed and not allowed to be critical of him. If there is a leadership crisis, I think it is very clear to Canadians where it exists right now.

I have been listening to this debate throughout the day, and I have found a number of comments to be quite interesting. The member for Dufferin—Caledon had an exchange I found very interesting. He went on about listening to science and making sure we listen to science, because listening to the science will point us in a certain direction. Then, I asked him where the science was in the Conservatives' motion. They introduced this motion today that asks the government to change a particular policy. Where is the science in that? Do members know what his response to that was? It was that the Conservatives are not the government.

Apparently, according to the member for Dufferin—Caledon, people can try to influence policy if they are Conservatives, because they happen to be in opposition. It does not require any science to do it. When people are in the government, they need to be taking the Conservatives' version of science, which they do not even have. It is one of the most ridiculous and ludicrous exchanges I have had in the House today.

The member for Regina—Lewvan, who I believe is heckling me right now, was a few moments ago asking why he needs to wear a mask in the House, when he does not need to wear it when he walks outside the House. It is a rule that the House made. BOIE, the Board of Internal Economy, made that rule. He has membership on that board—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If members have thoughts, comments or questions, I would ask them to wait until it is time for questions and comments, and not yell them across. In the meantime, I would ask members to keep their thoughts quiet and write them down, if they think they may forget them.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

• (1625)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member for Regina—Lewvan has a member on the BOIE committee. As a matter of fact, that member answered a question today in question period. It was completely unorthodox, but nonetheless it happened anyway. Why was the question not to the member from BOIE, his very own member, about this issue?

A rule was made that until this session was complete, masks were required to be worn in the House unless members were standing in the House speaking. If the member for Regina—Lewvan has a problem with that, I suggest he take it up with his leadership on BOIE who helped to make that decision.

The member for Prince Albert recently said, about wearing masks, that he forgot his mask and had to go back to his truck and get a mask for the airport. He said it as if we are the only place on earth that requires people to wear a mask in an airport.

What about the United States? On April 30, it extended the mask mandate in airports. It just happened. We have to do the same thing in the United States, but the member for Prince Albert would make us believe, as a number of Conservatives have today, that somehow Canada is taking a completely foreign approach when it comes to dealing with this on an international basis, with people coming and going in and out of the country in particular.

The member for Winnipeg North listed a number of countries that still have various mandates in place to keep protection for their citizens. I will not repeat those, because they are already on the record.

I also found something very interesting that the member for Prince Albert said a few moments ago. When he was asked a question from the Bloc about listening to advice from the experts, he referred to Dr. Tam's recommendations, her professional medical advice, as her "suggestions". Those are Dr. Tam's "suggestions". Those were his words.

This goes to a key point about how Conservatives treat science. They are ready to wrap themselves in the science, provided that it is science that backs up what they already believe. That is the problem. For the member for Prince Albert to say those were Dr. Tam's "suggestions" basically passes her off as though she makes suggestions just like anybody else can. She is the Chief Medical Officer of Health for the country. She makes recommendations. She provides advice to the Government of Canada so it can inform itself on how to implement policy.

There has been criticism after criticism, and I will pre-empt the question by answering it now from members from the opposite side who are saying, "Table it, table it." Can they tell me one time that Stephen Harper tabled recommendations to cabinet or the Privy Council? Can they tell me one time that Stephen Harper did that? The suggestion is that the government is taking advice from its professionals. The Conservatives want to frame this like it is being hidden from the public. It is very normal to receive advice and then make decisions based on that advice.

I am sorry if the Conservatives are not privy to that. Guess what? I am not privy to it either. I am not in cabinet, so I have not seen the advice. I do have faith in those who are providing the advice, and that they will give their professional advice. We hire individuals in this country in many different forms, whether at the federal, provincial or municipal level, to advise policy makers based on their professional advice. It has been no secret from day one that the Conservatives have been willing to trample all over that advice, time after time. If they believe that they will get the slightest political gain

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out of it, they will walk over anybody. That is what they are trying to do here. That is exactly what they are trying to do here.

From my perspective, the best speech today was actually given by the Bloc member for Jonquière. His entire speech was on populism and the manner in which the member for Carleton is using populism for his own personal political gain, full stop. It does not matter what happens in the process.

● (1630)

I really encourage those who were not able to listen to the speech by the member for Jonquière earlier today to go back and listen to it. He hit the nail on the head with respect to what is happening in this country right now as it relates to the populist movement and those, like the member for Carleton, who are literally walking over top of the freedoms that they somehow want to make Canadians believe do not exist and that they are the only ones who will be able to provide those freedoms once again to Canadians.

It was actually a really good speech. It was extremely germane to the discussion. The reason is because this discussion today, in my opinion, is about why the Conservatives have continually used the same tactics day after day, trying to sow this idea of the government being the enemy and the only individuals in this country who can save Canadians and give them back their freedoms are Conservatives. It is so incredibly dangerous when we allow that kind of politics to dominate the discussion, and when we allow politics like that to shape the manner in which discussions are being had in public that are based on conspiracy theory and people peddling misinformation. That is exactly what is going on here.

I have no problem with voting against this motion today because I have faith in those who we have employed to provide advice to the government in order to make the best decisions possible on our behalf. I have no doubt that at times there is conflicting advice. It is the government's job, whatever government that may be, to receive that advice and make the best decision on behalf of people, and I have faith that is exactly what has been happening in Canada.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to that speech and parts of it made very little sense in this House in terms of what we are talking about today, but I want to ask the member a pointed question.

Is he aware that the president of the Public Health Agency of Canada told airports, carriers and airlines that testing would be out of airports in January? Is he aware that it is May, and the government has done nothing about it?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: This is the problem, Madam Speaker. The Conservatives want to treat a pandemic as though it is a static problem: as though we can determine really early on what the various stages will be based on different things that are happening. We did not know the omicron virus was going to come along in January, did we? No, we did not. It really did not pop up in Canada until December. Things are changing. A pandemic is a dynamic and fluid situation to deal with. Conservatives clearly do not recognize that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I know that members are all anxious to ask questions, but I until I recognize them, they should not be heckling or yelling out.

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[Translation]

The hon. member for Shefford.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague from Kingston and the Islands that my colleague from Jonquiere gives good speeches. I also agree that there is a dangerous tendency towards populism and easy solutions to false problems on the Conservative side. On that we agree.

I would like to talk about the tourism and cultural businesses that are so integral to the economy in my riding of Shefford. It is important to be more transparent with this reopening plan since these businesses need more predictability.

There are still too many problems. There is still a lack of transparency and efficiency in this reopening plan. Take passports, for example. Right now, in my office, it is terrible. The delays in issuing passports are affecting the travel industry. Again, perhaps this could have been predicted, since we knew that people would go back to travelling now that the world is slowly coming out of lockdown.

Given that we do not have a specific plan and that the government has not properly anticipated how things would unfold, what does my colleague think about the importance of this plan and the importance of working on what is not currently working in order to promote tourism?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, one of the challenges always has been about how to nail down a plan on something that is continually evolving, shifting and changing.

I share the member's great concern about the tourism industry. The third-biggest economic driver in my riding is tourism. That is why the government was there for tourism operators specifically when the pandemic started. It was there before the last wave and will continue to be there for tourism operators moving into the future. We cannot predict the exact moves of the pandemic, but we can be there to support small businesses and tourism operators specifically through the pandemic. That is exactly what we have been doing and continue to do.

• (1635)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, some of my constituents have concerns. The government has been slowly lifting some of the pandemic requirements, and that includes what is going on in terms of travel. The government knew that and anticipated it. On its website, it has put out information for the public as well.

To that end, the government should have anticipated that travel would escalate, and therefore that demand for services would increase, both at the airport, with people passing through, and at passport offices. However, we have chaos going on, and people are lined up for very long times and cannot get through. At passport offices in my own riding of Vancouver East, people have to tent overnight to try to get service.

How come the government did not anticipate that and ensure that adequate resources and staffing were in place?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, that is a really good question and it is a valid question. I am listening to that question being asked continually by the opposition, and I am hearing what the minister has been saying about increasing the number of staff.

The member for Prince Albert earlier alluded to the idea that for a Liberal MP, an application might go through a little faster. I can assure him that I have a lot of constituents facing the exact same situation, and there is no favouritism played by a government department toward individual MPs' offices.

To the member's question, there will be an opportunity to reflect on this later, figure out why it happened and improve upon it in the future.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. There are no more questions and comments, so I would ask members to hold off.

[Translation]

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver East, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Climate Change.

[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a great privilege to rise and speak in the House of Commons, and in particular today on the opposition day motion from the member for Thornhill. I consider the member for Thornhill a friend. She is someone I have had the opportunity to get to know in the last few months, and I thank her for her work.

Before I begin my formal remarks, I would like to put into context the role of government in our society, noting Adam Smith's work about what governments should and should not do. The first thing a government should do is protect the health and safety of its citizens. In fact, the most important role of government is to protect the health and safety of its citizens, whether it is through delivering the services of health care, ensuring that all people have health care and access to health care or ensuring that we have a proper defence system in place and are protected. Those are the fundamental duties of government, as is ensuring public safety. Those are the duties I look to in what a government's role is in society.

During the pandemic, our government has done a lot and continues to do a lot. As we say, our government has the backs of Canadians. It has had the backs of Canadian workers, families and businesses as we have gone through the pandemic and as we are exiting it. I am proud of our government's record on many facets of the pandemic. I offer my prayers and condolences to the many Canadians who have unfortunately had loved ones pass away due to COVID-19. We must always remember what happened during that two-year period and what continues to happen, though maybe at a more gradual pace.

I am happy to participate in the debate today on the Conservative motion and to have the opportunity to discuss the government's commitment and efforts to ensure the recovery of Canada's tourism industry, including wait times at Canadian airports. Tourism is important to every region and every province. It is an inclusive industry, providing jobs and opportunities to newcomers, women, youth and indigenous people. These are specific groups that have experienced some of the worst impacts of this global pandemic.

The tourism industry is the engine of family-owned and family-operated businesses in communities from coast to coast to coast. Virtually all tourism businesses, some 99% of them, are small businesses. They are the backbones of communities across all 338 ridings in this beautiful country we are blessed to call home.

The Government of Canada understands the important role that these businesses play in our communities. They are the lifeline of Canada's economy and employ nearly two million people across the country. That is approximately 9% of our workforce.

We recognize that pandemic restrictions have placed an economic burden on businesses. Since day one of the pandemic, entrepreneurs have adapted and taken on the challenge of remaining viable. That is why the government introduced financial support for employees' wages, subsidies for rent and loans to provide liquidity relief to ensure business survival through to the recovery period. As a result of the programs we put in place, tourism businesses across Canada are in a better position to recover.

COVID-19 has impacted the tourism industry, its businesses and entrepreneurs in particular, as demand has been affected by the required public health restrictions. The government understands the impact on the tourism industry, and for that reason, it has put a number of targeted measures in place to help these businesses outlast the pandemic.

For the tourism, arts and culture sectors, businesses and non-profit organizations have received over \$23 billion through federal emergency support programs. Budget 2021 introduced a three-year, \$1-billion commitment for the sector. This included a \$500-million tourism relief fund, which was created to help Canada's tourism businesses not only survive but come back better. Of that, we earmarked a minimum of \$50 million specifically to support indigenous tourism. It also included \$100 million for Destination Canada marketing campaigns to help Canadians and other visitors discover and explore the country, \$48 million of which is expected to be spent this fiscal year.

Last October, when the overall economy bounced back and general relief measures expired, the government introduced targeted wage and rent subsidy programs in Bill C-2, another bill the opposition party voted against, even though it was for supporting tourism businesses and their workers across the country. We have also invested \$4 billion in the Canada digital adoption program, announced this month, which will help upwards of 160,000 small and medium-sized businesses to expand digital capabilities and adopt digital solutions. This is especially important in the tourism industry, where success hinges in part on the capacity to motivate visitors from around the globe.

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• (1640)

This year, budget 2022 proposes to provide \$20 million over two years in support of a new indigenous tourism fund to help indigenous tourism recover from the pandemic and to position itself for long-term, sustainable growth. It also announced a commitment to develop a new federal tourism growth strategy focused on recovery, stability and long-term growth.

The federal government will work with tourism businesses, provincial and territorial counterparts and indigenous tourism partners to plot such a course. On May 18, the Government of Canada launched the formal engagement period to develop this new strategy, and the government wants to hear from Canadian tourism stakeholders from coast to coast to coast as it charts the path forward for the sector.

Furthermore, to help restore Canadians' confidence in the safety of air travel and to support the recovery of Canada's air and tourism sectors, the government invested in COVID-19 sanitization and testing infrastructure at airports and in the development of advanced technologies to facilitate touchless and secure air travel. This April our government also lifted testing and quarantine requirements at international borders for fully vaccinated travellers, including for unvaccinated children under 12.

The health and well-being of all Canadians have always been the Government of Canada's priority during the COVID-19 crisis. Canada's continuing requirements are based on the latest and evolving scientific evidence. The government is committed to seeing the tourism industry thrive once again, and this funding has played a role in keeping businesses open during the past two years.

Prior to the pandemic, tourism was a growing, high-potential sector that supported almost two million jobs across Canada. Last month, tourism gained almost 40,000 jobs. We are seeing the beginning of the recovery. We are moving in the right direction. With our high vaccination rates and the ebb of the omicron variant, we are confident that the summer 2022 tourism season will outpace that of summer 2021.

While there is no denying that the tourism sector has been deeply affected throughout the pandemic, I believe there is much built-up demand and we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to come back stronger. As international travel reopens, tourists' pent-up desire to visit friends and family is being realized. I believe that in one week, two or three weeks ago, over one million arrivals and departures came through Canada's international airports, which is great to see.

Canada has much to offer: wide open spaces, beautiful vistas, bucket-list adventures, welcoming people and authentic indigenous tourism experiences. These are the kinds of meaningful and sustainable experiences that today's travellers, from both Canada and abroad, are craving. Canada also holds a strong appeal for those seeking to learn more about first nations, the Inuit and the Métis, and for those seeking an inclusive experience or a francophone language and cultural experience.

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• (1645)

[Translation]

Canada is also of great interest to people who want to learn more about first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and to those looking for an inclusive experience or a francophone linguistic and cultural experience.

[English]

We know that Canadians are currently experiencing long lines at airports, and we are working closely with our partners and CATSA to address the wait times and make sure the travel industry continues to bounce back.

Canada has a huge advantage due to its high vaccination rates, and I encourage all Canadians to get their vaccines if they have not or to get their boosters. We are focused on health and safety, and with all governments in Canada working together collaboratively, we will make sure the rest of the world appreciates this advantage, sees Canada as a destination of choice, particularly in the coming summer months, and visits all parts of Canada from east to west, from B.C. to P.E.I. to Newfoundland and Labrador, and all the beautiful places in between that all 338 members of Parliament get to call home.

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity, and I commend my colleague across the way. Just last week, we were both rising in the House to speak on a matter and were in agreement and shared some commonality. It is always a good thing when that happens.

With regard to this matter, the challenge before us is that many people, even in my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac, which is a border riding, are being crushed by the ongoing restrictions and mandates at the federal level. They affect tourism and are even affecting families. Some seniors have difficulty with the ArriveCAN app and the confusion it is causing. It is an unnecessary burden and weight.

When we have asked repeatedly for the Prime Minister to provide the science behind, and rationale for, keeping these restrictions and mandates in place, he has not provided any. We have international precedents from countries all over the EU, our biggest trading partner south of the border and countries all around the world that have dropped restrictions and mandates.

Why is Canada behind the rest of the world and not following the science that has been clearly established everywhere else? I ask that of my hon. colleague.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I will say that there is evolving public guidance from health experts who ministers receive their information from and there are evolving statistics we see on COVID for Canadians who are being impacted. We must listen. It is evolving and we know that. We have gradually and prudently, under what I term “responsible leadership” in protecting the public health and safety of Canadians, started removing various restrictions. We must continue on this path as we receive the pertinent advice from public health officials, ensuring that the flow of persons, people, products and services coming into this country is efficient.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a really important issue and we are hearing from many

people in my riding. Certainly, we believe that health measures should be informed by health science and not politics.

We heard Dr. Tam in March, stating that a full re-evaluation of Canada's pandemic measures would be done and that she would report back to Canadians. We are at the end of May. People have concerns. Trust in public health measures requires explaining the arguments and sharing the evidence they are based on.

For two years, the government was in front of Canadians, answering questions. We cannot find it now. It is not in front of Canadians, answering questions about this. To have trust, the government needs to be fully transparent with Canadians with the evidence behind any of the remaining health measures.

Does my colleague not agree that Liberals are failing to answer the questions of Canadians? They need to come forward quickly to ensure that there is trust in Canadians.

• (1650)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I want to talk about the words “two years” that the hon. member used. I want to thank Canadians because it has been over two years, and it has been a long two years. I want to thank them for their sacrifices. I want to thank them for protecting their families when they were asked to, for social distancing, for staying home, for wearing masks and for hunkering down. I want to thank them because they sacrificed that. It is because they received their vaccines and got our vaccination rates to very elevated levels, protecting themselves and their loved ones, that we are able to exit the pandemic in a very safe and prudent manner under responsible leadership from all governments collaborating together.

Yes, we need to continue to follow the public health guidelines. We must maintain a high level of confidence in the measures we put in place, directed by health officials. We have seen a loosening of the restrictions occur. I hope to continue—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but we need time for one more question.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I also thank my colleague from the NDP who spoke earlier.

I would have liked him to go further. He talked about transparency, as well as the need to show scientific evidence and to provide an update. We need to go even further. Once the evidence is provided, a strategy needs to be presented to the public as well.

The thing that many people find frustrating is the fact that nobody knows where we are headed, because nobody has up-to-date information.

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I would like to know whether my colleague agrees and whether he thinks that his government will come up with an exit strategy—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is no time left, but I will allow the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge to give a brief answer.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

[*English*]

I will say this: Our government must always provide the relevant information to Canadians to maintain a high level of confidence in the measures that we put in place. That is why, as Canadians have been vaccinated and as we exit the pandemic, restrictions have been loosened very prudently. We must always protect the public health and safety of Canadians. That is our number one priority and our number one job.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of our Conservative opposition motion calling on the Liberals to immediately lift remaining travel restrictions, which leaders in the tourism and hospitality sector and the airline industry say are harming business, damaging Canada's international reputation and resulting in chaos at our airports.

Let me say that, while the government certainly needs to lift these travel-related restrictions, it frankly needs to lift all remaining federal mandates and restrictions, which are draconian, discriminatory and unscientific. They are mandates and restrictions that have hurt everyday, taxpaying, law-abiding Canadians and are hurting our economy.

Under the Liberals' watch, thousands of federally regulated employees were fired, not because they did not perform their job ably, but rather because they made a personal health choice. The Liberals can point to provinces that imposed similar mandates. Those provinces have lifted the mandates and rehired workers who were let go, but the federal Liberals have not.

There are 3.7 million Canadians who are landlocked, unable to leave the country and unable to travel freely within Canada, because they cannot get on a plane or a train, again, for having made a personal health choice. As it stands, Canada is the only country in the world, save perhaps for North Korea, where it is required to show one's vaccine status to get on a plane or train and travel internally. It is the only such country in the world.

To make matters worse, the Prime Minister has repeatedly demonized and stigmatized fellow Canadians for making a personal health choice. He has routinely used hateful rhetoric, saying that they take up space and that they should not be tolerated, among other hateful words. I will tell members what should not be tolerated. It is that kind of hateful rhetoric from the Prime Minister, which is completely unbecoming of a Prime Minister.

The Liberals say they are following the science and following the data.

I am going to be splitting my time with the member for Edmonton West.

When we on this side of the House quite reasonably ask the Prime Minister and the government to show us the science, they do not provide any science or data. What they provide is political rhetoric aimed at pitting Canadians against each other.

It can be said that their policies are inconsistent with those of all 10 provinces and inconsistent with just about every country in the world. Just about every country in the world has lifted mandates and restrictions. The few that have not have set timelines to lift such restrictions, but not the federal Liberals. It begs the question: If the government is truly guided by science, why is its science so different from the science in every other jurisdiction in the world, not to mention all 10 provinces?

The mandates and restrictions the government has imposed and is so invested in, for whatever reason, have not affected just unvaccinated Canadians; they have done great harm to the economy and to vaccinated Canadians. One example of that is what this motion specifically relates to, and that is the travel restrictions that have led to chaos at Canada's airports, impacting vaccinated Canadians who are seeking to travel.

● (1655)

In recent weeks, we have seen many reports of passengers being stuck on the tarmac, on the airplane, unable to disembark because there is no room within the airport to properly process them. At Toronto Pearson, the Toronto Region Board of Trade reported that last week over 50% of passengers faced substantial delays. Just last Sunday, 120 planes were stuck on the tarmac at Pearson due to a backlog of the Liberal government's making. Pearson is hardly alone. These backlogs and delays are happening at border crossings and at airports right across the country.

The Minister of Transport, in the face of this, had the audacity to blame travellers. He said that it is their fault. I say, respectfully, that the Minister of Transport ought to look in the mirror. The problem rests on his shoulders. It rests on the shoulders of this Liberal government and on what at best can be described as completely outdated COVID travel measures. Members should not take my word for it; they can take the word of key stakeholders, which I will cite momentarily.

I should note that these mandates have contributed to staffing shortages at airports. We have seen, here in Ottawa, staff levels at just a little over half of what is required to properly and efficiently run the Ottawa International Airport, the airport of our capital. We have seen estimates that there are about 30% fewer security personnel than there were prior to COVID, due to the government's lack of planning and due to the mandates that led to the firing of employees.

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Then these restrictions were added. The random testing and health questions that are put to travellers are estimated to quadruple processing times according to the Canadian Airports Council, and the minister says we should blame travelling Canadians. When we have staffing shortages and measures that are quadrupling processing times, it is pretty clear where the problem lies.

What about stakeholders? Monette Pasher, president of the Canadian Airports Council, has called on the Liberals to begin to lift these health restrictions, calling them cumbersome and contributing to the backlog.

Chris Bloore, president of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, has said that these measures, these health restrictions, are damaging Canada's international reputation and resulting in a loss of revenue for businesses that rely on tourists and international business travellers. That association has called on the government to lift these restrictions.

Glenn Priestley, president and executive director of Northern Air Transport Association, has said that these mandates are slowing things down. We need to get them under control.

It is time for the Liberals to catch up with the rest of the world and end these mandates now.

● (1700)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, what the member is saying is just untrue. The reality is that he wants to make it seem as though Canada is the only country that has travel restrictions. The update today is that, of all the countries in the world, 21% are considered fully open, 64% are considered open with restrictions and 14% are considered closed.

Why would this member get up in the House and suggest that every other country in the world is fully open when it is just not true?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, what we have is a mess of the government's own making. It is a government that has refused to provide a timeline. It has kept in place these travel restrictions, which are clearly having a negative impact, evidenced by the enormous concern raised by industry leaders.

Given that that member sits on the government's side and represents a riding near the Canada-U.S. border, I would put it to him that perhaps he should focus on addressing these very real issues, issues that are hurting our economy, damaging our reputation and making the lives of everyday Canadians miserable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, today we are talking about lifting restrictions.

The Bloc Québécois has proposed we look at lifting the restrictions gradually, but our Conservative colleagues refuse. They want to lift all restrictions at the same time.

If another wave were to come this fall, would my colleague agree to use the same method proposed in the motion and reinstate all of the measures immediately, all at the same time?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I say very respectfully to the hon. member that I do not know how much slower the Bloc wants the government to move because it has only been two years. The rest of the world is learning to live with COVID, but the government refuses to live with COVID.

Further, when we are talking about measures that are having an impact upon mobility rights, causing this level of disruption and impacting Canadians in this way, the very least one would expect the government to do is tender the evidence to justify these measures, but it has provided no such evidence. That, without more, is unacceptable.

● (1705)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, there are things I truly appreciated in my colleague's speech and things I do not agree with. One thing he touched on were the wait times at the airports. When we see the wait times at airports or passport services, we know the government has not adequately staffed the resources to respond to the increase in the amount of travel.

We have constantly heard complaints like these from Conservatives over the years. It is always a surprise to me when Conservatives say there are not enough public servants. They cut services, then they complain about it. The repercussions are delays in service. We saw that happen with Veterans Affairs under the Stephen Harper government. It cut a third of Veterans Affairs, and that made a backlog that exists even to this day.

Does my good friend and colleague not agree in the importance of investing in public services to support Canadians and make sure that they get the services they deserve and need?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I have to say that the issue this motion relates to is to address a lack of planning on the part of the government from the standpoint of it providing sufficient resources at the airport and, most especially, to address restrictions that are increasing processing times by up to four times what they otherwise would be. That is the root of the problem. That is precisely what we are asking the government to fix.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from St. Albert—Edmonton for splitting his time with me, and, more importantly, the member for Thornhill for bringing this very important issue to the House.

Essentially, the debate is about calling on the government “to immediately revert to pre-pandemic rules and service levels”, but I say that we should call for the government to get its act together. Seriously, it is time for the government to get its act together and stop making excuses about its failures.

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We repeatedly hear many excuses from the government, such as it cannot open offices and it cannot allow public servants to return in person because there is a sixth wave coming in the fall. It is spring now, yet the government is saying it has to wait because there is a sixth wave coming in the fall. We hear the government say it cannot do this because there are still people in the hospital with COVID. The government makes the excuse that there are still people to be vaccinated.

Canada has, to its credit, one of the highest vaccination rates in the OECD. It is time for the government to recognize what the provinces have recognized and what many of our allies have recognized, which is that it is time to move forward—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the hon. member for Manicouagan is rising on a point of order.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I want to know if there is a quorum.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will look into this.

And the count having been taken:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is a quorum. The hon. member for Edmonton West.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, it is time for the government to recognize that we are going to have to learn to live with COVID.

Before getting to the heart of today's debate, and I may not get all my time because we are seeing some interference with that, I want to talk about an issue that happened in my riding of Edmonton West. My office is about a two-minute walk to one of the local Service Canada offices. Two months ago, and I brought this up in the House then, there was an issue when I went into the office to visit BDC. It shares the office with Service Canada. As I left, I noticed there was a lineup wrapping around the building.

Two months ago, in Edmonton, as we can imagine, it is winter-time still, and the lineup wrapped around the building. I chatted with some of the people waiting in line. There was a gentleman who was 85 years old. There was a handicapped lady, an elderly handicapped lady, forced to wait outside. I asked her how long she had been waiting out there. She said, "Well, several hours. They will not let us in."

I went into the building and, of course, security was blocking me, but eventually they let me in. I asked, "What is going on here?"

They were told, under government orders, that they were only allowed four people in at a time. They had four security guards to ensure that only four Canadians at a time could access Service Canada, to access the services that Canadians are entitled to and pay for. I looked inside. One wicket was open to serve one person and three people sitting in the chairs in a very large office.

At the same time, provincial mandates had been lifted. At that time, across every province, except for Quebec, which was still

halfway through, they had been lifted. We had hockey games with 17,000 people allowed in. We, at the same time, saw parties and receptions in Ottawa, with members of Parliament from the government and ministers attending crowded receptions, masks off, but in Canada, in Edmonton, we make an 85-year-old citizen wait for hours in line.

I brought it up to the House and the response, oddly enough, was from the Minister of Health, who responded to this by thanking the members of Service Canada for their hard work during the pandemic, which is great, but it does not address the fact.

This was two months ago. About a week after that, one of my staff sent me a photo. It was of a blizzard in Edmonton, which not uncommon in March. It was a blizzard, and people, again, were waiting in line at Service Canada.

We have mask mandates in federal buildings. We can go into an airport masked. We can enter this building masked, but Canadians are not allowed into Service Canada, even masked or even vaccinated, because the government says it is unsafe for more than four Canadians to be inside. In a blizzard, there were close to 30 or 40 people lined up. They were waiting so long that one of the people actually ordered from DoorDash to be fed.

Can members imagine that happening in this country? We will not allow people in because it is not safe indoors. It is safe enough for a hockey game. It is safe enough, funnily enough, for the Prime Minister to meet with Her Majesty The Queen without a mask, but not safe for Canadians, even masked or vaccinated, to be indoors. This is why I say that the bill should be the "get the government's act together" bill.

I realize my time is very short, but I want to read a couple letters and comments from constituents about their experiences. One reads, "I arrived outside Service Canada's office. I have been waiting since 5 a.m."

People are waiting since 5 a.m., and it is like this a big surprise to the government that, after introducing the 10-year-passport 10 years ago, they would be expiring about this time. We had 10 years' notice. We knew this was happening. We knew restrictions were being lifted months and months ago, and that people would be travelling again, yet it seems to have been a surprise to the government.

Can we imagine having to get up at about 4 in the morning and wait, in the dark, at 5 a.m., just to get served by the government?

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Another letter reads, “I had a walk-in appointment in March 8 and was told it should have been done before April 12. If nothing, call.” He called back later, but there was no reply or it hung up on him as the system was busy.

Yet another letter reads, “I applied on March 1. On March 23rd, \$160 was charged on my credit card. I went to Service Canada to see if they could help expedite the process because at this point I had already been waiting for two months. When I arrived, I was sent home and was told they were only serving people who are leaving within 48 hours and told me to contact Service Canada.”

After he left the Service Canada building, he called them multiple times. He was finally able to get a hold of them and was told to call back a week later to request an emergency transfer to Edmonton. This is just for a simple passport.

• (1710)

We knew this issue was going to happen. We have Canadians waiting months for a simple passport.

Another person applied for a renewed passport, so not a brand new one. The person was just renewing an existing passport on April 25. The person said, “I had gone in person, waited in a long line for hours in the cold,” again, in Edmonton, “and locked outdoors because it was unsafe to be inside. At that time, they were only letting one person at a time into the building. There were four security guards to watch one person. Eventually, they came out and said, ‘All of you go home. You won’t be served today.’ Those of us in line were literally freezing and we took turns warming up in our cars. A snowstorm had blown in and we were all kept out in the cold for hours. It was unnecessary to make us do that when there was a warm building right in front of us. When I went back in a week, I got there with another person at 5 a.m., so I could ensure that I would be seen that day. I was the third person in line.”

This is the state of the service from the current government. At 5 in the morning, they were the third person in line.

I beg the government to act on this issue, to please get its act together and get it done for Canadians.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth with every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[*English*]

The question is on the motion. May I dispense?

An hon. member: No, I want to hear this.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, as a member of the official opposition, I request a recorded division.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, May 30, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

[*English*]

AN ACT FOR THE SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY OF CANADA'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

BILL C-13—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. An agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-13, an act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the use of French in federally regulated private businesses act and to make related amendments to other acts.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

SITTING SUSPENDED

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The House will suspend until 5:30 p.m. to the call of the Chair.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 5:18 p.m.)

• (1720)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 5:24 p.m.)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m. so that we can start Private Members' Business.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1725)

[English]

BANK OF CANADA ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC) moved that Bill C-253, An Act to amend the Bank of Canada Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is truly an honour to rise today and speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-253, the Bank of Canada accountability act.

Members may know that the Auditor General is empowered, under the Auditor General Act, to perform audits on government agencies and departments. However, there is a special carve-out, an exemption, in the Financial Administration Act that specifically excludes the Bank of Canada from the oversight that the Auditor General provides.

We are all familiar with Auditor General's reports. It is always a big day on Parliament Hill when the Auditor General tables a report after an investigation on behalf of Canadians into various departments, agencies and programs. Of course, it was the Auditor General's report many years ago that first brought to light the excessive expenses of the long gun registry. It was thanks to her work, at the time, that Canadians got to know the billion-dollar price tag of that useless and ineffective program. We can all think to times when the Auditor General has identified massive problems with the government's handling of everything from immigration protocols to transportation, and that is what this bill is all about: Bringing the Bank of Canada into line with other departments and agencies to provide that oversight so that the Auditor General is empowered to do the same types of audits that he or she does on all other agencies and departments.

Many in the Liberal establishment are opposed to this bill. The Prime Minister once said that “sunlight is the best disinfectant”, and then he ran around pulling the shades down on all the windows to keep things hidden. He is afraid of accountability and transparency now. In fact, he is so allergic to it that he has made a deal with the NDP to help cover things up at committees and in the House. It is not a surprise that Liberal parliamentarians and Liberal politicians are opposed to this bill, but Canadians are demanding this type of accountability and oversight. They are demanding it, because we are seeing unprecedented action by the Bank of Canada and unprecedented decision-making that is directly affecting the value of the money they have worked so hard to earn.

Many of the arguments against this bill that I have already heard through corporate, taxpayer-subsidized and government-subsidized media and Liberal politicians are all bogus. First of all, one of the critiques is that the bank is already audited. That is true. The bank is already audited by private-sector firms in Canada, but those are not the same types of audits that the Auditor General does. The Auditor General does not simply do a balance-sheet audit. It is not like the Auditor General goes in and tallies up everything on the left side of the ledger and makes sure it balances with everything on the right side of the ledger. No one is assuming that someone is leaving

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the Bank of Canada with bags of cash over their shoulder. In addition to balance-sheet audits, the Auditor General does performance audits, and that really is the whole point of this bill.

The Bank of Canada has made many decisions that have had a profound negative impact on Canadians. It decided, for example, to buy corporate bonds. It had a corporate bond purchasing program. Now, if we go to its website, it spells out some of the general criteria of what minimum thresholds companies would have to meet in order to have their bonds purchased by the bank. I should point out that it is a huge advantage to a company to have its bonds purchased by the central bank.

A bond is basically an IOU. It is debt. It is a company saying, “We don't have the money today, but loan it to us now and we will pay you back later.” Corporations have to pay for that. They have to pay interest on those bonds. When fewer people are willing to buy the bonds, those corporations have to raise their interest rates to sweeten the deal to attract more potential buyers, and that costs the corporations more money. When the Bank of Canada comes along and says, “We'll buy some of those bonds”, that is a huge benefit to the corporation that is selling the bonds.

Which bonds did the Bank of Canada buy? Why did it buy a bond from company A and not company B? Those are the types of things that we do not know. We do not know all the criteria that led to the decision-making. It could very well be that in very competitive marketplaces, say the airline industry, one airline's bonds were purchased by the bank and another's were not.

• (1730)

It is the same thing in the telecommunications sector. Perhaps one company's bonds were bought and another's were not. Let us be clear. It is not buying these bonds with its own money. The Bank of Canada creates money. When it buys these corporate bonds, it is creating new money right out of thin air, which has an impact on the purchasing power of the money Canadians have worked so hard to earn. In fact, it dilutes that every time new money is created.

In addition to the corporate bonds, it has been buying government bonds, and boy has it ever. It has been on a buying spree for almost two years. From the beginning of the pandemic, when the Prime Minister ran out of other people's money to borrow, he had to turn to the Bank of Canada, and the Bank of Canada was only too happy to oblige.

The Bank of Canada, since about April of 2020, has been bankrolling the Prime Minister's deficit spending to the tune of about \$400 billion. That is \$400 billion of new money created right out of thin air. That is what is causing the inflation today, and that is why Canadians have a right to know what the bank was doing and what criteria it was following, and report back to Parliament and ultimately to Canadians.

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We have never seen this type of intervention in our monetary policy in our nation's history. Back in the great global recession of 2008, the previous Conservative government held the line on monetary policy. It was a difficult time. Many of my colleagues were in the House at that time. A lot of difficult decisions had to be made, but the previous Conservative government understood that if money starts to be printed out of thin air it makes an already difficult situation even worse.

That is what we are seeing today as we are coming out of the pandemic, after two years of hardship and the emotional toll it took on Canadians individually. People had to go long periods of time without seeing their loved ones. Many small business owners were watching their entire life's work evaporate as restrictions prevented them from opening their doors and serving their customers.

Coming out of that, now Canadians are being faced with punitive rates of inflation. Things that had cost \$10 or \$12 are now going for \$18 or \$20. One almost needs to get a pre-approval on a new loan to go grocery shopping these days as we see the prices escalating. Tools, lumber and all types of everyday purchases Canadians make are going up and up. The government would have us believe this is just something that happens and that it is like the weather: "We are going through an unexpected cloudy period, and inflation is up a little this quarter." That is nonsense. Inflation does not just happen. It is a direct result of the monetary policy of the Bank of Canada working hand in hand with the government of the day. That is why this proposed act is so necessary. We need to restore the independence of the Bank of Canada.

The Bank of Canada's independence has been undermined by the government's decisions to bankroll its deficit spending with all that new money creation. That is why prices are going up today. It is actually rather simple. If we have the same number of goods but dramatically increase the number of dollars going around, prices will go up. It is not rocket science. In fact, these are basic laws of economics. More dollars chasing fewer goods equals inflation. That is precisely what we are seeing today.

The government will try to have us believe inflation is happening because of external factors. Do members remember when it tried to blame the war on Ukraine? It tried to blame inflation on Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine. Guess what? Inflation was happening long before the invasion of Ukraine. The previous summer, on the eve of the election, inflation was already ticking up to record levels.

We all remember the famous quote the Prime Minister said in the middle of an election when inflation was only at about 4%. Do members remember those days, when inflation was only as bad as 4%? Our party started to challenge the Prime Minister and the Liberals on this and highlighted to Canadians it was their economic policy causing the inflation. What did the Prime Minister come back with? He said, "you'll forgive me if I don't think about monetary policy." Well, we do not forgive him. He should think about monetary policy. I guess he does not understand it, otherwise he would know that he is to blame for all that inflation.

• (1735)

Liberals try to say that it cannot be the Prime Minister's fault, that, yes, there is inflation in Canada, but there is inflation in other countries, too. That is true. Other countries that made the same

foolish decisions to run the printing presses during a time of economic contraction are also experiencing record levels of inflation. Some countries did not do that. There are several countries around the world that preserved the value of their currency and are not experiencing the same punitive levels of inflation that Canadians are having to pay.

The government's argument is a little like if someone told me I was putting on a bit of weight and I might want to look at my eating habits, and I said that obesity is a North American problem, that obesity rates in North America are the real challenge and that it cannot be anything I do because I live in a continent where it is a challenge for a lot of people. No, of course not. It is because of the decisions of each individual, just like it is the decisions of each individual country that are causing the inflation we are seeing today.

At the end of the day, the dollars that we carry around with us, the ones and zeros in our bank accounts, have no intrinsic value. We cannot do much with a 20-dollar bill or a 100-dollar bill. The only reason why other people accept it as payment is that there is a level of trust. There is a level of trust that someone else will accept it as payment and give the same value that was received. When the Bank of Canada undermines that trust by creating all that money washing through our system, it devalues the value of the money that people work so hard for. It is a form of fraud.

If people agree to provide labour to an employer for a given salary and then at the end of the quarter or the end of the year the money they receive for the work they have done is worth less, they have been defrauded of what they agreed to. They cannot go back and take away 6% to 10% of their labour. They cannot go back and tell the employer that the dollars they were paid with are now worth less, so they would like some of their time and energy back. They cannot do that. They have already given that to their employer, and the money they receive is now worth less than what they agreed to. That is why inflation is the worst form of tax.

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Of course, governments love inflation, because it makes the debt they have accumulated easier to pay off. Inflation is great for people who have the ability to borrow, and that is what we saw during the pandemic. As the Bank of Canada washed all that money through the system, the people who got the money first got to buy things before prices went up. These large financial institutions and investors who had access to that early money first were able to accumulate all the assets. By the time the rest of us get the money, through wage increases and other phenomena, the prices have already gone up and those wealthy investors get to sell at record profits. That is why there have been such big winners during the last two years. Members should look at the stock market and check what bank shares have done in the last two years. Bank shares have gone up dramatically since the start of the pandemic.

When we look at the Bank of Canada's balance sheet and the money supply charts, factoring in all the money in Canada, everything from the ones and zeros in our bank accounts and the digital money that we all have in our chequing and savings accounts to the cash and all the various credit products that exist out there, the rate of increase in the money supply tracks almost identically with the balance sheet at the Bank of Canada.

That is what this bill is all about. It is about providing the first steps toward accountability and transparency so that Canadians can have their confidence in the Bank of Canada restored. The independence of the Bank of Canada has been undermined by the political decisions of the Prime Minister. If we want to get our finances under control, if we want to get the value of the money that we have worked so hard to earn stable, we need this first step toward accountability so we can understand what the decision-making process was and what the costs were to Canadians.

I have one final point. We are going to hear arguments from the opposite benches about why this bill will undermine the Bank of Canada's independence. In fact, it is quite the contrary. The Bank of England is subject to parliamentary oversight through its equivalent of the Auditor General. The Reserve Bank of New Zealand has the same types of audit provisions that I am proposing today. The European Central Bank has similar types of provisions, with its version of the Auditor General. In fact, Canada is a bit of an outlier in the fact that it is allowing its central bank, which has such enormous power over our economy, to be excluded from this oversight.

This bill is long overdue and I hope all members of the House will support it.

• (1740)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in a few minutes it will be my second opportunity to debate against a bill introduced by the hon. member, which is based on what I consider to be facile assumptions, but it is a pleasure to debate the member. We were elected in the same year, 2004, and it is nice to see him up, partaking in debates in the House.

There has been a flurry of attempts recently to impugn the Bank of Canada, and this bill feeds into that trend. It is not only the so-called Liberal establishment that objects to these attacks on the bank's independence. As a matter of fact, the member for Abbotsford objects to those kinds of attacks as well.

I am wondering if the hon. member can tell us whether his entire caucus will be supporting his bill, given the comments of the member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, I expect every member of my party to support it, because our party is in favour of accountability and transparency. The member has it all backwards. It is his party that has undermined the independence of the Bank of Canada. When Liberals turn to the bank and ask it to act as the personal ATM of the Prime Minister of the day to bankroll his spending decisions, that is what undermines the Bank of Canada. What I am proposing in this bill is simple, non-partisan oversight by the Auditor General, who provides that same function for all kinds of independent, non-partisan departments and agencies.

I do not know why the member does not welcome this bill. Canadians want to see what is going at the bank. That member should support it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague the question once again, but I will make it a little clearer.

When the top candidate in the Conservative Party leadership race stated that he would fire the current Governor of the Bank of Canada if he becomes prime minister, the member for Abbotsford criticized him and stated that such a statement tarnished the credibility of the party on economic issues.

Does my colleague agree with what the member for Abbotsford said?

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, I will let the member for Abbotsford explain what he meant, but this bill is about accountability and oversight. This bill is about empowering the Auditor General to provide the same type of oversight role that he or she provides for every other government department, agency and Crown corporation. That is what this bill is all about.

When it comes to the performance of the Governor of the Bank of Canada, the Bank of Canada has only a few core mandates, one of which is to keep inflation low, at 2%. Inflation has been well over 6% for several months now. Every other Canadian who missed the target by such a massive range would face some kind of accountability. It is not to punish the guy or get even with him, but on behalf of Canadians, they deserve to have a Governor of the Bank of Canada who understands that printing money during a period of economic contraction leads to inflation. It is that simple. This—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, what is clear is that the Conservatives are ideologically driven, and the Conservative leadership candidate, the member for Carleton, has been on a path to try to discredit and politicize the Bank of Canada. That is clear as day.

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The Conservatives do not have any trouble in trying to invoke their ideology into the Bank of Canada, but they are ready to criticize others in the manner in which they are. What is interesting is that this bill calls for another audit, for the Auditor General to audit the Bank of Canada. Of course, the Bank of Canada already has independent audits going on, in any event, yet when the Conservatives were in government, they did not actually want to fund the Auditor General to do his work.

When will the Conservatives step up and make sure that all the departments within government, including the Auditor General, are actually properly funded to do their jobs?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, it used to be the case that transparency and accountability were something the NDP and the Conservatives could agree on. Back in 2006, when the Conservative government brought in the Accountability Act, we worked closely with the NDP. Those days are gone.

Now, the NDP has made a decision to prop up a government plagued by corruption scandals. If the member thinks this bill is ideologically driven because it would allow the Auditor General to audit the bank, does she think it is ideological to allow the Auditor General to audit Canada Post, the Department of Transport or any number of other departments and agencies? That is just nonsense. This is about allowing the independent, non-partisan Auditor General to do his or her job and audit the Bank of Canada.

• (1745)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I recognize that the banking system is the lifeblood of the economy, but talking about banking can sometimes be a bit dry, so I would like to talk about something else today, which is populism. What is populism? It is a focus on the ideas, concerns and problems of the people, combined with the political will to make those ideas, concerns and problems the focus of government policy.

The Conservatives have appropriated the term “populist”, ascribing it exclusively to themselves and with virtuous meaning. What we are seeing, in effect, is Conservative virtue signalling, but in fact everyone in this House is a populist. Regardless of party, including those who are independent, we conceive our role as bringing the concerns of our constituents to Ottawa to influence government policy on their behalf.

The difference between populism and the Conservative conception of populism is that the Conservative conception of populism has a dimension of “us versus them”. This “us versus them” ideology finds fertile ground on the Internet. Internet-fuelled populism is like a twister. It is a—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, we are a couple of minutes in, and while I am a big fan of definitions of words and word origins, I would ask you to consider the point of relevance of the member's speech. He is going down a diatribe that has nothing to do with the actual technicalities of the bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): As the hon. member well knows, there is a lot of latitude until the hon. member gets to the relevance of the debate.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, internet-fuelled populism is like a twister. It is a twister that sucks in any and every manner of grievance against the so-called elites, the so-called gatekeepers, the experts or at least the well-informed. This twister is driven by conspiratorial narratives shared on and amplified by the Internet, more specifically social media.

They are narratives like vaccines do more harm than good; the government is insisting on vaccination to help the pharmaceutical giants; the World Economic Forum is secretly working to subjugate us to their dastardly interests and oppressive vision; and climate change is an idea promoted by eco-socialists and the world government villains at the United Nations who use Greta Thunberg as their apprentice.

This one was mentioned by the member opposite in his speech: The mainstream media is simply an arm of the government, and we cannot believe a word they say, even if what they say is well researched and supported by fact. Here is another conspiratorial narrative: The Bank of Canada is working hand in hand with the Liberal Minister of Finance to create inflation, especially asset price inflation, to benefit the Liberals' friends.

It all makes sense to a receptive but uncritical mind. Bill C-253 is intended to feed the conspiratorial populist narrative. There is not much to the bill itself. It is short. It is so short that it makes one wonder why even take the time to introduce and debate it.

The bill would require the Auditor General to be one of the auditors of the Bank of Canada. The bank's auditors are selected by the Minister of Finance and approved by cabinet. KPMG and Ernst & Young currently audit the bank. Bill C-253 impugns these independent auditors, suggesting that somehow they do not do their job properly, even though they are bound by professional codes of conduct.

The other problem with appointing the Auditor General as one of the bank's auditors is that the Auditor General is not equipped to audit the bank. The Auditor General's role is to audit departmental programs against stated goals and objectives and to highlight shortcomings in the effective execution of those programs. The audit process is meant to be constructive, but it is also, in essence, a critique of the government. Naturally, opposition parties use AG reports in their efforts to undermine public faith in the party in power.

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This is fair game and an essential part of maintaining democratic accountability, but the Bank of Canada does not have programs per se. It has policy objectives and policy instruments. The success of its actions depends on a host of extraneous factors, such as government fiscal policy and international economic trends, including supply shocks and the like. These are all things the bank does not control, unlike a government department that has direct control over its programs.

The Auditor General does not have the capacity to cast credible judgments on the bank's policy performance in a dynamic economic context, as compared with the static context of bureaucratic programs. The trap the Auditor General could easily fall into if it were called on to judge the bank's economic policies, assuming it agreed to do so in the first place, is to come to tenuous if not potentially false conclusions masquerading as truth and fact, in the process undermining the bank's credibility with the public and risking a populist backlash.

What the sponsor of this bill does not seem to understand is that the bank's success in, say, meeting its inflation targets depends on the extent to which the public believes it will be successful in doing so. There is nothing worse for the economic welfare of Canadians than a public that has lost faith in the bank and a public that does not believe the bank can control inflation. This is what is at the heart of the dreaded wage-price spiral.

Bill C-253 is pure populism, a populist attempt to undermine public faith in a highly specialized institution, all being done for partisan political gain in a Conservative leadership race. As Andrew Coyne, who is hardly a Liberal apologist, has said:

Auditing the bank may make no practical difference to how it is governed, but that is not the point: The point is to suggest there is some sort of deep-state hanky-panky going on inside the bank, which only an outside audit could bring to light. The point is to demonize the bank, to discredit its leadership and undermine public confidence in its policies.... This is a particularly hazardous moment to be playing politics with the bank.

• (1750)

We have seen this movie before. We have seen what happens when Conservatives try to get their hands on independent public institutions like Elections Canada. There are a few of us here in the House who still remember the “unfair elections act” that the member for Carleton stickhandled on behalf of Stephen Harper at the time. Back then, the Conservatives invented a different bogeyman, one called “election fraud”, to justify voter suppression.

The word “conservative” encompasses many ideas and habits, none more important than prudence. The members opposite are not adhering to that Conservative value, a value that is alien to populism.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, accountability is already enshrined in the Bank of Canada Act. This act requires that once a year, two independent firms are to audit the affairs of the bank simultaneously. The bank is the only federal Crown corporation subject to this requirement. The act also gives the Minister of Finance the authority to enlarge or extend the scope of the audit and to request special audits and reports.

Contrary to what the bill might suggest, the auditor general already has the authority to exercise an oversight role in certain areas of the bank's business functions. Specifically, she can review and audit the bank's operations and records related to its roles as the government's fiscal agent, advisor on public debt management, and manager of the exchange fund account.

The Bank of Canada Act also makes it clear that in the event that there is a difference of opinion between the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bank of Canada on monetary policy, the minister may, after consultation with the governor and with the approval of the Governor in Council, give to the governor a written directive that shall be laid before Parliament.

The governor and deputy governor are regularly called to testify before committees of the House of Commons and the other place, including the Standing Committee on Finance, to be held accountable. I commend them for their willingness to appear and their transparency. I also thank them for systematically answering my questions in impeccable French.

In addition, there is also an Audit and Finance Committee, which has the mandate to review the bank's annual and interim financial statements; approve interim financial statements; make a recommendation to the board of directors with respect to the approval of the annual financial statements, as appropriate; oversee and ensure that the external and internal audit functions are carried out in an appropriate manner; review the adequacy of the bank's risk management, internal control and governance framework with respect to financial reporting; and oversee the bank's financial management, including the medium-term financial plan, the annual budget and expenditure reporting.

This bill is an expression of a philosophy and a strategy that should worry us, an attempt to cast doubt on the bank and undermine public confidence in this independent institution. That is exactly what we saw when the bill's sponsor was his party's leader and during the last election campaign. This strategy is still a factor in their leadership race.

The Bank of Canada is a complex institution, and it is difficult for the general public to understand. It just might be the perfect victim for politicians seeking a scapegoat for economic ups and downs. The current Conservative Party leadership hopeful openly attacks the Bank of Canada and has even promised to fire the bank's current governor. This same technique has already been used by none other than Donald Trump south of the border.

Firing the governor of the central bank just because the prime minister does not agree with the monetary policy could have a devastating impact on our economy, its stability and its attractiveness to investors. It would put us on par with banana republics where financial and monetary crises happen all the time.

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It is of course perfectly appropriate and healthy to be able to criticize the work of a central bank and its governor. We are seeing this now. Economists have said that central bankers waited too long before raising interest rates. The governor has also been criticized for being slow to recognize that inflation was not transitory and that monetary policy tightening should have started well before 2022.

The Bank of Canada has recognized some of its own errors. In a speech given in Toronto on May 3, the deputy governor focused on the importance of maintaining public confidence in the central bank. She said the following:

So we are acutely aware that, with some of the extraordinary actions we have taken during the pandemic and with inflation well above our target, some people are questioning that trust.

To bring down inflation, the bank's current policy calls for a sharp rise in interest rates, followed by an end to the rollover of government bond assets held by the institution.

Once again, criticizing the central bank and its management of inflation is legitimate, but we must also take the time to explain the multiple causes of these price increases, which is a global phenomenon.

● (1755)

The rhetoric that tends to undermine public confidence in the Bank of Canada is beyond worrisome. It can have a real impact on the economy, and this bill seems to serve that rhetoric.

The Bank of Canada is a public entity separate from both the banking sector and the political process, let us not forget. Its fundamental responsibility is to guide the economy in the long-term best interests of the public.

The bank was created in 1934. The Bank of Canada Act established the bank as a Crown corporation with special status and considerable independence to conduct its business. The act sets out the bank's business and powers as they relate to its core responsibilities of monetary policy, the financial system, currency, funds management and, more recently, retail payments supervision. The act also provides for the operational independence the bank needs to carry out its activities and meet its responsibilities, free from political influence.

In other words, the act dictates what the bank does, but not how it does it.

Over the years, the bank has made major changes to how it achieves its mandate. The most significant was in 1991, when the government and the bank reached the country's first inflation-targeting agreement.

As its name indicates, it is a sort of contract between the bank and the government that establishes an inflation-control target but confers on the bank the authority to decide how it will achieve this target. The agreement has been renewed on a regular basis, most recently in 2021, following consultations.

From the signing of the first agreement 30 years ago to the most recent agreement, the inflation rate was kept to almost exactly 2% on average. The bank is working to return to that level of price increases while ensuring the economy's stability. I will repeat that it is

facing disruptions at a global level, and we are confident it will succeed.

In closing, I would like to remind members that the bank has a board of directors composed of the governor, the senior deputy governor and 12 independent directors. The board of directors does not have a say in monetary policy decisions, which fall to the Governing Council, but it does have oversight of the bank's activities and finances. Its independent directors appoint the governor and the senior deputy governor, with the approval of the Governor in Council.

The bank also enjoys financial independence. The expenditures of the bank are financed by its own activities, and it therefore does not rely on public funding. Its budget is approved by the board of directors.

● (1800)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wish I could say that it is a pleasure to rise in the House to speak to this bill, but, quite frankly, I have been in this place for a few years now, and rarely have I seen such a hare-brained, preposterous bill as the one presented to us by the former leader of the Conservative Party.

Worst of all, this bill was introduced by someone who ran to be prime minister, but who is now sinking into a kind of crass partisan populism. I actually get the impression that this is a scheme to promote the member for Carleton in the current Conservative leadership race.

Let us turn to serious business. The bill focuses on the role of the Office of the Auditor General, one of the essential tools for our democratic quality of life, government accountability, and the proper functioning of government.

As an independent body, the office is able to go in, check the facts and see what really happened in a particular department, with a project, military or other equipment purchase, or government contract. It is able to see whether the rules and amounts were followed and whether taxpayer dollars were spent in a proper, reasonable and rational manner.

The office does extraordinary work. As an opposition member, I can say that we have often used the studies, reports and investigations of the Office of the Auditor General to ask questions of the government. It would have been difficult to get these data and studies otherwise.

The various commissioners, including the Commissioner of the Environment and the Commissioner of Official Languages, also do work that is essential to the proper functioning of Parliament and our democracy in general.

Unfortunately, under the government of Stephen Harper and the Conservatives, the Office of the Auditor General's budget was cut. They wanted to clip the Auditor General's wings because he was saying things that were unpleasant for the government. He was the one who reminded us that the government had not done exactly this or that, that it had misspent money, that it had not complied with the rules, and so on. The message they wanted to send was that he was not going to have the resources to do his job.

Not only did the Conservatives make cuts to the human and financial resources of the Office of the Auditor General, but now they are introducing a bill giving the Office of the Auditor General a new mandate. The Office of the Auditor General does not have enough resources to audit the entire government, which is considerable, to turn over all the stones and ask all the right questions—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry for interrupting the hon. member, but the hon. member for Manicouagan has a point of order.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I would like to know if there is quorum.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will check.

And the count having been taken:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have quorum. I will give the floor back to the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

• (1805)

[English]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Chair, I am so happy to see so many people rushing into the House to listen to my speech.

[Translation]

That is very kind.

I will take the next few minutes to review the purpose of this new bill introduced by the former Conservative leader. It is essentially designed to give more work to the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, but to do what? To investigate the Bank of Canada? Why?

As my colleague before me already said, the Bank of Canada is already accountable to Parliament for its own administration, its work, its monetary policies and its decisions through House and Senate committees.

It seems that the reason behind this is to hype up the bill introduced by the member for Carleton, who is pointing the finger at Canada's central bank, accusing it of creating all our inflation woes and blaming it for the current decrease in purchasing power that Quebecers and Canadians are unfortunately experiencing. As we said earlier, the Bank of Canada is not perfect and we have a duty to criticize it and to demand accountability.

This bill is a thinly veiled threat, an attempt by the Conservatives to intrude on and interfere with the Bank of Canada, an independent body. They are doing this for partisan and political purposes. They want to use the Office of the Auditor General for partisan purposes, in a thinly veiled threat to Canada's central bank.

This bill reeks of populism. I think it is pathetic that they are taking up hours of our time in Parliament to help give a Conservative Party leadership candidate some credibility on this issue.

Of course, from a libertarian or far-right economic perspective, the likes of which can be found in the ranks of the Conservative Party, no one blames anything on big business and the massive profits these companies are making. They think it is perfectly nor-

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mal for the big oil companies and big grocery chains to profit off the pandemic, the crisis and the supply chain issues by unreasonably increasing prices at the expense of workers, the least fortunate and families that are struggling.

The Conservatives are leaning into right-wing populism and will never explain why billionaires should exist or why companies make billions of dollars at Canadians' expense. Instead, they blame the Bank of Canada.

I do not necessarily agree with dramatically raising interest rates as a way to fight inflation. It has tragic consequences for people who, for example, are already having trouble paying their mortgages and bills. That is one way to do it, but it is really not in the best interests of the poor, workers and the middle class. I will come back to that later if I have time.

They want to discredit Canada's central bank in order to give more credit to cryptocurrencies. I do not know whether anyone has been following what has been happening lately with the collapse of cryptocurrencies. They are not governed or controlled by anyone, and no one is accountable to anyone else.

Of course, cryptocurrencies are an unbridled capitalist's dream. I am not sure that this is the kind of society that we want to live in. I am not sure that we should be telling people to trust this virtual currency and that this is how the country's currency is going to be run from now on, because some shadowy forces are controlling the evil Bank of Canada and that this is not in everyone's best interests.

This is really a bill that is being used for partisan purposes, for the leadership race that is going on right now.

If we want to point the finger at those largely responsible for the current price increases, then we must not be afraid to look at the facts and see who exactly is lining their pockets right now at the expense of the average citizen.

The Association des distributeurs d'énergie du Québec recently published a chart to make comparisons between the number of cents in the price at the pump between 2008 and 2022, that is attributable to different factors. In 2008, the price of oil was 84¢, while it is at 91¢ this month, May 2022.

• (1810)

That is not a huge increase. Pollution pricing rose from 1¢ to 9¢. Taxes have gone up, but not that much, just from 45¢ to 60¢. The refining margin, in contrast, has gone up from 9¢ to 48¢. That is the biggest contributor to rising pump prices over the last 15 years, and it is profit for big corporations like Suncor and Imperial Oil, which made billions in profits in the first quarter of this year.

We have to be able to tell people the truth. We have to be able to tell them that there are solutions other than raising interest rates. The NDP has solutions to help people get through this crisis. Increase the GST tax credit, which helps hundreds of thousands of people in Quebec and across Canada, and increase the Canada child benefit, which is a good way to redistribute wealth.

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We need to be able to tax these companies that are making billions of dollars in profits so that we can redistribute that money to the people who really need it, people who are suffering right now and struggling to pay their rent and buy groceries.

There are other solutions. I would point out that, in this morning's edition of *Le Devoir*, a dozen economists went over different ways we could be helping people, including regulating Airbnb rentals, lowering the cost of public transit, building massive numbers of social housing units and bringing in rent control. Not all of these measures would come from the federal government, but there are some excellent ideas and solutions.

What is currently before us is not only unnecessary, but also dangerous for our democratic institutions.

[*English*]

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, New Brunswick is large in its mind, and it is large in its geography as well. Thank you for recognizing me and permitting me to address this important piece of legislation. I should remind the House and members here that when we cut right through it, inflation is the price that we and all Canadians pay for the things that the government told us would be free. That really cuts to the core of this debate and why this bill is so important.

Parliamentary oversight and accountability are key pillars of our democracy that we as legislators should be determined to protect and safeguard. Members of Parliament have a great deal of respect for the work done over the decades by Canada's auditors general, along with the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the other independent offices of Parliament. As chairman of the public accounts committee, I have heard from our current Auditor General, Ms. Hogan, and her deputy, Mr. Hayes, on a number of occasions this year. I can say that MPs from both sides of this chamber welcome their analysis on the machinery of government, through audits of federal departments, agencies and Crown corporations.

The Auditor General's office has historically performed a valuable service to Canadian taxpayers. Their work informs us in this House of both the missteps and the achievements that come from fulfilling policies and programs implemented by the Government of Canada. With few exceptions, these policies and programs are tied to mandates given to them by the executive, that is the cabinet. Of course, those mandates come ultimately from Canada's voters. When civil servants do not adhere to these mandates, it is on us, as parliamentarians, to hold them accountable and to make course corrections.

As such, I wholeheartedly support Bill C-253 to bring the Bank of Canada under the purview of the Auditor General by including the central bank under section 85 of the Financial Administration Act. What this bill would do is authorize the Auditor General to include the Bank of Canada in her normal audit cycle, which means the Bank of Canada would be subject to the same types of routine audits that Crown corporations and departments undergo. That is it. At its core, this is about accountability and transparency, and adherence to its mandate and Parliament.

I applaud the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for introducing this bill, because he, like me, wants accountability from the Bank of

Canada to ensure it adheres to its mandate. Some hon. members protest that MPs should not examine or even criticize the Bank of Canada, because it is independent, but this is a view out of step with democratic oversight in the United States, Britain and other countries where lawmakers are today vigorously debating what their central banks got wrong. We can just turn to a couple of headlines, which read, "Former Fed Chair Ben Bernanke said the central bank erred in waiting to address inflation", and "The Fed's slow response to inflation was a mistake".

Another one, from the *Financial Times*, states, "MPs turn on bank's handling of economy as [British] government feels heat from cost of living crisis". In fact, even here in Canada, the media are reporting about Bank of Canada officials. In this case, "Carolyn Rogers says the Bank of Canada is learning from its mistakes", yet some feel that this House has no role in this debate.

Historically, the Bank of Canada has been focused on a stable rate of inflation, and the bank's previous governors successfully kept inflation under control. It was not always easy and it required work, independence and a focus on results. However, in recent years, the bank's references to employment targets has been a consideration. If colleagues look at the bank's website or listen to speeches that officials have made, other considerations are now being added by bank officials in its considerations.

More recently, the bank has also started to indicate that other goals, such as environmental and social objectives, would or could influence policy. Since the pandemic, the Liberal government's deficit spending program has been underwritten almost exclusively through the bank's use of quantitative easing. That is a fancy word for expanding the money supply, which is a polite way of saying "printing money".

• (1815)

As my hon. colleague just pointed out, when we expand the money supply, we dilute or reduce its value, and that is what has happened today in Canadian wallets. Their paycheques and their savings are worth less than they previously were.

How has all of this worked out? As members of Parliament, we should not be afraid to ask, to probe questions and to seek answers. The bill we are considering would allow the Auditor General to conduct audits of the bank through its normal 10-year cycle. Such audits include performance evaluations, something that is not happening now as it would go beyond the fiscal balance sheet examinations.

This is an important and key addition, particularly since the central bank is implementing monetary policies that are without precedent, and this will have massive implications for things like interest rates, inflation, growth and household incomes going forward. It is necessary that the Bank of Canada be subject to more transparency and accountability by Parliament.

Of course, there is precedent for allowing the Auditor General to have jurisdiction over arm's-length independent financial institutions. The Public Sector Pension Investment Board operates free of political interference but is still subject to the Auditor General's oversight. This bill follows virtually the same model by amending the Financial Administration Act's exemption for the Bank of Canada to match the Public Sector Pension Investment Board. Again, we are calling for the Bank of Canada to be covered in a way that other arm's-length agencies are.

Let us return to mandates and accountability. The Bank of Canada and its governor, Tiff Macklem, wield an extreme amount of power by setting our nation's monetary policy, not economic policy, as one of the members on the government bench said, but monetary policy.

I would argue that the bank's governor is the most powerful unelected civil servant in Canada. At the same time, he is bound by the mandate of his office and therefore subject to accountability, for us to ask how this governor is doing in his job. Unlike other institutions that report to Parliament, the Bank of Canada is audited by external auditors, who are appointed by cabinet on the recommendation of the finance minister. Therein lies the problem. There is not enough oversight or independence.

The bank is responsible for maintaining low and stable inflation, a safe and secure currency, financial stability and the efficient management of government funds and public debt, but at its very core, the governor is responsible for keeping the rate of inflation between 1% and 3%. How is he doing? The rate of inflation, in this country, has hit 6.8%. That is a 30-year high and not a record of success.

Political elites do not want MPs or Canadians to talk about the Bank of Canada's shortcomings. This is to protect the governor from proper and legitimate criticism, yet Governor Macklem has blown Canada's inflation targets and, in doing so, was cozy with the Liberal government.

He should have done his job instead of echoing government talking points about non-existent fiscal anchors. The incestuous relationship between the Liberal government and the Bank of Canada should never have been permitted to develop.

Because the Bank of Canada did not properly perform its job, Canadian households are paying a high price and, I fear, will pay a high price for years to come. Interest rate hikes will be more punishing, and price increases will last longer than had an independent Bank of Canada acted sooner.

Instead of talking about the punishing financial hit on Canadian families and businesses, these gatekeepers, to shield the governor from legitimate public scrutiny, cried, "Respect the bank's independence." Those cries ring hollow after the governor failed to exercise his own independence from the Liberals. The bank should be held accountable for its errors. This is not interference. This is accountability.

This bill is a modest reform to grant Parliament some oversight, since the Auditor General's audits would be tabled in Parliament and studied by its members. It would bring Canada's Parliament in step with other democracies in probing the Bank of Canada's imple-

mentation of its mandate. It would allow MPs to hold the Bank of Canada accountable and to ask and seek answers.

Conservatives do not wish to diminish the Bank of Canada's independence, but we want to ensure it is acting independently while fulfilling its mandate to control inflation. I support this bill, and I urge others to do likewise.

● (1820)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, at the outset of listening to the debate in this House and reading the text of this bill, I cannot help but wonder if the Conservatives have lost faith in the Bank of Canada. I know they are going to say they just want accountability and they just want to have proper oversight. However, as pointed out, not just by Liberals but by members from the Bloc and the NDP, this goes a lot further than just looking for accountability and oversight. This plays into that narrative that, quite honestly, the member for Carleton, who is the perceived next leader of the Conservative Party, is feeding. He is feeding that narrative, and it is the narrative that they do not have faith in one of the most important institutions in our country. Have the members across the way lost faith in the Bank of Canada?

An hon. member: Yes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, we just heard a yes. I heard a yes that was heckled across the way. I did not realize the answer was going to be that easy. I thought I was going to have to fight for it.

Madam Speaker, it goes to the heart of the issue, and the heart of the issue here is that this idea and this politicization of the Bank of Canada, which is being led by the member for Carleton and those who support him, for nothing more than the gains that they can make out of this populist movement, is exactly what we are seeing.

The member for Regina—Qu'Appelle was asked a question earlier: Will all Conservatives support this? He stood up and said that yes, they would. I am really interested to see the vote from the member for Abbotsford, because he was extremely critical, and he agreed that the politicization of the Bank of Canada "undermines the party's credibility on economic issues". That is the member for Abbotsford, the same member who was ousted for making a comment like this, just last night.

An hon. member: He resigned.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I am sorry. I am corrected, Madam Speaker. He resigned. He was given the opportunity to resign. I thank the Conservative member across the way for correcting that.

This is about populism. That has been well documented, and not just by the member from the Liberal Party who spoke earlier but indeed by other political parties in here. I am very glad to see that it is extremely clear what is going on here, and I look forward to my seven minutes that remain the next time this comes up for debate.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1825)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The time provided for Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, Putin's horrific actions in Ukraine are killing children, women and elders, and displacing millions of Ukrainians who are fleeing for safety.

Since 2017, the NDP has been calling for visa-free access for Ukrainians. It is unfortunate that this has not been put in place, as it would have been the most efficient way to get people to safety. Instead, the government opted for a visa process.

Canada's immigration backlog now exceeds two million people, with significant backlogs in every stream. The minister said that he was going to fix the problem, but the situation is actually getting worse, not better.

The promise of a two-week turnaround time in processing of the Canada Ukraine emergency travel visa is just fiction. In fact, Ukrainians could not even get an appointment to get their biometrics done in two weeks. Not only that, the minister announced an extended family reunification measure for Ukrainian nationals on March 3. It has been over two and a half months, and there is still no indication of when details of the family reunification PR program stream will be launched.

Aside from the issue of processing visas and travel documents, the government is now relying on Air Miles to help Ukrainians get to safety. I certainly hope that this does not replace what is absolutely essential, which are evacuation flights. If it does, it is clearly not a very reliable way to help Ukrainians get to safety. Not only that, but it will also not help those who need to leave now.

What will happen when there are no more Air Miles points available? How will Ukrainians know that they can access points? For booking flights, points are extremely limited as there are limited seats available for each flight. As such, it could be very difficult for Ukrainians fleeing Putin's war to get to safety.

Ukrainians in need of getting to safety are mired in red tape with delays in getting emergency visas. Now, they need to wait for Air Miles points to be available and hope that they can get a seat to get to Canada. Let us imagine that. The Liberal government needs to realize that this not a vacation for Ukrainian nationals. People are trying to get to safety. They are fleeing a war, and they are in a desperate situation. Canada should be partnering with Air Canada and organizing evacuation flights for Ukrainians.

Because the immigration stream made available to Ukrainians is a temporary visitor stream, concerns that they will not have the support they need are escalating. Even though the Prime Minister announced that there would be income support for them a month ago, so far there is no information on when or how they will be able to access the support. There is not even clarity on how much income support they would get or how long it would be made available to them. This cannot carry on. Also, children would not qualify for the Canada child benefit, yet we know that newcomers rely on that support to support their access to safe housing.

Provinces have said that they would help, but it is not enough. We need the federal government to bring forward a national program to address this issue and to ensure equitable access and support for all Ukrainian nationals.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am truly honoured to rise to answer the member's question. Canada stands firm in its support for Ukraine. Ukrainian immigrants are an important part of Canada's cultural history, and we continue to support the courageous Ukrainian people

More than 32,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Canada since January 1 of this year. As part of our response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or the IRCC, introduced the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel. This fast-track temporary residence visa is designed to help Ukrainians seeking a safe haven in Canada while war continues in their home country.

As of May 1, we have received approximately 240,000 applications under this new program and have approved over 111,000. We are meeting our target of 14 days for processing applications. We are committed to processing 80% of applications within 14 days, and we continue to meet that standard.

On May 10, the Minister of Immigration announced that three charter flights would be offered to approved Ukrainians and their families under the emergency program. The IRCC will be sending an email to those who have received their visas to come to Canada under the emergency program to let them know how they can book seats on these charters. The flights will be available on a first-come, first-served basis, and will depart from Warsaw, Poland, arriving in Winnipeg on May 23, Montreal on May 29, and Halifax on June 2.

Protecting people from danger and integrating them into a new community and a new country is just the beginning. Ukrainians will need support once they arrive in Canada, and that is why we have announced that Ukrainians will have access to hotel stays for up to two weeks and income support for up to six weeks.

Adjournment Proceedings

The IRCC is issuing open work and study permits to Ukrainian nationals and their families who are currently in Canada and cannot return home safely, allowing them to extend their stay in Canada for up to three years. In addition, on March 30 of this year, the Government of Canada announced temporary federal support to help eligible Ukrainians arriving under the new program to settle into their new communities.

These extended settlement program services, which are typically only available to permanent residents, will be available until March 31, 2023, and include the following: language training; information about and orientation to life in Canada, such as help with enrolling children in school; information and services to help access the labour market, including mentoring, networking, counselling, skills development and training; activities that promote connections with communities; assessments of other needs Ukrainians may have; services targeted to the needs of women, seniors, youth and LGBTQ2+ persons; and other settlement supports.

We will continue to do more to welcome Ukrainians seeking refuge here in Canada from Putin's war as quickly as possible, and we will take care of them when they get here.

• (1830)

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, the government is very good at making announcements, but the reality is that it actually has not followed up. The parliamentary secretary just talked about the income support for Ukrainians. Where is it? How can people access it? Where is the information for people to obtain that support? I have constituents who are hosting Ukrainians and they do not know where they can get that support. It is simply not there, even though the announcement was made by the Prime Minister weeks ago. Talk is cheap. We need to actually act on it and put those programs in place.

Finally, it is absolutely essential that the government does not rob Peter to pay Paul, and that it ensures that refugees from other countries are also supported, so agencies and resettlement agencies are not stuck without the support that they need for all those other countries. They all deserve support. The government also needs to take action to ensure resettlement services agencies have the capacity to do this work.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I am always pleased to have a conversation with the hon. member. I am very happy to report on the settlement. Earlier this year, we made an announcement that we were going forward with \$35 million for our rural and small communities. I had the privilege last week to go to Moose Jaw in Saskatchewan, where I announced \$14.2 million that will be distributed among 11 rural communities. We have been there since day one with our Ukrainian community. We will continue to be there and support them, and I am very proud of the actions that our government has taken.

• (1835)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise tonight on this adjournment debate. I want to acknowledge I am standing here on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

The question I am pursuing tonight I originally asked on April 27, so it had not been long since we had received the final chapter of the sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, with its most dire warnings ever.

I asked the Prime Minister how it could be, given we had been told by the IPCC that emissions must peak globally by 2025 and drop dramatically from there to at least half by 2030, that two days later the government approved the Bay du Nord project, and how it could be that, three days later, the budget included continuing to build the Trans Mountain pipeline, while somehow transferring that monstrosity to indigenous ownership.

The Prime Minister's answer, as ever, was that the government was doing so much and had committed \$100 billion to be spent between 2016 and 2030. One hundred billion dollars is a lot of money, but it does not save us. The government's plan does not come close to holding to 2°C or 1.5°C.

We are facing some very serious realities, and talking points will not do. I have to admit that I made an error in my question of April 27. On how bad things were, I quoted from the IPCC lead author, who said that it was “now or never”. I read the report of the IPCC as saying, as I just did, that we had until 2025 globally to ensure that emissions had peaked and dropped from there. I was wrong.

I went back and reread page 22 of the “Summary for Policymakers” of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's sixth assessment report. We do not have until 2025; we have less time. The quote is that “global emissions must peak between 2020 and, at the latest, before 2025”.

This is not a political debate. I know the hon. parliamentary secretary is as good and decent a person as we are ever going to find in this place, and the minister is a good person and the Prime Minister is a good person, but it does not matter. The difference between policies developed by good people who fall short on climate change and policies by people who do not believe climate change exists, in the words of Bill McKibben, one of our leading champions for climate action globally, is losing more slowly.

The Liberal plan before us does not deal with the science. It does not. Setting net-zero by 2050 as if it means anything is spin. It is not science. Net-zero by 2050 is only relevant if global emissions peak before 2025 and drop rapidly from there.

Adjournment Proceedings

I know what the hon. minister has said in this place about Bay du Nord and the emissions not being Canada's problem. Really? When did he lose his moral compass? The emissions do not matter if they happen somewhere else? Canada is to continue to increase producing oil and gas? It is not our problem if the emissions in other countries condemn our children to an unlivable world? That is what we are talking about; nothing less than that.

When we have a choice between now or never, please do not choose never.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the points raised by the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. I always like discussing this issue with her.

Fighting climate change is very important to me. It is an issue that really guides the work that I do in this place every day.

I would point out that we are at the point of seeing a flattening of emissions from this country, and that is a very big deal. In 2019, we began to see a decoupling, where the economy grew and emissions were flattening. They were not growing in the same way the economy was.

In 2020, our emissions in fact dropped, but that was a different year. We all know that because we were not travelling the way we had before. However, I will point out that some of that drop is a permanent piece that comes from the work that we have done to remove coal-fired electricity from the electrical grid, as we are doing, so there are positives steps. I think it is really important to highlight some of that as well because I feel the anxiety, as I think so many people do, and it is important to point out that progress is being made.

The member has also raised the Bay du Nord project. I have pointed out that we are making progress. There is work being done. It is hard work. We put a price on carbon pollution. That was a big deal. We had to fight it all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada to make it stick. That was a lot of hard work, and it is a having an impact. It is a very strong market mechanism.

If we look toward next things, we are mandating zero-emission vehicles so that 100% of all new light-duty vehicles sold by 2035 will be zero emission. We are retrofitting buildings as set out in the emissions reduction plan. As quickly as we seek to make that transition, there are many logistical challenges that we are overcoming to make that happen quickly.

Currently, we are still in a place where we rely on oil and gas for our homes and transportation. Even as we transition from the combustion of fossil fuels, and this was something that was a big learning for me, there is going to remain a need for non-combustion related uses. For example, I was at my bike shop talking to someone about my bike. Right now, there is no other quality way to lubricate the chain on my bicycle than to use oil. It is also used for plastics in a medical context. Those are needs that are still there. Therefore, the world will still need some fossil fuels, but not necessarily for combustion, which brings me to the question of Bay du Nord.

The federal government accepted the environmental assessment of the Impact Assessment Agency regarding the Baie du Nord project after four years of consideration and scrutiny by scientific experts. The projected emissions from Baie du Nord are 10 times less than the oil sands on average and five times less than the average oil and gas project. Ultimately, I am going to highlight this, because it is something that is important to me as I look at all of this: The atmosphere sees emissions, but it does not see production barrel numbers.

What we are doing is driving down the combustion of fossil fuels in our own country through the work I have outlined above, and there is so much work being done. We are also putting a cap on emissions from the oil and gas sector. Those are all steps we are taking that are important steps forward. I would say we are making tremendous progress. It is a hard mountain to move, but we are doing it.

I thank the hon. member for all of her feedback and work on this issue.

• (1840)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I did not say in my four minutes up here that the government is not working. I did not say that individuals are not working hard. I did not say the government is not making progress. I said that the totality of what it has proposed does not protect my grandchildren from the *Mad Max* dystopian future that awaits them on if we stay on the trajectory we are on, so we must be sure we do more.

There is no excuse for the government wasting billions of dollars on the Trans Mountain pipeline. There is no excuse for an emissions reduction plan that includes an increase of 21% by 2030 of oil and gas production. There is no excuse for approving Baie du Nord.

My Liberal friends, who claim to be climate active, should hang their heads in shame. They must do more. We stand on the edge of too late, but it is not yet too late.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, I do understand the urgency. It is, in fact, something I take very seriously in the work I do. It is something that I take to heart, and there is urgency in the work we are doing. In only looking through the emissions reduction plan, it goes through every sector of our economy, putting forward projections to reduce our emissions.

We have signed on to international agreements. Canada joined over 100 countries in signing the global methane pledge to reduce global anthropogenic methane emissions by 30% by 2030. If we look at all of the work put together, including reducing emissions by 40% to 45% from 2005 levels by 2030, then we are on a path to net zero by 2050.

It is urgent, I absolutely agree, and we are working with that urgency. We will continue to do so.

• (1845)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn. The House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole to study all votes under Department of Public Works and Government Services in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES—MAIN ESTIMATES,
2022-23

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Public Works and Government Services in the main estimates, Mrs. Alexandra Mendès in the chair)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Today's debate is a general one on all votes under the Department of Public Works and Government Services. The first round will begin with the official opposition, followed by the government, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party. After that, we will follow the usual proportional rotation.

[Translation]

Each member will be allocated 15 minutes at a time, which may be used both for debate and for posing questions. Members wishing to use this time to make a speech have a maximum of 10 minutes, leaving at least five minutes for questions to the minister. When a member is recognized, he or she should indicate to the Chair how the 15-minute period will be used, meaning how much time will be spent on the speech and how much time will be used for questions and comments.

Also, pursuant to order made earlier today, members who wish to share their time with another member shall indicate this to the Chair. The Chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent. When the time is to be used for questions and comments, the minister's response should reflect approximately the time taken to pose the question, since this time will be counted in the time originally allotted to the member.

[English]

Pursuant to order made earlier today, the time provided for the debate tonight may be extended beyond four hours as needed to include a minimum of 16 periods of 15 minutes each.

I also wish to indicate that in committee of the whole comments should be addressed to the Chair. I ask for everyone's co-operation in upholding all established standards of decorum, parliamentary language and behaviour.

We will now begin tonight's session.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Chair, I would like to salute and welcome the minister. Now, on to the first question.

Business of Supply

The Parliamentary Budget Officer said the following at the February 4 meeting of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates: "The pattern is that whenever we look at major procurement issues, for example, combat ships, supply ships, and now polar icebreakers, there is one constant: the costs are always higher when an independent office estimates them rather than the government."

Why is that?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Chair, we always provide the estimates, and we do our best to maintain procurement that matches up with those estimates.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, Andrew Kendrick, who testified on May 13 at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, mentioned that the major shipyards always transferred the risk to the smaller suppliers, the contractors, and that the costs associated with the risks were assumed by them. If they needed to boost the price, they just had to increase the bill and the government paid.

Why are the contracts written that way? Why is it always the taxpayers who pay for the cost overruns or the risks, which most often are passed on to the smaller players?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we are really proud of our national shipbuilding strategy. The investments we make into that strategy pay off. The economic benefits pay off, and it is not just for the large shipyards. Small businesses benefit as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, the cost of everything is skyrocketing right now. None of the contracts involve fixed costs. A number of witnesses told the committee that many businesses in many countries had fixed costs. The witnesses suggested signing fixed-cost contracts.

Does the minister agree?

• (1850)

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, what I would acknowledge is that COVID has had an impact around the world. With respect to the shipyards, there is no question that COVID has impacted costs of labour and supply chain issues.

Business of Supply

We always work in a way to maintain having costs match up to the quotes that are given, but COVID has presented a number of challenges, not only in shipyards but also all around the world in supply chains and labour.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, was Canada the only country to experience COVID-19 or did it happen in other countries as well?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, COVID has happened around the world.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, I have another point that was raised by officials from Public Services and Procurement Canada. On April 7, these bureaucrats told the committee that we can expect further cost overruns and delays regarding the delivery of new ships for the navy and the Coast Guard, and that the multi-billion dollar shipbuilding program faces significant challenges.

Will the minister admit that billions of dollars in cost overruns are already expected?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I have had an opportunity to visit one of the shipyards, and the work that is going on there is second to none. To see the extent of what is taking place here in Canada, on Canadian soil, to produce these ships is absolutely fantastic. It is creating jobs and economic growth right here in Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, nobody is questioning the shipyard employees' work. What we are questioning is the excessive cost overruns taxpayers have to cover for projects that, to make matters worse, are often delayed.

There are delays. Here is my question. Are these delays and cost overruns due to government management, or does the problem lie with the shipyards?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, just so that we are aware, I want to point out some of the benefits that the national shipbuilding strategy and the investments that we are making are having on Canadians. First, there is the creation of jobs, which includes the creation of over 18,000 jobs per year that are created or maintained. In terms of the economic benefit, it is \$1.54 billion annually to the economy.

With respect to overruns, I have already mentioned that COVID has had an impact and that does impact some of the overruns that have been faced.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, Troy Crosby, the person responsible for National Defence procurement, told the committee that the ships are not being built fast enough and that they are costing more.

I want to know if the minister has sent the shipyards an official letter, directive or document of some sort expressing the Government of Canada's concerns about the delays and cost overruns. If so, when did she send it? If not, why not?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we are constantly monitoring the progress of the shipyards. We are working very closely with the shipyards.

They are working very hard to keep their projects on budget and on time, but they have faced challenges, as I have already mentioned. We continuously monitor the situation and do whatever we can to assist to ensure that those ships are built as quickly as possible and with the amount that has been allotted.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, about the construction timeline, the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that construction of the first polar icebreaker will begin in the 2023-24 fiscal year, and the second in the following year. The ships should be delivered in 2029-30 and 2030-31, respectively.

How can they even have a timeline when the Davie shipyard is still not an approved partner in the national shipbuilding strategy?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, we are working with the shipyards. I would like to point out that we have actually had five large ships delivered already.

Three of the offshore fisheries science vessels have been delivered, and two of the AOPS have been delivered. Other projects are under construction. We are going to continue to work with the shipyards, and we will ensure that we continue to monitor the situation and do what we can to support them. We know how important it is to keep these jobs here in Canada and have this production take place here in Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, let us talk about some of projects that are currently being delivered or have been delivered, particularly the Arctic and offshore patrol ships.

A witness who appeared before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates last week, Mr. Kendrick, said he really could not understand why the cost of the seventh and eighth ships to be delivered to the Canadian Coast Guard will exceed \$1.5 billion, while Norway is building three larger, more powerful ships for a total of \$700 million.

Can the minister explain that?

• (1855)

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I would point out that it depends on what the specs are with respect to the ships that are being built.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, obviously it depends on the ships. In the case of these ships, however, we understand that the contract for the first five ships was for \$400 million each, but the sixth ship is going to cost \$800 million, bringing the total to \$2.8 billion.

We have learned that the total bill for all the ships would be \$4.3 billion. The cost per ship normally goes down, but instead it is going up. The seventh and eighth ships ordered are going to cost \$1.5 billion.

After gaining experience from building the first two ships, we should be improving, not regressing. Can the minister explain why this is costing more, not less?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we continue to monitor these ships as they are being built. The estimate for the ships that I believe the member is referring to, the two vessels, is projected to be \$1.5 billion. We are going to continue to monitor the situation and ensure that the ships being built are required.

There may be instances, for certain ships being built, that the design changes, but we continue to work with the shipyard. We are also continuously monitoring the price to see if the ships are over budget. We are constantly looking at that and determining what is bringing them over budget, and we are keeping a close eye on it so we can continue to work with the shipyards and they can deliver things as quickly as possible and respond to the specs.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, for some time now, the minister has been telling me that the government is monitoring the work very closely.

Why does the Parliamentary Budget Officer regularly complain in his reports that the government is so cagey that he cannot get any information? The committee is in the same boat, and the experts who came to testify told the committee members that they were not allowed to know more.

Since the minister is so well informed, why are the experts and especially the Parliamentary Budget Officer not allowed to have that information?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we are open and transparent in the way we move forward. We have been clear about the benefits with respect to the shipyards and what they produce, such as the economic benefits and the jobs that are being created. We are open and transparent with those numbers because we know that is important to Canadians. We will continue to carry on in that way.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, let us talk about transparency. I will give the minister an opportunity to say more.

The committee recently heard from representatives of Irving Shipbuilding. For the contract to build the 15 new frigates, the president mentioned that Irving's bid was under \$60 billion and added that the government had announced that it would cost \$60 billion.

However, the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimated that the frigates would cost \$77.3 billion to build.

Given that Irving's figure was less than \$60 billion, the government's figure was \$60 billion, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer's figure was more than \$77 billion, could the minister, in the name of transparency, tell us the projected cost of building these frigates?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, throughout this process we are monitoring what the ships are going to cost, monitoring where the shipyards are at and working very closely so that we can be open and transparent with Canadians. That is the process we have undertaken thus far and we are going to continue that process.

The PBO did include taxes, so that may be part of the discrepancy, but at the end of the day, if there is any suggestion that we are not open and transparent about the numbers, I totally disagree with the member's premise.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, let us talk about transparency again.

An article in the April 19, 2021, issue of the weekly newspaper *The Hill Times* discusses the secrecy surrounding the fees that the federal government has paid to Irving, the prime contractor for the construction of these 15 surface combatants.

We know that Canada is paying Irving fees, but the Department of National Defence refuses to disclose the cost of these fees. Out of respect for taxpayers, how much has the government paid for this?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we are going to be open and transparent. When those figures are able to be shared, we will share them. We will continue to work with the PBO and all parties, because at the end of the day, we are proud of our national shipbuilding strategy. We know that at the end of day it is creating jobs and contributing to the economy, which are very important for Canadians. We will be open and transparent with the numbers.

• (1900)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who we are lucky to have, by the way, estimates that the polar icebreakers announced by the government will cost \$7 billion, or \$3.5 billion each.

However, the Government of Canada only announced the purchase of two polar icebreakers, not how much they will cost. Does the Parliamentary Budget Officer have the right figures? If not, what should we expect?

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, let me be very clear. We want to work with the PBO, we have worked with the PBO and we are going to continue to work with the PBO.

With respect to the numbers, when we are in negotiations, we cannot, of course, reveal the numbers, as we have made clear many times. When we are able to release the numbers, we will release them and operate in an open, fair and transparent way.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, I will come back to the issue of the polar icebreakers. We currently have the cost estimated by the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

I understand that the minister is in negotiations. I would like to know who she is negotiating with. Is the Davie shipyard included in these negotiations, because it is not yet a partner in the national shipbuilding strategy?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, we are going to continue to work with the PBO.

In terms of the difference in numbers, it is an issue of taxes being included or not included. It is a different methodology. Again, when we are able, we will share all of that information so that the member and all others are aware of what we are investing.

At the end of the day, we know these investments are important, and that is why we are making them. We will continue to monitor the shipbuilding as it takes place.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, at present, we see that defence procurement for major projects is rather complex and we understand this complexity.

That is why, in his 2019 mandate letters for the then Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Minister of Defence, the Prime Minister included the creation of an organization whose sole focus would be defence procurement.

This was missing in the 2021 mandate letters. I would like to know whether it is still being contemplated, and, if not, why it was overlooked.

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, right now I think we are delivering in defence. We have a strong defence record.

In terms of what we are in the process of doing, we are moving forward to finalize 88 new fighter jets, we are delivering the first Canadian-built ships in 20 years and we are acquiring six Arctic offshore patrol vessels. We are continuing to deliver in defence. Right now the situation is a strong one, and we will continue to procure in this manner, which is strong.

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am thankful for being invited to rise in the committee of the whole to speak to the main estimates for Public Services and Procurement.

[Translation]

As a direct service provider, my department works to serve Canadians in support of the government's missions. My department is the government's central purchasing agent. It manages real property, acts as a treasurer and accountant, is responsible for pay and pension administration, advises on matters of integrity, and acts as the linguistic authority.

[English]

It has a wide-ranging mandate that touches so many aspects of daily and long-term government operations. To deliver on this mandate, we have requested more than \$4.6 billion in the 2022-23 main estimates for PSPC.

As the central purchasing agent for our government, one of the department's most critical roles of late has been to support Canada's response to the ongoing pandemic, and we intend to keep that support going. I can tell members that our aggressive procurement approach over more than two years has ensured that Canada has a secure supply of vaccines and personal protective equipment.

In fact, Canada is a world leader on this front. We have contracts in place with several vaccine suppliers and we have access to supplies of future formulations that will protect us against variants. I can also say that thanks to our long-term contracts with Medicom and 3M, tens of millions of N95 respirators are being produced right here at home every single month.

It is because of the ground work that we laid at the beginning of the pandemic that Canada is in good standing to see it through to the end. As Canadians are keenly aware, the pandemic is not over yet and there is still more to do. For example, we are working to ensure that we have enough supply of rapid tests and therapeutics, as they remain in high demand across the globe.

So far, Canada has produced more than 600 million rapid tests, and we have contracts in place for nine different therapeutic treatments, giving us access to 1.7 million treatment courses. I can assure the House that the department will continue to deliver for Canadians as we work to finish the fight against COVID.

As members well know, the pandemic is not the only crisis we are dealing with. Every day, we learn more about the horrors unfolding in Ukraine following Russia's unprovoked and unjustifiable attack. We know that it is essential for all democratic nations to stand united in our support of the Ukrainian people and Ukrainian sovereignty. That is precisely what our government is doing.

Business of Supply

PSPC continues to provide logistical and other support to ensure that Canada's support and assistance are received by those who need them. On the domestic front, defence procurement and defence contract management are important parts of my mandate, and I am honoured to be leading on this front during this crucial time as Canada's defence policy evolves in a rapidly changing world.

We continue to make progress on our defence procurements. That includes our government's work to procure 88 advanced fighter jets to replace our aging fleet of fighters. The purchase of new jets represents the most significant investment in the Royal Canadian Air Force in more than 30 years.

Since day one, our government has been focused on steering a process that is truly competitive. That is what we have done because we know that it is the right way to get the best value for Canadians and to make sure our defence needs are properly met.

Following a rigorous evaluation of the proposals, the government has entered into the finalization phase of the process with the United States government and Lockheed Martin. This is an important milestone in the procurement process, and I can report that we are on track to reaching an agreement later this year, with the delivery of aircraft potentially as early as 2025.

We also continue to work with our partners to renew the fleets of the Canadian Coast Guard and the Royal Canadian Navy. Despite the immense pressures on global supply chains, we are making progress on shipbuilding and revitalizing the industry in Canada.

There is no doubt that the government's purchasing power is an important lever and we are using it to drive economic prosperity, but we must make sure that prosperity is inclusive for all Canadians. That is why we have recently launched a supplier diversity action plan, which includes pilot projects to increase the participation of under-represented groups in federal procurement.

An example of this is our Black business procurement pilot project, which has led our government to awarding a series of contracts. We received important feedback from the community about the process so we can improve it going forward. Our goal here is to help remove barriers to full participation in procurement for all suppliers.

- (1905)

We also continue to walk the path of reconciliation by leading in the implementation of a requirement to ensure that a minimum of 5% of the value of federal contracts is held by businesses that are led by and employ first nations, Inuit and Métis people.

With our purchasing power comes other responsibilities, such as doing our part to tackle forced labour around the world. I know that all members would agree that we must do everything we can to eradicate this abhorrent practice. That is why our government has updated the federal code of conduct for procurement to clearly outline Canada's expectations for suppliers when it comes to human and labour rights. As of November 2021, all of our goods-related contracts now contain anti-forced labour clauses. That means the government can terminate contracts when there is credible information that goods have been produced in whole or in part by forced labour or human trafficking.

The department has done other important work, including major projects in the national capital region. That includes replacing the Alexandra Bridge and implementing a long-term, integrated, inter-provincial crossing plan. It is an endeavour led by the National Capital Commission, which is part of my portfolio. Of course, we are also working on the renovation and rehabilitation of the Parliamentary Precinct. Just outside of these doors, we are working to modernize and preserve the heart of Canada's democracy and to keep it a place that can be enjoyed by all Canadians. Our work in this area expands beyond Parliament Hill and its historic buildings. On Monday, I had the pleasure of announcing the winner of the design competition for the city block that faces Parliament on Confederation Boulevard known as "Block Two".

Renewing the Parliamentary Precinct is an enormous undertaking that will result in an integrated parliamentary campus while moving us toward carbon neutrality and climate resiliency. Of course, greening all of our operations across government will support Canada's commitments to fighting climate change.

Our energy services acquisition program is an excellent example of progress my department has made when it comes to greening government. Under the program, we are modernizing the district energy systems that heat and cool 80 buildings in the national capital region. I am happy to report that we have already cut greenhouse gas emissions by 57% from the baseline year of 2005, and we are on track to meet our goal of net zero emissions by 2030.

These many initiatives are made possible by Canada's hard-working public servants here in the national capital region and across the country. They deserve to be paid accurately and on time. I also want this committee to know that we continue our efforts to resolve the backlog of pay transactions and stabilize pay operations.

Business of Supply

At the same time, Shared Services Canada is advancing work on the next generation of human resources and pay solutions: one that is flexible, modern and integrated. Shared Services Canada is also working to provide public servants with modern tools and deliver digital services to Canadians that are secure, reliable and easy to use anywhere. While not covered in the main estimates, Shared Services Canada is an important part of my portfolio, and like PSPC, it plays a vital role in supporting government operations.

Also in my portfolio is Canada Post Corporation, and I want to note for the committee and all Canadians my appreciation of postal workers. Despite hardships brought on by the pandemic over the past two years, our dedicated postal workers have continued to provide high-quality service across the country. Indeed, all public servants have stepped up since COVID-19 hit our shores to get through to the other side of the pandemic and to keep the Government of Canada running. I am so honoured and humbled to lead such a talented team, and I know that we will be able to build on our accomplishments and achieve great things for Canadians.

I have touched on only a fraction of the important work happening under my portfolio of Public Services and Procurement Canada. I am happy to take the committee's questions regarding the main estimates for my department.

● (1910)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Chair, our government has been working to address inequities by modernizing its procurement practices and encouraging suppliers from diverse backgrounds to be part of the federal supply chain.

Budget 2021 proposed \$87.4 million over five years, and \$18.6 million ongoing, to modernize federal procurement and to create opportunities for specific communities such as indigenous people, women, LGBTQ2+ Canadians, Black and other racialized Canadians. This included a two-year study from 2018 to 2020 that aimed to leverage the government's significant purchasing power to pursue socio-economic outcomes through procurement.

As the minister mentioned, our government also undertook a Black business procurement pilot in 2021 to expand procurement opportunities for Black entrepreneurs. We also recently released two requests for information to better understand the procurement experience of businesses owned or led by persons with disabilities and the LGBTQ2+ community.

As part of its efforts to diversify the federal supply chain, we have issued requests for information to gather input from Canadian Black businesses and businesses owned or operated by persons with disabilities, as well as businesses owned or led by members of the LGBTQ2+ community.

The feedback gathered through the RFIs will be used to expand the use of targeted approaches to increase diversity in federal procurements. PSPC's Policy on Social Procurement came into effect in May 2021. It allows the department to create targeted approaches to increase diversity and inclusion in PSPC procurement and leverage trade agreements that permit socio-economic procurement.

I know that the minister has been holding a number of round tables. Could the minister tell the House what she has been hearing first-hand from business leaders?

● (1915)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, this is a very important part of the portfolio for me, to ensure that we level the playing field and give all business leaders an opportunity to enter into procurement with the federal government. I think it is really important that we listen. This is why I have had the opportunity to set up round tables and hear directly from business leaders and from those who have established a desire to work with the government, but have felt that they have faced some obstacles.

These discussions have been very helpful, in terms of providing us with feedback on what things have been working, and how we need to move forward.

I have met with diverse groups and really appreciate the feedback. One of the areas was the coaching pilot. We held a coaching pilot that talked to business leaders about how to be successful in their procurement bids, and offered training and assistance. Afterward, I had an opportunity to speak with those business leaders who experienced the coaching pilot. I can tell members that they were all grateful. They said it was helpful in terms of better understanding, recognizing and feeling supported and that they would like to see projects like that continue.

These pilots, round tables and discussions have been very helpful. We are going to continue to work toward levelling the playing field because, at the end of the day, we know that when we allow all businesses an opportunity to enter into procurement, we all benefit. It is not just the moral and right thing to do; it is also the economically smart thing to do.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Chair, our government is committed to renewing and strengthening its economic relationship with indigenous entrepreneurs and communities by providing increased economic opportunities to first nations, Inuit and Métis businesses through the federal procurement process.

Our government announced the implementation of a mandatory requirement for federal departments and agencies to ensure that a minimum of 5% of the total value of contracts is held by indigenous businesses. This requirement includes public reporting and will be phased in over three years, beginning this year, with a number of federal departments that are ready to immediately begin this work, with full implementation expected by 2024.

Business of Supply

From March 2020 to March 2022, Public Services and Procurement Canada, as a common service provider, has awarded \$1.3 billion through 1,744 contracts to indigenous suppliers.

Can the minister tell the House more about the efforts to achieve this mandatory target, and what she is hearing from indigenous business leaders and partners?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, this is a really important initiative, and what I will say is that we are making great headway in this regard. With regard to indigenous businesses, we want to encourage them. We want to provide them with the tools and the support that they need. They are very pleased that we are collaborating. They are very pleased that we have commenced this initiative, and we look forward to continuing to work with indigenous businesses. What I would point out is that is the floor, not the ceiling.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Chair, I thank the Minister of Public Services and Procurement for being here this evening. We are happy to have her.

Madam Chair, how many full-time public servants work at Public Services and Procurement Canada?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Chair, the response is 17,500.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, how many of those public servants work specifically on procurement?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, the procurement service workers are doing an absolutely fantastic job. I want to thank them. The full-time equivalent of procurement service workers is 2,193.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, how does the minister explain the challenges in tracking expenditures in areas such as air defence and the national shipbuilding strategy if there are so many procurement specialists?

We often hear that it is difficult to do the tracking and that expenses are on the rise.

• (1920)

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I am proud of the work that our procurement specialists are doing. We have now navigated over two years through a pandemic that has descended upon this country and the world, but I am speaking about Canada because that is where I am the procurement minister. The work that procurement has done has been second to none. I think we need to take time to give them thanks and credit and all those procurement officials—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, I am not by any means questioning the work of officials. I am simply asking why it is hard to get the figures.

Nevertheless, earlier, you were saying that spending is tracked very meticulously, you mentioned it just now.

Why is it always so hard, either for a committee or for the Parliamentary Budget Officer, to get detailed expense reports and get clear answers to simple questions, such as explanations for cost overruns?

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Before giving the floor to the minister, I would remind the hon. member to ask her questions through the Chair.

The hon. Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, with all due respect, I would disagree with the member's premise of the question. We always want to be accountable with the numbers and we will provide those numbers. If there are specific instances where the member is looking for certain numbers, then I would ask that she ask us—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I have to interrupt the minister. There does not seem to be any interpretation.

[English]

Is it working now? Can you hear me now in French? I can now hear the interpreters.

Apologies to the hon. minister.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, with all due respect, I would disagree with the premise of the member's question. We always want to be open and transparent with numbers. If there are certain situations where the member has not been able to get certain numbers, then I would encourage her to reach out to my team and we will provide the numbers that we are able to provide to her.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, just about every witness we heard from in committee has told us the same thing: The military procurement process is slow, inefficient and rife with political interference.

Does the minister have a plan to fix this fiasco? Some witnesses think that a second department focused solely on military procurement may be needed.

Does the minister believe that this would be useful and effective?

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I would repeat what I said earlier, which is that I believe that we are strong in defence procurement. In fact, members can look at what we are involved in right now: The most significant investment in the air force in 30 years is the purchase of 88 fighter jets.

The first five ships have been delivered under the national ship-building strategy. Two-thirds of the projects under Strong, Secure and Engaged have been either implemented, completed or are near completion. That is a pretty strong record.

In terms of defence procurement, I think we have a strong record.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, it would appear that businesses do not entirely agree with what the minister. That is their right.

Many in government and in the private sector have pointed out how difficult it is to do business with the government, particularly when it comes to francophone SMEs.

In the past year, what proportion of government tenders and contracts were written in both official languages?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, if anyone wants translation into French, then we would provide that. If the member is asking about specific contracts that currently exist in two different languages, I am happy to have my team follow up with her and provide her with those exact details. I do not have that number off the top of my head.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, we have talked about Cisco and sole-source procurement several times at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, and I have asked the minister about it.

What concrete action have the department and the minister taken to ensure that the government receives the best available prices for computer equipment?

- (1925)

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I wish to begin by assuring the member that whenever we are procuring, we always want to ensure that we are getting the best product for the best price. We have rigorous procurement measures that take place, and we are going to continue with that. We recognize that these are taxpayers' dollars. In every procurement project, it is important that we are getting value, and that is the process that we will continue to undertake for every procurement.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, I would like the minister to tell me what measures are in place to ensure the best price from Cisco when only that company can bid.

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, it is important to point out here that there are specific requirements with respect to each project. Whenever possible, we have competition because we know this is the best value we are going to get, and we can look at the 88 fighter jets, but there are times when it is necessary to match up the operability—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, there is not actually any competition when there is only Cisco and resellers of Cisco products. Competition would involve companies that sell something other than Cisco products.

How many contracts have been offered to companies that sell something other than Cisco products?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, as I said, we always want a competitive process. If in fact there is an instance where it has to be a Cisco product because of matching up in terms of operability, then we are limited in that regard, but we are transitioning away from that. That is the approach we are taking in the future, because we know that at the end of the day we want as much competition as possible.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, Cisco is not the only company in Canada that meets international Internet and other technology standards. We should break out of this cycle.

Shared Services Canada has requested an additional \$60 million for its 2022-23 budget. What is the reason for this? How much of that will go to Cisco or to a company that resells Cisco products?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, when we are procuring these contracts, this is the amount we have set aside. We do not know yet who is going to be the successful bidder in that. When we are looking for successful bidders, we are always looking for those that are the most competitive, have the best value and are going to meet the needs that we have in order to ensure that we are getting the product that is going to best serve Canadians.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, what is being done to ensure that there is no dumping by any company to undercut the competition?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, in all aspects, we are doing everything we possibly can so that, at the end of the day, we are procuring in a responsible way that best serves the needs of Canadians.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, the government is paying a fortune for tenders that allow companies such as Cisco and Microsoft to secure a monopoly. Why should taxpayers be paying a fortune to line the pockets of foreign companies?

They are often the same ones. They are the ones with huge profit margins, not the resellers, which get 65% discounts on products in order to do business with the government. If there is open competition with other companies, it is an 85% discount. When a specific company is getting an exclusive contract, why does that company not offer the same discounts that it gives to its resellers?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, in many instances, there are Canadian subsidiaries to companies, so we need to look at that as well. At the end of the day, in terms of the procurement, we are always doing whatever we can to ensure that it is competitive, that it is fair, that it is open and that our procurement is responsible and going to fit the needs of Canadians in whatever product we are procuring.

I want to take this moment to thank procurement officials, officers and specialists who are working so hard in order to ensure that we get the very products that we need. COVID-19 is a perfect example. When we look at everything we have procured, the specialities these procurement officers provided are second to none, and I want to thank them.

• (1930)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, in August or September 2019, it was announced that the Davie shipyard had pre-qualified for the national shipbuilding strategy.

What is the current status of negotiations? What is holding them up?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I want to assure my colleague that we are working very closely with Chantier Davie. We are working hand in hand, we have been, and we will continue to do so. We thank Davie. It is a strong and reliable partner, and we look forward to continuing to work with it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, if things are going so well, when will the qualification be made official?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, the qualification will be made official when the qualifications have been met. We know there is a strong relationship there and we continue to work with Chantier Davie. The conversations are going very well.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, sometimes my memory plays tricks on me.

How many years did it take for Irving and Seaspan to qualify?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we do not want to compromise the requirements. We want to work with Chantier Davie to get it to satisfy those requirements. That is exactly what we are doing.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, I do not think my question had anything to do with negotiations with Davie.

How many years did it take for Irving and Seaspan to qualify?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I would like to thank Chantier Davie for its hard work on the national shipbuilding strategy. We have invested \$2.1 billion with Chantier Davie, and we want to thank it for what it has produced in this regard.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, am I to understand that Seaspan and Irving did not have to wait for years?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, at the end of the day, when the requirements are satisfied, then we can move forward. That is exactly what these processes are about. We want to make sure the requirements are satisfied.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, IBM, the company that created the Phoenix system, was also approached about creating an electronic passport system.

How could the government approach that company when it knows what happened with Phoenix? How can the government ensure that the same disasters will not befall our highly confidential and private passport data?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, when we are working with companies, we recognize the challenges that can arise. Phoenix is a perfect example of that. We inherited that challenge, and we are working to fix it. We are committed to fixing it, and we are putting significant resources into it because every public servant should be paid on time.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, why was IBM approached about the electronic passport system?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, on the question the member is raising, if I have this right, it is a competitive process and it is with IRCC, which is the lead on that.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Chair, I am wondering if there are companies in Canada that are capable of computer programming and creating an effective hacker-proof system or if we should rely solely on the Americans.

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, in these procurement processes, we absolutely want to focus on domestic production and support domestic production and services. That is the route we take, and we are going to continue to take that route. My understanding is that there is expertise here.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Chair, has the minister heard of the expert task force on substance use?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Chair, in response to that, I would say that I appreciate the member's advocacy with respect to the opioid crisis that we are facing and I thank him for his work.

• (1935)

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, that sounds like a no. This is a group of experts who were convened by Health Canada to make recommendations to the government on federal drug policy. The expert task force had five key messages related to Canada's substance use strategy. One message was, "Bold actions are urgently needed, including...the expansion of safer supply." I asked the minister at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, on April 29, what she would do to procure a safer supply of controlled substances to address the toxic drug crisis.

Has she taken any steps since then on this issue, such as reaching out to the Minister of Health or the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, I appreciate my colleague's advocacy on this, and I assure him that our government recognizes that problematic substance use is a health issue. With respect to a procurement perspective, PSPC procures, Health Canada is the client, and provinces deliver health care to provinces and territories.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, have any of those ministers reached out to the minister for procurement?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, just to be clear, it is provinces and territories that are responsible for the delivery of health care to provinces and territories. As the procurement minister, I will procure based on requests that come from Health Canada, and we work with provinces and territories, through the health minister, to determine what—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, here is a quote. It is something the minister wrote in the PSPC 2022-23 departmental plan. It says:

Nearly two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, protecting the health and safety of Canadians remains a priority for the Government of Canada. PSPC will continue to play a central role in our response by procuring critical supplies, including vaccines, tests and therapeutics.

It has now been over six years since British Columbia declared a public health emergency. Is the health and safety of some Canadians, like people who use drugs, not a priority for the government?

Why has PSPC not played a central role in responding to this crisis?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, we respond to provinces and territories. We have been working very closely with the provinces and territories. Provinces and territories have asked us for supplies. They have asked us for over 100 million vaccines; we have provided over 100 million vaccines. They have asked us for rapid tests; we have supplied over 600 million rapid tests. They have asked us for therapeutics; we have procured 1.7 million therapeutics. We have distributed these products to the provinces and territories because they have asked for them, and I want to thank all those who have worked so hard to make that possible.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, is the minister saying she did not procure for any COVID response needs without direction completely from the provinces?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, what I am saying is that we have been by the side of the provinces every step of the way, because we know that they are delivering for Canadians. Through this, we have responded to their requests and we are very pleased that we have been able to support them.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, they have been requesting leadership.

The mandate letter to the minister directs her to "[c]ontinue to procure COVID-19 therapeutics, tests and vaccines, for adults and children, to ensure all Canadians have access to free booster shots and second-generation vaccines as needed", yet there is no mention of procuring a safer supply to address Canada's other ongoing public health emergency and overdose epidemic.

Do you believe stigma has played a role in this lack of direction from the Prime Minister?

The Deputy Chair: I will ask the minister. I would ask the hon. member to direct his questions directly through the Chair.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, vaccines and therapeutics have been the only medications that we have bought on behalf of provinces and territories. They have asked us to procure those things, and we have been there. In fact, eight out of 10 dollars that have been spent have been spent by the federal government in supporting provinces and territories.

With respect to investments we have made, there has been \$800 million to set up community-led harm reduction, treatment and prevention projects since 2015. Significant investments—

Business of Supply

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, her colleague, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, told the CBC that safe supply “is going to be the way that we will save the most lives”, yet the minister is not committed to a timeline for expanding access to safe supply, saying that research is needed before it can be scaled up. Why is the government wasting time on pilot programs instead of ensuring that a safer supply is available across Canada?

• (1940)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I would start by saying that I am really pleased that the Prime Minister has appointed a Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, and I am very confident that that minister, who is a doctor and very passionate about this area, is going to deliver for Canadians, which she has.

With respect to safe consumption sites, we have made investments. Supervised consumption sites have reversed 35,000 overdoses since 2017 without—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, 20 people a day are dying in this country because of a toxic overdose, and 20 families are getting the call. If the government had the political will, how quickly could a national safe supply program be established in this country?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I appreciate the member's advocacy, but I would like to point out that we are making significant investments in this area and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, many Canadians who want access to a safer supply cannot get it, so that answer falls short.

Does the minister have any idea of the cost of substance use issues in Canada, factoring in health, social services, policing, the justice system, lost productivity and other relevant costs?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I am happy that the member has actually raised those issues, because we are working to divert people who use drugs away from the criminal justice system toward supporting and trusted relationships with health and social services. This is an extremely important measure. This is one of the many measures that we are taking, and we are going to continue to work in this regard, because we—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, I live in Port Alberni, where nobody can even get access to detox. It is three and a half hours for a youth to go to Victoria, and there is often a waiting list.

In the second report, the expert task force said that current policies are currently costing Canada huge amounts. It recommended significant new investments to reshape the system and address the drug toxicity crisis. Since then, the government has committed \$100 million over three years.

Does the minister believe that represents a significant new investment that responds to the scale and urgency of this crisis?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, what I would recognize is that absolutely this is a crisis. There is no question, but our government has been there for support. The member mentioned the \$100 million but in fact the total is now \$800 million to support commu-

nity-led harm reduction treatment and prevention projects since 2015.

I know the minister is working very hard on this, and I look forward to the work that she will be announcing as we move forward.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, the stigma is not just in the policy; it is in the amount of money that has been spent on COVID-19 and on the toxic drug supply crisis.

When will the government respond to the toxic drug crisis with the urgency with which it responded to COVID-19, and in a way that shows it values the lives of people who use drugs, the people who are dying right now in our country and whose lives can be saved from preventable deaths?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we realize the hurt and the difficulty. I worked in a high school for 20 years. I can recognize how opioids can be a problem; drugs can be a problem, but our government has taken action. We are going to continue to take action.

I am delighted that we have a minister appointed specifically for mental health and addictions. It is extremely important.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, the government says it is taking action while more people are dying. The deaths are mounting. It is not taking action in the way it needs to, like it did with COVID-19.

I will change my line of questioning to the minister.

As caregivers for children under five eagerly await a decision from Health Canada on Moderna's application for vaccines for this age group, how quickly will doses be distributed to the provinces upon approval?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, that is a very important question. I can say that we have been working with Moderna, Pfizer and other providers of vaccines from the beginning. I would just remind the member that when the pediatrics were approved, I was very happy to receive the first plane load in Hamilton, at the John C. Munro international airport. We had, within one week of the approval date, enough vaccines to vaccinate every child aged 5 to 11.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, given the ongoing issues with the Phoenix pay system, why did the budget not allocate necessary funding to help deal with the now years-long backlog of pay problems for federal public servants?

Business of Supply

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, what I would say about this is that it is a top priority. We have been working on this from the very beginning of inheriting this problem. We are going to continue to work to put supports in place to reduce the backlog and to provide satisfaction to public servants, but we believe that every public servant should be paid accurately and should be paid on time.

• (1945)

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, the government is increasing spending on expensive consultants to fix the problems of expensive consultants, while public servants are being offered wage increases that do not even keep up with inflation.

Does the minister believe hard-working public servants who have delivered for Canadians throughout the pandemic deserve wage increases that account for the rising cost of living?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I believe every worker in this country should be paid a fair wage. Workers are working hard across the country. Of course, we want them to be paid fairly for the work that they are doing. There are different systems in place in terms of how payment is made, but I absolutely appreciate the work of public servants and think they should be paid fairly.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, does she believe they should be able to be paid and given wage increases to meet inflation and the new cost of living?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I am a big believer in negotiations and I think that any disputes with respect to that should be settled at the bargaining table. It is the best solution.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, is the minister committed to reigning in outsourcing to ensure Canadians are getting value for services and that we maintain institutional knowledge, skills and expertise in the public service?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, whenever we can use in-service, we do. We cannot say we want Phoenix fixed tomorrow even though we do not have the skills and the expertise inside to fix it, and then say that we cannot go out. We go out when we need to go out, because we need the expertise.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, the announcement of a strategic review of the public service and potential cuts of up to \$6 billion has prompted concern from hard-working public servants and Canadians who rely on public services. The last time a strategic review happened, the Harper government cut service delivery for veterans, people on EI and many others, while going after 19,000 public service jobs. The lack of details about this review is concerning.

Can the minister reassure Canadians that this review will not impact service levels, and that the federal public service unions will be consulted throughout the process?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, the treasury board president is leading this process, and I believe the determination has not been made yet.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, I would like to ask the minister whether the federal contractors program requires organizations bidding on federal contracts to enter into an agreement to implement employment equity? Is this policy being followed?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I am really happy about the measures that we have undertaken as a government in terms of establishing employment equity. There is a task force that is looking at this—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, is disaggregated data being collected, and have contracts been awarded to organizations that fail to meet their obligations on employment equity?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I think that question is more appropriate for the Minister of Labour, but what I will say is that we are taking measures in order to ensure that there is equity in work and that pay is—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, as part of the strategic policy review, will her department be looking at the feasibility of permanently converting unneeded office space into affordable housing?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, with respect to office space, we are absolutely reviewing the space that we need, and we look forward to moving forward with ideas for that space.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, what is the timeline for the completion of the accessible government built environment initiative?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I do not have that answer off the top of my head, but I am happy to have my team get that information for the member.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, how much funding has she dedicated to this project?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, it is the same response.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, it was recently reported that the Royal Canadian Air Force is relocating two aircraft from Winnipeg to Vancouver Island to address a gap in search and rescue coverage created by procurement delays. The three-year delay in this case will put a strain on other air force operations.

Does the minister believe that defence procurement should be moved to a single minister to increase accountability when things like this are happening?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I have answered this question previously. I think that defence procurement has a strong record. We are going to continue to procure as best we possibly can, recognizing what is required, and I think our defence procurement is strong.

Business of Supply

• (1950)

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am thankful for the opportunity to address the committee on a topic we know all too well.

More than two years ago, our lives were forever changed by the emergence of COVID-19. Since that time, all Canadians have experienced immense sacrifices and loss in one form or another. Kids missed birthday parties and graduation; seniors were isolated from their families and friends; our health care and other essential workers on the front line put themselves at great risk, working long hours so that we could get the services and the care we needed, and we cannot commend them enough.

At its worst, the virus claimed the lives of so many loved ones in this country and around the world. During this crisis, Canadians remained resilient. They stepped up by following public health guidelines and getting their vaccine shot when it was their turn.

Life is getting back to a new normal, but make no mistake, our government's top priority remains protecting the health and safety of all Canadians. Since the beginning, we have worked hard to do just that. Securing life-saving personal protective equipment and ensuring that everyone could get vaccinated were top priorities, and Public Services and Procurement Canada has been vital in those efforts. I can tell members that the department's aggressive procurement approach over more than two years has ensured that Canada has a secure supply of personal protective equipment and vaccine.

When COVID-19 reached our shores, we acted promptly to get our health care professionals the supplies they required, working around the clock to procure critical personal protective equipment and other medical equipment. The entire world was scrambling to get the same material from a finite number of suppliers, making it a highly complex and competitive global environment. Procurement experts worked day and night, aggressively buying from all available suppliers and distributors at home and abroad. Lives were on the line, and every effort had to be made. Thanks to those efforts during the most crucial months, our government acquired billions of units of masks, N95 respirators, face shields, hand sanitizer, protective gowns, gloves and a lot more.

The urgent global demand meant that early supplies largely came from overseas. However, as part of the pandemic response, we also invested in Canadian companies to make the needed supplies here in Canada. Companies from across Canada did their part as well, and some even completely shifted their production lines to meet the urgent need. We should all be proud that Canadian industry stepped up in such a big way.

Medicom out of Montreal and 3M in Brockville are prime examples. Our government has a 10-year contract with Medicom to supply N95 and surgical masks, and we have a contract with 3M for 25 million N95s annually through 2026. Our investment with these companies has helped secure a domestic supply for the production of personal and protective equipment now and well into the future.

These are only two examples, but there are many more across this country. This has truly been a team Canada effort. Canadian companies that stepped up to join the fight have been and will continue to be key to our success.

When it comes to vaccine, our work has been just as effective. Our approach on this front was deliberate, strategic and comprehensive. At the onset of the pandemic, when pharmaceutical companies took on the challenge to develop a viable vaccine, we simply had no idea if it was even possible. Scientists, regulators and manufacturers from many nations worked under intense pressure to produce safe and effective vaccines and somehow make them available around the world.

Once vaccine candidates began to show promise, we knew that once again we would be dealing with a highly complex and competitive global market. That is why we pushed a diversified vaccine procurement approach, one that allowed us to reserve doses as early as possible by signing agreements in principle while the details of the final purchase agreements were being negotiated.

• (1955)

At the same time, we were proactive in acquiring critical goods such as needles, syringes and more in order to support provinces and territories when it came time to administer the vaccines. That work paid off. Today, if eligible Canadians want a COVID-19 vaccine shot, they can get one. Over the past year, Canadians have rolled up their sleeves and done their part during the largest vaccination campaign this country has ever seen. In fact, the Canadian vaccine rate is one of the best in the world. Securing vaccines has saved lives, and it is why Canadians can now get back to doing the things they love.

We are also better equipped for future waves. Our contracts with the world's leading vaccine maker gives us access to the supply of future formulations that will protect us against new variants. I am also proud to say that we are also investing in our capability to manufacture these life-saving vaccines right here at home. Most recently, our government announced the next step in ensuring Canada has a secure domestic supply of the latest vaccines through an agreement with Moderna to set up a manufacturing facility in the Montreal region. This new facility, which is set to be operational in two years, will be able to produce up to 100 million mRNA vaccine doses annually. It will also create hundreds of good-paying jobs.

Business of Supply

Because of the actions we have taken and the groundwork we have laid, Canada will see this pandemic through to the end, but, as the minister stated in her opening remarks, the pandemic is not over yet and there is still a lot more for her department to do. That includes working to ensure we have enough supply of rapid tests on top of the more than 600 million we have already purchased at the federal level. We also continue to pursue some therapeutics. We currently have access to some 1.7 million treatment courses.

Before I close, I would like to take a moment to thank the hard-working public servants who are behind these actions. They have served their communities well, and I cannot commend their efforts enough. I would also like to honour the memory of those we have lost, the friends and families who are grieving, those who have made incredible sacrifices and everyone who has been impacted by COVID-19. Of course, we pay tribute to Canadians across the country who continue to work hard in our fight against the virus on the front lines of our health care system.

It has been a long two years, and we know everyone is ready to move on. Public Services and Procurement Canada will continue to deliver for Canadians as we work to finish the fight against COVID. I want to thank the minister, the department and the officials for their dedication and hard work.

I have a question for the minister and here is the preamble. The COVID-19 pandemic is still fresh in the minds of Canadians, and it is still too soon to say it is completely over. We all remember seeing the hospitalization rate and, sadly, even the death tolls on the news. We remember the restrictions and safety measures that were implemented by all levels of government to keep people safe and stop the spread of COVID-19.

We remember how difficult it was to refrain from visiting loved ones, how hard it was on businesses, on children in day cares and schools, on parents, on everyone, but we also remember how Canada made it through the pandemic before many other developed countries. We remember how Canadians stepped up to help their neighbours in a time of crisis. We are proud that when the COVID-19 vaccine became available, Canadians rolled up their sleeves and did their part to protect themselves, their loved ones and their communities, giving Canada one of the highest vaccination rates in the world.

Canada is now ahead of the curve on pandemic preparedness for any future outbreaks of COVID-19 and is well placed for any similar events in the future. The government has made it priority number one to keep Canadians safe, and we will continue to do so. While we are all eager to finish the fight against COVID-19 and return to normal, Canadians need to know that this government has done what was necessary during an extraordinary period to help Canadians pull through. All Canadians know this government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic was timely, comprehensive and crucial to the millions of Canadians affected by the necessary restrictions implemented in Canada and across the globe at this time.

Can the minister please detail the numerous ways her department stepped up to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and keep Canadians safe?

• (2000)

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Chair, I agree with the many things my hon. colleague said, specifically about the procurement success that we have had. I want to thank all the procurement specialists that have worked so very hard. Let us go back to March 2020, when COVID had descended upon us. Since that time we have procured over 100 million vaccines. We have enough vaccines in this country for every Canadian to get their full complement, those that are eligible, together with the booster.

We have procured over 600 million rapid tests. Provinces and territories were in great need of those. We have procured them. We have delivered them. It is a fantastic tool.

We have procured over two billion pieces of personal protective equipment to keep Canadians safe. We have now 1.7 million treatments of therapeutics.

I look at what has been achieved by the team, and it is an army. Some of them are watching tonight. Some are before me here. Some are in the lobby. Some are working at home, and some are in their offices. I want to thank that army, that team that worked day and night in order to ensure that we had the supplies to keep Canadians safe. That has always been our goal, to look ahead, to plan ahead and to put in place whatever was needed so that we could deliver for Canadians. We did not want to let them down, and we wanted to be smart and prudent and forward thinking and that is exactly what we have done.

How we were able to do that was by the sweat and the dedication and the commitment of so many Canadians who were working. I want to thank them together with all Canadians across this country that helped keep safe, whether that was in health care or in grocery stores making sure we had the food, but it was a fantastic effort. I am very proud of the Canadians in this country who worked so hard to get us to the place that we are in today.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Chair, could the minister explain or comment on the multipronged approach that we have taken on making sure that we have not only secured vaccines internationally, but also build domestic capacity and investments in research and development?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we are making significant investments. We believe that domestic production is important. We want to have vaccines produced here, which is why agreements like the memorandum of understanding with Moderna is very important. We are going to continue to invest in domestic supply and production. I am very pleased that we are able to do that, and we will support these companies locally.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Chair, could the minister comment on the ongoing investment and our plan going forward with the vaccine, the supplies and therapeutics that we are procuring to ensure that Canadians continue to be protected?

Business of Supply

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we do have sufficient contracts to ensure moving forward we have a supply of vaccines and those contracts also provide provisions so that, as new formulas arise, we get access to those formulas. In addition to this, as I mentioned earlier, 1.7 million doses for the therapeutics, which is extremely important. Shipments of more than 30,000 Paxlovid treatments have come in, and we expect many more in order to ensure that Canadians have access to that important treatment.

• (2005)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Chair, what is the expected life cycle cost to purchase, operate and maintain the F-35 aircraft, assuming a 30-year life span?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am really pleased that my hon. colleague is asking this question because we have implemented a competitive procurement process with respect to the fighter jets. We are going to get the best deal for Canadians.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, what is the expected purchase cost?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, as I have said, we are going to get the best price for this plane because of the competitive process, and we are in negotiation now.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, Canadians deserve better than that. This is a multi-billion dollar project. What will the purchase cost be?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, the amount that was set aside was \$19 billion, but as I have said, this is in the negotiation stage. Those details, of course, cannot be revealed.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, does the minister not know, or will she not share? She has stated previously that transparency is a major issue for the government.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, if we were to share, in the midst of a negotiation, what the purchase price was, that would not be in the best interests of Canadians.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, what is the specific version or block of the F-35s Canada will be receiving?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, these are in negotiation. Now, they are talking about the details. They are ironing out those details. We look forward to an agreement being reached by the end of this year.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, this is an important question. The exact type or block is not a negotiation issue, it is what is available. What will be the block or type of F-35 Canada will be procuring?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, as I have said, this is in the midst of extensive negotiations. Those details are being negotiated right now.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, what is the expected delivery date if the contract is signed this year?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, the expected date is 2025 for the first delivery.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, sources in the U.S. tell us that we are so late in procuring the F-35 that it will not be available until 2030. Is this correct?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, the expected date of delivery at this point is 2025, based on negotiations.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, why is it taking seven months or more to negotiate a contract?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, this is a complex and complicated contract. It is a significant amount of money. We are going to get it right.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the terms and conditions have already been specified in the RFP and agreed to by Lockheed Martin, so why is there a seven-month delay?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, there are actually a lot of details that have to be worked out. These are important details. Our military is depending on us. We are going to get it right.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, wow. Other major purchases have been negotiated within months. Why is it taking seven months for the F-35?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, this is the most significant investment in 30 years, and \$19 billion is a lot of money to spend for Canadians.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, for \$19 billion, we would hope that we would at least know what the block number, model or type we would be getting of the F-35. What is the expected 30-year cost to purchase, operate and maintain the combatants—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, it is in negotiations.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, it is generally a two to three to one cost ratio to operate and maintain. The PBO said it is about \$70 billion for the purchase, which leads to almost a quarter trillion dollars for the maintenance and operation over a lifespan. Does the minister agree?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, the project budget is \$56 billion to \$60 billion. That is an estimate without taxes.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, when does the government expect to sign a contract with Irving Shipbuilding to begin construction of the surface combatants?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, that is still in the design phase.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, when is the first ship expected to be delivered?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we are working out the exact dates and details.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, that is funny, because in a previous OGGO meeting, years ago, we were actually given a date, and now it is being decided.

Business of Supply

An Order Paper delivered by the government stated that the costs for the Coast Guard AOPS would be \$750 million per ship. Irving Shipbuilding testified just last week it would be considerably less. Who is telling the truth?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, as I have said before, we continue to monitor these contracts, and we will share the specifics and details once the contracts are signed and commitments have been made.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, how can the government state \$750 million publicly on an Order Paper question when the shipyard is saying less? Now we are hearing that the government does not know the exact number and cannot release that information.

● (2010)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, this is an estimated budget, and we are going to continue to work. We will be open and transparent with respect to numbers when they are confirmed.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, at no point in the Order Paper does it say it is an estimated cost. It says the cost provided by the government. Irving, the shipbuilder, says it is considerably less. Again, who is telling the truth?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, this is estimated at this point. When it is confirmed, we will share those numbers.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, has the contract been signed for the two AOPS for the Coast Guard?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, no contract has been signed.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, PSPC 2019-2020 achieved just 58% of their planned targets, yet the executives were paid out over \$8 million in bonuses. Last year, PSPC failed to achieve over one-third of their targets, as noted in their departmental plans. Would the minister confirm she will not be approving executive bonuses for such failure?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, my understanding is that bonuses are being paid based on the terms of their contract agreements.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the terms of their contract agreements also include making their targets, as noted in the departmental plans, so will the minister be paying out bonuses to executives for the failure from last year?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, actually, I would never refer to the work of public servants as a failure.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, missing one-third of their targets is not a success. One target missed by PSPC was paying public servants accurately and on time. It missed this by a whopping 23%.

Will the minister confirm that she will not be approving executive bonuses for this failure?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we had complications with Phoenix, something that was left to us by the opposition. Public servants are working very hard to correct this, because public servants should be paid accurately and on time.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, these targets were not left by the opposition party; they were made by the minister. It was a Liberal government that enacted Phoenix, over the opposition of the OGGO committee.

Two other targets missed were increasing contracts to women-owned businesses and increasing them to indigenous-owned businesses, despite their prominent roles in the departmental plans.

Will PSPC be paying executive bonuses for missing these targets?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, as I have said, executive bonuses that are paid out are paid in accordance with the contracts. We will honour the terms of the contracts.

With respect to the previous point on Phoenix, the work has resulted from what we inherited, and that work remains ongoing to correct the system.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, not one but two Auditor General reports on Phoenix actually contradict what the minister just stated.

Now, the Minister of Small Business in this place said, "I would encourage everyone to shop local." Does the minister agree with this statement?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I would encourage people in Canada to shop local, yes, and they can visit my hometown of Dundas.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, this is beautiful.

The minister's own departmental plan, on page 19, if she wishes to check, targets for this year a 15% decrease in purchases from Canadian small businesses last year. How is this supporting small businesses?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we are working very hard to support small businesses. I do not agree with the premise of that question. In fact, during COVID-19, over 40% of the funds spent were spent on domestic production.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, I even noted on what page in the departmental plan, signed by the minister, the target decrease was.

Now, the previous minister for PSPC testified in committee that Amazon was a Canadian company. Is this why the Liberals are giving so much to Amazon and not buying from Canadian small businesses?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I think the member is confusing the contracts. This is with respect to the cloud services we have procured.

Business of Supply

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, actually, last year, the government purchased \$20 million in goods, not including the cloud services, from Amazon. This year alone, year to date, in just two months it is \$10 million.

How is buying from Amazon supporting small businesses?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, these are all small transactions, which is the result of the numbers the member is speaking about.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, an Order Paper response showed over 7,000 pages of purchases from Amazon instead of from small businesses. Amazon's market cap is \$1.5 trillion. How is this a Canadian small business?

• (2015)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, the web services are the big-ticket item. The smaller items are items like pencils and things like that.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, that is not the case. The large majority of dollars in purchases from Amazon are not for web services, and the Order Paper response provided by the government shows that.

Why is the government spending so much on Amazon and not on small Canadian businesses?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, actually, we are absolutely supporting small and medium-sized businesses. As I have said, 42% of COVID spending with respect to procurement was for Canadian domestic businesses. We have entered into major contracts. Millions of masks are being produced locally here and we are going to continue to do that.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, there is \$32 million in purchases from small businesses for direct non-cloud services, and about \$20 million for cloud. That is the truth, right from the government's own numbers.

Amazon has sold items promoting Xinjiang cotton, three of which directly use forced labour. Will the minister immediately end all government Amazon purchases and buy from local Canadian businesses instead?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I would like to add, with respect to the support for small businesses, that we have Procurement Assistance Canada. It helps small businesses, as I spoke about earlier this evening, to navigate in order to procure goods. We are going to continue to support them.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the House voted unanimously that what the Communist Chinese government was doing to the Uighurs was genocide. I will repeat the question.

Amazon is selling items purchased from Xinjiang that are knowingly using forced labour. Will the minister immediately end purchases from Amazon and send those purchases to small and medium enterprises?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we have provisions in our contracts now that do not permit forced labour to be used, and if it is used we can terminate the contract.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, will the minister immediately terminate all purchases from Amazon, seeing as it is selling items made with forced labour?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we will continue to work to enforce the terms of our contracts to ensure that there is no forced labour and that the obligations of the contract are fulfilled.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, Panasonic has received \$32 million in contracts from the Liberal government despite sourcing materials from factories using Uighur labour. Panasonic has refused to alter its practice.

Will the Liberal government immediately stop buying from companies using forced labour?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I am pleased to talk about the progress we have made with forced labour. PSPC has now put in a code of conduct that has to be signed. There are provisions in the contracts that say if there is forced labour, we have the opportunity to terminate the contract.

We are going to continue to move forward in this regard because we are absolutely against forced labour and—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, if the government was against it, it would listen to me and the companies that I have noted.

BYD received a quarter-million dollar contract from the government. Its supplier uses Uighur forced labour transferred forcibly from south Xinjiang, where mandatory unpaid labour follows years of educational transformation in concentration camps. Why?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I have been very clear that in the contracts we will not procure goods that use forced labour. If the member has evidence that forced labour is being used, he should share that information and we will look at it. We are not going to procure goods that use forced labour and we take the allegations very seriously.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, I have been sharing it this evening and the minister has refused to rule out buying from these companies.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute has identified dozens of companies that have knowingly used forced labour goods in their supply chains. These companies, according to the government's own Buyandsell website, have received hundreds of millions in contracts from the Liberal government.

If my office, with one person, can find all of this information, why can PSPC, with all of its resources, not find the same information and stop sending Canadian taxpayer dollars to buy services made with forced labour?

Business of Supply

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we have taken action on forced labour. We take the allegations very seriously. We have implemented clauses in our contracts. We have a code of conduct that has to be signed. In fact, we are one of two countries, the U.S. and us, that have expanded CUSMA obligations with respect to forced labour to all imports.

We have taken action. We take this seriously. It is in four ministers' mandate letters. I look forward to moving forward and supporting the Minister of Labour as he leads on the legislation for the eradication of forced labour.

● (2020)

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am pleased to have the opportunity to address this committee to discuss the procurement activities of the Government of Canada and how these are being leveraged to meet our goals for equity.

I believe every member of the House would agree that the government wields considerable buying power as one of the largest public buyers of goods and services in this country. Every year, Public Services and Procurement Canada manages or facilitates approximately 23 billion dollars' worth of contracts for goods and services.

Our procurement activities keep the government functioning so it can serve and protect all Canadians. These procurements generate economic activity and bring money into the hands of Canadian companies, sustaining many thousands of jobs in cities and towns all across this country and contributing to our prosperity as a nation.

Government procurement has always been an important catalyst for change, and the opportunities it provides have never been more evident than they are today. It is our focus as a government to bring our purchasing power to bear as we work to improve the way the government buys goods and services to support Canadians.

While our economy is making a strong recovery, we know the pandemic has affected the lives and livelihoods of so many across our country and around the world. Most recently, our bulk procurements of rapid tests, vaccines and therapeutics have helped Canada respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, a top priority for our government.

We have also seen how these economic hardships have affected some communities more than others. For members of under-represented groups in this country, the pandemic is just the latest in a long history of tragic events that have led us further and further from the image of equality that we want to see for Canada. There is still so much work to be done if Canada is to become a country with equal opportunities for everyone.

As this government finishes the fight against COVID-19, we are committed to creating an environment where all Canadians can benefit from a robust economic recovery. That means ensuring that those who are facing systemic barriers to success are able to successfully participate in federal procurement and benefit from our considerable buying power. That is exactly what we have been doing in recent years.

We have been consulting businesses led by indigenous people, Black Canadians, other racialized Canadians, women, LGBTQ2+ Canadians and Canadians with disabilities. These discussions have informed us, and we have developed concrete plans to increase their representation in federal procurement to better reflect our country and society.

I would like to now take a few minutes to explain in detail our actions to attract a wider diversity in suppliers to government.

This government remains committed to building progress to address the inequalities that exist between indigenous and non-indigenous people. As we continue to walk the path of reconciliation, we are working to help indigenous communities seize economic opportunities and promote self-determination.

This past August, we announced that our government is implementing a mandatory requirement for federal departments and agencies to ensure that a minimum of 5% of the value of their contracts is held by businesses managed and led by first nations, Inuit and Métis people. The new requirement will be phased in, and we expect it to be fully implemented by 2024. It will be mandatory to report publicly on our progress against this target.

I would like to make it clear that when it comes to ensuring that indigenous-owned and indigenous-led businesses are full partners in government contracting, the 5% requirement is the floor, not the ceiling. We will continue to work actively with indigenous groups to increase their participation in federal procurement more broadly.

I would like to remind members of the House that even as this government worked tirelessly to acquire supplies and equipment to support Canada's frontline health care workers and all Canadians during the pandemic, we were also creating opportunities for businesses led and managed by indigenous people. To date, 41 self-identified indigenous businesses have contributed to the government's pandemic response through contracts awarded by Public Services and Procurement Canada for goods and services collectively worth about \$197 million.

● (2025)

These contracts represent vital services that include logistics, air charter services, accommodation, cleaning services and IT professional services. They also represent much-needed goods, such as medical and laboratory supplies, masks, hand sanitizers and thermometers, contributing to more than 2.7 billion pieces of personal protective equipment acquired by the government since the beginning of the pandemic. By increasing contracting opportunities, we are able to generate economic prosperity in communities that have not traditionally shared in this country's economic wealth. As we have said many times, this government is committed to reconciliation. That includes increasing the participation of indigenous-led businesses in the federal procurement process, and helping them to succeed and grow.

Business of Supply

Our plan is also to continue addressing barriers faced by other groups that are under-represented in Canada's business community: Black and racialized Canadians, women, persons with disabilities and LGBTQ2+ Canadians. In January, Public Services and Procurement Canada launched the supplier diversity action plan, which includes concrete steps to increase the participation of businesses from under-represented groups in federal procurement. The foundation for this plan was the result of a number of pilot projects. One of these projects involved opening select bidding opportunities in several regions for various goods and services to Black-owned and operated businesses. The department then invited a number of these businesses to answer an online questionnaire about their experiences with federal procurement. This information has been helping PSPC improve efforts to attract more Black-owned and operated businesses to offer their goods and services to government.

A cornerstone of the supplier diversity action plan is the policy on social procurement. This policy demonstrates our government's commitment to using procurement toward greater economic and social opportunities for under-represented groups. The policy empowers procurement specialists to pursue this objective in their day-to-day work. By enacting this policy, our government is making it clear that including more under-represented groups among our suppliers is now a core objective of our procurement function.

I would like to highlight some of the ways in which our government is working to increase the participation of women-owned and led businesses in federal procurement. Encouraging women-owned and led businesses to do business with government will help ensure that our economic recovery after the pandemic will be strong and inclusive.

To help increase diversity and social procurement, Public Services and Procurement Canada is providing education and assistance on federal procurements to under-represented groups across Canada through the Procurement Assistance Canada service, formerly known as the Office of Small and Medium Enterprises. Small and medium-sized businesses can take advantage of webinars, seminars and events organized by regional offices across the country to learn more about how to do business with government. In addition, as part of the supplier diversity action plan that I mentioned earlier, these offices now offer personalized coaching to give targeted advice to enterprises that have previously bid on government contracts but have not been as successful as they could have been. The coaches provide information and tools that help guide companies through their bidding process.

When this government took office in 2015, one of the principles it wanted to reinforce was that Canadians should see themselves reflected in their government. Diversity and inclusion are crucial so that all Canadians feel they are participating in society. Can the minister elaborate on what actions her department has taken to help diversify the Canadian government's procurement process and to have the vendors and suppliers the government buys from better reflect the Canadian people it is serving, while advancing reconciliation?

• (2030)

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would like to assure Canadians that I am fully committed to ensuring the diversity of the Govern-

ment of Canada's procurement process. This is an extremely important initiative for me.

As part of our efforts to diversify, we have issued RFIs to gather input from Canadian Black businesses, businesses owned and operated by persons with disabilities, and businesses owned or led by members of the LGBTQ2+ community. We have held round table discussions with Black businesses and indigenous businesses to hear first-hand how we can increase their participation in the procurement process. In addition, through mandate commitments, we are going to continue to advance government-wide initiatives to increase diversity of bidders on government contracts. We are going to continue to move forward on other procurement commitments, including better tools, simpler processes and increased opportunities for diverse businesses.

We are making good progress on the indigenous procurement front. We are modelling this work with broader diversity objectives within the supply chain. We have a supplier diversity policy that came into force a year ago. That gives us more latitude in how we run procurement processes. We are now turning that into an actual program of work as to how we can use those flexibilities to increase the diversity in supply chains. There is a lot of outreach that is being done with different groups to try to make it easier, including e-procurement.

We developed a policy on social procurement to leverage purchasing power, to achieve socio-economic objectives and increase supplier diversity. The policy will contribute to reducing barriers and enhancing economic and social opportunities for under-represented groups, such as indigenous peoples, Black and racialized Canadians, women, LGBTQ2+ Canadians and other under-represented groups, including socio-economic objectives in federal procurement, which improves best value for Canadians by balancing spending with achieving important policy goals. This I spoke about before.

Business of Supply

It is important for me. It is not just the right thing to do and the morally correct thing to do, but it is also the smart thing to do because once we open up opportunities, bring down barriers and have a level playing field, that creates a system where people who previously faced barriers are going to be supported. That is exactly why, at the end of the day, it is not just the right thing to do, but economically we can elevate, support and allow companies to have access and experience success, because we know the potential is there. We want to tap into and unleash that potential because we know the benefits that it is going to create.

We are currently asking suppliers to voluntarily self-declare if they identify with an under-represented group. This is in line with other self-attestation approaches used in the procurement process. We will work with other departments and under-represented businesses and associations to explore and improve the certification approach, including the consideration of third-party certification. These are some of the measures that we are taking in this regard.

Ms. Joanne Thompson: Madam Chair, I wonder if the minister could speak to the work around therapeutics in the COVID-19 pandemic fight.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I am very pleased to say this is another tool. Vaccines, of course, are the most important, but to date, we have procured 1.7 million therapeutic treatments that we are giving to the provinces and territories. We received 155,722 treatment courses of Paxlovid. We are going to continue to receive these treatment courses and support provinces and territories. We know that this is an important tool, and I am happy to be able to support the provinces and territories in this regard.

• (2035)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be sharing my time. My questions today will focus on procurement and human rights. The member for Scarborough—Guildwood, who is a member of the Liberal party, observed in the House yesterday that, “We have gone through a period of time in the last two or three years where we may have sourced goods which we, in other instances, may not or would not have sourced from dubious sources.”

Does the minister agree with her colleague?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Chair, what I would say to that is that we do not want to procure any goods used where there is a violation of human rights. That is why we have taken the measures that we have in PSPC.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, that is zero for one in terms of answering the specific question I asked, which was whether she agreed with the comment from her colleague.

More specifically, I wonder if the minister can share when the government first became aware of significant concerns around forced labour with Supermax.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we were first advised of this in October 2021.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, according to British solicitor Nusrat Uddin's comments to CBC earlier this year, Canadian

government officials were briefed on concerns about Supermax prior to 2015. Is that accurate?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I just want to correct it. It was December 2020. That was the time we were first made aware.

What I would say in this regard is that we take these allegations very seriously. When we hear of allegations, we act on those allegations.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, it sounds like she is saying that this British solicitor's comments were inaccurate and we will want to follow up on that later.

The hon. minister says the government found out about this in December 2020. When did the government actually end its contract with Supermax, and when was the last time it received supplies from Supermax?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, what I would say is that as soon as we found out about the obligations, we stopped shipments. No more shipments were received. The contract was terminated subsequent to that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, the minister said that the government first heard about these concerns in December 2020. Did the government immediately end shipments in December 2020?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, it was in January 2021. That was when we ended shipments.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, is the government still doing business with Sinopharm?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, Sinopharm provided a declaration to PSPC in April 2021. All deliveries were completed in December 2021.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, is the minister concerned about allegations of forced labour against Sinopharm, and when did the minister become aware of those allegations?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, in 2018, we implemented the policy on ethical procurement of apparel. The contract security program provides security screening for personnel and organizations to safeguard protected classified information. PSPC, when contracting, includes—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, going back to Supermax, the British and American governments both discontinued purchases from Supermax long before the Canadian government did. The government claims that it only became aware of concerns about forced labour at Supermax after the Americans and the British had already discontinued purchases from Supermax.

Why was the government not following the policies of our allies in this respect?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, what I will confirm is that as soon as allegations are made clear to us, we respond to those and we take those allegations very seriously.

Business of Supply

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, if the U.S. and the British governments had discontinued purchases, and the minister says the Government of Canada was not even aware that there were allegations, how is it that we are so far behind our allies in terms of being aware of these concerns?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, I will reiterate: when we hear of allegations, we take those allegations very seriously. We have terms in the contract that allow us to terminate the contracts. We act on allegations that we hear.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, it seems that the government should be listening to what our allies are doing and actually paying attention better to what is going on around the world.

An independent analysis completed for the government last year by the University of Nottingham Rights Lab found that only five of 48 vendors had appropriate policies in place to mitigate risks around human trafficking and forced labour.

Why do so few of our vendors have appropriate policies in place, and yet why have we only discontinued, as far as I am aware, one contract?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, what I would say is that we have implemented a number of measures in this regard to eradicate forced labour. Four ministers have mandate commitments in their mandate letters to move forward with the eradication of forced labour.

For me, in PSPC, I am going to do everything I can to prevent forced labour in the supply chains. We have made progress and we are going to continue to move forward.

• (2040)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, the minister notes promises in mandate letters to bring forward future legislation. We do not have a timeline around that legislation, when it comes in, but meanwhile we are purchasing products from companies where our allies have already noticed and said that there is a problem with forced labour in their supply chain.

Minister, that simply is not good enough.

Does the government purchase any products at all that are produced in Xinjiang?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member has to address questions and comments to the Chair.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, the member is being selective in repeating the things that I am saying. I am talking about the commitments and the progress that we have made. We have made progress. We have a code of conduct. We have provisions in our contracts that say if forced labour is used, then the contract is terminated. We have extended CUSMA obligations with respect to forced labour. We are moving.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, there are provisions in contracts that allow the termination of contracts, and contracts are simply not being terminated. My last question was this: Does the government purchase any products that are produced in Xinjiang?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, when we find out about forced labour issues that are raised to us, we take those seriously. We investigate those, and we will not procure product—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, again, that is not an answer, but on another question, does the government purchase any products produced by Nuctech, and has the government purchased any surveillance cameras or other security equipment made in China?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, with respect to Nuctech, let me say that the safety and security of embassies is important. No contract has been issued. All issues regarding the security will be—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, I want to be very clear, because I am not just asking about embassies. I am asking in general, across government procurement.

Has any part of the government purchased products produced by Nuctech or purchased any surveillance cameras or other security equipment made in China?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, let me be very clear. There were seven bidders. Three were compliant. Nuctech was one of them, so they are on the standing order but with no call-ups, so there is no contract with Nuctech.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, does that include CBSA?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, would the member clarify the question he is asking me as to whether it includes CBSA? Can he give me more clarification there?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, that is the third time I have asked this question. Is any part of government procurement happening from Nuctech, and is any part of government purchasing surveillance cameras or security equipment made in China?

I hope we get an accurate answer.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, there are none. There are no contracts that we have procured. If we have procured contracts for CBSA, none of them were from Nuctech. We have not procured from them.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Chair, our interpreters are truly the glue that holds together our bilingual Parliament, and I will be asking the minister questions concerning parliamentary interpretation.

Business of Supply

Our bilingual Parliament is the product of a strong Conservative legacy. Sir John A. MacDonald and Sir George-Étienne Cartier made the use of both official languages an essential right in this Parliament when they negotiated Confederation; Richard Bennett established the translation bureau, which has ensured that unilingual parliamentarians have had access to the words of their colleagues; John Diefenbaker introduced the use of simultaneous interpretation into the proceedings of this House, permitting real-time comprehension for all MPs, and Brian Mulroney finally entrenched the right to parliamentary interpretation in the Official Languages Act.

Sadly, the Liberal government has neglected the interpretation services for this House, which have regrettably atrophied and been overwhelmed. We live in the consequences every day now, and it is just another chapter in the Liberals' democratic decline.

Does the minister agree with me that our interpreters are an absolutely essential feature of Parliament, and that we must do everything we can to support them?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Chair, my thanks to the member for his indication at the beginning of the question of where he was going with it.

I agree that we have two official languages, and at all times it is important that we have interpretation, especially during the very exceptional circumstances that we have been experiencing.

In budget 2021, we recognized the changing needs of the translation bureau and committed \$18 million for the translation bureau to respond to a higher volume of translation and interpretation requests, while continuing to support a remote working environment. This is going to ensure the parliamentarians and Canadians receive timely translation and interpretation services in both official languages, as well as indigenous languages, sign languages and other languages spoken across Canada.

However, I appreciate the member's question with respect to the stress that is being put on them during this very trying time, because of remote work and virtual appearances at committees. We are going to continue to support the translation bureau, and I want to thank them for the great work that they are doing.

● (2045)

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair, I am glad to hear the minister's commitment, but her department's record speaks to the contrary. The minister was a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in 2018 when it reported to the House that the "Translation Bureau...is mandated by statute to be the exclusive provider of translation and interpretation services...to Parliament."

Does she still stand by the view she helped write in the report?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we want to continuously work with the translation bureau to ensure it can provide the services that are needed. We know there is a stress on the system, and it is actually about hiring interpreters to commit to this. There is a limited pool of expertise in this regard, and we continue to work on it.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair, we have had committees tightly rationed with meeting time in the past few weeks, and we have seen many committee meetings, including very important meetings, cancelled because of a lack of interpretation services. Simply put, our committees cannot do the things they want, and they certainly cannot hold the government to account adequately.

If her translation bureau is supposed to be the exclusive provider of services, is she not concerned about the lack of resources she is making available to support the proceedings of this House and its committees, and what is the minister doing to actually make sure Parliament has the resources necessary to hold the government to account?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we are working with two educational colleges in order to tap into the specialized translation services. One needs to have credentials that meet qualifications. There is a skills shortage and there are workplace challenges with respect to remote work, but we have 65 staff interpreters and 56 freelance interpreters.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair, earlier I mentioned the great concerns the opposition parties are having in terms of our ability to hold the government to account, and it is at the mercy of the resources the government makes available for that purpose.

Has the government been gaming the system to ensure the resources are unavailable for the committees it does not like, such as the Special Joint Committee on the Declaration of Emergency and its motion to order the production of documents on the Liberals' increasingly flimsy invocation of the Emergencies Act?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, let me be very clear. I categorically do not agree with the premise of that member's question, and I am very disappointed he has asked it in that way.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair, she may be disappointed, but those are the facts.

Does the minister agree her government's neglect is sabotaging the House's constitutional duty to hold the government to account?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, this is a skills set shortage. To indicate that this is concocted is absolutely ridiculous.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair, can the minister confirm that there has been a 25% decline in the number of staff interpreters employed by the translation bureau since 2019?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I gave the numbers that we have who are employed with the translation bureau, and we are working hard to increase those numbers. It is a question of getting the skill set that is available.

Business of Supply

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair, she has not in the previous question, but can she confirm in this question that there has been nearly a 40% decline in the number of freelance interpreters retained by the bureau since 2019?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I am going to raise myself to a higher level here, which I always call myself to do, and I am going to disregard the allegations. I am going to talk about what we have done for interpreters. We have actually increased—

• (2050)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair, they are not allegations; they are actual facts.

Does the minister acknowledge that hybrid Parliament has led to a ninefold increase in workplace injuries for our parliamentary interpreters?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, the interpretation bureau employed 65 staff interpreters and 56 freelance interpreters in 2019 to 2020.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair, that was no answer.

Knowing the role hybrid Parliament has had in skyrocketing workplace injury reports among the ever-dwindling ranks of interpreters, which are, again, facts, has the minister informed the government House leader that the single biggest step we can take to avert this looming catastrophe would be the end of hybrid Parliament and the return to regular parliamentary business?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I would like to point out and thank the interpreters for the amazing work they are doing. There has been a huge workload increase, and COVID has descended upon us. They have been absolutely fantastic. We have implemented measures like the headsets with sound limiters, reducing the length of their assignments and implementing rigorous COVID-19 safety measures. I thank our amazing interpreters.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, we have heard today about the important work of Public Services and Procurement Canada. As the government's central purchaser and real property manager, the department is in a unique position to help reach important goals, and that includes our commitment to fighting climate change. Canadians deserve a clean, safe and sustainable environment now and into the future. The science on this front is clear. Human activities are driving unprecedented changes in the earth's climate, which pose significant risks to human health, security and economic growth.

In Canada and around the world, the serious effects of climate change are so evident: coastal erosion, thawing permafrost, increases in heat waves, droughts and flooding, ecosystem changes, and risks to critical infrastructure, among other threats. That is why we have been hard at work implementing forward-thinking policies that will protect our environment now and leave the next generation with a cleaner planet.

I can say what we have is a solid plan to reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions through investments and support for green industries as we transition toward a low-carbon future. Part of that means we need to get our own house in order and green our gov-

ernment operations, and that is precisely what we are doing with our greening government strategy.

The greening government strategy is our plan to attain net-zero emissions by 2050. The strategy supports Canada's sustainability goals already set out under the Paris Agreement on climate change and in the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change. We are on track to deliver the largest emissions reduction in our country's history.

We have an opportunity here to be a global leader in government operations that are low-carbon, resilient and green. Public Services and Procurement Canada plays an important role in this regard. The department manages more than 20 billion dollars' worth of goods and services annually from thousands of suppliers. As the single largest purchaser of goods and services in this country, the impact the department can make is incredibly significant.

Our government is committed to being a first purchaser to support the growth of new, clean and renewable power sources as they become available. Our policy on green procurement sets out exactly how we incorporate environmental considerations into our core business practices and drives our work in all of these areas.

This is about using the federal buying power to generate social and economic benefits, and key among those is protecting our environment. As one example of procurement of goods and services with a high environmental impact, we are incorporating elements that address carbon reduction, sustainability and broader environmental benefits. This means we consider things like reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, improved energy and water efficiency, and reduced waste in the procurements that we undertake.

It also means that we support the use of renewable resources, reduce hazardous waste and reduce toxic and hazardous substances when we make purchases. As we show environmental leadership, we can influence industry and Canadians to choose environmentally preferable and climate-resilient goods and services.

We are doubling down on this front in our latest budget, tapping into Public Services and Procurement Canada to develop new tools, guidelines and targets. That means eventually more support for the adoption of green procurement across the federal government.

Business of Supply

Greening the federal fleet is another important piece of our plan. Our goal is that the government's light duty fleet will be comprised of 100% zero-emission vehicles by 2030. The federal fleet of the future will differ greatly from the existing one. It will be made up of a variety of low-carbon technologies. Its vehicles will operate efficiently and cost-effectively, and it will have much lower emissions and energy use.

Through the energy services acquisition program, we have already cut greenhouse gas emissions by 57% from the baseline year of 2005, and we are on track to meet our goal of net-zero emissions by 2030. In addition to procurement, the department is also responsible for managing the Government of Canada's real property portfolio, and it is leading the charge to green our federal buildings, a commitment made under the greening government strategy.

• (2055)

I would note that in Canada, building operations and construction materials account for 38% of our greenhouse gas emissions. We know we must make them more environmentally friendly, and the government must lead by example.

We have pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our buildings by 40% below 2005 levels by 2030 at the latest. I can say that we are making good progress. We are doing it through green building practices by using sustainable materials, optimizing our space usage and lowering energy consumption.

We are also focused on achieving Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, also known as LEED, and Green Globe standards, which recognize the use of green products and materials. I am proud to say we have several LEED gold- or platinum-certified buildings across the country.

Every step counts, and some of the most basic changes we are making, such as converting all lighting in our buildings to more efficient LED lighting, will have a major impact on our efforts. More and more, we are using smart buildings technology, which means we save energy by monitoring and controlling the mechanical, heating, cooling and lighting systems in federal buildings. These systems allow us to make a real impact by using innovative technologies and identifying opportunities for energy savings. It is improving how we manage the energy performance of our buildings.

In 2017, Public Services and Procurement Canada set an important precedent by creating a carbon-neutral portfolio planned to achieve carbon neutrality across our real property portfolio by 2050, with an aspirational target of 2030, and zero carbon for its portfolio, which includes 360 buildings across the country. To that end, Public Services and Procurement Canada implemented a broad investment strategy to rehabilitate our federal buildings across the country. These are major retrofits that will contribute to low-carbon operations.

The Arthur Meighen Building in Toronto is a great example. Here in the national capital region, work is under way on modernizing Les Terrasses de la Chaudière and the Place de Portage office complexes. Redesigned office spaces in these buildings will offer much more natural light, allowing us to cut costs and reduce dependence on artificial lighting.

The government continues to do more to equip buildings with green fixtures and features, such as installing solar panels and green habitats on roofs, as well rainwater capture systems to reduce the buildings' demand on the city's water infrastructure. These steps transform our buildings, and this change in how we think about the way we work will usher in a new era of sustainable green government.

In another major greening project, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, we are modernizing the network of plants that heats and cools over 80 federal buildings in Ottawa. The department manages five central plants that heat and cool more than 80 public and privately owned buildings in the national capital region, including the Parliament buildings.

Modernization will increase safety, efficiency, reliability and environmental performance, and result in a reduction of operating costs and an estimated reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of approximately 33%. Future activities will move toward deeper greening by replacing natural gas with carbon-neutral fuels for baseload operation. This is a move that has the potential to reduce total emissions by 90% by 2030.

These are just a few examples of the important work happening at Public Services and Procurement Canada to fight climate change. Our government has a solid plan in place to reduce greenhouse gas emissions so we can leave a healthier, cleaner planet for our kids and our grandkids. Public Services and Procurement Canada is an important part of that plan, and I am proud of the work the department continues to do for all Canadians.

• (2100)

The Deputy Chair: I just wanted to let the parliamentary secretary know the five minutes are up.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Chair, can the minister please detail the measures this government has taken with regard to greening government in order to help meet its international commitments and ensure a healthy environment for Canadians, for both today and tomorrow?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Chair, to begin, I would like to confirm that we are committed to real action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our buildings, as is outlined in my mandate letter. We have opportunities here, and we want to seize these opportunities and demonstrate leadership.

Business of Supply

This past year alone, we reported a 57.6% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from our buildings, as compared to the baseline laid out in 2005 and 2006. This is a result of important actions to improve buildings' energy efficiency, electricity grid improvements and the procurement of renewable energy credits. A decrease of 19% of the remaining emissions is expected by 2025 through the procurement of clean electricity. That is the national clean electricity initiative.

A decrease of 40% of the remaining emissions is expected by 2025, by modernizing the heating and cooling systems for up to 80 buildings in the national capital region. This is referred to as the energy services acquisition program. Additional greenhouse gas emissions reductions are expected as we continue to modernize buildings.

These ongoing actions, in conjunction with achievements to date, will lead us towards achieving over 82% of greenhouse gas emissions reductions by 2025 and put us in a very good position to achieve net-zero carbon by 2030 in our buildings portfolio.

We also have the Buy Clean strategy. As outlined in my mandate letter, we are committed to reducing the carbon footprint and encouraging green procurement strategies. This includes strengthening federal procurement practices to prioritize reusable and recyclable products in support of our goal of zero plastic waste.

We will also work with our colleagues to introduce a new Buy Clean strategy to support and prioritize the use of made-in-Canada low-carbon products. Protecting our planet is a top priority for our government, and we will continue to do our part in promoting ecofriendly practices.

We also have made efforts on the electric vehicle front. We are committed to greening government at all levels of procurement. As the manager of the government fleet, we have standing offers for light-duty vehicles that include electric, hybrid and plug-in hybrid vehicles.

In the past three years, we have procured 1,187 zero-emission and hybrid vehicles. We will continue working with industry to ensure we are finding new ways to support green procurement opportunities.

● (2105)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Chair, in my hometown we build the award-winning, world-class Chrysler Pacifica minivan. It is the first and only hybrid minivan produced here in Canada, and something we are extremely proud of in my hometown of Windsor.

I just wanted to ask the minister whether the greening government strategy will have a positive impact, as I foresee it will, on communities such as mine that build electric vehicles and hybrid vehicles.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I am absolutely delighted to hear of that announcement. That important investment is absolutely going to be a game-changer, in terms of the production of electric vehicles. Of course we want to increase that and make it easy and convenient for people to purchase and drive electric vehicles.

The Deputy Chair: There are 13 seconds left.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Chair, I just wanted to really acknowledge the minister for answering questions all this evening. She is just an absolute superstar. I just wanted to acknowledge that in the form of a question.

The Deputy Chair: There is no time left.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Chair, the government has named the F-35 the successful bidder for the future fighter requirement. The minister, on CTV's *Question Period* on Sunday, April 3, 2022, said, "At the end of the day, when this contract is signed, there will be guaranteed industrial benefits." Does the minister still say that this is correct?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am happy to say that in this strong procurement process, which was rigorous and competitive, we gave the highest weighting to economic benefits, and we are very pleased that we were able to do that, because we want to ensure that Canadians, of course, are benefiting from this.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, Bagotville and Cold Lake cannot prepare for the F-35, because there has been no contract signed. When will the F-35 contract be signed?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I am very pleased to say that we are in the finalization stage, and we expect the contract to be signed before the end of this year.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Minister, we know that Lockheed was allowed to bid after the government changed existing ITB rules requiring 100% offsets. Innovation, Science and Economic Development decided to allow F-35 to submit a best-efforts ITB proposal that would be negatively scored, because it was unable to guarantee benefits. Does the minister agree with that?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member should address all questions and comments to the Chair please.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, what I agree with is the heavy weighting that was given to economic benefits. I think that this was very important, and there are procedures in the process that are set up in order to ensure that those economic benefits are honoured.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, the minister knows that, as a member of the consortium, Canada gets the F-35 at the same price as the United States in the year of purchase. Can she confirm that is correct?

Business of Supply

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we are in the negotiation phase. We are very pleased that the process was competitive, and we know that we are going to get the best price based on a competitive process.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, as I just stated, that is already set as part of the consortium agreement. Does the minister actually suggest that somehow Canada is going to be able to have a different process than the others in the consortium when it comes to price?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, what is being worked out right now are the details of that process so that, in this finalization stage, those intricate details are being written to sign a contract so that we know exactly what we are receiving.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, can the minister confirm that Canada is purchasing a block of F-35 fight planes from the scrapped Turkish purchase of Block 3 aircraft while the latest model, the Block 4, is unavailable; in other words, a less capable fighter?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, one of the advantages with this process is that we are getting the latest and greatest plane. We are delighted that, in this procurement and in this investment that we are making, we will be getting the latest and greatest F-35.

• (2110)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, some \$15 billion in defence spending was included in the budget but not declared or attached to anything. Can the minister tell us why, and what is that for?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, that is a question of defence. Defence is looking at what its needs are, and we look forward to the department asking us, as procurement, to fulfill those needs.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, that is a non-answer.

The government's future surface combatant program has grown in cost from \$60 billion to an estimated \$100 billion. Has the government given any thought to an off-the-shelf, foreign purchase?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I strongly support the national shipbuilding strategy. We are creating jobs here in Canada. I had the opportunity to visit one of the shipyards, and I can tell the member that the work being done there by Canadians is absolutely phenomenal.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, does the minister know that those ship designs have gone from 5,000 tonnes to 10,000 tonnes?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I know that there have been amendments, yes.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, does the minister know that the combat system has been declared "U.S. eyes only", and that all the Canadians working on the combat system have been let go?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I can say that I saw workers in action. The national shipbuilding strategy is putting Canadians to work, and I am happy about that.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, does the minister know that all maintenance on the combat systems will be done in the United States?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I am happy to support the national shipbuilding strategy, and they are going to provide us with the ships that we—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, right now, CAE does Canada's military pilot training. Does the minister support CAE and training pilots at home by a Canadian company?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I am not sure where the member is going with this, but of course we support Canadian companies across the board.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, does the minister know that the future aircrew training program has been weighted for either an Italian or a British company to win and train pilots outside Canada?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, these contracts are all subject to the procurement process, where there are negotiations that go on and we try to get the best price and the best value for Canadians.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, is the government prepared to lose all those Canadian jobs at CAE, and its partners, to training Canadian pilots in Europe?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, as I referenced earlier, economic benefits are a part of the contracts that we sign and will continue to be.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, the Cormorant search and rescue helicopters are 24 years old and we are down to two or three aircraft. What plans does the government have for a mid-life upgrade of the aircraft, and what are the plans to replace the missing platforms?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I just need clarification on the helicopter that the member is referencing.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, they are the Cormorant search and rescue helicopters.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I am going to have to get back to the member with respect to that specific question. What DND asks for us to procure, we procure.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, what is the government's plan to acquire new submarines, and will they be nuclear, given that conventional submarines have a difficult time staying under the ice pack for more than a few hours or days before they have to retreat?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, we are procurement, so we ask DND. As the client, DND provides us with the information and the details and the specs it needs, and we follow what it has asked.

Business of Supply

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, to date, the government has not been able to procure a new side arm for the Canadian Army. Our special forces have new side arms. Why could the Canadian Army not just join that purchase or follow up on that buy? Why does it have to wait?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, the Department of Defence asks us to procure, and we procure. The Department of Defence is the client. What it asks us to procure, we get the best possible value for Canadians in our—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Chair, how long do our Canadian Rangers have to wait to get a new rifle? This should not be rocket science. They need them. When will they get them?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I think the member is referring to the C21 sniper rifles. The competitive process resulted in a \$2.6-million contract to deliver 229 new C21 sniper rifles. Delivery is expected at the end of 2022.

• (2115)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Chair, I would like to ask the minister a few questions about the Lac-Mégantic bypass.

What is the minister's role on the bypass file?

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, there was a problem with the interpretation. I just got the introduction of what was going to be asked, but I did not actually get a question.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, what is the minister's role in the bypass in Lac-Mégantic?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I would like to start by saying that the whole government feels for the victims and families of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy—

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, I will let the minister answer.

Can she tell us what role Public Services and Procurement Canada plays in this process?

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we are making every effort to come to agreements that are satisfactory to all parties with respect to the properties.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, what agreement is the minister referring to? Who is it with?

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, it is with the landowners.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, is the department also involved in the contract with Canadian Pacific?

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, our responsibility is with the landowners.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, how can Public Services and Procurement Canada not be involved if the government is signing a mutually agreeable contract with a private company, a contract that could be worth \$395 million?

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I am going to have to ask the member to repeat the question.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, how can the minister not be involved in a contract with a private company, a contract worth \$400 million?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, if I understood this properly, we support Transport Canada to acquire the property.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, can Public Services and Procurement Canada explain to us how the government can enter into a mutually agreeable private contract with a private company for \$400 million?

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, just to be clear, we are negotiating with the landowners, who have the ability to have appraisals, etc.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, it is my understanding, then, that the minister's department will not be involved in negotiations with Canadian Pacific for the acquisition of the bypass and for the construction contract.

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I am sorry; I hope I am understanding. We are in negotiation with the landowners.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, I will ask the minister this question for the last time. Will her department be involved in reaching an agreement with Canadian Pacific for the construction and acquisition of the rail line?

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I would suggest that that question be directed to Transport Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, is the minister familiar with Andrew Kendrick, who appeared before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates on May 13?

Business of Supply

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, no, I do not.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, Mr. Kendrick is an architect who worked for the government from 1981 to 2020. He has credibility and a great deal of experience. He told the committee that the offshore patrol ship project process, which is supposed to be fair, open and transparent, is not. It is completely opaque. Does the minister agree with his statement?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, as I have said, our processes are open, fair and transparent. I have not seen the testimony, but I would just assert that that is what our process is.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, Mr. Kendrick, who worked for the Government of Canada from 1981 to 2020, said that what concerns him about the whole shipbuilding process is that the government has lost control of situation. Does the minister agree?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, absolutely not. I do not agree with that.

• (2120)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, Mr. Kendrick also says that Canada's national shipbuilding strategy is not delivering the ships that the Canadian Navy and Coast Guard need. According to him, the few ships that the strategy has delivered have cost an indecent amount of money, and Canada has become an international laughingstock. Is the minister okay with being a laughingstock?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, again, what I would say is that I am proud of the national shipbuilding strategy. I think the economic benefits for Canada, the jobs that it creates, and the amazing work that is taking place are something that we as Canadians should all be proud of.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, in his statement, Mr. Kendrick said that, broadly speaking, Canada is paying between three and five times the world price for ships and taking two to four times longer to get them. Is the minister also proud of those results?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, I just want to be clear. I assume the member recognizes this, but we actually compete these contracts. They are the result of competitive processes.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, I am quoting comments made by a committee witness who worked for the Canadian government from 1981 to 2020.

Mr. Kendrick also asked the committee to note that the offshore patrol ships are not wanted or needed by either the navy or the Coast Guard and are only being built to keep the shipyard busy un-

til the Canadian surface combatant project is ready to move forward. Does the minister agree with that statement?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, DND tells PSPC what it needs, and we procure what it needs. I would just add that the national shipbuilding strategy contributes \$1.54 billion annually to the economy, and it creates and maintains 18,000 jobs per year.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, is the minister telling us that PSPC blindly does whatever DND tells it to, without doing any checks? Is that how her department works?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, no, I am absolutely not saying that. What I am saying is that DND is the client. It tells us what product it wants. We then compete the process, and in the shipbuilding strategy, we are monitoring it throughout.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, I have a simple question. When will her department's employees return to work at their offices?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Chair, we are asking departments to make the decisions as to how they want to work. We know that it is challenging. We know that work is going to look different, but we are interested in creating safe spaces so that they—

The Deputy Chair: It is time to resume debate.

The hon. member for Steveston—Richmond East.

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to speak to one of Public Services and Procurement Canada's most important responsibilities. This department ensures the ongoing delivery of defence procurement so that those who serve us so bravely have the equipment they need to carry out their important work. We are guided by “Strong, Secure, Engaged”, our government's defence policy, which sets out clear direction on priorities over a 20-year period. I want this committee to know that we have been making progress when it comes to defence procurement in support of policies we believe in and will continue to do so.

In late February, when Russia illegally invaded Ukraine, the world rapidly changed, and countries around the world, including Canada, had to rethink defence postures. Since then, our government has supported Ukraine with concrete actions, which include implementing severe economic sanctions against Russia and providing military equipment to the Ukrainian people as they defend courageously their sovereignty, freedom and independence.

Business of Supply

Russia's actions have been a wake-up call for the world's democracies, reminding us that we must stand together in defence of the values we share, and that a strong modern military capacity is needed for the protection of all sovereign nations. Budget 2022 provided more than \$8 billion in defence spending over five years, which is on top of the already planned increases associated with "Strong, Secure, Engaged".

I want this committee to know that PSPC stands ready as we reassess our priorities in the face of new threats, and we remain focused on moving forward on defence procurement. That includes holding open competitions whenever possible because that is the best way to get the right equipment at the right price and with the most benefits to Canadians. Above all else, we need to make sure that our Armed Forces have what they need to get the job done. Allow me to outline some of our achievements on this front.

When it comes to air defence, we are delivering. That includes our ongoing work to purchase new fighter jets, which represents the most significant investment in the Royal Canadian Air Force in more than 30 years. This is a highly complex procurement and we have delivered on our promise to Canadians to hold an open, fair and truly competitive process. Our goal from the beginning has been to ensure that we are getting the right aircraft at the right price while maximizing economic benefits to Canada. We worked with potential suppliers and foreign governments early and often to obtain feedback on our process and Canada's needs.

In 2019, we released a formal request for proposals to eligible suppliers. Three of those suppliers submitted proposals, which were rigorously assessed against elements of capability, cost and economic benefit to Canada by government experts. In December of 2021, the Government of Canada announced that two bidders remained eligible in the process. Earlier this year, we announced that, after careful consideration, the Government of Canada had decided to enter in a finalization phase with the top-ranked bidder. This is an important milestone in the process and means we are on track, as we aim to award a contract for 88 new fighter jets later this year, with the potential of receiving our first jets as early as 2025.

We are making progress in many other areas as well. For example, we also have an active request for proposals to acquire a remotely piloted aircraft system, and we are aiming to award a contract in two years.

To support our troops on land, we are moving forward on the logistics vehicle modernization project, which is meant to improve the light and heavy vehicle capabilities of the Canadian Armed Forces. We anticipate awarding a contract by 2023. We are engaging with industry to move forward on a number of purchases, including our next generation of fighting vehicles and our enhanced recovery capability projects, to support our Armed Forces. These are only a few examples.

• (2125)

I would like to highlight the important contribution of the ITB policy. The policy requires that companies invest in Canada the equivalent of 100% of their contract value. That means these defence procurements are making immense contributions to jobs, innovation and economic growth across the country.

When it comes to supporting marine-related procurements, which play an important role in defending this country, we have essentially rebuilt the shipbuilding industry in Canada through the national shipbuilding strategy. This is Canada's long-term plan to renew the fleets of the Royal Canadian Navy, as well as the Canadian Coast Guard, and it is helping to create and sustain good jobs right here at home.

More than a decade following the launch of the strategy, we have seen five large ships and numerous small vessels delivered. We have also seen the completion of dozens of ship repair, refit and maintenance projects at yards across Canada. To date, more than \$20 billion in new contracts has been awarded across Canada, with nearly 18,000 jobs created or maintained annually.

Of course, we must acknowledge that strains on supply chains and the rising cost of materials have put pressure on many of our projects across the board, but I can say that Canada's marine industry is facing those challenges head on and we continue to make progress. This past year, a second Arctic and offshore patrol ship was delivered to the Royal Canadian Navy and a third was launched into the water, with work continuing on another two ships. Design work also started on the future polar icebreakers and multi-purpose vessels. These are only a few examples.

Construction also continued on the navy's first joint support ship, as well as design work on the future Canadian surface combatants. That project is the biggest of all of our shipbuilding projects, a multi-billion dollar endeavour that will span the next 20 to 25 years, and the resulting ships will form the backbone of our Royal Canadian Navy. Several repair, refit and maintenance contracts were also awarded on behalf of the Coast Guard and navy, generating hundreds of jobs and significant economic benefits to communities across the country.

Hard-working Canadians at our official partnership yards, Seaspan on the west coast and Irving on the east, have been doing their part and are keeping our projects going. This past year, we have also made progress in the multistep process to select a third official shipyard under the national shipbuilding strategy and, of course, many smaller shipyards and numerous suppliers across Canada are all playing a role in our revitalized shipbuilding industry. For those who serve in the air, on the land or on the sea, we are delivering.

Business of Supply

Canada must always be ready to respond to evolving global circumstances to ensure that we are meeting our international obligations and that the Canadian Armed Forces are prepared to fulfill the missions we ask of them. Our government is committed to immediately reinforcing Canada's national defence. PSPC stands ready to build upon our achievements and to further bolster the capabilities of our forces. Canadians take great pride in the men and women who serve, and nothing is more important than making sure that they have what they need to keep Canada safe and secure.

• (2130)

Recent events have shown that we continue to live in a dangerous world where some nations are willing to flout international law by assaulting and even invading other nations without cause. It is a world where the strong will sometimes use their military advantage to take what they want by force. This is not the world that we want to live in or strive to create, but it is today's reality. Canada has been fortunate not to be the victim of such an attack in recent history, but Canada has always stood up for what is right and has defended its partners and allies across the globe.

Two things are essentially required to be able to do this: brave men and women and the proper equipment. The Canadian Armed Forces is stocked with courageous Canadians ready to defend this country and its values. It is the government's responsibility to provide the adequate military equipment to these brave men and women so that when we do make this grave request of them, they will be as safe as possible and have the right tools for the job. This means everything from boots and helmets to jets and ships.

Public Service and Procurement Canada, in partnership with the Department of National Defence, has been procuring a range of equipment, arms, vehicles and more for our military. These are often complex procurements with many moving parts. We have been committed to open competitions and assuring that these contracts support Canadian industries as much as possible.

The workers in the shipbuilding and other defence industries are giving their best for Canada. The men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces do the same every day. The same is expected from the Canadian government.

Could the minister please detail some of the important investments this government has made in the Canadian Armed Forces based on the "Strong, Secure, Engaged" defence policy in order to provide our military men and women with the best equipment and keep Canadians safe?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to take this opportunity to thank the men and women of our Armed Forces, a sentiment I know is shared by all sides in the House, for the incredible work that they do. I was pleased to join with almost everybody here to vote for a motion to increase our defence spending up to 2% of our gross domestic product.

We have made progress since 2015. In 2015, we were at about 1%. We are now at 1.37%, and with the additions in the budget this year, we are going to move up to 1.5%. We still have more to do, but we know, based on the threats in the world today, we need to invest in our Armed Forces.

I am so pleased that we are also creating economic benefits and good middle-class jobs here in Canada from coast to coast through substantial investments in equipping our military.

Let me talk about the national shipbuilding strategy. Over the last 10 years, we have invested \$21.07 billion in NSS contracts to businesses across the country. Of these, approximately \$1 billion went to small businesses of less than 250 employees, and this has created approximately 18,000 jobs being created or maintained in Canada, not to mention all of the spin-off jobs that are created from companies that do business with C-SPAN, Irving and Davie.

We have awarded thus far \$6.52 billion to Irving; \$5.26 billion to Vancouver Shipyards, which is C-SPAN; and \$2.26 billion to Davie. Other shipyards have received \$7.03 billion. We are also providing the most advanced military jets, the 88 fighter jets that are being ordered. At this point the contract is being negotiated with Lockheed Martin. They are the biggest investment we have made in the Air Force in a generation. We launched a transparent competition in order to procure those jets starting in December 2017.

• (2135)

Mr. Parm Bains: Mr. Chair, we heard a little about the shipyards. My questions are coming from Richmond, British Columbia, so the marine sector is extremely important to us over here on the west coast. I am curious to know about some of the work that is being done at the Vancouver Shipyard, Seaspan and the economic impacts around that.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, again, as I mentioned, we have invested \$21 billion in the economy through the national shipbuilding strategy. Of that, the amount that has gone to Seaspan, with the spinoff effects in the member's riding, is \$5.26 billion. That is not to talk about the indirect benefits that go to companies that are doing business with that shipyard.

I appreciate the hon. member's interest in this issue, and I look forward to continuing to work with him and all of our colleagues in investing in the Canadian economy.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Chair, I would like to know the official cost of the Arctic and offshore patrol ships and whether it is possible to break down those costs.

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the first two AOPS were delivered in July 2020 and July 2021, and the next three are under construction. The project budget is \$4.3 billion.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, will the budget be respected?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, we always try to respect the budgets.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, can the minister officially confirm that the budget will be respected?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, as I said earlier, there are cost pressures because of COVID, but we always attempt to have those budgets respected.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, I would like to know why the icebreaker contract was split between two shipyards. That reduces the expertise, so I would like to know why the contract was split.

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, in these contracts, we are always looking for the best value that can be provided, and this is based on the production timing as well.

• (2140)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, I would like to know why, in the bidding process for the F-35 aircraft, the government has abandoned its industrial and technological benefits policy.

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I am sorry. I had a problem with interpretation, just the last sentence.

[Translation]

The Chair: I invite the hon. member to put her question again.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, I would like to know why, in the bidding process for the F-35 aircraft, the government has abandoned its industrial and technological benefits policy.

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, if I understand the question, for the F-35s, we weighted the highest economic benefits to that project, and that was part of the selection of the final bidder.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, even with the F-35 program, there are no guaranteed benefits for Canada's aerospace industry.

The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers has confirmed that we could lose the contracts our companies currently have. Canada could spend tens of billions of dollars that will go directly into Americans' pockets. Is that not a shame?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, as I have said, the weighting in this procurement project has given the most significant weighting to economic benefits in our history, and it was a 20% weighting. That was considered in the successful selection of the final bidder.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, of that 20%, how much of the benefits will go to Quebec, which is the backbone of the aerospace industry?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the member's advocacy but that has not been determined yet.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, this is not about advocacy. It is about saving very important, highly specialized, good-paying jobs not only for individuals, but also for the GDP as a whole, in both Quebec and Canada.

It is important to protect these specialized jobs during crises and shortages. Quebec's aerospace industry is equivalent to Ontario's auto industry. Our GDP needs to be protected just as much.

That said, according to the Defence Development Sharing Agreement between Canada and the United States of America, Canada is the United States' only industrial defence partner. It is therefore possible to require that F-35 maintenance be done here, in Canada. Will the minister demand that this maintenance be done here?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, the negotiation process is ongoing with respect to the F-35s. We expect that a contract will be signed by the end of the year in this finalization stage. We are hopeful for that. Terms will be worked out in that contract.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, will the terms of the contract ensure that the Defence Development Sharing Agreement is respected?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, the terms of the contract will be respected. This is a very significant investment we are making, at \$19 billion. We want to make sure that we get it right. It is important to have the details right in this contract. We are going to make every effort to ensure those details are there and respected.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, I hope that the terms of the contract will be respected, but will this contract respect the Defence Development Sharing Agreement?

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I believe the member is referring to the economic benefits, and as I have said, this is something we have prioritized with respect to this procurement. It is a \$19-billion procurement. It is an important procurement, and we of course want to ensure that we are going to receive the economic benefits.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, the agreement I mentioned has been around since the 1950s and, although it has been amended, is still in force. I sincerely hope the contracts will include and respect it.

That said, the government estimates that the F-35s will cost \$19 billion, as the minister just said. I would like to know where that estimate comes from and if it includes a cost overrun.

- (2145)

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, the cost comes from the Department of Defence.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, are those costs comparable to what other countries ordering F-35s are paying or will be paying?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, this is a rigorous procurement process. It is why we undertook the process. It was competitive. We wanted to ensure we got the best plane for the best price with the greatest economic benefits for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, is the cost comparable to what other countries are paying or will be paying for the same plane?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, we are still in negotiations so a final price has not been determined, but that will be determined in the negotiation process. I trust the hon. member understands that we cannot release that information now because negotiations have not concluded. This is the finalization phase.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, even though negotiations have not concluded, the government has this \$19-billion estimate.

Does that estimate match what the other country is paying for the same plane?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, again, that was the whole reason we had this competitive process. We wanted to ensure we were getting the best price. There were three bidders that came forward. The process was valuable in terms of the competitiveness.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, will the contract specify that pilots must be trained here in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, we always look for the procurement contract that has the best value with the best economic benefits for Canadians as we take a look at the various contracts that are submitted.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, the best way to get good economic benefits is to ensure that the training and aircraft maintenance are done here.

Will that be the case?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, we are in the midst of the procurement, and we are going to do our best to ensure that we are getting the best value for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, 81% of senior public servants are anglophones, but new public servants are 70% anglophone and 30% francophone.

Would it not be logical for the proportion for entry-level public servants to be the same for senior officials?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, the question was inaudible for the interpreters, so I will have to ask the member to repeat the question.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, 81% of senior public servants are anglophones, but new public servants are 70% anglophone and 30% francophone.

Would it not be logical for that proportion to be the same for senior officials, in other words 70% anglophone and 30% francophone?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, of course I support both official languages in the public service, but this is a Treasury Board issue, not a PSPC issue.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, a number of public servants said that everything happens in English and that francophones are discriminated against when they speak French. Their ideas are ignored, and their ability to move up is limited.

Why is it that an idea suggested in French is ignored or dismissed, but the same idea suggested in English is applauded and praised?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the member's point that is being made here. We are happy to work with the Treasury Board, but this is not an area that my department is the lead on.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, the National Capital Commission is refusing to pay property taxes it owes to the Municipality of Chelsea.

How many other tax disputes has this government filed, whether for the National Capital Commission or any other entity or real property belonging to the government?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, we understand the issue with PILT and Chelsea. This was an issue for which the NCC offered full and fair compensation. It was unfortunate that this offer was not accepted, and now the matter has been referred to legal proceedings.

• (2150)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, when I have property taxes to pay, it is quite difficult to negotiate with the municipality.

How many other property tax disputes have there been with respect to federal buildings and land across Canada?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, our government is committed to ensuring municipalities pay their fair payments in lieu of taxes. We are working with the Ontario government because it set new legislation that impacted the PILT Act. We are working with it now.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, what is the total amount that the federal government wants to dispute with municipalities in Quebec and in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I have to get back to the member with respect to the specific cases. I do not have the exact number of specific cases available to me at this moment.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, a simple analysis will show that Shared Services Canada purchased more than \$900 million in Cisco products, either directly through Cisco or from its resellers.

How many open and generic tenders for network devices, including LAN switches, routers or Wi-Fi devices, have been won by Cisco resellers in Canada since Shared Services Canada was established?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, with respect to the number the member has referenced, we do not have that number. I would ask the member to provide us with information as to where she received that number, and we will follow up with her with respect to her question.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, I am talking about figures from 2011, not just from this year.

We often hear that the government's computer network is outdated. How can this be the case when we are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in network contracts?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, we have a strong network. It is the applications we are working on, and we are going to continue to make those investments.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, has the government hired professional vulnerability testers, commonly known as hackers, to ensure the security of government data and people's personal data?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, this is actually under the direction of the Communications Services Establishment.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to address committee on an extremely important and long-standing issue.

Our government is committed to eradicating forced labour from our supply chains. As we all know, these horrendous practices are as prevalent today as they have ever been. We have all heard the numbers.

The International Labour Organization estimates that some 25 million people are subject to forced labour around the world every day. That is every single day that the most vulnerable citizens of the world, young and old, are subject to what amounts to modern-day slavery, and we have all heard the reasons.

Forced labour spreads in countries where institutions are corrupt, where governments do not provide oversight, where workers lack the protection of labour laws, and where journalists are persecuted for reporting on it. We should be nothing less than completely outraged by this, and I know that we all agree that there is no place in the world for these human rights abuses.

However, the fact is that these practices are inextricably linked to global supply chains. We cannot participate in these supply chains without doing our part to ensure their integrity. We have a duty to act with a whole-of-government approach and in collaboration with our international partners to truly make an impact.

Business of Supply

Of course, the pandemic has made us all too aware of hyper-competitive markets, and a stretched global supply chain can foster forced labour. At the beginning of the pandemic, we knew that we had to act quickly in a highly competitive global market to literally save lives, and we did just that, but we must acknowledge that a strained global supply chain increases the risk of goods having been produced using forced labour. We all know that this is completely unacceptable, and there is no doubt that the pandemic has had a devastating, disproportionate impact on the world's most vulnerable citizens. That very much includes those who are already victims of forced labour.

If we come up with any solutions, Canada must be part of a concerted global effort, and that is why this government is strongly committed to co-operation at the international level as a means of eliminating forced labour from our supply chains. I will give a few examples of how Canada continues to work diligently with our international partners.

We have been working with the United States and Mexico to prohibit the import of goods produced with forced labour. Canada is working with the European Union as well, to combat the forced labour of workers at sea. We have been working with our allies in multilateral institutions to use all means available to protect individuals from forced labour and remove it from supply chains. We are also sharing information and best practices with other countries that are just as committed to this fight against forced labour. The government is taking a whole-of-government approach through the national strategy to combat human trafficking to eliminate this scourge.

Additionally, the customs tariff has banned the import of goods that are mined, manufactured or produced by forced labour into Canada since 2020. To enforce that tariff, the Canada Border Service Agency is in charge of intercepting goods suspected of being produced using forced labour. The agency, Employment and Social Development Canada and other departments are working collaboratively to advance the effective operationalization of the ban. Of course, Public Services and Procurement Canada has an important role to play at the forefront of this, as the minister has outlined in her opening remarks today.

We know that all of these activities may prevent the products of forced labour from coming into our country, but they cannot stop forced labour from happening in the first place. The workers have already been exploited; the bottom lines of those businesses are not permanently affected, and the cycle of abuse continues. We need to do more, and we know that our actions must be concrete. That is why the government is taking more substantive measures to ensure that we are not doing business with suppliers or subcontractors that use forced labour. To that end, Public Services and Procurement Canada has taken the lead in maintaining the highest ethical standards for government procurement.

As part of the national strategy to combat human trafficking, the department updated the code of conduct for procurement to clearly outline Canada's expectations for suppliers when it comes to human rights and labour rights. The department is also working with its network of suppliers to ensure that they comply with international labour and human rights laws. It is doing so by engaging with suppliers of higher-risk goods and encouraging them to take action

against companies in their supply chains that break these international laws. As Canada's central purchaser, the department has made information available to government suppliers about the 2020 amendments to the customs tariffs that ban the import of goods that are mined, manufactured or produced by forced labour.

• (2155)

In addition, as of November of last year, all goods-related contracts awarded by Public Services and Procurement Canada now contain anti-forced labour clauses. That means that the department can terminate contracts where there is credible information that goods have been produced in whole or in part by forced labour or human trafficking.

I will note that, in some cases, companies may not know that there may be forced labour in their supply chains, so before terminating a contract, procurement officers will try to work with a company to correct the situation. This is intended to protect the individuals subject to forced labour, who may become even more vulnerable from these actions.

These are concrete actions that will help in the fight against forced labour around the world, but the issue is a complex one, and the injustices and horrors of forced labour are not always immediately seen, often being well hidden by design and actively overlooked. The fact is it is still extremely difficult to prove that forced labour or child labour were used in the production of products, particularly because they tend to occur in parts of the supply chains that are not always open to scrutiny. That is why the government is implementing a number of additional measures to improve the integrity of our procurement system.

We want to shine the light on forced labour and its many victims so that it cannot be ignored. As part of this sustained effort, we have conducted a risk assessment of forced labour in goods procured by the government. This risk assessment is an important step to help determine where supply chains may be vulnerable to forced labour, and the results are providing us with the evidence we need to adjust our approach to tackle the problem into the future. This includes the work to explore and map human rights due diligence obligations and compliance monitoring used internationally. This will inform us as we develop policies in the future to safeguard federal procurement supply chains.

Business of Supply

We are taking action, but we know there is so much more to do. The mandate letters to the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement demonstrate that combatting forced labour is a major priority for our government. I am certain that my colleagues agree that we cannot stand on the sidelines, nor can we tolerate forced labour in any form, anywhere in the world. We must act, and I know that Canadians expect no less from us.

Our government is wholeheartedly committed to upholding human rights and international labour standards. We will continue to make sure that goods produced by forced labour do not enter Canada, bring integrity to our supply chains, and maintain the highest ethical standards for government procurement. For all of the victims and survivors of forced labour around the world, Canada is working to be a leader in efforts to eradicate labour exploitation. I can assure the committee that our government will continue to work with partners across the globe to rid our supply chains of the tragedy and anguish caused by forced labour.

If it is permissible, I will now move into asking questions of the minister.

Child labour, forced labour, and even slavery, as hard as it is to believe, are scourges that still exist in today's world. While Canada and the Canadian government do not condone or support the use of these in any way, products made under these conditions are sold on the international market, and it is not always clear or easy to distinguish which ones are made using ethical procurement and which ones are not. While the government does look to Canadian suppliers and manufacturers first when procuring necessary products on behalf of the Canadian people, there are some products that are available only from overseas suppliers. Canada believes in open markets and trades with countries across the globe for an assortment of goods. Although not all labour standards are equal to those in Canada, and not all workers' rights are the same as those in Canada, that will not stop the Canadian government from doing its utmost to avoid supporting in any way the overseas suppliers and manufacturers that exploit workers and children in order to produce their products.

I would like to emphasize again that this government realizes that in order to have ethical procurement, it needs to be proactive in determining whether the suppliers it enters into contracts with are abiding by the codes of conduct set out not only by this government, but by a number of international human rights and labour organizations. Price and quality control cannot and will not be the only determinant by which this government does business with overseas suppliers. We respect human rights and labour rights at home and will do our best to support them abroad also in our procurement practices.

Can the minister please detail the measures that this government has taken with regard to the issues of labour exploitation and forced labour when dealing with procurement of goods, especially from overseas suppliers and manufacturers?

• (2200)

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Chair, as I have indicated previously this evening, this is an area that is very important to me.

As the government's procurement authority, PSPC is committed to ensuring that human rights and labour standards are protected and that ethical practices are maintained by suppliers and manufacturers from which we procure vital goods, such as personal protective equipment. Notably, PSPC requires bidders responding to tenders for PPE to certify that they and their first-tier subcontractors comply with a set of fundamental human and labour rights requirements and are free from forced labour discrimination and abuse, with access to fair wages and safe working conditions. This requirement builds on PSPC's policy on the ethical procurement of apparel, which since 2018 requires apparel suppliers to certify that they and their direct Canadian and foreign suppliers comply with a set of fundamental human and labour rights.

In July 2020, clauses on ethical procurement and origin of work were added into the new PPE contracts and in all newly issued requests for proposals for personal protective equipment. The origin of work clause requires bidders to provide the name, address and country of the manufacturers of the item, including subcontractors. The ethical procurement clause requires bidders to certify that they and their first-tier subcontractors comply with the same human rights and labour standards as set out in the policy on ethical procurement of apparel.

PSPC has made changes to strengthen its contractual framework and has also updated the code of conduct to include new expectations for suppliers and their subcontractors on human and labour rights. It also has implemented new anti-forced labour contract clauses to ensure that we can terminate contracts in the event of violations. These clauses protect the department from financial liability if imported goods are not released at the border because their importation is prohibited under the forced labour prohibition in the Customs Tariff Act.

In addition, PSPC works closely with other government departments, such as Employment and Social Development Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency. At CBSA's request, ESDC labour provides support by conducting research and analysis on the risk of forced labour for specific complaints or allegations received pertaining to the forced labour import prohibition administered by the CBSA.

Business of Supply

Given the complexity and scope of the problem, addressing forced labour will take sustained effort over time. As the member mentioned, four ministers have in their mandate letters the commitment to eradicate forced labour through legislation.

We look forward to doing more in this very important area.

• (2205)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, a number of questions have been raised regarding Nucotech and whether contracts were awarded to the company. There may be questions regarding contracts awarded through Public Services and Procurement Canada as a department and as a common service provider. Can the minister clarify if contracts were awarded to this company?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, with regard to Nucotech, I can confirm that Public Services and Procurement Canada as a department does not have any contracts with Nucotech. That was the point that I was making earlier, that we currently do not have any contracts.

As a common service provider in the past, PSPC undertook competitive procurements on behalf of the Canada Border Services Agency, and four contracts were awarded to Nucotech, the most recent being in 2019. However, since that time there have been no new contracts awarded to the company, so there have been no contracts from 2019 to the current time.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am going to share my time with the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

I thank the minister for her work tonight. It is quite a feat to put in all the time and to answer all the questions, and I thank her for that.

Andrew Kendrick, a naval architect with 40 years' experience, appeared before committee. His statement was that it costs three to five times the world price and two to four times longer to deliver ships in Canada versus the rest of the world. Does the minister have any comment on that? Has she investigated and verified this to be true, or does she feel we are in line with world price and world delivery?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Chair, there is no question that COVID has presented challenges, and the shipyards are no exception to that. These challenges have involved problems with getting labour, as well as supply chain issues, and there is no question that that has resulted in some delays and some costs. I would confirm that.

I think the testimony the member is referring to was not testimony that was given by everyone, although I can appreciate that there may have been a person who gave that specific testimony.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Chair, he was the project manager from 2007 to 2010 for AOPS, so I think he is very well informed. The surface combatant went from \$14 billion to \$26 billion to \$56 billion. The Parliamentary Budget Officer says it could be \$77 billion.

At what point does the minister say we have got to slow down here and we need to go line by line to understand how this has quadrupled or gone up even more?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, just to be clear, one price is with taxes and the other is with the exclusion of taxes. On projects of this magnitude, we have to understand and appreciate that.

With respect to the procurement of projects, I have said with the national shipbuilding strategy how committed I am to this strategy. The economic benefit that this has provided for Canadians and the 18,000 jobs that it is creating or maintaining annually are extremely important. We are going to continue to support this strategy.

• (2210)

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Chair, I have no question at all about the economic benefits. I have no question about how hard the workers work in all the shipyards. The same work is getting done around the world using the same steel and the same technology, yet Canada still pays four to five times the amount.

Will the minister look into this and find out how this can be?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, what I would say with respect to that question is that shipyards around the world are experiencing the impacts of COVID-19 and, as I have said, there are labour shortages and supply chain issues. There are a number of issues that have added to the complexity here.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Chair, that is fine. She also mentioned tax. There is not \$40 billion worth of tax on a \$14-billion project, unless taxes are really being hiked in the future. Another one is the off-shore oceanic vessel. The original price tag was \$100 million, and now it is \$1 billion. How do we have a ten bagger on a project? That seems like mismanagement.

The other question is this: Will she open the books to the Parliamentary Budget Officer so he can go through them? He had to use U.S. numbers to come to his conclusion of \$77 billion.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, we are transparent on contracts. We are open and transparent on those contracts, and those numbers are available.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Chair, if one comes to committee, they will find out the Parliamentary Budget Officer did not have that much help and he did not really feel like it was transparent. He said that in his statements.

One other question I have is about ArriveCAN. How much did ArriveCAN cost the taxpayers of Canada, from the concept to the product being used today? How much did ArriveCAN cost?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, that is with CBSA, not procurement.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Chair, is the procurement minister saying that her department had nothing to do with procuring the ArriveCAN app?

Business of Supply

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, not with respect to the app. There may be services that have been related, but not with respect to the actual app.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Chair, we definitely need some further investigation on it. On COVID vaccines, Moderna was originally pegged at 35 million doses per year. It is now 25 million doses for 2022. It went from 35 million to 25 million.

Why was there a decrease of 10 million doses?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, what I would say to that is that in 2021 there were 35 million doses and in 2022 there were 20 million doses.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Chair, it is on her website. That is where I got it from. There is a footnote there. Pfizer is also projected to be 65 million doses a year. Therefore, 25 million doses plus 65 million doses is 90 million doses.

How much will those 90 million doses cost the Canadian taxpayer this year?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I have a couple of things I will say to that. The first is with respect to doses. We do have arrangements with the suppliers that if we need to push doses further back, we are able to do that.

The second thing, with respect to the cost, is to say the health and safety of Canadians was our top priority. We procured over 100 million doses, and every Canadian has the eligibility to have a full complement because of the strong procurement.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Chair, we were talking about transparency tonight. I asked a simple question.

How much does it cost to procure 90 million doses for 2022? It should be pretty easy to answer.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, we cannot disclose the details of the contract, but we can say that the overall cost is \$9 billion.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Chair, on April 29, the minister appeared before committee and did a fine job, I will admit. I asked her a question about the Prime Minister's \$750,000 kitchen renovation at Harrington Lake and she said she would get back to me. I wonder if she has had time to look it up and figure out what comes with the \$750,000 kitchen renovation.

• (2215)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, what I would say is I am happy to have my team get back to the hon. member with respect to the details. In the official residence portfolio, which is the six official residences and 49 ancillary buildings, 62% are in poor or critical condition. This is an area on which we have to act, but of course it is the NCC that oversees the operation and maintenance of those buildings.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Chair, with regard to Ukraine, I wonder if the minister can tell us how much of what they have procured, everything that has been accumulated and sent overseas, has actually reached Ukrainian land. Is it stuck in Poland? Is it in Crete? What is the percentage? How much?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, that is a question for DND.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Chair, tonight I am very proud to be part of this extraordinarily fast-paced exercise, which is also very informative for all Canadians. It is wonderful. Democracy is winning tonight.

I am speaking to my colleagues from my constituency office, with good reason. I have the great privilege of representing the community of Wendake, which is part of my riding. That is why my colleagues will see the Canadian flag, the provincial flag and the flag of Wendake behind me. I am very proud to represent the Wendake First Nation and to defend their interests and concerns as best I can. However, there is one concern in particular that I just could not wrap my head around when someone from Wendake brought the situation to my attention.

Wendake is located in the middle of my riding and is therefore surrounded by several of Quebec City's suburban neighbourhoods. About 50,000 people live within a three-kilometre radius of Wendake. In short, Wendake is in an urban environment. Oddly enough, according to the postal code established by Canada Post, Wendake is not in an urban area, but rather in a remote region that is isolated and far from any major cities. That is all false, but unfortunately what I am saying is true. The postal code corresponds to a remote region, whereas Wendake is really embedded in a city. This situation has gone on for too long. We have already discussed this issue in the House and in committee. I will have the opportunity to come back to it.

I would like the minister responsible for Canada Post to tell us what she thinks of this situation, which is totally unfair and unacceptable to the Wendake First Nation.

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for the question.

[*English*]

First, I want to take the opportunity to thank Canada Post. During the pandemic, postal employees have worked tirelessly. I know that Canada Post wanted to keep its workers safe, but postal workers, in turn, wanted to keep Canadians safe, so they exercised measures and delivered life-saving medicines and important mail. I want to thank all postal workers for their excellent service.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the member's question. In order to provide timely and consistent service to all Canadians, the cost of mailing items varies depending on the size of the parcel, the distance between origin and destination and the cost of transportation, processing and delivery. Of course, all these decisions are made by Canada Post.

Business of Supply

With respect to the issue he is raising, at the root of this issue is that urban cities continue to grow and include rural communities, and this creates a challenge. We are working with Canada Post on the designation of rural versus urban communities. Canada Post works hard to ensure that its prices remain competitive while providing a wide range of services. This has to do with the designation of rural. Time has passed, and communities that previously may have looked rural look different now, so we are working with Canada Post on this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the minister for her answer. I can see that she has worked on this file over the past few days, which is a good thing. That said, we are not seeing results.

Right now, it costs 30% more to send something from Wendake than to send it from my home in Loretteville, even though I live less than a kilometre from Wendake. That is totally unfair, unacceptable and wrong, especially for a government that prides itself and boasts about its lofty principles with respect to the first nations.

Three weeks ago, on April 29, during a meeting of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, when she was answering a question from my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, the minister said that they were aware of the situation and were looking into it.

They need to do more than just look into it. This situation needs to be fixed. When does the minister plan to fix this situation, which is completely unfair to the Wendat people?

• (2220)

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, what I would say in response to this, just to give a little more background and information as to where we are, is this is about the location. There are communities across the country that are in similar situations. Since the implementation of the rural moratorium in 1994, Canada's rate of urbanization has progressed every year. Many of the locations that were deemed to be rural at the time of the moratorium have since become urbanized. That is what is at the root of this issue.

In order for Wendake to be classified as an urban community, the rural moratorium would need to be amended to represent current demographics. I am in discussions, as I have said, with Canada Post on this. It is not an easy fix. It is more complicated than one might first think. It has to deal with the change in the nature of the rural communities and how they are urbanized.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, soon I will have been living in Loretteville for 58 years. I am turning 58 soon. I know the area like the back of my hand. I have had close, personal friends there from childhood, and I can say one thing: Wendake did not become urban overnight. Wendake has always been embedded in an urban area.

In 2022, Canada Post is unable to recognize that Wendake is in an urban area. This penalizes the Wendat by forcing them to pay a 30% surcharge to ship goods through Canada Post. This also has an

impact on the price of insurance, because insurance is based on postal codes. The consequences are significant.

It is not true that Wendake has suddenly become urban. Wendake has always been surrounded by Quebec City neighbourhoods.

We are calling on the minister to act immediately. With the stroke of a pen, this situation could be resolved.

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I am already acting. I have taken this under advisement. The team has reached out to Canada Post to have a discussion about this very issue.

I respect what the member is saying, but there are other issues related to this. It is not an indigenous issue: it is a rural area that becomes urbanized. I appreciate his comments that it never was rural, but it was designated rural by Canada Post. We are looking into this. We will continue to work with the member. I appreciate his concern and his bringing this to my attention.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, I would be pleased to welcome the minister to Wendake once the situation is resolved.

[*English*]

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kitchener Centre.

It is a pleasure to stand before this committee to speak about the vast and integral work that Shared Services Canada, or SSC, does on behalf of Canadians and how it is keeping the private information of Canadians safe and secure in an increasingly hostile digital world.

SSC plays a vital role in supporting government operations. As a common service provider, SSC works to support the whole of the federal government as it delivers digital programs and services that meet the needs of Canadians. SSC continues to invest in technology and expertise that support an enterprise approach to its IT services and support by enabling federal government departments and agencies to shift toward the use of common IT systems.

This approach is not only more efficient than individual departments working independently of one another when it comes to their IT, but also safer. An enterprise approach helps the government reduce duplicated costs, achieve faster turnarounds and enhance cross-departmental collaboration when addressing problems. It provides more secure and reliable services and reduces risk. Ultimately, it helps us serve Canadians better.

SSC is working on several fronts to make smart, future-looking investments in the interest of better serving Canadians. This modern, adaptable digital approach is working to fully support the needs of Canadians. Through its data centres, networks and cloud service providers, SSC operates an infrastructure that powers the thousands of applications required for government operations that enable the delivery of essential digital services to Canadians.

Business of Supply

Over the course of the worldwide COVID pandemic, the Government of Canada has continued to serve Canadians. Much of that work was a result of SSC being able to keep the lights on during those dark and uncertain days. Throughout the pandemic, SSC adapted to our collective new realities by launching new online collaboration tools for thousands of public servants working from home.

At the same time, SSC bolstered online portals vital to communicating with Canadians about programs and supports available to them and their families. This was no small achievement. To facilitate virtual work, SSC quickly performed major upgrades to the enterprise network, government-wide Internet and network security, the result being a modern, mobile workforce at the service of Canadians wherever they may be.

Recognizing the increased global attention that hybrid working models are now receiving, SSC is continuing to work to implement the technology and network upgrades necessary to enable the effective communication and collaborative tools for employees who will return to their workplace. This kind of digital government needs a high-performing and resilient enterprise network. Shared Services Canada is responsible for providing network infrastructure and services to almost half a million users across government departments and agencies to effectively deliver services to Canadians.

In an increasingly uncertain and hostile digital world, cybersecurity has become more important than ever, providing Canadians access to more and more programs and services online while simultaneously meeting the security and privacy expectations of the public.

• (2225)

The national cybersecurity strategy announced in 2018 is working to keep Canadians safe from evolving cybersecurity threats that target Canadians, Canadian businesses and our critical infrastructure. I am pleased to note that budget 2022 proposes to provide \$875.2 million over five years and \$238.2 million thereafter for those necessary measures to nimbly address the rapidly evolving cyber-threat landscape. This includes \$178.7 million over five years allocated to SSC and CSE.

As the Government of Canada becomes increasingly digital with public servants working both from home and at work sites, and with more and more services being delivered online to Canadians, cybersecurity becomes more and more of a concern. With remote working having become integral to our operation, the rising dependence of citizens, businesses, industries and governments on everything digital is only going to continue. We need a system that constantly monitors activity, verifies users and limits access within a system. Cybersecurity is and needs to be a priority of our government. Our public servants need to be provided with modern tools, up-to-date government IT systems and digital services delivered to Canadians that are secure, reliable and easy to use at any time from any device.

Would the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, as the minister responsible for Shared Services Canada, please explain how Shared Services Canada is protecting our digital information?

• (2230)

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the member shared such important information, and I thank him for outlining the commitments that we have made in the budget.

Shared Services Canada is doing fantastic work. Cybersecurity is extremely important. We are making the investments we need to keep the system safe. I want to thank all the workers for their great work, particularly during this very challenging time.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Chair, I would like to start by recognizing that the minister has been answering questions for many hours now. I respect her, and I appreciate her contributions this evening.

I would like to ask about the greening government strategy, which the minister spoke about earlier. A signature commitment of this strategy is net-zero emissions by 2050. Does the minister realize that net-zero emissions by 2050 is not equivalent to our Paris commitment to limit global temperature increase to no more than 1.5°C?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to thank the hon. member for acknowledging my stamina this evening, but I am also surrounded by an amazing team, so I have great gratitude for all those who are here and, as I said previously, spread out all over in order to assist me this evening. For the work of my team, I am just so grateful.

In the answers that I did give previously, I actually stated that, with the initiatives we are undertaking, we would be achieving reductions of 82% in greenhouse gas emissions by 2025, and we are in a very good position to achieve net zero by 2030 for our building portfolio.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Chair, I would encourage the minister to look at the science behind the climate crisis and ensure that our government's targets align with that science. This strategy was initiated in 2017 to help the federal government reduce its environmental impact and transition to low-carbon climate-resilient operations. One year later, though, in 2018, the federal government then purchased the Trans Mountain pipeline for \$4.5 billion. Does the government include the Trans Mountain pipeline it purchased in this strategy?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, with respect to PSPC, I can talk about initiatives that we are undertaking. In addition to the figures I gave on what we have done in our strategies with reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, we are also undertaking other efforts, which include procurement practices that prioritize reusable and recyclable products and our goal of net-zero plastic waste. We are going to continue also to work with our colleagues to introduce a new buy clean strategy and support and prioritize made-in-Canada, low-carbon products.

Business of Supply

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Chair, I appreciate that. The fact is, though, that we bought a pipeline. Why is TMX not part of our procurement approach?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I am here this evening to talk about the procurement file and on the procurement file, I say there are a number of initiatives. I have gone over those initiatives. We absolutely appreciate the crisis that we are in, and we have aggressive measures that we are taking in order to meet our commitments. We are going to continue on that path.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Chair, I appreciate those commitments. The UN Secretary-General has made clear that new fossil fuel infrastructure at this point in the climate emergency is moral and economic madness, yet the Government of Canada now estimates that the Trans Mountain pipeline and the expansion will cost \$21.4 billion, including the completion of the expansion of the pipeline.

Meanwhile, the minister's mandate letter includes "a new Buy Clean Strategy to support and prioritize the use of made-in-Canada low-carbon products in Canadian infrastructure projects."

How does the \$21.4 billion spent buying and expanding this pipeline fit into this "buy clean" strategy?

• (2235)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, again, I have spoken about that this evening and have gone over a number of times the efforts we are making in procurement with respect to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and ensuring that we are minimizing plastic and waste.

One of the other things I would like to add is electric vehicles. We know there is the ability for us to act there too, and we are. In the past three years, we have procured 1,187 zero-emission and hybrid vehicles, another area where we can show leadership and do our part with respect to meeting targets.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Chair, does the minister see any contradiction between the buy clean strategy and the government's relentless commitment to its purchase and expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I am very happy that we have a buy clean strategy. In addition to that, we have a national clean electricity initiative. We have an energy services acquisition program. We have many initiatives that we are undertaking as a government, because it is important for us to meet our targets and we want to show leadership in this regard.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Chair, in budget 2022, the federal government announced that Public Services and Procurement Canada "will develop new tools, guidelines, and targets to support the adoption of green procurement across the federal government". How does the recently announced \$10-million loan guarantee for the Trans Mountain pipeline fit into this new commitment?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, we are focusing on doing what we can in procurement in order to contribute to meeting the targets that are there. This is an all-of-government approach. PSPC has a role to play. I have gone over the numbers with respect to initiatives that we are taking in order to meet our targets, and this work is significant.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Chair, I do appreciate the role that PSPC has to play and the work that the minister is doing in it.

My final question is this: How are we to trust any of these strategies and commitments, though, in light of the reality of the same commitments to expanding and building the Trans Mountain pipeline?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I would put forward the stat that we have accomplished to date as evidence of the initiatives that we are taking and the progress we are making, which is a 57.6% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from our buildings as compared to the baseline laid out in 2005-06. We are going to continue to work on these and other important initiatives in PSPC in order to reach the targets.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for her genuine contribution to this conversation. I will cede the rest of my time to the member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Qujannamiik, Iksivautaq, Iksivautaq* meaning "chair".

I will be splitting my time with the member for Courtenay—Alberni. My first set of questions will be regarding Canada Post.

Does the minister know how many post offices are operated in Nunavut?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I do not know the exact number, but I am happy to provide that number to the member.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Mr. Chair, does the minister know what percentage of post offices in Canada are in indigenous communities?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I am really pleased about the pilot we are running in an indigenous community in Canada. This is a hub. It is going to add extra resources and innovative supports. I am looking forward to the results of that pilot.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Mr. Chair, does the minister know how many banks are operated in Nunavut?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, what I would say in response to that question is that the pilot we are running actually includes a postal banking service because we know this has been raised. We look forward to the results of what this pilot reveals.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Mr. Chair, I do look forward to that information.

I will help the minister with some of these questions. Nunavut has 25 post offices in all 25 communities. It has eight banks. I am quite sure that the realities are similar in indigenous communities.

Business of Supply

I am going to ask the minister a yes-or-no question. Does the minister agree that access to affordable, quality banking is a challenge for Nunavut and for indigenous communities?

• (2240)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I am not going to purport to know the experience of indigenous people in those communities. I am happy to work with the member to have discussions so that we can determine pathways forward that are going to respond to those needs and issues.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Mr. Chair, does the minister agree that learning this information and addressing the systemic inequity can address reconciliation with indigenous peoples?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I am always willing to learn, and I think learning is a very important part of our journey on reconciliation.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Mr. Chair, is the minister aware that Australia has operated a postal operating system that offers over 3,500 post offices with access to banking services?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I know that banking services have been discussed repeatedly and that there are models out there. Again, this is why the pilot is important. We are running pilots like this in order to gather information to determine pathways forward with respect to ensuring that Canadians are receiving the supports and services they need from Canada Post.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Mr. Chair, does the minister agree that it is within her mandate to work with Canada Post to develop a postal banking system?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I believe it is in my mandate to work with Canada Post to deliver services that Canadians need and to continue to ensure that those services are delivered in a way that allows Canada Post to be self-sustaining.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Mr. Chair, does the minister agree that Canada needs to do more to reconcile with indigenous people in Canada?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, absolutely, 100%.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Mr. Chair, can the government instruct banks like First Nations Bank, TD Bank and Scotiabank to open branches in places like my riding?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I am happy to have conversations with the member with respect to the issues she is raising in the area of banking.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Mr. Chair, does the minister think the government can instruct the banks I mentioned earlier to operate in indigenous communities and rural communities?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, with respect to Canada Post, we are carrying on conversations and discussions. I have met with Canada Post. I have met with the workers union, CUPW, and we will continue to have conversations in order to assist Canada Post to get to a place where it is self-sustaining.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Mr. Chair, will the minister work with me to at least develop a pilot project in Nunavut to check the viability of developing a postal banking system for the rest of Canada?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I would be honoured, and I welcome working with the member and listening to the concerns and issues she has. I look forward to that engagement.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Mr. Chair, does the minister recall this quote from her mandate letter?

Ensure that Canada Post provides a high quality of service that Canadians expect at a reasonable price and better reaches Canadians in rural and remote areas. You will be supported in this work by the Minister of Rural Economic Development.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, yes. In fact, I have had conversations with the Minister of Rural Economic Development. I recognize that that is in my mandate letter. It is one of the reasons why we have conducted surveys in order to get information from the public to determine what services are important to them and assist Canada Post to deliver those services.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Mr. Chair, I will quote another sentence in the mandate letter:

You will also leverage the government's purchasing power to increase access to economic opportunity for a greater diversity of Canadians.

Does the minister recall that as well?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, yes, I do. I was very pleased to see that in my mandate letter.

• (2245)

Ms. Lori Idlout: Mr. Chair, will the minister work with me on the viability of a postal banking system in Nunavut?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I will work with the member, take the input that she has, learn from her experiences and work collaboratively as we move forward with Canada Post.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Mr. Chair, I will now turn to another aspect.

Last year, polling conducted by Canada around postal services raised concerns about cuts to services and jobs. What are the government's plans for Canada Post to ensure that transparency is happening?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, we absolutely want to work with Canada Post. We actually did that survey in order to hear from Canadians. The member read from my mandate letter. It talks about the services that are important to Canadians. We need to know what those services are. That was the reason for the survey. We want to get that information so that as we move forward, Canada Post is able to deliver services that Canadians value and need.

Business of Supply

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Chair, if the provinces and the territories came to the government and asked to procure safer pharmaceutical alternatives to the toxic drugs that are killing Canadians, would it act with the same urgency that it did to procure COVID-19 vaccines and supplies?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Chair, if we go back to March 2020, when COVID descended upon us, we were in a very different situation. We did not have one vaccine that was approved. The provinces and territories needed the assistance, which is why the federal government got into that procurement business. This is generally not what the federal government would do. Health care is provided by provinces and territories.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, the government keeps touting a safer supply as how it is going to respond to this crisis. Has the government looked into whether bulk buying harm reduction supplies or a safer supply could help reduce costs for supervised consumption sites, which often face funding challenges?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, the government has made significant investments in terms of the crisis that we have at hand with opioids, and the vaccines that we have procured were procured because we knew that we needed those vaccines across the country.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, people are dying in the minister's own community. Parents are losing their children. The drug supply in this country has never been more toxic. We need a paradigm shift in our drug policy and we need a crisis-level response. We can save lives by procuring a safer supply.

Will the minister raise this issue at her cabinet table and urge the government to act, and act now?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, as I have said, I am happy to work with the member. I appreciate his advocacy. Our government has made significant investments. The Prime Minister has appointed the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. She is working very hard on this.

We have made investments, as I said, of \$800 million to support community-led harm reduction, treatment and prevention projects since 2015.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, the government created an expert task force on substance use. It included police chiefs, top medical health professionals, people who work on the front lines, people who use drugs, family members who have lost loved ones and experts on substance use. The minister has not even read the executive summary of its report, which she admitted earlier.

My question is this. Will the minister do the right thing and at least read the report? It does include a safer supply. Will she support my bill, and at least getting it to committee, to listen to the experts and to see if there is a way that her cabinet post and her department can contribute to saving lives?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the impact that this is having. I am, as a part of this government, always willing to work to address this crisis. However, we have made investments and taken measures, and these investments are making a significant difference. There is more that is going to be done, and I know that the minister responsible is taking strong action. I look forward to

the future steps we are going to take, but significant investments have been made, with \$800 million since 2015 in this regard.

• (2250)

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, does the minister think that her government is doing a good job in responding to the toxic drug supply crisis?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I think that our government is seized with this, and we are going to continue to implement further measures in addition to the \$800 million that we have committed. I know that the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions is working very hard on this matter.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, Canada's target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 requires substantial carbon reductions across all economic sectors. Changing how we look at public infrastructure can unlock previously overlooked pollution-reduction opportunities while supporting Canadian manufacturers and creating the conditions for them to thrive in the low-carbon global marketplace.

This government committed to buy clean in the last election, and creating a buy clean strategy was identified as a priority in the mandate letters of three ministers. However, creating a buy clean strategy is not mentioned in the minister's departmental plan for 2022-23. Can she speak to that?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, as I have said, we have taken significant steps in procurement. We know that there is work that we can do, and we are undertaking that work.

The work has led to a 57.6% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, a 19% reduction in the remaining emissions expected by 2025 with our national clean electricity initiative, and an additional decrease of 40% by 2025 by modernizing the heating and cooling systems of buildings in the national capital region through the energy services acquisition program.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, when can we see buy clean policies that build climate considerations into public infrastructure and spending that rewards Canadian climate leaders and supports the transition of Canada's industries? I am not talking about TMX here.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, to develop a buy clean strategy for Canada's infrastructure projects, PSPC is working with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's centre for greening government; National Resources Canada; Infrastructure Canada; Innovation, Science and Economic Development; and the National Research Council.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, I have been fortunate to sit on the OGGO committee, and we have heard that, right now, the federal government does not have a program for airplane recycling or for shipbreaking here in Canada. There are regulations that the EU has when it comes to shipbreaking, for example, and also standards in the Basel Convention.

Would the member work with me on getting the government to commit to the EU ship recycling regulation program on all procurement for all federal military vessels?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I think the member knows that I am a person with a very collaborative spirit. This place functions best when we work collaboratively and work together. I am always open to discuss ideas and so, of course, I will move forward and have conversations with the member about that topic and any other topic related to my file.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the minister. It has been four hours, and I want to commend her for standing here and taking very difficult questions. I think we all look forward to

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working with the minister on the difficult issues facing our country, and I look forward to that collaboration as well.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, I want to express my gratitude to everyone in the House, the workers at the table, the pages and everyone who has spent time here this evening. I appreciate that support and their efforts. I hope that everyone has a really happy and enjoyable long weekend.

The Chair: I, too, want to thank everyone for their participation tonight, including the members, the minister, the minister's staff and, of course, all of our colleagues who participated in this debate this evening.

It being 10:54 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today in Standing Order 81(4), all votes are deemed reported. The committee will now rise, and I will leave the chair.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 10:54 p.m.)

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