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# House of Commons Debates

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Monday, July 20, 2020

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, July 20, 2020

The House met at 12 p.m.

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*Prayer*

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• (1205)

[*English*]

## RECALL OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

**The Speaker:** I wish to inform the House that pursuant to Standing Order 28(3), I sent a notice calling the House to meet this day and I now lay this notice on the table.

[*Translation*]

Furthermore, on Saturday, July 18, I sent every member a message explaining why the House was being recalled. Let me also advise the House that, in accordance with the representation made by the government pursuant to Standing Order 55(1), I have caused to be published a special Order Paper giving notice of government bills and motions. I also wish to lay upon the table a letter from the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons dated July 18.

I would like to say a few words before we begin today's proceedings.

[*English*]

As was the case for the previous recalls of the House, I understand that there will be agreement to see the application of Standing Order 17 suspended for the current sitting to allow members to practise physical distancing. I encourage all members to follow this and the other recommended best practices during today's procedure.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, members desiring to speak and address the Chair may do so from any seat in the House.

[*English*]

Finally, I ask that all members tabling a document or moving a motion sign the document and bring it to the table themselves.

The hon. government House leader.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discus-

sions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the follow motion.

I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House,

(a) a bill in the name of the Minister of Finance, entitled An Act respecting further COVID-19 measures, be deemed to have been introduced and read a first time and ordered for consideration at second reading later this day and on Tuesday, July 21, 2020;

(b) at 3:00 pm on Tuesday, July 21, 2020, or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put without further debate or amendment all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, provided that, if a recorded division is requested, it shall not be deferred;

(c) if the bill is adopted at second reading, it shall be referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, and deemed read a third time and passed;

(d) when the bill has been read a third time and passed, the House shall adjourn until Wednesday, July 22, 2020, pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 26, 2020;

[*English*]

(e) the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security and the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations be added to the list of committees in paragraph (e) of the order made on Tuesday, May 26, 2020; and

(f) the application of Standing Orders 15 and 17 be suspended until Monday, September 21, 2020.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. minister have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[*Translation*]

**The Speaker:** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

*Privilege***PRIVILEGE**

RESPONSE BY THE PRIME MINISTER

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a question of privilege regarding an incident that occurred in committee of the whole on July 8. I know you are aware of this, because I made this case to you a couple of weeks ago and you came back to the House and identified the unique circumstances. I thought that now that the House is sitting, I would expand on the remarks I made that day.

Mr. Speaker, I would first like to present to you my argument that in this special case it is within your authority and duty as Speaker to rule on the matter raised in committee of the whole. As you yourself noted on July 8:

...the situation is somewhat particular in that the question of privilege was raised in the committee of the whole and the procedure for dealing with it is quite different than it is in the House.

What complicates this matter even further is that the work of the committee of the whole today and the work scheduled this summer are strictly governed by an order of the House that limits these proceedings and dictates that the committee must now rise.

The situation is more than particularly complicated. The House order adopted on May 26 would appear to run counter to some of the more important tenets of our parliamentary democracy, such as Parliament's authority to defend members' privileges or take action to keep the executive accountable. Although the Liberals, with the support of the NDP, provided us with these occasions to talk in committee of the whole, they effectively prevented members from taking any action.

Mr. Speaker, that is the point of my submission to you today and why I believe you should intervene on this question of privilege that arose in committee of the whole on July 8.

Page 156 of the third edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* explains the procedure when a member rises on a question of privilege in committee of the whole:

...the Chair will hear the question of privilege. As in a standing, special, or legislative committee, the role of the Chair is to decide whether the matter raised does in fact relate to privilege. If the matter raised by the Member touches on privilege and relates to events in the Committee of the Whole, the Chair will entertain a motion that the events be reported to the House.

The terms of the May 26 order do not provide for a motion to be moved. Therefore, the matter of my question of privilege cannot be reported to the House.

Pages 152 and 153 of the third edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* note:

Speakers have consistently ruled that, except in the most extreme situations, they will hear questions of privilege arising from committee proceedings only upon presentation of a report from the committee which deals directly with the matter and not as a question of privilege raised by an individual Member.

The extreme situation noted in that passage was from 1992, when Speaker Fraser found a prima facie case of privilege with respect to threats made to a witness who had appeared before a subcommittee, without waiting for a report. The ruling, found at page 14631 of the Debates, from December 4, 1992, points out that there are occasions on which it is not appropriate to wait for a report from the committee before dealing with a serious breach of privilege. In that case, Mr. Speaker Fraser was faced with the fact that it

might well be a period of several months before the subcommittee could meet to deal with the matter.

In this case, the problem is more substantive than just a simple matter of delay. It would appear that the committee of the whole established by the government is unable to take any action except to rise, as you explained to us on July 8, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the content of my question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring your attention to a matter that was raised on November 3, 1978, by the member for Northumberland—Durham. The member charged that he had been deliberately misled by a former solicitor general. The member had written a letter in 1973 to the solicitor general, who assured him that as a matter of policy the RCMP did not intercept the private mail of Canadians. On November 1, 1978, during testimony before the McDonald Commission, the former commissioner of the RCMP stated that the RCMP did indeed intercept mail on a very restricted basis. The Speaker ruled on December 6, 1978, and found that this did constitute a prima facie case of privilege.

The issue I raised on July 8 is similar in that a senior officer of the House, the Ethics Commissioner, presented evidence that directly contradicts the evidence the Prime Minister gave the committee in response to my question about the co-operation that his office will or will not be providing to the Ethics Commissioner. The Prime Minister said, in reference to the SNC-Lavalin scandal, that he took unprecedented steps so that the Ethics Commissioner could, “fully investigate the matter at hand.”

On July 8, I referenced three points that the Ethics Commissioner made in the “Trudeau II Report”. They directly contradicted the Prime Minister.

● (1210)

First, the commissioner said:

Because of my inability to access all Cabinet confidences related to the matter I must, however, report that I was unable to fully discharge the investigatory duties conferred upon me by the Act.

Second, he noted:

Because of the decisions to deny our Office further access to Cabinet confidences, witnesses were constrained in their ability to provide all evidence. I was, therefore, prevented from looking over the entire body of evidence to determine its relevance to my examination. Decisions that affect my jurisdiction under the Act, by setting parameters on my ability to receive evidence, should be made transparently and democratically by Parliament, not by the very same public office holders who are subject to the regime I administer.

Third, he said:

During this examination, nine witnesses informed our Office that they had information they believed to be relevant, but that could not be disclosed because, according to them, this information would reveal a confidence of the Queen's Privy Council and would fall outside the scope of Order in Council 2019-0105.

This is very important, because as we are currently witnessing, the Prime Minister is in a very similar situation. He is assuring members of the House and Canadians that he will co-operate fully, as he said he did in the previous investigation, which we now know to be false.

On February 1, 2002, the Speaker Milliken ruled on a matter regarding the former minister of national defence. At the time, the previous member for Portage—Lisgar alleged that the former minister of national defence deliberately misled the House as to when he knew that prisoners taken by Canadian JTF 2 troops in Afghanistan had been handed over to the Americans. In support of that allegation, he cited the minister's responses in question period on two successive days. The Speaker considered the matter and found that there was a prima facie question of privilege. He said, "The authorities are consistent about the need for clarity in our proceedings and about the need to ensure the integrity of the information provided by the government to the House." The authorities to which Speaker Milliken was referring include, but are not limited to, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, which states on page 115, "Misleading a Minister or a Member has also been considered a form of obstruction and thus a prima facie breach of privilege."

The Speaker in 2002 accepted the minister's assertion that he had no intention to mislead the House and made the following statement: "Nevertheless this remains a very difficult situation." The Speaker went on to say:

On the basis of the arguments presented by hon. members and in view of the gravity of the matter, I have concluded that the situation before us where the House is left with two versions of events is one that merits further consideration by an appropriate committee, if only to clear the air. I therefore invite the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar to move his motion.

Of course, the House is presented with two versions of events. We have the Prime Minister's version, where he claims he fully cooperated, and we have the report from the Ethics Commissioner, which directly contradicts that claim.

On February 25, 2014, the former House leader of the official opposition raised a question of privilege regarding statements made in the House by the former member for Mississauga—Streetsville. He said the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville had deliberately misled the House during debate on Bill C-23, the Fair Elections Act, when the member stated that he had witnessed evidence of voter fraud first-hand. The former House leader further argued that the matter was not resolved by the statements made by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville on February 24 and 25, when he admitted that, contrary to his original claim, he had not actually witnessed what he had originally claimed to have witnessed. In his view, this was not a simple case of someone misspeaking. He argued, rather, that in this case the member deliberately chose to take something he knew not to be true and present it as eyewitness evidence, something so egregious that it constituted contempt.

On March 3, 2014, the Speaker delivered his ruling, citing what Speaker Milliken was faced with in February 2002, when the then minister of national defence, Art Eggleton, provided contradictory information to the House. In a ruling on a question of privilege raised about the contradiction, Speaker Milliken stated on February 1, 2002, at page 8581 of the Debates, "I am prepared, as I must be, to accept the minister's assertion that he had no intention to mislead the House."

The Speaker went on to conclude:

In keeping with that precedent, I am prepared to accord the same courtesy to the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

### *Privilege*

At the same time, the fact remains that the House continues to be seized of completely contradictory statements. This is a difficult position in which to leave members, who must be able to depend on the integrity of the information with which they are provided to perform their parliamentary duties.

Accordingly, in keeping with the precedent cited earlier in which Speaker Milliken indicated that the matter merited "...further consideration by an appropriate committee, if only to clear the air", I am prepared in this case for the same reason to allow the matter to be put to the House.

• (1215)

As you know, Mr. Speaker, in deciding these matters, Speakers take into consideration three principles. The first is that the statement was misleading.

[*Translation*]

This was clearly the case. The Prime Minister gave us a version of events that was obviously not true.

• (1220)

[*English*]

Second, the member knew at the time of the statement that it was incorrect. There is no doubt that the Prime Minister must have known that it was incorrect. The title of the report was the Trudeau II Report, because it was the second time he was found guilty of ethics violations. He also knows it to be false, because in the previous Parliament, I questioned him regularly on his obstruction of that investigation.

Third, the member making the statement intended to mislead the House.

I believe this matter has met all three of these principles, Mr. Speaker.

Getting back to your comment in committee on July 8 about this matter being complicated, I refer you to Joseph Maingot's second edition of *Parliamentary Procedures in Canada*, page 227:

In the final analysis, in areas of doubt, the Speaker asks simply: Does the act complained of appear at first sight to be a breach of privilege...or, to put it shortly, has the Member an arguable point? If the Speaker feels any doubt on the question, he should...leave it to the House.

In a ruling of October 24, 1966, at page 9005 of the Debates, the Speaker said:

In considering this matter I ask myself: What is the duty of the Speaker in cases of doubt? If we take into consideration that at the moment the Speaker is not asked to render a decision as to whether or not the article of complaint constitutes a breach of privilege...considering also that the Speaker is the guardian of the rules, rights and privileges of the House and of its members and that he cannot deprive them of such privileges when there is uncertainty in his mind... I think at this preliminary stage of the proceedings, the doubt which I have in my mind should be interpreted to the benefit of the member.

Mr. Speaker, you have clearly indicated that this is uncharted territory. There are likely very few scenarios that could guide you specifically as to the proper course of action, because this has not happened before in our parliamentary system. I believe, therefore, you should leave it to the House to decide, and if you do find that there is a prima facie question of privilege, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

*Government Orders*

**The Speaker:** I believe the hon. member for Winnipeg North has a point of order or wishes to speak to this.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we would like to be able to review the comments and the concern put on the record by the leader of the official opposition, and we will report back to the House as soon as we can.

**The Speaker:** I want to thank everyone for their input. I will take it under advisement and return to the House with a ruling as quickly as possible.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

### FURTHER COVID-19 MEASURES ACT

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Bill C-20, an act respecting further COVID-19 measures.

[*English*]

**Hon. Mona Fortier (for the Minister of Finance)** moved that Bill C-20, An Act respecting further COVID-19 measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour today to introduce in the House Bill C-20, an act respecting further COVID-19 measures.

COVID-19 has been a profound shock to our economy and has profoundly changed the way we go about our daily lives. Canadians have come together to flatten the curve, and economies are now gradually and safely reopening. It is a crisis that has called for quick, decisive leadership to stabilize the economy, to protect jobs, to ensure that workers and families can put food on the table and to prevent long-term damage to our economy. Our government has worked tirelessly to answer this call.

[*Translation*]

Protecting Canadian jobs has been a priority for us since the beginning of the pandemic. Our government recognizes the importance of protecting the link between workers and their employers. Businesses thrive when owners and employees work as a team. We know that for businesses to stay ready to bounce back, it is vitally important that they maintain that link with the employees they have trained, employees who have earned the trust of customers and whom they have been working with for years.

[*English*]

We launched the Canada emergency wage subsidy to give businesses, non-profits and charitable organizations support so that they could keep and rehire workers. To date, this program has helped around three million workers keep their jobs. That means millions of families have had paycheques to rely on throughout this.

This program has been available to employers of all sizes across Canada and across sectors. It is here to make sure that even as this crisis causes unprecedented uncertainty, employers have the certainty that they can pay their workers.

The CEWS has been an important part of our economic response plan and is providing support to a broad base of businesses. It has had a significant impact: In May, one in four private sector employees was covered by the wage subsidy.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

This pandemic is unprecedented in nature, and the situation continues to evolve. We are ensuring that our programs are also evolving.

Today, we are introducing a bill that will make the wage subsidy more effective, flexible and responsive. These changes will give businesses a longer runway to recovery, expand program eligibility to include a larger number of workplaces, provide more targeted support to the hardest-hit businesses and, by so doing, protect a greater number of Canadian jobs.

[*English*]

In the spring we began consulting with businesses and labour representatives on what adjustments we could make to the program, so that we could help more Canadians get hired back and help businesses grow. During the consultations we heard from many employers that the CEWS was invaluable in keeping workers on the payroll and helping to bring workers back. However, employers understand, like all Canadians do, that our economic recovery will be gradual.

Many people we spoke with shared the view that the subsidy should be extended past the initial 12-week extension. They also shared many ideas on how the adjustment to CEWS could support businesses and employees as the economy restarts and businesses recover and grow. One thing they were worried about was the current program design's cliff effect, which is that even if a business picked up slowly, once it grew past the 30% revenue decline threshold it would not have the support it was relying on in order to pay workers.

[*Translation*]

No business should feel it has to choose between reopening, growing and hiring or getting the support it needs.

Many of the people we have talked to have also said that businesses want the government to dial back the wage subsidy as revenue goes up to ensure stable support during recovery.

*Government Orders*

Canadians know that recovery will be a gradual process because we want to do it safely. We do not think businesses should be penalized for doing the right thing and taking the necessary precautions to protect their community.

[*English*]

Whether it is a restaurant that is not at full capacity so that it can keep a safe distance between diners, or a front-line non-profit organization that is making sure all of its workers have proper PPE and training before going back on the job, or a store that has adjusted its hours to make sure it is properly cleaned, we see organizations working hard to figure out how to operate safely as we all adjust to living with COVID-19.

Other Canadians told us that the current 30% revenue decline test kept many of Canada's affected businesses from getting this much-needed support. They brought up the idea of tiered support to help businesses that are struggling as they face the challenges of this pandemic, but have not seen a full 30% reduction in revenue.

Overall, businesses have a strong sense that the road to recovery will be gradual and uncertain. Employers want to know that they will have support past this summer in order to stay strong through the challenges we face.

[*Translation*]

Information gleaned on the ground about how well our programs are working and how we can make them even more useful is priceless. Given what we have learned, we are proposing changes to the wage subsidy that will encourage employers to resume operations and keep hiring Canadians as the economy opens up. Our bill will make those changes happen.

[*English*]

With Bill C-20 we are proposing to extend the CEWS until November 21, 2020, with the intent of providing further support through the CEWS until December 19, 2020.

This bill would also broaden eligibility, making this subsidy available to more employers and protecting more workers. The changes in this bill would also promote growth as the economy continues to recover from the shock of this pandemic.

Effective July 5, 2020, the CEWS would consist of two parts: a base subsidy available to all eligible employers experiencing a decline in revenues, with the subsidy amount varying depending on the scale of revenue decline, and a top-up subsidy of up to an additional 25% for employers most adversely affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

The maximum base subsidy rate would be provided to employers experiencing a revenue drop of 50% or more, with the rate gradually declining for employers experiencing a revenue drop between 49% and zero. This would extend access to the CEWS to a broader range of employers. Organizations that have been struggling but have had revenue declines of less than 30% would be able to access the wage subsidy for the first time. This would open the program to a whole new range of employers, providing the base subsidy rate support to active employees and helping protect more of the jobs Canadians rely on.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

For employers who have been deeply affected, those who experienced a revenue drop of more than 50% over three months on average, we are offering a top-up subsidy for their workers of up to 25% of their pay. This measure will be particularly helpful for employees working in industries that are recovering more slowly. As I said, our plan consists in building a bridge to a safer place for Canadians during this emergency situation.

[*English*]

Lastly, we want to make sure this program provides no barriers to growth. By removing the 30% revenue decline threshold, employers already on the program will not have to worry that they will lose support they are still relying on as they grow. We will still be there to provide support as they work to recover and restore growth.

We know this new CEWS will be a welcome change, and that a lot of businesses have made plans based on the existing design for the next two periods of the CEWS from July 5 to August 29. We are creating a safe harbour where they can be confident they will still qualify, at a minimum, for the same level of support for those CEWS periods as under the previous design.

[*Translation*]

Thanks to this new more effective design, the emergency wage subsidy will help even more employers who are all at various stages of reopening. If they experienced a greater decline in revenue, they will receive a higher subsidy.

The gradual reduction in assistance given to businesses that are successfully reopening will ensure that they get stable and predictable support as their activities resume. These changes will make businesses more competitive and will help increase the number of employees returning to work thanks to the emergency wage subsidy.

[*English*]

This proposed design of the CEWS would ensure the program continues to address the immediate needs of businesses while also positioning them for a strong recovery.

Our government believes in the resilience of Canadians and the ability of our businesses to find innovative ways to keep going and to grow back stronger, but these are extraordinary times and businesses continue to need support to do this.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Our plan is to help Canadians stay strong throughout this storm. It will protect Canadians' health and ensure that we have the best tools and systems to monitor the virus. It will provide the financial support that Canadians with disabilities need. It will also help mothers and fathers feed their families, make it possible for youth to follow their dreams and ensure that no one is left behind.

*[English]*

It is also about keeping our communities strong, giving needed support to the shops and restaurants that define our neighbourhoods and making sure the outreach centres and community organizations that support our most vulnerable can keep being there for people.

COVID-19 has affected all aspects of Canadians' quality of life, from their health to their livelihoods. We created programs to support students, seniors, families and workers so they would not have to make impossible choices between paying their bills and keeping food on the table. It is now critically important that we pursue inclusive growth and continue to support our most vulnerable. That is why I am working on incorporating quality of life measurements into decision-making, including in the economic response plan.

- (1235)

*[Translation]*

In addition to the support provided by the Canada emergency wage subsidy, more than eight million Canadians have received the Canada emergency response benefit, which has helped them pay for groceries, rent and prescription medications. We have also provided financial support to millions of vulnerable Canadians through existing programs, such as the goods and services tax credit, the Canada child benefit, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement.

*[English]*

Canadians with disabilities are facing increased costs, too, and need support. This legislation would help an estimated 1.7 million Canadians living with disabilities qualify for a special payment of up to \$600 so they can have access to the support they need.

We are also working to make sure businesses can get the liquidity support they need. From the Canada emergency business account and the business credit availability program to the large employer emergency financing facility, we are providing tailored support to workers and employers of every size across this country to make sure that no matter where people work, their employers have access to support.

*[Translation]*

We are making sure that no business is left behind. We have allocated \$962 million to the regional relief and recovery fund, administered by the six regional development agencies across Canada, in order to support the affected companies that are essential to the regional and local economy, including in rural communities. These companies create good local jobs, and they support our families and the communities they serve.

We are also investing in indigenous businesses, providing almost \$307 million in funding to help small and medium-sized in-

igenous businesses, and \$133 million to support indigenous business through the recovery, including micro-businesses that are not eligible for other support programs.

*[English]*

We have also provided support for women entrepreneurs who are facing hardship during the pandemic, through \$15 million in new funding from the women entrepreneurship strategy.

Canadians' collective actions have helped control the virus here at home. Canadians want to go back to work, but they need the confidence they can do it safely. Across Canada, economies are re-opening and we are seeing our streets come back to life, but it is a bit different than before, and that is a good thing. We need to make sure we are staying safe.

*[Translation]*

COVID-19 has not disappeared. We need to take action to protect ourselves and our neighbours against another out-of-control outbreak. All employers are required to strictly follow the latest public health guidelines in order to protect their patrons, their workers and their communities.

*[English]*

We must always remember that our collective economic success is fundamentally linked to our public health outcomes. The \$19-billion safe restart agreement our government reached with provinces and territories last week is helping Canadians stay safe and healthy and ensuring we are more resilient to possible future waves. This funding will enhance capacity for testing, contact tracing and data management.

*[Translation]*

Through this funding, we will be able to secure reliable sources of personal protective equipment, which will help protect our front-line workers and health care workers. It will also enable the provinces and territories to provide temporary income support, so that workers who are not entitled to paid sick leave can get 10 days of paid sick leave related to COVID-19.

The funding will help in many other ways, including by making sure there are enough safe child care spaces available so that parents can go back to work.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Our government will not stop working to help Canadians face the challenges of COVID-19. We stand ready to take additional actions, as needed, to stabilize the economy, protect Canadians and position them for a strong restart as we emerge from the crisis. By recognizing and addressing the challenges employers are facing and providing the support they need to restart, the enhancement to the Canada emergency wage subsidy proposed in Bill C-20 is another important step in our work to support the resilience of Canadians and help them bridge through to better times.

It is on all of us, as hon. members in the House, to make sure we remain focused on the ongoing crisis at hand and put the immediate needs of Canadians first. Canadians have demonstrated their ability to put old habits aside and come together for the greater good. I encourage the members of this House to do the same so that Canadians can get the support they deserve without further delay.

- (1240)

*[Translation]*

I urge all hon. members of the House to support the speedy passage of Bill C-20 so that we can protect jobs in this country and get Canadians back to work.

*[English]*

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the issue with the emergency wage subsidy is one that has come up many times. Through the work of the opposition party and the government listening to advocacy from the CFIB and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, we have seen improvements in the wage subsidy, but there is a gap in the current announcement.

I want to read the minister an email from one of the franchises in Barrie—Innisfil. A constituent wrote to me yesterday and said:

[We] believe that the government needs to make these changes retroactive to Period 4 (June 7th to July 4th). We were down 27.5% in May and 21% in June and yet we get no support from the CEWS for those 4 weeks? We received the CEWS in Periods 1-3 and it looks like we will receive some form of support on the sliding scale until December. But June is a missed period for us, as I am sure it will be for many other employers who were starting to recover their lost sales and fell off the 30% revenue decline cliff. [The Prime Minister and the finance minister] both pledged changes to the CEWS on May 15th that would deal with this cliff effect. We believed them and it took 2 months for it to happen. In our opinion the right thing for the government to do is to make these changes retroactive to June 7th not July 5th.

What is the minister's response to that?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for demonstrating that we have all been working together to make sure we make the wage subsidy a tool that works for businesses. During these consultations, we went across the country and worked with members and even senators to better understand how this program could work better for employers and also to make sure workers were protected and could go back to their jobs.

As we held these consultations with the business and labour representatives to ensure that any changes to the CEWS would be responsive to their needs, during these consultations we heard that the CEWS was invaluable in keeping workers on the payroll and helping to bring workers back. Many ideas were shared on how the design of the CEWS could be made better and more responsive.

We heard that the 30% revenue test was too strict and could discourage growth. We heard that the most affected sectors needed more support. We heard that employers continued to require support and the extension to August 29 would not be enough for some employers to get back on their feet.

The decision was made to further extend until December and make sure that there are different periods that would help the different businesses to have access to the now new proposed changes, and we hope members will support that.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my esteemed colleague on her speech and thank her for it. I also want to thank the government for introducing this bill, which helps businesses that truly need it. It is true that the economic recovery will need a major boost, but employees also have to want to go back to work. Right now, many workers who are sought after by businesses are feeling quite comfortable collecting the CERB.

Why did the government not think that this would be a good time to provide return-to-work incentives by amending the CERB in order to help with the economic recovery?

- (1245)

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for demonstrating that we considered how the CERB and the wage subsidy can work together so that our efforts help more workers get back to work.

That is why we are proposing a new approach that will encourage business owners and employers to go get workers. The CERB will continue until the end of August, and we know that many families still need support because they do not yet have all the tools they need to go back to work.

We are therefore going to make that transition and ensure that the two programs can work together so that, as of the end of August, we can focus more energy on the wage subsidy.

Once again, I thank my hon. colleague for pointing that out.

*[English]*

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, we have heard a very compelling speech by the hon. member. However, it should be noted in the House that COVID does not simply impact those infected by it. Many people who are living on disability continue to get left out. I look to my riding of Hamilton Centre, where the disability tax credit program as proposed by the Liberals is still going to leave out the vast majority of the people in my province who are struggling to get by.

*Government Orders*

My question for the hon. member is this. How does she feel about the fact that the Prime Minister was prepared to place a \$900-million bailout for his friends at WE, while people on disability continue to have to wait for support?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his concern and question. I would say that today is really an important day, as we are bringing into the legislation a benefit of up to \$600 for people living with disabilities. We know they need more support. That is why we are moving this legislation today, to make sure we provide that necessary support. I am hopeful that all members of the House will support the proposed legislation.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on her speech and point out that today's bill will really address several of the needs I have seen in my riding.

People with disabilities and parents of young adults with disabilities were very disappointed when the House could not come up with legislation that would help them.

I would like the minister to tell us why making that payment available was problematic and how those issues were resolved.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for everything she has done since the crisis began.

We know MPs have made an important contribution by listening to what is going on in their communities. That is exactly why we are introducing this bill to support people with disabilities. We know they need more support.

Given what we learned during recent cross-Canada consultations about how we can best support vulnerable people, we know today's measure will enable us to support people with disabilities.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciated hearing from my colleague from Barrie—Innisfil about an issue with one of his businesses. I wonder if the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity is familiar with the deeming rule, which was part of the original Canada emergency wage subsidy program, where, if people qualify for a month but then go above the qualifying amount the next month, they still get the funding for that additional month. It is called the “deeming rule” and it was applied.

Perhaps the member could discuss that further with us today. I would like to know if it will apply going forward, with the changes to CEWS, and whether those who have not realized this deeming rule was in effect can go back and apply for it, having missed that opportunity previously.

• (1250)

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Madam Speaker, I want to re-emphasize the fact that what we have done with this government is act rapidly. When we proposed the first part of the CEWS legislation, we knew we were helping businesses and we were able to support over three million workers across the country. However, we also understood, by doing consultations, that we needed to fix it and adjust the CEWS to make sure we would respond to the needs of businesses

across the country. That is what we are doing with the proposed legislation.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, when the government first rolled out programming in response to the COVID-19 shutdown, the programming was filled with the old classic rule that no good deed goes unpunished. The government created an income support program for workers, but ripped it away the second those same workers earned more than \$1,000, punishing their good deeds of working hard and earning money. It created a wage subsidy, but then tore it away as soon as a business was able to recover more than 70% of its pre-COVID revenue, again punishing a business for the crime of recuperating revenue and rebuilding the economy.

We warned early on that these anti-work, anti-earnings disincentives would penalize the very people who were working hard to put our economy back on its feet in the post-closure period. The government ignored our concerns and delayed. In the meantime, countless workers and business owners have faced the impossible dilemma of whether or not they should go back to earning what they did before the pandemic began.

Members could judge these people, who are out in the world facing that dilemma, but before they do, I ask them to think of, for example, a waitress whose employer may go bankrupt because of the enormous revenue loss that he has experienced during the shutdown. If she goes back and begins earning \$1,200, and he then goes under, she will lose her job and she will have lost her CERB. In other words, she will have no income at all, and the government will have imposed this penalty upon her for having worked too hard, having exerted too much effort to rebuild her finances and support her employer and her community.

Up until now, the same went for businesses that committed the offence of regaining lost revenues. If they were down less than 30%, that is to say that they had recovered more than 70% of their pre-COVID revenue, they would lose the wage subsidy. For many of them, the extra revenue was worth less than the wage subsidy. In which case, the perfectly rational and, in many cases, necessary decision for them was to suppress their revenues in order to qualify for the very assistance that would keep them alive and allow them to employ their workers.

Finally, the government has come forward with a proposal to address that disincentive of the wage subsidy. Unfortunately, what we see in this proposal is a cobweb of complexity. I will break down just how complex it will be and how bewildering it will become for the business owners who are trying to make sense of it all.

First, we see there are now effectively four periods that remain until the subsidy is phased out altogether. In each of those four periods, the rate of subsidy is different than it is in the others. Then there are the three scenarios that apply to those four periods. The first scenario is for businesses that have lost less than 50% of their revenue, in which case they are entitled to the base subsidy. Then there is the second scenario for businesses that are down more than 50%, in which case they are eligible for both the base subsidy and the top-up. Then there is the third scenario for businesses with employees who are furloughed or “on leave”, in which case there is yet another different rate of compensation paid through the subsidy. Do not even get me started on businesses that have both furloughed and non-furloughed employees.

If we just take the basic permutations and combinations that I have mentioned, over the next four months, businesses could face 15, 20 or 30 different rates of wage subsidy. They will somehow understand these with the help of very expensive accountants and consultants as they try to go forward and make business decisions. This complexity will no doubt impose massive new costs, unpredictability and uncertainty on the very people who are struggling just to open their doors. They are already facing a whole series of public safety rules imposed by their municipalities, rules that are themselves hard to follow, burdensome and costly to implement. Now they will have to plow through an already complicated system of taxation in order to make sense of an even more complicated system of subsidies.

● (1255)

In numerous conversations with the minister, we put forward proposals that could have made this simple. Why could the government, for example, not have expanded the Canada emergency business account to lend businesses their prior month's revenue loss, and then forgive repayment on 75% of whatever they spent on wages out of that amount? That could be the wage subsidy with no complexity, and it would not be a disincentive. It would be scaled to revenue loss, easy to administer and available at someone's local bank.

Of course that was not the option that the government chose. No, instead it had to come up with the most complicated system possible. The only two sectors that will experience any benefit from that complexity are the accountants and tax lawyers, who will be paid to implement and make sense of it all. Although I suspect many of them will have to hire Ph.D.s in astrophysics in order to make sense of some of the finer details of this particular proposal.

Simpler proposals are better, and simplification should always be the goal of government policy so we know exactly what we are trying to accomplish, and the beneficiaries know how to accomplish it. Therefore, we as Conservatives call on the government to look for ways to simplify the implementation of this.

We also call on the government to signal to the Canada Revenue Agency to be as reasonable as possible in its enforcement and in the subsequent cases of accidental and incidental errors that are inevitably going to be the result of small businesses tripping over many of the tripwires found in this complex proposal.

All that being said, at the very least we can give the government some credit for belatedly realizing the necessity to remove the

### *Government Orders*

penalties on businesses that are recovering their revenues while trying to employ their workers.

Now let us turn our attention to those very same workers. Under the current Canada emergency response benefit, workers who earn \$999 can keep the \$2,000 CERB, but if they earn \$1,001, they lose that same benefit. In other words, they are taking one step forward in order to be pushed two steps back. No one would make the decision to earn \$1,000 in order to lose \$2,000. The effective tax rate on such a person would be 200%. That is a major and unacceptable penalty for work. It is also a problem with an obvious solution.

I see here the member for Haldimand—Norfolk, who was once the employment minister and helped to bring in a solution to the same problem under the employment insurance program. She, in the previous Harper government, helped to bring in the working while on a claim system, which allowed people on EI to go out and get a job and lose only 50 cents of their EI for every dollar they earned. That means that they would always be 50 cents better off for each of those dollars earned. That should be the basic principle of our tax-and-transfer system. People should always be better off when they work more, earn more or take on one more shift.

Our party has very meticulously assembled a proposal for the government that would solve this anti-work problem and give our working-class people the rewards they deserve for going back to their jobs and taking on as many shifts as they possibly can. Our proposal is simple and it is this. For those earning less than \$1,000, nothing would change. They would still get their \$2,000 CERB. However, for those earning more than \$1,000, any dollar earned over \$1,000 would result in losing only 50 cents of their CERB.

Of course, all of this could be reconciled at tax time. The government already has records of people's earnings because employers submit the payroll remittances. The government knows exactly what people earn and when they earn it. It would be very easy to use the highly sophisticated CRA software, which could automatically calculate all of this, and people's final amounts could be reconciled at tax time on their returns.

● (1300)

Therefore, we put forward this proposal, which would allow all workers to be better off when they go out into the workforce and get themselves another dollar. It would mean that people would only lose their CERB gradually as they earn between \$1,000 and \$6,000, so that every day in every way workers who contribute to their employer, get businesses back on their feet, serve local customers, pay taxes and contribute to the economy are rewarded for doing so.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that our proposal would be affordable and that it would be a minor cost. I frankly believe that when the behavioural changes that would result from it are taken into account, the government will be net better off as a result of rewarding rather than punishing work.

### *Government Orders*

This is, of course, a problem that most left-wing governments have. They do not believe that there is any limit to the amount of taxation they can impose upon people. They do not understand the impact that incentives have on human and economic behaviour. That is why we see ever larger tax rates, which punish people for exerting themselves and for contributing to their employers, and which take away from risk-takers, entrepreneurs and working-class people.

We on this side of the House believe in restoring the value of work and rewarding exertion, because work is the only thing that generates the product of our nation. We know that no matter what government program we create, we cannot replace the prodigious output of our 20 million Canadian workers and the 1.2 million businesses that employ them. No government program can ever do that. The only way to recharge our economy and to replenish our wealth from the enormous costs we have incurred and the debts we have mounted is to get our workers and our businesses firing on all cylinders once again.

Beyond just fixing the problems and the penalties in these programs, we also need to unleash the power of free enterprise across our economy. There are parts of the economy that the government began shutting down years before COVID-19. One example of that is the energy sector. The government imposed a shutdown on the energy sector by blocking three pipelines and a major northern Alberta mine well before the COVID-19 pandemic ever appeared. It can now begin to reverse those anti-development policies.

It can, for example, look at the inventory of \$20 billion of resource projects that await federal approval, and it can expedite decisions on them now so that billions of dollars of privately funded economic activity can begin without any cost to Canadian taxpayers. This includes a massive \$14-billion pipeline and an LNG plant in the Saguenay region of Quebec. It includes smaller pipeline projects and mines right across the country. These projects have already been delayed too long. If the government really wanted a stimulus, a free-market, privately funded stimulus that would reduce debt rather than adding to it, now would be the time to expedite those exact same projects.

Now would be the time to begin to draw the lines of a future energy corridor connecting east coast refineries with western petroleum, opening the door to the sale and transmission of electricity from the prodigious hydro dams of Quebec to energy-starved communities in provinces across the country.

Now would be the time to put an end to the insanity of selling our energy, not just oil and gas but also hydroelectricity, at massive discounts to our American neighbours to the south while we pay premiums for that same energy here in our very own country.

Now would be the time to go through our tax system, page by page, and start tearing out all of the penalties we impose on businesses that produce wealth and the workers who generate it.

• (1305)

Now would be the time to eliminate the enormous delays that are involved in building anything in the country. It takes three times longer to get a warehouse approved for construction in Canada than it does in the United States of America.

That is just one example of why so much capital has left our country for our southern neighbours and for many other economies around the world.

As a country, we went into this crisis weak. We had 0.3% unemployment, higher unemployment in fact than all other G7 countries, except for France and Italy, whose socialist policies our government was working hard to emulate. We went in with growth that was roughly half of that in the United States of America, with half our population \$200 away from insolvency, and bankruptcies and insolvencies skyrocketing in the latter months of the year 2019.

We went in with a \$29-billion deficit, before the very first case of COVID-19 was discovered in the country. We went in with the second-highest level of debt in the G7 when we take public and private debt combined. Only Japan has higher combined public-private debt than Canada did in 2018, at 356% of GDP, and now that number has grown further.

We now have a government that is adding \$343 billion of debt this year, money it believes literally can be created out of thin air, that we can simply count on the Bank of Canada, through keystrokes, to generate this currency out of nothing. The Bank of Canada has created a half a trillion dollars since March and used that money to buy bonds, mostly government bonds. In other words, our governments across the country are currently being financed by fake currency that is literally pulled out of thin air. The Prime Minister thinks that can go on forever, as though he invented the idea of turning on the printing presses to pay for a government.

We know that for thousands of years emperors, kings and others have tried to pay their bills by creating currency from nothing. Whether they clipped coins so that the gold in them could go a little further, whether they took drachmas and wrote “2” where there once was “1”, whether they more recently cranked up the printing presses and pumped out cash until inflation was skyrocketing, the result, in the long run, is always the same: When you create money from nothing, that money begins to be worth nothing.

We are not there yet, but we must plan for the day when, eventually, there are too many dollars chasing too few goods. When that happens, the value of the dollar will decline. This will be wonderful news for the very rich of course, because their assets will inflate in value and they will become richer still. However, it will be terrible news for the wage-earning blue-collar people of the country whose wages will be devalued, who will be earning less money for every hour they put in.

That brings us back to my very first point, that we in this country should always reward and never punish work, that we should unbridle the power of the labourer and the entrepreneur to join hands in the production of wealth, to finance the lifestyle and the economy that our country deserves to pay for our national programs, our national defence, our social safety net and for a quality of life that we in a country like Canada have become accustomed to and that we should only exceed in the days ahead.

I appreciate the opportunity to address this issue. We stand ready to work with the Liberals to improve these policies, to correct their faulty ways and to make our country better yet.

• (1310)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it was tough listening to the member opposite. I think of the Fraser Institute and the Conservative Party coming together.

On the one hand, the member talked about why the government needed to do more for businesses, why it needed to do more for individuals. The greatest expenditure of the government today is related to supporting Canadians from coast to coast to coast, in part doing it through programs like the CERB, which the member referenced, and by supporting businesses through wage subsidies. All of that will no doubt cost a considerable amount of money, as the member knows full well. Then the member concluded his comments with regard to fear of the debt.

Does the member support the government spending the money to support Canadians through programs like the CERB and supporting small businesses?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, we of course believe that government should compensate the businesses and workers who it has banned from working. When we ban people from earning an income, we have to replace that income somehow, and that is what governments across the world have had to do.

Unfortunately, the Liberal government has created the highest unemployment in the G7. Why? Because the programs it created were designed to punish people for working and businesses for operating, even those that had approval from lower levels of government to reopen safely in the COVID-19 period. It punished people for earning more than \$1,000. It punished businesses for recovering more than 70% of their pre-COVID revenue. Therefore, it is no surprise that our unemployment is the highest in the G7. The government designed programs expressly to make it so. It was as though it was setting out to suppress the economy, to punish entrepreneurs and workers, and it succeeded in all those objectives.

We had different objectives over here, which is to unleash the power of our workers and entrepreneurs to go back and bring our economy back to life. That is what we will continue to champion on this side of the House until we get to that side of the House and start implementing it.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Carleton, for really laying this out in a simple way so Canadians can understand.

### *Government Orders*

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said at one point that the problem with socialism was that eventually they would run out of other people's money, and the member spoke about his concern with respect to money.

Over the weekend, we heard about a scheme that was being developed, which is being studied and supported by CMHC, presumably in support of the government, on a home equity tax on Canadians. Could my hon. colleague speak to that, to the concerns that Canadians should have with that and to the impact that it will have financially on Canadians?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, that is a political party that has tried to convince Canadians again and again that it can spend limitlessly without ever having anyone pay for it, and now we see that again. The Liberals claim that they can just create the money out of thin air and spend that instead of paying bills, like is mathematically required in every society everywhere in the world. We know that is not true, and they do too. That is why they are starting to concoct schemes to raise money.

We learned over the weekend from some intrepid journalists over at Blacklock's that the government was now studying, through CMHC, the prospect of a new tax on home equity. That would be a way for the government to take the wealth that Canadians have legitimately stored in their homes, the wealth upon which the retirement of millions of Canadians depend, in order to pay for permanent expansions of government spending; in other words, enrich the governmental cabal that the Liberals control at the expense of home-owning Canadians.

I want those Canadians to be assured that the Conservatives will do as we have always done, which is to fight tooth and nail against this new home tax the Liberals are planning.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague, who concluded his remarks by saying that he was ready to work with all parliamentarians to improve these government programs.

Regarding the CERB, I have to admit that I was a little surprised. As far back as late March, we proposed introducing incentives, and we got nothing but radio silence from our Conservative friends. They did not get fired up about this until the end of June.

I am therefore wondering how my colleague's thought process evolved between March and June.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** I think the two parties remember things differently. From my understanding, it was the Bloc leader who was inspired by a Conservative Party idea to allow people to earn more and be compensated accordingly. I therefore must congratulate the leader and members of the Bloc for taking inspiration from their Conservative friends. We are always happy to inspire them.

*Government Orders**[English]*

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is good to be back in the House with all the chuckles I hear today. Quite frankly, I get a chuckle any time I hear Liberals called socialists, when we have a corporatist party that continues to provide tax loopholes for the ultra-wealthy. We hear the Conservatives lamenting about the upcoming looming debt, the confusion around who creates value and who hoards wealth in the country.

If the Conservatives are so worried about debt, will they support the New Democrats' call for a wealth tax on the super, super rich, which would raise nearly \$6 billion a year, and crack down on the estimated \$25 billion in corporate taxes that we lose to tax havens each and every year?

If Conservatives are a law and order party, will they support law and order within our tax regime?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, of course we support law and order within our tax regime. Every person should pay what he or she owes and every business should pay what it owes.

However, there is some confusion in the premise of the member's question. He speaks as though socialism and corporatism are at odds. In fact, they are the ugly twin brothers of economic ideology.

The corporatist agenda of the Liberal Party is perfectly compatible with the socialist agenda of the NDP. Both rely on big government to take away the product of workers' work, and to take from the mouth of labour the bread it has earned and give it to those who have political connections.

In big government socialist economies, we always know that the rich do well, because they have the most political power and they convert that political power into riches for themselves.

We believe in the free enterprise system that rewards merit and hard work, a bottom-up economy. That is the economy for which we fight in the Conservative Party.

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have corporate constituents in Thornhill who would bitterly agree with my hon. colleague about the delay of the remedial legislation before the House and the cobweb of complexity that they are learning about today as they read this legislation.

These corporate constituents, who employ thousands of workers, with a payroll totalling millions of dollars, with partnerships and a corporate structure that have been in place for a quarter century, have been, until now, denied by the Canada Revenue Agency.

My colleague has addressed the issue of the costly cobweb of complexities, but I wonder if he can tell the House, having read this legislation, whether there is provision for retroactivity of the claims unfairly denied.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, I understand there is some retroactivity for some of the administrative eligibility, but there is no retroactivity for the new thresholds and formula to determine the eligibility and amounts that would be paid under the wage subsidy. A technical briefing may give the member and his constituents better information than I can offer.

The new rates that are being brought in, the removal of the 30% cliff, all of that is prospective. Some of the administrative eligibility rules are retroactive.

• (1320)

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I ask for the consent of the House to share my time with the hon. member for La Prairie.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member does have the consent of the House.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet:** Madam Speaker, were it not for our considerable ideological, and sometimes tactical, differences, I would take immense pleasure in listening to my esteemed colleague. However, those major differences cannot be ignored.

Our conviction that the Canadian emergency response benefit needs to be adjusted does not come from the Bloc Québécois, but from Quebeckers themselves. It comes from Quebec's economic circles. It comes from Quebec's businesses, which have expressed concern that this measure, in its current form, disincentivizes going back to work. The return to work is essential for the economic recovery. The people—and the government—of Quebec deserve all the credit for these insights. We humbly salute them.

Bill C-20 does have its good points. There is nothing bad about Bill C-20 per se. There is not very much in it, and not everything we would have liked to see, but there are reasonably good things in it. This got me thinking.

It would be nice if at times we did not confuse constituents with voters. A constituent is not just a voter. A constituent is not just someone we hope will mark an X next to the right person's name and the right party, once every  $x$  number of years. A constituent is much more than that. In that sense, it would be good, independent of other issues we debate in the House, if we always worked with a view to providing people the best, including the best parties and the best candidates, and not just the least bad.

We have the least bad legislative measure in the circumstances, but it is missing a few pieces. Let's remain positive though.

First, there is just one criterion for the Bloc Québécois: Is Bill C-20 good for Quebec? Does it serve the interests of Quebec? Honestly, the answer is yes, in many ways.

There was a bit of an imbroglio having to do with the parliamentary manoeuvring around the initial tabling of a bill that included help for persons with disabilities. That situation did not end well. That was a number of weeks ago and this has caused a delay. Today, we can end the delay and ensure that—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Order. I would ask those outside the chamber to stop talking because that makes it difficult to hear. I am sorry to interrupt the member, but I would like it to be quiet outside the chamber.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet:** Madam Speaker, it is the Liberals' lobby; we know what they are like. I believe it is the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain who caused the problem. Let us be serious as the construction holiday begins.

For people living with a disability, there is an improvement from what was offered before. We are therefore in favour of it. There are measures concerning legal time limits; no one is against that. We support that.

There is an improvement in the wage subsidy program that makes it accessible. As I stated this morning at a scrum, that is good news. The program can be accessed by many seasonal businesses which, until now, had no support. That is important, especially in Quebec's regions and in eastern Quebec. That is good news.

We all understand that these programs will have to be phased out sooner or later. The debt accumulated as a result of the pandemic and the federal government's decisions is enormous. There are useful elements, and others that are less so. There seems to be something interesting in this measure. Adjusting the amounts that can be accessed according to the real losses incurred is in itself an improvement.

However, political parties—and above all the Liberal Party of Canada—continue to claim they have the right to receive the wage subsidy.

My understanding was that, on the short list of parties that can be considered serious—and there is one other one—the Conservatives are considering forgoing the wage subsidy. That will depend on who wins the leadership race. I firmly believe that political parties should not be contributing to Canada's national deficit at a time like this. That does not make any sense to me. This would have been a good opportunity to put things right.

I suspect that if the Liberal government had had the wisdom to drop the wage subsidy as a simple gesture, perhaps some of its party members would have donated a little more. I bet the average Liberal donor has good judgment, just like the average Conservative donor or the average Bloc donor. If I were in the Liberals' shoes, I would have thought about that.

As was mentioned earlier, the CERB was created as an emergency program. This measure could have taken several forms. In its current form, the measure was good and positive. As everyone knows, any program created in an emergency might include some temporarily uncertain aspects. That is okay; we can live with that.

Now, months later, we need to improve it. There is still a big problem with work incentives. The Government of Quebec and the economic community, among others, have raised this issue a number of times. This program is detrimental to workers' return to work. We heard a lot about this issue with respect to students, but we should not kid ourselves. There are not many weeks left.

### *Government Orders*

Something needs to be done about the Canada emergency benefit. Do we need to change the program? Should we replace it with something else? Should it be integrated into the EI program? All of these are possible options, and we are open to any constructive suggestions that will serve the greater good, the economy and the interests of Quebec.

The last time we spoke about the Canada emergency benefit in the House, fraud seemed to be a very serious issue. All of a sudden, it is no big deal and it is no longer being mentioned, even though this was a good opportunity. I think all reasonable members of the House, which I suppose is almost everyone, are in favour of combatting fraud.

The Canada emergency response benefit, in its current form, does nothing for artists. It was great that big events were protected, but they would have no soul without the artists and artisans sharing their work. These people have not received any assistance from the Canadian government. Something needed to be done.

If there is one thing on which we agree with the Liberal government, it is that we must be generous in welcoming others. In Quebec, we want to welcome the guardian angels. We want their cases to be prioritized because they helped Quebec during a very difficult period.

• (1325)

I cannot imagine the Liberal Party not being in favour of that idea. We would have to talk about it with our Conservative Party colleagues. We are very comfortable with it, and it is something we have been advocating for some time. This was a great opportunity squandered.

Just a few minutes ago, I got a message from Louis Sansfaçon, the father of Émilie Sansfaçon. Why is the government not doing something to address the demand, the need, for 50 weeks of employment insurance benefits for the seriously ill, who are currently entitled to just 15 weeks? The government said it would be 26 weeks, but that has not changed yet; it is still 15 weeks. Why is the government not taking this opportunity to address the issue and demonstrate some good judgment and compassion?

Those are the things that should have been done differently. Those are the things that we feel are necessary. The government should have seized the opportunity to help more Quebeckers, and more Canadians too, for what it is worth. That is the kind of progress we can get behind. Let's all get behind that and make some more progress.

• (1330)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the leader's comments. I want to pick up a bit on the wage subsidy program. It has been of huge benefit for workers not only in the province of Quebec but indeed throughout Canada. I understand that well over two million jobs have been saved because of this program.

*Government Orders*

I wonder if the member would concur on how important it was that we got a program out there as quickly as possible at that point in time, recognizing that there would be some need for modifications. When we introduce a new program from virtually nothing, there is going to be a need to make changes. Working with opposition members, such as the leader of the Bloc, and Canadians as a whole, is really what in essence is captured in this bill with respect to the wage program. Could he provide his further thoughts on the issue?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet:** Madam Speaker, I heard my esteemed colleague ask a number of questions, and I assume he wants me to repeat what he said, preferably in French. That might be a bit of wishful thinking on his part.

Yes, some of the measures were quite relevant. Then again, not everything could be described as well balanced in the original version, what with the government offering both the wage subsidy and the Canada emergency response benefit, or CERB.

The reason the wage subsidy was such a dismal failure initially is that the CERB did not include any incentive to go back to work. That kept thousands, if not tens or even hundreds of thousands, of people out of the labour market.

Some employers preferred to have their employees apply for the CERB rather than use the wage subsidy. There is still time to improve this and save the Canadian government a few billion dollars.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I would like to make two comments.

I find it somewhat ironic that the Bloc Québécois is saying that the CERB encourages people not to return to work. People are getting the equivalent of about \$13 or \$14 an hour by staying home and collecting the CERB. I thought that the Bloc Québécois was in favour of a \$15-an-hour minimum wage. If people earn more money by staying home and collecting the CERB, maybe it is because the job in question is not that great, so perhaps what we really need to do is consider the working conditions.

Again with regard to the CERB, the leader of the Bloc Québécois talked about arts and culture, an area that he clearly knows a lot about. Help was given to major festivals, but what will happen to artists and artisans at the end of August when the CERB expires? These people may find themselves with empty pockets, facing a lot of uncertainty.

I would like to know what the Bloc leader thinks about that. How should we continue to support our artists and artisans in Quebec and across Canada?

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet:** Madam Speaker, it is a wrench, a pain, a struggle. I have very little desire to answer questions from anyone calling themselves a member of the NDP. Out of respect for the institution, however, I will answer the question.

First, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of a higher minimum wage established using guidelines that are not just a simple figure that comes across more as a slogan than a calculation.

Second, my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie did a fine job summarizing the Bloc Québécois's position on the assistance provided to artists. He has certainly learned well, since we have been advocating for it for a long time now.

I do indeed know a thing or two about the reality for people in the arts and culture sector, with whom we are in very regular contact. Whether we are talking about the CERB, a new program, an adjustment or an aspect of employment insurance, we are open to everything. However, we simply cannot accept that tens of thousands of artists and artisans in Quebec and Canada are not receiving any targeted aid at a time when they are extremely vulnerable. These people may end up having no choice but to give up their art and take a normal job. We would then have to rebuild this vessel of our soul and our culture.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois welcomed the bill tabled today in the House of Commons. We were the first party to express our support for this bill.

This bill is not perfect and does not meet all of our expectations. However, we believe that it is truly a step forward in the right direction.

As we said about a month ago, we think that the delays in the justice system need to be addressed in order to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and ensure that the justice system can continue to function properly.

We have been in favour of providing assistance to persons with disabilities all along. We even put pressure on the other parties to speed up the process, knowing that these people were waiting for assistance. However, I must admit that the Liberal Party's proposal to support those living with a disability even looks like an improvement. We commend the Liberal Party for this proposal.

Lastly, I would not go so far as to say that this is a new idea, but we were not expecting a scalable wage subsidy. Much to the dismay of the Conservatives, who change their tune rather hastily, the Bloc has been insisting for three months that the CERB should be scalable, in order to be able to adjust to the recovery and ensure that it is not a barrier. The Bloc leader rightfully stated that we were the voice of Quebeckers and of the Quebec government, who started sounding the alarm quite a long time ago.

The fact that the wage subsidy will be scalable is good news. I will repeat that we were also hoping for something similar with the CERB. With respect to the wage subsidy, the good news is that it will be adjusted according to the situation of the businesses, which did not initially have access to this subsidy. Access will therefore be expanded, allowing new businesses to benefit, which will obviously affect seasonal jobs. The Bloc has long stood up for seasonal jobs. Therefore, we are pleased to see these adjustments and the extension, which will provide some reassurance to those in financial distress. We are pleased with this position.

Moreover, we do not know whether there will be a second wave. This adjustment and extension will enable us to face up to a possible second wave with slightly less financial stress. We think this tool has some value, especially considering the uncertain future ahead of us.

Obviously, those who have analyzed this bill, including myself, think it is complicated. It is not always easy to understand it all. I have spoken to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and shared our comments with him.

Faced with this bureaucratic nightmare, will small businesses be able to identify the opportunities available to them?

The government leader assured me that the government will be using a simplified, easy-to-understand approach to facilitate access for small businesses. That is very important to Quebeckers. The bill does not have everything we wanted, of course. For instance, the Bloc Québécois's traditional demands regarding wage subsidies were not all met.

I am sure that it will come as no surprise if I repeat that when the Liberal government builds a program to assist struggling businesses and uses it for electioneering purposes, we cannot allow that abuse to continue. This is an ethics problem, and when we see the Liberal Party tabling this bill, we have to wonder what its intentions are.

• (1335)

Does the Liberal Party support the measure because it benefits all Canadians or because it benefits the Liberal Party?

The Conservatives deserve an asterisk in the Guinness Book of Records, just like Roger Maris. They backed down and finally said that they would check that because, yes, they had collected the emergency wage subsidy and that perhaps it was not a good idea to do so. We are therefore going to give them the benefit of the doubt.

I am talking here about the two largest parties in the House, alongside the Bloc Québécois, obviously.

If other parties collected the wage subsidy, that needs to be looked at. Because of this bill, the other parties that are benefiting from the emergency wage subsidy will be putting more money in their pockets, which will help fund their election campaigns. Are these people in favour of this bill because it improves the lives of Quebeckers and Canadians or because it benefits their party? There are lingering doubts in that regard.

I want to reiterate that the Bloc Québécois did not collect the emergency wage subsidy and will not do so. Are we rich? No, because money does not grow on trees. We will not collect the subsidy as a matter of principle.

We can honestly say that we are supporting a bill like this one because we believe it is good for Quebeckers. We are here in the House for one reason: to work in the interests of Quebeckers. We are demonstrating that once again by supporting this bill.

There is something else we have been talking about for a long time: tax havens. Why would the government want to use taxpayer dollars to help companies when some of them do not pay a penny in taxes? Why is the government not cleaning house and forcing

### *Government Orders*

companies that have money to pay their taxes? Why should those companies benefit from support paid for by taxpayer dollars?

Once again, all we are hearing from the government benches are crickets. There was a little progress a few months ago when the government said it might happen. I guess the Liberals got a call from some of their friends on Bay Street asking if it was a joke and telling them to back off pretty quick. Those companies want to have their cake and eat it too. They also want the flour, the baker and the bakery itself. That is probably why there is nothing in this bill denying assistance to companies that have not paid a penny in taxes.

To get back to the CERB, everyone knows that the Liberals were quick to start spending. Yes, the situation required it. Yes, we are in a pandemic. Yes, we were building the plane as we were flying it. I understand all that.

However, there were discrepancies, mistakes and abuses. A month ago, we proposed creating a system to prevent fraud and fix these mistakes by finding the people who took advantage of the situation to line their pockets, but it is not in the bill. That was glossed over during the financial analysis by the government, which spent considerable amounts during the pandemic.

I have to end my speech. I would simply like to say that the Bloc Québécois never collected and will never collect the emergency wage subsidy. We are very proud of that fact. Let any members who pledge to do the same stand and show their respect for Quebec and Canadian taxpayers, and we will applaud them.

• (1340)

**Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his speech and for his analysis of the bill before us today. I really appreciated what he said. We are on the same page regarding the wage subsidy and what we can do to provide even greater assistance to Canadians and Quebeckers.

He said he was not on the same page as our Conservative colleagues. I would like to give him an opportunity to explain some of the differences between the Bloc Québécois and the Conservative Party with respect to the changes we are proposing here today. I wonder if he could explain how the Conservative Party is not on the same page as Quebeckers and Canadians who are represented by Canada's other political parties.

**Mr. Alain Thérien:** Madam Speaker, I will not comment on what the Conservatives believe to be fair or unfair when it comes to the wage subsidy. When they have good ideas, it is because the Bloc is rubbing off on them. They have seen the light a few times. It took time, but we applaud them. We have faith in human nature.

When I read the bill, I admit that I was a bit surprised, because I was not expecting the adjustment. I think it is a good idea.

*Government Orders*

The role of the opposition is not always to oppose. It is not a matter of constantly repeating that what the government says and does is wrong. On many occasions, the government made sensible proposals, which we supported. In our analysis, we think about Quebecers, and I think that the government made the right move. We can only applaud them.

Could it have done better? Yes, it could have done better. If the government had listened to us, its bill could have been virtually perfect. However, we are not discouraged, we continue to lobby to improve the situation in the community we represent.

● (1345)

[*English*]

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party is always a supporter of small and medium-sized businesses, all businesses, as they are the economic engines of our economy and country. The bill in front of us, Bill C-20, is very complicated and I believe the Bloc supports it.

I would like to give the hon. member from the Bloc Québécois a chance to shed some light on one scenario in the bill. For example, if a business suffers a 60% average loss, then what would it get back in return to help it continue to operate?

Again, if a business loses 60% of its revenues, what will it get back in wage subsidy support from this bill?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** Madam Speaker, the adjustment is something new. Before, when the decline in revenue was less than 30%, everyone was treated the same way. As soon as revenues declined by less than 30%, businesses were not entitled to any assistance at all for those months.

Thanks to this adjustment, people who experience a drop in revenue of less than 30% will get a wage subsidy that will be adjusted based on their slightly lower loss of revenue. On the other hand, if their revenue decline is more than 30%, the new scalable subsidy will be adjusted accordingly.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to start by framing the response to COVID-19. In the response by the Liberal government so far, what we have seen is that at every step of the way it has tried to do the minimum possible. The Liberals have tried to do the least possible, and at every step of the way we have pushed and fought and demanded more for people. That has been our experience throughout COVID-19. We have been demanding, fighting and pushing the government to deliver more for people.

When we look at every step, whether initially when the government proposed EI as being good enough to help Canadians, we said no, it was not going to cover all Canadians who needed help and so we fought and pushed to get the CERB. Initially, the Liberals were going to give \$1,000 to Canadians, and we had to fight them on that. We had to demand, we had to negotiate and push hard to get \$2,000 for Canadians. The Liberals were just not going to do it, but only the minimum possible, and we had to fight every step of the way.

The Liberals were willing to cut off people in July. They were going to cut off people from CERB without any help in place for the millions of Canadians who could not go back to work. We were willing to go to the brink to make sure that CERB was extended for Canadians in need.

Now, we have a bill in front of us that outlines some supports. Again, these are supports that we had to fight for throughout the pandemic.

From the beginning of the pandemic, Canadians living with disabilities were completely ignored. Some of the most desperate people living in some of the direst conditions were completely ignored by the Liberal government. We had to fight and to say that Canadians living with disabilities needed help and needed it now. We forced the government to promise to deliver that help. Two months later, there was still no help. Finally, today, we are seeing some legislation that would bring in some help for Canadians living with disabilities, but it is not going to cover everyone. That is a problem, and we are going to continue to fight to make sure there is help for everyone, for all Canadians living with disabilities.

We also fought to improve the wage subsidy. We knew that businesses needed some help and that we needed to connect workers to those businesses, and so we fought for some improvements to the wage subsidy program that would help workers and get people back to work. We are proud of that work.

● (1350)

[*Translation*]

Every step of the way, the Liberal government wanted to do the minimum possible to help people. That is why we pushed the government to increase the assistance it was offering to Canadians.

As for the bill tabled by the government, we were the ones who pushed it to support people with disabilities. We are proud to have achieved this result.

Again, however, the Liberal government is not helping everyone who has a disability. We will continue to fight for them and stick up for them, to ensure there is help for every person living with a disability.

We also pushed the government to make sure the wage subsidy would cover more businesses. We wanted to ensure that more people had access to this program and that everyone had access to work.

[*English*]

However, this is not enough. There is still so much more that needs to be done. We have seen again and again a theme emerging from the Liberal government, one in which there are lots of empty words and a lack of concrete action. Therefore, again Canadians are faced with the reality that at the end of August, CERB will be discontinued. For millions of Canadians who have no work to return to, this is a scary situation. They are worried and afraid.

That is why we are calling on the government to put in place a permanent change to EI. EI does not serve all Canadians; it only helps about 40% of Canadians. We need to make sure that EI is modified so that everyone who needs help gets that help. That is what we are going to fight for.

[*Translation*]

CERB will be discontinued at the end of August. When that happens, many people will be in a precarious position. They have no idea what lies ahead. That is why we need to improve EI to make sure that everyone who needs it can access that support.

[*English*]

In addition, if we look at the impact of COVID-19, it has been felt most by women. Women have borne the brunt of COVID-19. We see that in some really shocking numbers. Right now the participation of women in the work force is the lowest it has been in 30 years. This is a chilling statistic and something that creates great worry and fear for all of us.

What we need to do is to make sure that if COVID-19 has disproportionately affected women, we have a solution that recognizes that women have been the most impacted. That is why we are saying there can be no recovery from COVID-19 without child care. There can be no recovery without addressing the inequalities impacting women.

Not only do we need child care in place, but we are also seeing the impact of COVID-19 on schools. Education has to be considered a human right. Of course, there are jurisdictional issues, but the federal government has to step up and bring dollars to the table, funding to the table, to ensure there is adequate, affordable child care, as well as access to schools and education for everyone in this country.

It is not enough to say that the Liberal government is a feminist government or that the Prime Minister is a feminist prime minister, if women have been impacted most by COVID-19 and there is not a specific response to address that. If not, then those words are empty. We need a clear plan to address the lack of child care and the difficulties faced by schools. The federal government has to step up with funding to support both of those things.

• (1355)

[*Translation*]

It is obvious that COVID-19 has disproportionately affected women. We need a response that addresses the fact that women have borne the brunt of this pandemic. What we have seen so far is that the participation of women in the workforce is the lowest it has been in 30 years. That is unacceptable. That is why we need to provide funding and support to the provinces to ensure that everyone has access to child care. Child care is vital for getting through this crisis. It is absolutely essential. That is exactly what we are going to do. We are going to force this government to keep its promises so that everyone has access to child care.

[*English*]

Now I want to turn our attention to the current scandal that we are facing. In the middle of COVID-19, the government is mired in another scandal, this time involving WE.

### *Government Orders*

I want to make one thing really clear. The government claims that it was trying to help students. I want to set that aside and make it really clear that this was never about helping students. This was about bailing out close friends of the Liberal government and close friends of the Prime Minister. If the government really wants to help out students, there are many existing programs it could immediately improve. It could immediately use existing programs like the Canada summer jobs program. It could immediately help students' access to universities by reducing their tuition or increasing grants or by reducing their debt.

There are so many things that the government could do if it really wanted to help students right now. It is a farce for the government to claim it is about helping students. It is clearly a billion-dollar bailout of close friends of the Liberal government and close friends of the Prime Minister. That is what the scandal is about; it is not about helping students.

I challenge the government: If it really wants to help students, it has a billion dollars it could put toward students right now. Put it toward reducing debt; put it toward reducing tuition fees; put it toward student programs or the summer jobs program. Do that.

The reality is that the government is not about helping students. The government did not want to help students; it wanted to bail out its friends.

[*Translation*]

The WE Charity scandal was not about the Liberals helping students. It was about the Liberals trying to help the close friends of the government and the Prime Minister.

[*English*]

We talked about empty gestures and a lack of action on COVID-19. In this crisis, we have talked about some of the help that Canadians need right now. We talked about the fact that the government made a choice to give a \$1 billion bailout to close friends, but chose to make Canadians living with disabilities wait. The government made a choice to make Canadians who rely on the CERB to wait until the last moment before we forced them to extend it, but the government jumped so quickly to help its friends out with a \$1 billion bailout.

These are the choices the government has made. It continues to choose again and again to quickly help out its friends, but to make people wait for help. That is the reality of this crisis. In the beginning of the crisis, the government jumped to help banks with billions of dollars, but again—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I am sorry. The hon. member will have nine minutes to conclude his speech after question period.

I now have to give the floor for Statements by Members and to the hon. member for Nepean.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]***PALESTINE**

**Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to highlight an issue that many Canadians, including all Palestinian Canadians, are concerned with. Israel has said it is preparing to annex significant Palestinian territory in the West Bank.

This will be a devastating blow to Palestinian human rights. This unilateral annexation would be damaging to peace negotiations and international law. We are also concerned that this could lead to further insecurity for Israelis and Palestinians at a difficult time for peace and stability in the region. We have long maintained that peace can only be achieved through direct negotiations between the parties.

I call upon our government to take concrete, visible and decisive action on our firm commitment to the goal of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace both for Israel and Palestine.

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● (1400)

**WE CHARITY FUNDING**

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Madam Speaker, “Three strikes and you’re out.” That is what my constituents are saying about the most corrupt Prime Minister in the history of Canada and the latest Liberal ethical lapse: the WE Charity-Trudeau family scandal.

The decision by the government to provide millions of taxpayer dollars to WE Charity—

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** A point of order, Madam Speaker.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Members cannot interrupt statements by members.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, the decision by the government to provide millions of taxpayer dollars to WE Charity, an organization that has been lining the pockets of members of the Liberal Party to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars, is beyond disgusting. Using a national crisis like a health pandemic to line Liberal family members' pockets is morally reprehensible.

The unfortunate reality is this abuse of charity means that the people most affected are some of the poorest on the planet. Unlike dressing up in blackface or groping a female reporter, this time the Prime Minister is not going to get away with hiding on some fantasy island vacation or avoiding democracy by shutting down—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Hochelaga.

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*[Translation]***YVON LAMARRE**

**Ms. Soraya Martínez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, on June 2, Quebec lost a visionary well known to Montrealers. Yvon Lamarre was elected in 1966 and served as the presi-

dent of the City of Montreal's executive committee under Mayor Jean Drapeau.

Among his accomplishments are the Lachine Canal park, an initiative to build 20,000 housing units, universal accessibility for people with reduced mobility and Canada's first paratransit system. As one of Quebec's great philanthropists, he launched the Fondation Yvon Lamarre in 1986. Today, over 30 adapted residences provide essential respite services to people with intellectual disabilities, including those on the autism spectrum and with physical disabilities.

Mr. Lamarre's foundation improves people's lives and has improved my own family's life. Like him, our government cares about the millions of Canadians living with disabilities and plans to put forward a measure that will expand access to additional financial support to help them get through these tough times.

On behalf of my family and many Canadian families, I thank Mr. Lamarre from the bottom of my heart.

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**REGIONAL AIR TRANSPORTATION**

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, on July 1, Air Canada announced its decision to drop 30 regional routes and close eight stations at regional airports, including many in eastern Quebec. This was a devastating blow for my entire region, and especially for the Mont-Joli airport, which will lose over 30% of its revenues without the Air Canada counter.

Local players quickly joined forces to try to come up with a new model for reliable, sustainable regional air service. Various project proponents saw this news as an opportunity to transform the regional transportation model by proposing an alternative to private companies, since we are talking about providing a service, not a product. Air transportation is a service that should help revitalize a region.

The federal government must commit to supporting the Quebec initiatives rather than continue to stubbornly subsidize private airlines that abandon Quebec's regions overnight. The government needs to wake up and recognize that an air transportation model should serve the interests of the people, not the shareholders of private corporations.

[English]

### BLACK LIVES MATTER

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since the tragic death of George Floyd May 25 in Minneapolis, the words “black lives matter” have mobilized not only Americans but millions seeking justice around the world and here in Canada. My own hometown of Châteauguay held its first-ever Black Lives Matter protest, attended by hundreds of people of all ages and from all racial and linguistic backgrounds, including our next-door neighbours in Kahnawake.

[Translation]

The protests have to translate into measures. It is not enough to march and protest. We must work to change things.

That is why I brought together, virtually, of course, 20 or so people from the black community and young leaders to discuss the issue of systemic racism and to see how together we might change things back home in Châteauguay—Lacolle. An oversight committee came out of that initiative, and I am certain that concrete measures will follow shortly.

• (1405)

[English]

I want to thank the member for Hull—Aylmer, who also chairs the Canadian Caucus of Black Parliamentarians, for attending our inaugural meeting and for his long-time leadership in fighting for black Canadians.

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### COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize two communities in northwest Saskatchewan. On April 15, the first case of COVID-19 was identified in the town of La Loche. This quickly escalated into 220 cases, with another 62 cases in the neighbouring Clearwater River Dene Nation. La Loche and Clearwater were considered the hot spots of indigenous communities in all of Canada at the time. Of the 15 deaths in Saskatchewan from COVID, five were residents of La Loche, bringing further pain to an already difficult situation.

I am happy to say that as of Wednesday, La Loche and the Clearwater River Dene Nation had zero active cases. Mayor Robert St. Pierre and Chief Teddy Clark have shown incredible leadership in guiding the people through this very real crisis. The Saskatchewan Health Authority and the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority initiated an unprecedented door-to-door testing and contact-tracing campaign that contributed to managing this outbreak. This situation is a great example of people in northern Saskatchewan working together for the common good.

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[Translation]

### ARGENTEUIL—LA PETITE-NATION

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as you know, opportunities to travel outside Canada are limited during this pandemic.

### Statements by Members

For many people, the months of July and August are synonymous with vacation. I would like to take this opportunity to invite our constituents to visit our Quebec, our regions and small towns.

In my riding, Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, over 41 municipalities are brimming with magnificent countryside views, navigable waterways where people can swim, and warm and welcoming communities. Whether we are talking about visiting Plaisance Falls, boating on one of the 85 lakes in Saint-Adolphe-d'Howard, or taking in our historic sites and tourist attractions, now, more than ever, the tourism industry is depending on us.

Let us be tourists in our towns, our regions, our riding. Let us encourage our local economy.

I wish everyone a good and safe summer.

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### MARCEL D'AMOUR

**Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise to mark the passing of the former mayor of Hull, Marcel D'Amour, at the venerable age of 97.

We often use words such as “builder” or “tireless”, but I can assure you that they describe Mr. D'Amour perfectly.

Thanks to his indomitable spirit, the Outaouais is part of the National Capital Region's economic success story. Mr. D'Amour served three consecutive terms as mayor and unsuccessfully tried to make federal departments move to Quebec. However, he never gave up. After Pierre Trudeau was elected, Mr. D'Amour convinced the new prime minister of the merit of his idea. Fifty years later, at least 25% of the region's public service positions are in the Outaouais.

I had the privilege of visiting Mr. D'Amour at his home on three occasions. We discussed past and present issues. Once a builder, always a builder. He supported the recent proposal to build a tramway in Gatineau connecting both sides of the Ottawa River.

On behalf of all the residents of Hull—Aylmer, I extend our condolences to his family and thank them for lending us this great man and politician.

*Statements by Members**[English]***SMALL BUSINESS**

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canadian small and medium-sized business owners have stepped up to the plate to give back to their communities. Many had to close shop with no warning for an uncertain period. Uncertainty is one factor that can take a business down. Small and medium-sized businesses have long been the economic engine of this country. Now they need their country more than ever. What they need right now is clarity on various government programs, such as the wage subsidy and rent assistance.

How long will they run? Is there anything else coming to help them? Those questions are there. Diverse small businesses I have been visiting and talking to in my riding have reached out and want answers from the government. Every time a small business closes down, it is a piece of the community we may never see again. Let us help them out. They need us.

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• (1410)

**JASPER NATIONAL PARK BUS ACCIDENT**

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 2020 has been a very difficult year right around the globe and here at home as well. So many of our fellow citizens are already dealing with loss and sorrow, and then this past weekend an accident in Jasper National Park claimed more lives, causing more pain and grief.

I count my blessings, being Canadian, as I feel that most Canadians react to sorrow and grief with compassion, empathy and a heartfelt wish to console. We know that it is togetherness that will help us make it through the suffering that might come our way. As long as we are looking after each other, as long as we are willing to share that burden of pain and sorrow, we can face whatever comes our way.

*[Translation]*

We stand with you.

*[English]*

They are in our hearts. I thank all who have reached out to help, friends and strangers alike. They are an inspiration.

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**CYSTIC FIBROSIS**

**Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are over 4,000 individuals who have cystic fibrosis in Canada. I have met with some of them and heard their stories.

CF is a genetic disease that impacts the lungs of these Canadians causing shortness of breath, increased risk of infection and destruction of the lung leading to loss of lung function. It will lead to death for the majority, but we can do something about it. For example, Health Canada could create a special access program for Trikafta, a new drug that would treat CF and improve the quality of life for 90% of these Canadians. It is imperative that treatments for rare

disorders be allowed in Canada before it is too late for those whose lives these medications could save.

I urge the government to reconsider the regulatory changes being made, now delayed until January, that would make the Canadian market unappealing for drug companies to introduce new products, especially treatments for rare disorders such as CF.

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*[Translation]***NORAH AND ROMY CARPENTIER**

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this moment to pay tribute to two young girls, Norah and Romy Carpentier, whom we lost too soon. This tragedy has left our hearts bruised, and there are no words powerful enough to express our shared sadness.

I also want to acknowledge their mother, Amélie Lemieux, for her unwavering courage. She is a model of resilience and strength in the face of life's unexpected challenges.

As member of Parliament for Lévis—Lotbinière, and as a father and a grandfather, I hope from the bottom of my heart, Ms. Lemieux, that your wish comes true and that your two stars, your two princesses, Norah and Romy, guide you in the days ahead.

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*[English]***YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the ramifications of COVID-19 will be felt for a long time, and Canada's youth are most definitely being hit hard. The disruption in their education and employment opportunities will have lasting effects on their lives and on Canada for years.

Instead of using existing programs to help students, the Liberals have asked them to rely on the now stalled Canada student service grant. The Prime Minister and his Liberal government are under investigation, and this program is not working. Students now find themselves stuck in the middle of yet another Liberal scandal. Students should not have to keep waiting for the government to find its moral compass. They need work and financial support now.

The government needs to cancel this complicated program and transfer the funds to the Canada summer jobs program or give grants directly to the volunteer sector. This would ensure that jobs would be accessible for students who need help right now. It is time that the Liberal government stop putting corporations and their well-connected friends first and start helping students in Canada.

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[Translation]

### IMMIGRATION

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has been criticizing the delays in processing immigration applications for a long time now. What was already an issue is now taking a major human toll, especially in the context of the current crisis.

Right now, doctors and nurses are unable to work or help out because their work permit applications, which they submitted on paper, cannot be dug out of the pile to be processed. Many families are still living apart because their sponsorship applications still have not been processed three years, five years, sometimes eight years on. People who should have been allowed in a long time ago are being deprived of the support of their loved ones, all because of the legendary incompetence of the Department of Immigration. Despite the fine promises that have been made, the guardian angels' applications are still going nowhere.

However, the government does not need anyone's permission to move these applications up the queue. What is it waiting for?

The government needs to get into high gear. It is a matter of humanity. It is high time that the Department of Immigration did two things: number one, muster some compassion and willpower, and number two, get some 21st-century technology.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

[English]

### HALDIMAND—NORFOLK

**Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has taken a tremendous toll on the health, safety and prosperity of Canadians. In my riding of Haldimand—Norfolk, too many people have been negatively impacted by this pandemic, but do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Through it all, the strength and kindness of the people in my community have been deeply heartening.

To our many front-line health care and emergency personnel who are putting their own lives at risk every day to protect us, to our farmers and farm workers who are working so hard to ensure that our food supply is both secure and sufficient, to those who keep our grocery and pharmacy shelves stocked, to the business owners who shifted their products and services to help fight COVID-19, and to all those who have done their part during these difficult times, we give our utmost thanks and we are beyond grateful to them for their efforts.

We thank them, and we wish them to be well.

### Oral Questions

#### JOHN ROBERT LEWIS

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life of Congressman John Robert Lewis, a civil rights icon who served the American people with honour and distinction. He was a courageous warrior who fought against racism and for equality in all of its forms.

He was inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King's non-violent struggle for racial equality and was part of the seminal moments of the civil rights movement. He was one of the original Freedom Riders. He marched on Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama in 1965, where he was beaten by state troopers. He helped organize the March on Washington.

The work he started nearly sixty years ago remains unfinished. One of his last public appearances was to protest the George Floyd killing at the hands of the Minneapolis police.

We grieve together with our American brothers and sisters on the passing of the conscience of their nation. As he passes the torch to another generation of civil rights leaders, let us honour him by doubling our efforts to combat racism and achieving true equality.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### ETHICS

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, June 10 was the last time the House of Commons met to deal with the legislation that we have been summoned back for today. In the meantime, the Prime Minister has been rocked by a \$900-million scandal in which he gave a sole-source contract to an organization that paid his immediate family members hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The Prime Minister could have picked any day to summon members of Parliament back to work, but on his website it says that he is taking a personal day. I guess he needed another long weekend.

Why is the Prime Minister taking a personal day? I would like to ask the Deputy Prime Minister, is everything okay?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as Deputy Prime Minister, part of my job is to be accountable to this chamber when the Prime Minister is not here. It is a privilege for me to answer questions on behalf of the government from members on the other side of the House, and I am very happy to answer any questions the opposition has today.

[Translation]

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** We will see, Mr. Speaker.

### Oral Questions

Every day, we learn troubling new details about the WE Charity scandal. This weekend, Charity Intelligence, an independent watchdog, said that it had serious concerns about WE, including enormous debts, poor financial transparency and board member resignations.

Was the Prime Minister aware of these issues when cabinet chose to give the contract to his friends at WE Charity?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The non-partisan public service recommended this structure as the only way to deliver the program in the required time.

Obviously, the way this unfolded was regrettable, and that is why the charity is no longer administering the project.

• (1420)

[English]

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a group of people set up an organization with a charitable wing that receives money from the taxpayer. That same organization sets up a for-profit corporation that charges the charity for services. At the same time, the charity and the for-profit are gobbling up tens of millions of dollars' worth of prime Toronto real estate, all the while giving a platform and endorsements to the politicians who approved the grants in the first place.

This is not a plot line in a *Sopranos* episode; this is the Prime Minister's current scandal, so will the Prime Minister show up at committee and testify?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the non-partisan public service recommended this structure as the only way to deliver the program in the required time. Obviously, the way this unfolded was regrettable, and that is why the charity is no longer administering the project. When it comes to the committee, we are co-operating with it, as we ought to do.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is odd that the public service would come up with this idea all on its own. Charity Intelligence, a watchdog for charitable organizations, says WE has no experience delivering this kind of program: "I'm not sure how you would assess the charity's track record or capability to do this if it had not previously done such work in the past." That is from the managing director, Kate Bahen.

The Liberals say it was the public service that recommended WE, and yet it was WE that sent a proposal to manage this program directly to Rachel Wernick, on the same day that the Prime Minister announced the program.

Who in the Prime Minister's office prepped WE for this announcement?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we heard clearly last week at committee, it was the non-partisan public service that recommended this structure as the only way to deliver the program in the required time.

Let me also be clear with Canadians that the way this unfolded was regrettable and the charity will no longer be administering the project.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the Deputy Prime Minister is saying; nothing has become clear from testimony at the committee. In fact, at the ethics committee, Liberal members shamefully filibustered and ran out the clock so they would not have to answer these types of questions. Getting up in the House of Commons and responding is not the same as giving an answer to very specific questions.

Charity Intelligence went on to say that "in 2018, the auditor flagged for the first time that WE Charity was in breach of its bank covenants. That is a massive, massive red flag."

Either the Liberals were aware of these issues and still approved the decision, or they were incompetent. It is either corruption or incompetence. Which is it?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is neither. Let me simply be clear. As we heard from Canada's excellent public service last week, it was our non-partisan public service that recommended this structure as the only way to deliver the program in the required time. Obviously, the way this unfolded was regrettable, and that is why it is important for me to assure Canadians that the charity is no longer administering the project.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, roughly an hour ago, exactly when is not important, I received a message from Louis Sansfaçon, who came to Parliament with his daughter Émilie Sansfaçon a few months ago and met with the Prime Minister.

During that meeting, the Prime Minister said that he intended to consider the request made by people who pay the same taxes, and whose families pay the same taxes as everyone else, to increase employment insurance benefits to 50 weeks for the seriously ill.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister consider this request now?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

I want to acknowledge how important it is for our government to support Canadians at this time of serious economic crisis.

We understand the importance of supporting Canadians. We are doing that now, and I want to assure the House that we will continue to do so.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I realize questions are not always sent in ahead of time, but that did not even remotely resemble an answer.

Can the Deputy Prime Minister tell us that she will consider this request, that I will be able to ask a question about this issue, and that I will get a more detailed answer once the government has had some time to think about what it can do for people with serious illnesses who are collecting employment insurance?

• (1425)

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure you and all members of the House and all Canadians that our government understands the importance of supporting all Canadians during this very serious economic crisis. We do understand the importance of supporting people with serious illnesses.

We are working on it, and we will keep doing this important work.

\* \* \*

#### ETHICS

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the WE scandal is another example of the Liberal government saying all the right things in public, but working for its close friends behind closed doors.

If the Liberal government really wanted to help students, it could use existing programs.

Will the government admit today that the point of this scandal was not to help students, but rather to help its close friends?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

What our government understands is the importance of helping young Canadians today. Economic history has shown that recessions pose a particular threat to young people, which is why our government is here to support that generation.

That is a promise from our government to all young Canadians.

[English]

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there were lots of ways to help students; this was not it. What this was was a billion-dollar bailout of close friends of the Liberal Party and of the Prime Minister. People with disabilities were told to wait for months before they could get help. People who saw their CERB about to end were also told to wait. People who needed help were told again and again by the government to wait, but when close friends of the Liberal government and close friends of the Prime Minister needed help, they jumped in with nearly a billion-dollar bailout.

Will the government admit that this was not about helping students but about helping its close friends?

#### Oral Questions

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will tell you what this government believes in. We understand that economic recessions and depressions pose a particular threat to young people, and that is why we acted swiftly to support young Canadians. I want to say to all young Canadians that we will not allow them to be left behind. We will not allow them to be a lost generation.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week at the ethics committee, Liberal members filibustered the committee in an attempt to obstruct further examination of the Prime Minister's role in awarding a sole-source deal to his buddies at the WE organization. This comes after the Liberals blocked the Ethics Commissioner from testifying at committee regarding the "Trudeau II Report", in which the PM was found to have broken ethics laws for a second time.

Where is the Prime Minister's commitment to transparency and openness when he sends members to committee to do his dirty work?

[Translation]

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows full well that committees are independent and make their own decisions. The members who sit on these committees act in accordance with their priorities and their knowledge of the issues. They ask good questions and have good debates.

The government will never tell members what to do, because it understands that a committee's independence is too important to be disregarded.

[English]

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, like the Prime Minister, the finance minister has close family with financial ties to the WE organization. Despite this and his previous record of ethical breaches, the finance minister did not recuse himself from discussions or the decision to award a whopping \$43 million taxpayer-funded bailout to the WE organization with its broken bank covenants and board in shambles.

Did the minister know the state of the WE organization when he signed off on this plan worth \$912 million in taxpayer dollars?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I and our government have been clear, the health and safety of all Canadians remains our priority. The finance committee asked me to come to testify. I was present. The committee asked for officials to come. The officials testified. What is clear and has been shared and stated publicly is that the non-partisan professional public service made a recommendation and we accepted its recommendation.

Our focus remains on making sure that students have additional supports in this very challenging and unprecedented time. It was a contribution agreement that was negotiated and signed between the public service and WE Charity. I did sign off on that recommendation. It was the only one the public servants provided, and after due diligence, I am confident they did their important work.

• (1430)

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday, July 17, 2020, the Liberals had a lot to say at the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, and they systematically obstructed its work. Meanwhile, Canadians have serious questions about the close ties between the Prime Minister and WE Charity.

Will the Liberal government continue trying to cover up this new scandal at the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that members act independently in committee. Far be it from us to try to influence committee work.

The Conservatives may like telling their MPs what to do, but on the government side, we are committed to protecting the independence of committees. The independence of members is absolutely fundamental to the proper functioning of the House and always will be.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, to get to the bottom of this new scandal, the transparency of the Prime Minister's cabinet deliberations is important.

This time will the Prime Minister lift the veil of secrecy, waive cabinet confidence and finally tell us the whole truth?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, the aim of the Canada student service grant was always to connect post-secondary students and recent graduates who want to support their communities' COVID-19 response.

As I said, we will always work with the Ethics Commissioner. The Standing Committee on Finance asked me to come and testify and I did. We answered all the questions. The public service made recommendations and I accepted those recommendations.

[English]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Diversity says that she and the government did due diligence before granting this \$912 million contribution agreement to WE Charity. Did this due diligence demonstrate, through the pub-

licly available sources, that WE Charity had somehow accumulated over \$40 million in real estate?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, members of all parties passed a motion at the finance committee to ensure that I could appear to provide these answers. They also requested that officials appear, and the officials also appeared last Thursday to provide this information in a public format so that the information could be available. As I shared at committee and continue to share, the non-partisan professional public service made a recommendation. I am confident that the public servants did their due diligence. Any of the information that was shared with me by the public service, I shared at committee to ensure that Canadians and members could have those answers. It was a contribution agreement that was signed because our focus was on students and not-for-profits in this very challenging time.

[Translation]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the question was to find out whether the public service or the government knew that the organization received over \$40 million in real estate. Perhaps we will find out one day.

I will ask another question. Is the government telling the truth when it says that it respects the committee? The committee invited the Prime Minister to testify. Will the Prime Minister testify, yes or no?

[English]

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we have stated, it is very regrettable the way the situation has unfolded. As the Prime Minister has also stated, he recognizes that he should have recused himself. We know that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is doing an investigation. We have stated that we would comply with him.

To the member's first question, any of the information that was made available to me, I made available to committee members, and it was their recommendation that I accepted, because our goal has always been to deliver for Canadians and provide additional support to students. We recognize that not-for-profits are also facing a very challenging time, so it was an opportunity to put in a program that would help people in a very positive way.

[Translation]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the midst of a pandemic, the government created a \$900-million program and decided, without even launching a tendering process, that only those that hire the Trudeau family are able to administer it. Is it just me or did the Prime Minister create a loyalty program for his family and friends of the family?

Is there a single cabinet member who can explain to us how they decided that WE Charity was the only organization that was able to administer this program?

• (1435)

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I explained before the Standing Committee on Finance, we wanted to create another program for students and not-for-profits. We asked the public service to give us some ideas. I am sure it did its job. It made a recommendation. I asked some questions, and it made a recommendation, which I accepted. That is how we arrived at that decision.

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, that is absurd. We are in the middle of a pandemic. At a time when we should feel confident that our government is working for the common good, that the only thing that matters is the public interest, the Prime Minister is putting his family and his buddies first. He handed more than \$40 million of taxpayer money to an organization that he has ties to and that hires members of his family. We obviously cannot trust him.

Will the Prime Minister do the one thing that could lend any semblance of sincerity to his apology and step down while the Ethics Commissioner investigates?

[English]

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know this is a very unprecedented and challenging time and that Canadians are hurting. We know that COVID-19 has impacted all Canadians, disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable. Students are no exception.

The program we put out for students was a \$9 billion program in support that included the creation of the Canada emergency student benefit. We doubled Canada student grants for full and part-time students. We instituted a six-month moratorium on Canada student loans. We increased funding for first nations, Inuit and Métis students purposing post-secondary education. We announced 10,000 additional jobs for the Canada summer jobs program, a new investment of—

That is right. This is how much we have been doing.

[Translation]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, that makes no sense. The minister did not answer my question. The problem is that the Prime Minister did not recuse himself from the decision. He did not recuse himself beforehand, and then he apologized after the fact, but only because he got caught red-handed yet again.

Why did the Prime Minister fail to mention that his mother and his brother were paid by WE Charity? Did he just forget that detail, or was he hoping it would not come to light? Why try to hide the truth, if not because he knew his decision was ethically indefensible?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, the Prime Minister said that he should not have been there when the decision was made. He accepted responsibility. Our government will continue to ensure that there are programs for students and for not-for-profits.

### Oral Questions

We will also ensure that Canadians have the resources they need right now. We know that young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow, they are also the leaders of today. Since the beginning of this pandemic, we have said that we would be there for all Canadians, and we will continue to work for them.

[English]

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the WE Charity scandal continues to deepen. More troubling details are being revealed daily. With their filibuster in the ethics committee last week, it would seem that the Liberals are hiding something embarrassing. Every minister should be asked about their connection to WE. The transport minister, the employment minister and the foreign affairs minister have made it clear that they knew nothing about the Prime Minister's conflict of interest. The rest of cabinet, however, must come clean.

Can the minister tell us if she was aware of the Prime Minister's blatant conflict of interest?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have been clear that my focus as the Minister of Youth has been on ensuring that young people have the supports they need during this pandemic. The member asks very good questions, and that is exactly why, when members of all parties supported a motion at finance committee to have us appear, I appeared. The first possible opportunity to have myself appear, I was there and I made sure that my officials were there as well to answer these very questions.

What is clear is that the public service made a recommendation. I accepted the recommendation because my goal is to ensure that young people have the supports they need, and I shared all of that information. It is publicly available.

**Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister does not believe that the rules apply to him. He outsourced nearly a billion dollars worth of taxpayers' money to an organization with close ties not only to his party, but also to his family. It is greatly disturbing. It is always one set of rules for Liberals and another for everyone else. We have seen here today that the Liberals refuse to answer the questions we have about the scandal.

When will the Prime Minister agree to testify at committee?

*Oral Questions*

• (1440)

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the health and safety of Canadians is a shared responsibility, and that is why we continue to work day in and day out to ensure that those supports are available. Members of all parties at the finance committee asked me to appear and I appeared, and the officials appeared as well. What the officials reiterated was that they made a recommendation based on the organization having the capacity to deliver the substantial program in the timeline needed.

These questions have been answered and we will continue assuring and reminding Canadians that we will be here to support them. The Conservatives continue with their tactics, but we will stay focused on Canadians.

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve answers after the Prime Minister got caught awarding a billion dollars of taxpayers' money to WE, an organization that benefited the Prime Minister politically and socially, and enriched his family.

The Prime Minister famously said that “sunshine is the best disinfectant”. Will the Prime Minister let the sun shine in and appear before the finance committee to answer questions about this sordid affair, or will he continue to hide?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that the record state what is actually taking place. There was a substantial line item of \$912 million for the Canada student service grant. The vast majority of that program, that line item, was for grants to really reward students because they have been rolling up their sleeves helping to heal communities and not-for-profits during this very challenging time. It was a contribution agreement that was signed, and they would have been able to receive a maximum of \$43.5 million, which we know will not happen because the WE Charity is no longer delivering this program.

It is also important to note that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is investigating and we will—

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

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the Liberals are in trouble after handing over almost a billion-dollar contract to their friends at WE. Meanwhile, students have to wait to get paid for the time they have already spent working in their communities. That time was given in good faith.

During COVID, students are facing disruption of their studies and lack of employment opportunities. Their futures are at stake, but Liberals prefer keeping their wealthy friends wealthy, instead of helping students make ends meet.

When will the Liberals put the future of students ahead of the interests of their friends and the well-connected?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to share the following with the member, because she obviously has not seen the \$9-billion student support program that we put forward. We announced \$9 billion in support, including the creation of the Canada emergency

student benefit. We doubled Canada's student grants for full and part-time students. We instituted a six-month moratorium on Canada student loans. We increased funding for first nations, Inuit and Métis students for post-secondary education during this very challenging time. We created an additional 10,000 jobs through the Canada summer jobs program.

The list is long because we are here to ensure that there is a suite of programs to support students during this very challenging time. We will continue to ensure that they have those supports.

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that giving an apology is not the same as taking responsibility, yet the Liberals continue to refuse to take responsibility for this disturbing pattern of self-dealing that now sees the Prime Minister and the finance minister under an ethics investigation. It is as if the Liberals think the rules do not apply to them, that they get to do favours for their family, the wealthy and elite and get away with it with the magic words “I'm sorry”, but that does not cut it.

Will the Prime Minister finally take responsibility and agree to waive the cabinet confidentiality, attend the ethics committee and fully co-operate with the Ethics Commissioner's investigation into the WE Charity scandal?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been clear that we will be complying with the Ethics Commissioner, and that is something we have always done. We have the utmost respect for officers of Parliament. We know they do very important work, and that is why it is important that we let the commissioner do his important work.

It is also important to note that our focus is on Canadians and delivering programs for them. That is why we have put forward the Canada emergency student benefit. We have put forward the Canada summer jobs program. We have made sure that these programs are actually modified to ensure they are within the COVID-19 context. We want to ensure the health and safety of all Canadians, including students. Yes, we will continue fighting for students.

• (1445)

**The Speaker:** I know we have been away from the House for a while. I want to remind hon. members how it works. We ask a question and then we get a response. Help from the other side, whatever side it is on, whether it is during the question or during the answer, is not the way we should be doing things. I wanted to put that out there.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

## HEALTH

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Lac-Saint-Louis and Canadians across the country are eager to know when we can return to normal. In my riding, families have made changes to their lives, from staying home to wearing masks, so they can keep themselves and our community safe.

Recently, we heard the news that Medicago, a Quebec company, has been approved by Health Canada to begin clinical trials for a COVID-19 vaccine. Could the minister please tell us the status of this research?

[Translation]

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Lac-Saint-Louis for his question and for his work.

We knew that it was essential to invest in research to ensure that the best and brightest can find treatments and potentially a COVID-19 vaccine.

[English]

On July 9, Health Canada approved the clinical trial for Medicago's COVID-19 vaccine in Canada. This is the first vaccine from a Canadian company to enter human trials, and we are pleased to support such important research in Canada.

\* \* \*

## TAXATION

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Here we go again, Mr. Speaker. The CMHC paid \$250,000 to a group that labels homeowners as lottery winners to see how they could be taxed some more. The minister claims the Liberals are not looking at a capital gains tax, but recall that before the previous election, there was a document entitled "Ontario Caucus Priorities 2019 Platform", where these tax options were being considered by no less than the current parliamentary secretary to the same minister. The CMHC study is looking at a home equity tax.

Will the government end this charade and commit to no new tax, no tax hikes, on principal residences of homeowners?

**Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear. This is not something that this government is considering. We are not looking at tax changes on principal residences. That is not something we are looking into and we will not be considering that in the future.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, CMHC spent \$250,000 on a study to determine how the government could squeeze more taxes out of homeowners.

Will the government promise to put an end to this practice and stop always demanding more and more taxes, especially from honest Canadian workers? Will it promise here and now that it will not punish them and that it will drop the idea of a home equity tax on primary residences?

## Oral Questions

**Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

We cannot drop an idea that we never had. Changing the tax rules for principal residences is not part of our plans or our policy. We have no such plans.

\* \* \*

## AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

**Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's poultry and egg producers are at the end of their rope. The government promised support measures to offset losses resulting from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, but that compensation has yet to be paid. CUSMA is now in effect, which means more losses for them, yet these farmers continue to wait. Producers have been more than patient.

Can the minister tell us the date when the compensation will be paid? We want a date. The agricultural sector is listening.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, of course it goes without saying that the agricultural sector is extremely important.

We believe in agricultural production and in our farmers. That is why we said that we would be there to help them with compensation. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is having good conversations with the agricultural sector in my colleague's riding and across the country.

We will always be there to defend their reality, especially during this pandemic and this economic crisis, but also, given that we have signed a free trade agreement with Europe.

\* \* \*

[English]

## VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on June 15, I asked the Minister of Veterans Affairs if he was aware of the practice of red-flagging veterans' files. His response was, "I'm not aware", yet on June 2, he signed a letter thanking veteran Shane Jones for his emails that had been forwarded to the minister from the Prime Minister's Office. Those emails included ATIP information that confirmed issues with which Shane was dealing with VAC because there was a flag on his file.

Again, was the Minister of Veterans Affairs aware of the practice of red-flagging veterans' files?

● (1450)

**Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we know, we are still looking into it, and I will come back to her with a specific answer as soon as I can.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there was the case of the Aga Khan, Wealth One, Liberal marijuana companies and now WE Charity. A friend is a friend.

The Prime Minister is certainly not socially distanced from this ethics scandal. He could hardly be any closer.

We are in the midst of a pandemic, the House is not sitting and the government is not accountable to anyone. Everyone must be able to trust it. The Prime Minister has clearly and repeatedly shown that we can no longer trust him.

Will he step aside in favour of the Deputy Prime Minister?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think that this type of partisanship is appropriate today.

With all due respect to my colleague, I would remind him, since he just said that the House is not sitting, that we are in fact sitting. Last time I checked the calendar, it was July. The House usually does not sit this month, but we are here today and will be here tomorrow and the day after that.

We are happy to answer his questions.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if there was no partisanship, would those people be laughing, would they find this funny and would they still support the Prime Minister?

It is quite clear that there is partisanship going on on their side of the House.

The Prime Minister should get a direct line to the Office of the Ethics Commissioner. This is the third time that he has had to deal with them. The first time was for the Aga Khan controversy. That was strike one. The second time was for the SNC-Lavalin scandal. That was strike two. Now, he swung again but the ball landed in the catcher's mitt.

What are the Liberals waiting for to replace the Prime Minister with the Deputy Prime Minister?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government is focusing on programs that are fundamental to Canadians, like the CERB or the wage subsidy, for example.

The reason why we are here today is to help people with disabilities. We are focusing on that and on all the real priorities of all Quebecers and all Canadians. It is our responsibility to do that. It is the responsibility of the government.

The Bloc Québécois can put on a dog and pony show, but the reality is that this government is focusing on what it needs to do and that is to help all Quebecers and Canadians. This partisanship will not change a thing.

[English]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government seems to have blinders on when it comes to China. Canada has remained silent while China's communist regime is systematically attacking the Uighur people. Canada is the only member of the Five Eyes alliance that has not banned Huawei. Now Canada is awarding a Chinese government-owned firm a \$6.8 million contract to supply security equipment to our embassies.

The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is that good men do nothing. When will the Prime Minister stop pandering and stand up to China?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear for Canadians: No contract has been awarded to Nuctech at this time. I have been very specific with the department, and I have been asking for the facts and figures surrounding that contract. I have asked that we review our purchasing practices when it comes to security equipment. I have asked the department to continue our review of security in all our missions around the world.

Let me very clear with Canadians: No purchase has been made under this contract.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are gravely concerned by the government's unwillingness to keep them safe from foreign threats. The government had made clear its plans to use technology from a Chinese state-owned company to secure our embassies. That would be like asking Gerry Butts to be the ethics commissioner.

Nuctech works with entities under American sanctions, providing security equipment currently being used in the Uighur genocide.

Another review is simply not enough. Will the government clearly commit today to say no to Nuctech because it is involved in Xinjiang and because of the threat it poses to Canadian security?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thought I was very clear for Canadians, but let me be clear for the member. There has been no purchase made under this contract. That is the reality. Let us not be misleading Canadians who are watching.

The member asked if we are leading. We were the first ones to suspend the extradition treaty between Canada and Hong Kong. I was the first one to say that we would stop the export of sensitive items to Hong Kong. We were the first, with the United States, to update the travel advisory.

We are front and centre when it comes to standing up for Canada and human rights around the world.

• (1455)

#### IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal ministers have said, as they must, that all Canadian citizens resident in Hong Kong, some 300,000, are welcome home now that the communist Chinese government has imposed repressive new security laws. However, the government is mute, unlike many of our democratic allies, on broader issues of extended visas or refuge for the many more Hong Kongers who may seek sanctuary in Canada.

What is the plan for the expected surge of asylum seekers?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to be unequivocally clear. Canada stands shoulder to shoulder with Hong Kong and shares the grave concerns of the international community over mainland China's national security legislation.

As the Prime Minister said, we will continue to support the many connections between Canada and Hong Kong, while also standing up for its people. Canada is exploring measures beyond those announced, including exploring immigration options, and we will have more to say in due course.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks, our government has been working very hard to give young entrepreneurs in Laval the tools they need.

Can the minister tell us more about her department's investment in excess of \$3.1 million to strengthen the economy by creating more entrepreneurial opportunities and jobs for young people across Quebec?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Laval, the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, for his excellent question.

It goes without saying that our economy depends on our talented young people. That is why we marked World Youth Skills Day by investing \$3.1 million in 14 projects that support youth entrepreneurship.

I congratulate Laval's youth. We believe in their talent and in the talent of all our young people to create good jobs and new businesses.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### TOURISM INDUSTRY

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with an annual economic effect of over \$5.5 billion and over 37,000 jobs supported nationally, the guide outfitters sector is vital to Canada's rural and remote communities. In Canada, it typically welcomes over 300,000 fishing and hunting clients from outside of Canada, with the vast majority from the United States.

#### Oral Questions

With the border now closed at least until August 21, an entire season has been lost and many outfitters are struggling to keep their businesses afloat. The outfitters I have spoken with are saying that wage subsidies alone are not helping. What is the government doing to ensure our fishing and hunting guide outfitters survive?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, obviously I agree with my colleague. Many outfitters and tourism operators are deeply impacted by the pandemic and the economic crisis. That is why we decided to come up with a new fund, the regional recovery fund, which is there to help them. We have been supporting many outfitters across northern Ontario, Atlantic Canada and the west.

If my colleague has a specific case in mind, I would ask him to please come to see me and we can definitely look at it. We will continue to help them through these difficult times.

\* \* \*

#### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's energy sector was devastated by the Liberal government long before COVID-19.

Since 2015, the Alberta economy has been battered by the Liberal's job-killing anti-energy policies. That is why it is disappointing and shameful, but not surprising, that the energy sector has been waiting for 118 days to get the help it needs, despite the Minister of Finance claiming that help was just hours or days away.

Without the revenue from a strong energy sector, how does the Prime Minister plan to come up with the tax dollars to illegally funnel to his friends?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the energy sector and its workers continue to be affected by COVID-19 and the global surge in oil supply. We have taken action to create jobs through the remediation of inactive and abandoned wells, a program that has seen tens of thousands of applications in Alberta and Saskatchewan. We are also supporting the sector with a 75% wage subsidy to keep Canadians working.

Since day one, our government has been steadfast in our support for the hard-working men and women in our energy sector.

\* \* \*

#### ETHICS

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is hard not to feel disappointed in the Liberal government, because every day there is a new scandal. The Prime Minister has already broken our ethics laws not once but twice, and now he is under a conflict of interest investigation yet again.

*Routine Proceedings*

Remember 2017? It was the Liberal government that paid over \$1 million to WE for an event right here on Parliament Hill featuring the Prime Minister's own mother. Could the Prime Minister tell the House whether his mother was paid for this appearance?

• (1500)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, WE Charity was one of several organizations to have submitted a Canada 150 proposal to the Department of Canadian Heritage, and it was subsequently selected. The two Canada 150 contribution agreements between WE Charity and the Department of Canadian Heritage were approved by the minister responsible at the time, at the recommendation of department officials. Cabinet was not involved in the process of approval for these contribution agreements.

\* \* \*

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the investing in Canada plan is an unprecedented \$180-billion program to upgrade our infrastructure across the country. This plan represents the largest such investment in our national economy and environment, more than doubling existing funding. Now more than ever this investment can deliver the economic stimulus required during Canada's post-COVID recovery.

Could the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities comment on the progress that has been made in putting this plan into action?

**Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government's investing in Canada plan has allocated \$7.5 billion to help build up Quebec projects. These investments include public transit, clean water, clean energy, and healthy and active transportation.

We are going to continue to work with the Government of Quebec and municipalities across Quebec to get good projects built that build a cleaner, stronger and more prosperous future.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is unprecedented in Canadian history.

For a third time, the Prime Minister is under investigation by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

Yes, this is the third time. It has to be done.

He bypassed the public service and granted an untendered contract worth nearly \$1 billion to an organization with which he has so many links that it looks like a huge spiderweb. The Liberals have such a sense of entitlement that they ignore the rules when it comes to awarding contracts to their cronies.

Why is it that young people and students have to pay the price for the Liberals' irresistible desire to give their buddies presents?

[*English*]

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been clear when it comes to the ongoing investigation by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner: We will comply with his office.

When it comes to supports for students, the Canada student service grant was an additional measure for students.

We have already come forward with the Canada emergency response benefit. We have already added 10,000 jobs to the Canada summer jobs program. We have put a moratorium on interest for Canada student loan payments, and this program will go ahead. We are working around the clock to ensure that it does, because we want to ensure that students and not-for-profits have the support they need at this necessary time. That remains our focus.

\* \* \*

**POINT OF ORDER**

ORAL QUESTIONS

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during statements by members, although the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader knows points of order do not apply, he objected to my referencing the Trudeau family's receipt of WE payments. If he insists I made reference to the Prime Minister's receiving funds intended for charity, a more expansive investigation is needed so that Canadians can learn how much the Prime Minister received himself.

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member and will take that under advisement.

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**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[*English*]

**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table the House of Commons' "Report to Canadians 2020".

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**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 78 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

• (1505)

[Translation]

#### PAYMENT CARD NETWORKS ACT

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-243, An Act to amend the Payment Card Networks Act (credit card acceptance fees).

He said: Mr. Speaker, who do we work for? The answer is simple. We work for the people, including those who run a business. I point that out because SMEs are relying more than ever on credit card companies, especially during COVID, without being able to do anything about it. I invite all my hon. colleagues to join me in giving business owners in Quebec and the provinces a fighting chance long-term. The purpose of this bill is to regulate interchange fees, which for far too long have been negotiated behind closed doors at the banks.

My hon. colleagues have to ask themselves who they work for. In answering that question, they will come to the conclusion that this bill is fair and will serve the people who trusted us to speak for them.

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

\* \* \*

#### PETITIONS

##### GATINEAU PARK

**Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present petition e-2414 from my Outaouais constituents about protecting Gatineau Park.

I can personally attest that Gatineau Park is one of the most visited parks in Canada with close to three million visitors every year.

[English]

The Gatineau Park, unlike other parks in Canada, and many provincial parks, is not protected by legislation mandating that it be managed to ensure its ecological integrity. This is the reason that almost 3,000 people have signed this particular e-petition asking Parliament to protect Gatineau Park.

It gives me great pleasure to deposit this petition today.

##### FALUN GONG

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions today.

Today is the day marked by the Falun Gong community as the 21st anniversary of the beginning of the horrific persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China. This petition highlights that persecution and calls on the Government of Canada to take strong action against it and champion human rights in the relationship with China and with all countries around the world.

##### HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is similar in some respects, as it also deals with a human rights issue in China.

It asks the House to pass Bill S-204, a bill that would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ

#### Routine Proceedings

when there has not been consent. It deals with the horrific practice of forced organ harvesting and trafficking that impacts the Falun Gong community. We have also been hearing, at the human rights subcommittee, about the impact of organ harvesting on Uighurs as well. Uighurs are facing a genocide in China and organ harvesting is part of the persecution faced by them.

The petitioners are hoping for the quick passage of Bill S-204 to ensure a strong Canadian response to this evil of forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

I commend these two petitions for the consideration of the House.

• (1510)

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of petitioners who support Bill S-204. The petitioners have grave concerns about international trafficking in human organs and forced organ harvesting. They seek the speedy passage of legislation that would amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Criminal Code to make it illegal for Canadians to travel abroad to participate in this practice.

As the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has outlined for the House, this issue affects Uighurs and Falun Gong practitioners in a grave way, and I ask, on behalf of the petitioners, that the House adopt Bill S-204.

#### SENIORS

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I table a petition signed by residents of Winnipeg North who want the House of Commons to give special attention to seniors, particularly the poorest seniors in our country. This has actually been addressed in the last few months, as we have seen some increases to the OAS and the GIS. However, these petitioners just want to see members of Parliament support our seniors in all regions of our country.

\* \* \*

#### QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 425 to 471 and 475 to 484 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Routine Proceedings*

[Text]

Question No. 425—**Mr. Kelly McCauley:**

With regard to government purchases of personal protective equipment (PPE): (a) how many units of PPE did the government have in Canada by November 30, 2019, broken down by type of equipment, and how much PPE was purchased in this month; (b) how many units of PPE did the government have in Canada by December 31, 2019, broken down by type of equipment, and how much PPE was purchased in this month; (c) how many units of PPE did the government have in Canada by January 31, 2020, broken down by type of equipment, and how much PPE was purchased in this month; (d) how many units of PPE did the government have in Canada by February 29, 2020, broken down by type of equipment, and how much PPE was purchased in this month; and (e) how many units of PPE did the government have in Canada by March 31, 2020, broken down by type of equipment, and how much PPE was purchased in this month?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 426—**Mr. Kelly McCauley:**

With regard to additional funding for agencies tasked with Canadian border management, broken down by source of funds and fiscal mechanism (i.e. business of supply, emergency payment from fiscal framework, new legislation): (a) how much went to each border management agency throughout December 2019, broken down by (i) source of funds, (ii) amount of funds, (iii) purpose of funds; (b) how much went to each border management agency throughout January 2020, broken down by (i) source of funds, (ii) amount of funds, (iii) purpose of funds; (c) how much went to each border management agency throughout February 2020, broken down by (i) source of funds, (ii) amount of funds, (iii) purpose of funds; and (d) how much went to each border management agency throughout March 2020, broken down by (i) source of funds, (ii) amount of funds, (iii) purpose of funds?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 427—**Mr. Kelly McCauley:**

With regard to the Canada Emergency Care Benefit: (a) how many people have received payments from both Employment and Social Development Canada and the Canada Revenue Agency; (b) of those cases in (a), how much was paid out in double payments; and (c) how much will need to be recovered due to double payments?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 428—**Mr. Kelly McCauley:**

With regard to meetings or briefings at the deputy minister, minister, and cabinet level for Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Global Affairs Canada, the Privy Council Office, Public Safety Canada, and all agencies therein, between November 30, 2019, and March 31, 2020: what were the details of all meetings held referencing the Hubei province in China, the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, pandemics, and emergency preparedness measures, including (i) the department holding the meeting, (ii) the date of meeting, (iii) officials in attendance, (iv) the topic of the meeting or agenda?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 429—**Mr. John Nater:**

With regard to inmates released early from federal correctional institutions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic: (a) what is the total number of inmates who were released early; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by (i) institution, (ii) length of sentence; and (c) how many of the inmates released early were serving sentences related to (i) murder or manslaughter, (ii) sex offences, (iii) other violent crimes?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 430—**Mr. James Bezan:**

With regard to COVID-19: (a) what is the first date on which Canadian Armed Forces MEDINT or CFINTCOM became aware of a new novel coronavirus in China; (b) what is the first date on which the Minister of National Defence was briefed or received a briefing note regarding a new novel coronavirus in China; and (c) what is the first date on which the Minister of National Defence shared information concerning a new novel coronavirus in China with the Prime Minister's Office and/or the Privy Council Office?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 431—**Mr. James Bezan:**

With regard to personal protective equipment: (a) how many C4 protective masks and canisters have been issued to Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) personnel since January 1, 2020; (b) how many C4 protective masks and canisters are in stockpile; and (c) what are the types and quantities of all personal protective equipment for infectious diseases available for CAF/Department of National Defence personnel and in stockpile?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 432—**Mr. James Bezan:**

With regard to the Mobile Tactical Vehicle Light, Mobile Tactical Vehicle Engineer, Mobile Tactical Vehicle Recovery, and Mobile Tactical Vehicle Fitter: (a) how many of these mobile tactical vehicles have been identified as surplus; (b) how many mobile tactical vehicles have been or are in the process of being decommissioned; (c) how many of these mobile tactical vehicles have been given to museums or sold to private owners; (d) how many of these mobile tactical vehicles remain in service; and (e) by which date does the Canadian Armed Forces/Department of National Defence plan to have the entire fleet of these mobile tactical vehicles removed from service?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 433—**Mr. James Bezan:**

With regard to Role 2 and Role 3 hospitals and air transportation: (a) how many Role 2 and Role 3 hospitals are currently available in Canada; (b) how many Role 2 and Role 3 hospitals are planned for the next six months; and (c) how many aircraft capable of transporting people with infectious disease does the Canadian Armed Forces/Department of National Defence intend to acquire and by which date?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 434—**Mr. Pat Kelly:**

With respect to the Bank of Canada's participation in Canada's economic response to the coronavirus pandemic, between March 1, 2020, and the tabling of the reply to this question: (a) what is the dollar value of securities purchased under the Government of Canada Bond Purchase Program; (b) what is the dollar value of securities purchased under the Canada Mortgage Bond Purchase Program; (c) what is the dollar value of purchases under the Banker's Acceptance Purchase Facility; (d) what is the dollar value of assets purchased under the Provincial Money Market Purchase Program, by province and in aggregate, respectively; (e) what is the dollar value of purchases under the Provincial Bond Purchase Program; (f) what is the dollar value of purchases under the Corporate Bond Purchase Program; (g) what is the dollar value of purchases under the Commercial Paper Purchase Program; (h) what is the dollar value of purchases under the Contingent Term Repo Facility; (i) what is the projected dollar value for total purchases during the life of each program in (a) to (h); (j) what is the dollar value of new currency created to date to fund the measures taken in (a) to (h); (k) what is the projected dollar value of new currency to be created to fund the measures taken in (a) to (h) during the life of each program; (l) what, if any, effects on inflation by the creation of currency in (j) does the Bank of Canada project for (i) 2020, (ii) 2021, (iii) 2022; and (m) what, if any, adjustments to the Bank of Canada's prime rate does it anticipate needing to counteract any inflation projected in (l)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 435—**Mr. Pat Kelly:**

With respect to the Bank of Canada's participation in Canada's economic response to the coronavirus pandemic: (a) when does the Bank of Canada project divesting itself of assets purchased under each of the Government of Canada Bond Purchase Program, the Canada Mortgage Bond Purchase Program, the Banker's Acceptance Purchase Facility, the Provincial Money Market Purchase Program, the Commercial Paper Purchase Program, and the Contingent Term Repo Facility; and (b) what gain or loss does the Bank of Canada project realizing upon the sale of assets purchased under each of the programs in (a) respectively?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 436—Mr. Pat Kelly:**

With respect to the doubling of the carbon tax on April 1, 2020: (a) by how much will the increased tax raise the cost of producing oil and natural gas respectively nationwide; (b) by how much will the increased tax raise the cost of producing oil and natural gas respectively for each energy producing province; (c) by how much have national revenues declined due to the drop in the price of crude oil since January 1, 2020; (d) in order for national revenues to recover to levels immediately pre-dating the drop in the price of oil in (c), and given the increased cost of production in (a), what does the price of crude oil need to be; (e) what effect does the increase in cost of production in (a) have on the ability of Canadian energy producers to compete with foreign producers at current world prices for crude oil; and (f) how many Canadian energy producers does the government forecast will be unable to compete with foreign energy producers at the prevailing price of crude oil due to the increased cost of production in (a)?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 437—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:**

With regard to government grants, contributions and contracts since January 1, 2016, what are the details of all grants, contributions or contracts given to World Wildlife Fund Canada or its international affiliates, broken down by: (a) date issued; (b) description of services provided; (c) authorizer; (d) timeframe for services; (e) original contribution value; (f) final contribution value (if different); (g) location services will be provided; and (h) reference and file number?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 438—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:**

With regard to the budget measure contained in Bill C-44 (42nd Parliament, budget 2017) exempting fees under the Food and Drugs Act from the new rules contained in the Service Fees Act: (a) how many times has the Minister of Health given a ministerial order to increase fees; and (b) what are the details of each increase, broken down by date of ministerial order, including (i) amount of the increase for each drug, device, food or cosmetic, by percentage and absolute dollar value, (ii) amount of the fee, (iii) manner or criteria used for determining the amount, (iv) circumstances in which the fee will be payable, (v) rationale for the fee, (vi) specific factors taken into account in determining the amount of the fee, (vii) performance standard that will apply in respect of the fee?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 439—Mr. Arnold Viersen:**

With regard to temporary resident permits specific to victims of human trafficking, since November 4, 2015: (a) how many applications have been received; (b) how many temporary resident permits have been issued; (c) how many temporary resident permits were denied; (d) in (a) to (c), what is the breakdown by (i) year, (ii) month, (iii) gender, (iv) source country; (e) for permits in (b), what is the breakdown based on ministerial instructions 1(1), 1(2) and 2; and (f) what is the average wait time for an individual who applies for a temporary resident permits specific to victims of human trafficking?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 440—Mr. Arnold Viersen:**

With regard to federal funding to combat human trafficking since November 4, 2015: (a) what is the total amount, broken down by (i) department or agency, (ii) initiative, (iii) amount; (b) what process was used to determine which department or agency would receive this funding; (c) what criteria or process was used to determine how much funding was allocated to each department or agency; and (d) what is the itemized list of funding programs to combat human trafficking, including (i) title of program, (ii) recipient organization or name, (iii) date of expenditure, (iv) amount, (v) description of goods or services provided, including quantity, if applicable, (vi) file number?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 441—Mr. Arnold Viersen:**

With regard to the additional \$75 million National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking announced on September 4, 2019: (a) what departments and agencies are receiving this new funding, broken down by initiative and organization; (b) what are the details of all funding provided to date, including the (i) name, (ii) project description, (iii) amount, (iv) date of the announcement, (v) duration of the project or program funded by the announcement; (c) what process was used to determine which department or agency would receive this funding; (d) what criteria or process was used to determine how much funding was allocated to each department

or agency; and (e) what projects are slated to receive federal funding in the 2020-21 fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 442—Mr. Kerry Diotte:**

With regard to the functioning of the public service and government officials since March 16, 2020: (a) how many employees or full time equivalents (FTEs) have been (i) hired, (ii) reassigned in relation to the COVID-19 response; (b) how many FTEs have been (i) working from a government building, (ii) telecommuting or working from home during the pandemic; and (c) how many FTEs have been (i) laid off or terminated, (ii) placed on leave, broken down by type of leave?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 443—Mr. Michael Barrett:**

With regard to construction and renovations at the Prime Minister's country residence and surrounding property at Harrington Lake: (a) what are the details of each new building or other structure constructed, or in the process of being constructed, at the property since November 4, 2015, including (i) date construction began, (ii) projected or actual completion date, (iii) square footage, (iv) physical description of the structure, (v) purpose of the structure, (vi) estimated cost; and (b) what are the details of all renovations which began at the property since November 4, 2015, including (i) start date, (ii) projected or actual completion date, (iii) structure, (iv) project description, (v) estimated cost?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 444—Mrs. Marilène Gill:**

With regard to evaluating the stock status of all of Canada's fisheries resources since 2000: (a) has the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) used indicators to evaluate the various stocks and, if so, what is the breakdown of indicators by (i) species, (ii) province, (iii) area, (iv) sub-area, (v) year; (b) if the answer to (a) is negative, what does the DFO use as a basis for (i) evaluating stocks, (ii) making decisions on fisheries management; (c) has the DFO assessed the quality of its estimates for all of the various stocks and, if so, what is the breakdown of this qualitative assessment by (i) species, (ii) province, (iii) area, (iv) sub-area, (v) year; (d) if the answer to (c) is negative, (i) are there plans to carry out this assessment, (ii) why is this type of assessment not conducted; (e) has the DFO put together an action plan to increase the number of indicators used for evaluating various stocks and, if so, what are the names, measures taken or considered, and conclusions, broken down by (i) species, (ii) province, (iii) area, (iv) sub-area, (v) year; (f) if the answer to (e) is negative, (i) is this type of action plan being considered, (ii) why is there no action plan on this issue; (g) has the DFO expended funds to increase the number of indicators for evaluating the various stocks and, if so, what is the spending breakdown by (i) species, (ii) province, (iii) area, (iv) sub-area, (v) year; (h) if the answer to (g) is negative, (i) are there plans for this type of expenditure, (ii) why is there a lack of spending on this issue; (i) has the DFO begun to "rapidly develop or update the biological knowledge essential for the sustainable management" of lobsters in areas 15, 16, 17 and 18, as recommended in Science Advisory Report 2019/059, and, if so, what is the breakdown of measures taken by (i) area, (ii) sub-area, (iii) year; (j) if the answer to (i) is negative, (i) are there plans to do so, (ii) why have no measures been taken; (k) can the DFO explain why the confidence limit has increased to 95% in the past 10 years regarding the evaluation of the estimated biomass of stock in NAFO 4T and, if so, what is the explanation; and (l) if the answer to (k) is negative, why is the DFO unable to explain this increase?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings*

**Question No. 445—Mrs. Marilène Gill:**

With regard to the peer review process coordinated by the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO): (a) exactly how is the peer review process carried out; (b) is participation in science advisory meetings by invitation only and, if so, (i) why is this the case, (ii) how are peers selected, (iii) who is responsible for peer selection or, if not, what is the procedure for participating in meetings; (c) in advance of a science advisory meeting, do all peers receive (i) the preliminary study and, if so, how long do they have to review it or, if not, what are the reasons for this decision, (ii) the data for this study and, if so, how long do they have to review it or, if not, what are the reasons behind this decision; (d) is it possible for an individual or a group to express their views (i) without having been invited and, if so, what is the procedure to follow or, if not, what are the reasons for this decision, (ii) without attending the science advisory meetings despite having been invited and, if so, what is the procedure to follow or, if not, what are the reasons for this decision, (iii) without attending the science advisory meetings and without having been invited and, if so, what is the procedure to follow or, if not, what are the reasons for this decision; (e) is it possible to attend meetings as an observer and, if so, (i) what is the procedure to follow, (ii) is an invitation required or, if not, what are the reasons for this decision; (f) for each of the DFO peer review processes coordinated by the CSAS, what is the breakdown for each meeting since 2010 by number of representatives affiliated with (i) DFO, (ii) the federal government excluding DFO, (iii) the Government of Quebec, (iv) the Government of British Columbia, (v) the Government of Alberta, (vi) the Government of Prince Edward Island, (vii) the Government of Manitoba, (viii) the Government of New Brunswick, (ix) the Government of Nova Scotia, (x) the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, (xi) the Government of Ontario, (xii) the Government of Saskatchewan, (xiii) the Government of Nunavut, (xiv) the Government of Yukon, (xv) the Government of Northwest Territories, (xvi) band councils, (xvii) a Quebec university, (xviii) a Canadian university, (xix) an American university, (xx) the non-Indigenous fishing industry, (xxi) the Indigenous fishing industry, (xxii) an Indigenous group not affiliated with the fishing industry, (xxiii) an environmental group, (xxiv) a wildlife protection group, (xxv) another group; (g) how is consensus defined in the DFO peer review processes coordinated by the CSAS; (h) are stakeholders selected in order to encourage a lack of opposition to the conclusions put forward by the DFO; (i) do the procedures for the peer review process encourage a lack of opposition to the conclusions put forward by the DFO; and (j) does the methodology for the peer review process encourage a lack of opposition to the conclusions put forward by the DFO?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 446—Mrs. Marilène Gill:**

With regard to recreational fishing managed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) since 2000: (a) what is the total amount of revenue generated by the DFO from the sale of recreational licences, broken down by (i) year, (ii) federal entity, (iii) fishing area, (iv) sub-area, (v) species; (b) what is the total amount of spending by the DFO to support recreational fishing, broken down by (i) year, (ii) federal entity, (iii) fishing area, (iv) sub-area, (v) species; (c) what measures are being taken to ensure compliance with recreational fishing regulations, broken down by (i) year, (ii) federal entity, (iii) fishing area, (iv) sub-area, (v) species; (d) what is the average number of fishery officers dedicated specifically to overseeing recreational fishing, broken down by (i) year, (ii) federal entity, (iii) fishing area, (iv) sub-area, (v) species; (e) what technological tools are used to ensure compliance with recreational fishing regulations, broken down by (i) year, (ii) federal entity, (iii) fishing area, (iv) sub-area, (v) species; (f) what is the number of tickets issued by the DFO using technological tools, broken down by (i) year, (ii) federal entity, (iii) fishing area, (iv) sub-area, (v) technological tool; (g) what is the total amount of all tickets issued by the DFO using technological tools, broken down by (i) year, (ii) federal entity, (iii) fishing area, (iv) sub-area, (v) technological tool; and (h) what is the total amount of all recreational fishing tickets issued by the DFO, broken down by (i) year, (ii) federal entity, (iii) fishing area, (iv) sub-area, (v) species?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 447—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:**

With regard to deputy ministers' committees of the Privy Council Office, for fiscal years 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20, broken down by individual committee: (a) what are the names and qualifications of each member; (b) what is the remuneration provided to members for service on committees, broken down by member; and (c) what are the expenses claimed by members while performing committee business, broken down by member?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 448—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:**

With regard to regional development agencies (RDAs) and the April 17, 2020, announcement of "\$675 million to give financing support to small and medium-sized businesses that are unable to access the government's existing COVID-19 support measures, through Canada's Regional Development Agencies": (a) how much of the \$675 million will each of the six RDAs be allocated; (b) for each RDA, how will the funds be made available to businesses, broken down by program; (c) for each answer in (b), what are the details for each program, broken down by (i) funding type, (ii) criteria for qualification, (iii) maximum allowable funding per applicant, (iv) application deadlines, (v) number of applicants received, (vi) number of approved applicants; and (d) for each applicant in (c), what are the details of the applicant, broken down by (i) name, (ii) location, (iii) North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code, (iv) amount applied for, (v) amount approved, (vi) project status, (vii) federal electoral district?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 449—Mr. Peter Julian:**

With regard to business support measures in response to COVID-19 and audits by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance, since March 11, 2020: (a) how many audits has the CRA conducted to ensure that businesses do not practise tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance, broken down by the number of businesses; and (b) of the businesses that have been audited by the CRA in (a), how many have benefited from support measures and how many have been denied support measures because of tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 450—Mr. Peter Julian:**

With regard to the efforts of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) to combat tax evasion and abusive tax planning since March 1, 2016: (a) how many businesses have been identified by the CRA's computer systems, broken down by (i) businesses linked to tax evasion, (ii) businesses linked to fraud or fraud indicators, (iii) businesses linked to abusive tax planning; (b) of the businesses identified in (a), how many applied for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS); and (c) of the applications for the CEWS in (b), how many were approved, and how many were denied because of tax evasion and abusive tax planning practices?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 451—Mr. Kenny Chiu:**

With regard to the government's response to the arbitrary arrests of Martin Lee and other pro-democracy leaders in Hong Kong: (a) has the Canadian government objected to these arrests and, if so, what specific action has been taken to voice the objection; (b) what specific assurances, if any, has the government received that Canadian citizens in Hong Kong not be subject to arrest or harm in relation to the pro-democracy movement; and (c) how is Canada monitoring and ensuring that Hong Kong's Basic Law is being upheld, including the rights, protections, and privileges it grants to democratic advocacy?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 452—Mr. James Cumming:**

With regard to vehicles purchased by the government for the 2018 G7 summit: (a) how many vehicles were purchased; (b) at the time of purchase, what was the market value of each individual vehicle purchased; (c) how many of the vehicles in (a) were put up for sale by the government; (d) of the vehicles in (c), how many were sold; (e) what was the individual selling price for each vehicle sold; and (f) of the vehicles in (c), how many (i) remain, (ii) are still for sale, including the individual selling price, (iii) are being used by the government, (iv) are in storage?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 453—Mr. Dave Epp:**

With regard to the changes to the Canadian Surface Combatants (CSC) design and associated increase to the cost per ship and delay of the construction start time: (a) how many ships are specifically contracted for in the first phase of the contract with Irving Shipbuilding; (b) what is the most recent cost estimate for the first three ships as provided to the Assistant Deputy Minister (Material) and the Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN); (c) what are the specific design changes being considered that are expected to increase the size, capacity, speed, and weight of the Type T26 frigate from the original United Kingdom design; (d) who proposed each change and who approved the change(s) as being essential to the operations for the RCN; (e) what is the rationale given for each design change contemplated in terms of the risks to schedule and budget; (f) what, if any, are the specific concerns or issues related to costs, speed, size, weight and crewing of the T26 frigate design that have been identified by the Department of National Defence, third party advisors and any technical experts; (g) what are the current state of operations and technical requirements for the CSC; (h) what is the schedule for each (i) design change, (ii) contract approval, (iii) independent report from third party advisors, including the schedule for draft reports; (i) what is the cost for spares for each of the CSC; and (j) what is the cost of infrastructure upgrades for the CSC fleet?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 454—Mr. Dave Epp:**

With regard to the Arctic Off-Shore Patrol Ships (AOPS): (a) what are the operational requirements established by the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) for the two additional ships; (b) will the two AOPS for the CCG require redesign or changes, and, if so, what will be the specific changes; (c) what will be the specific cost for the changes; (d) when and in what reports did the CCG first identify the need for AOPS; (e) has the CCG identified any risks or challenges in operating the two AOPS, and, if so, what are those risks; and (f) what will be the total estimated costs of the two AOPS to CCG?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 455—Mr. Dave Epp:**

With regard to the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN): (a) which surface platform in the RCN is deemed a warship and why has it obtained such a designation; (b) will the Joint Support Ship be a warship; (c) which specific characteristics will enable to Joint Support Ship to be a warship; (d) what are the RCN's definitions of interim operational capability (IOC) and full operational capability (FOC); (e) when will the first Joint Support Ship (JSS 1) achieve IOC and FOC; (f) when will the second Joint Support Ship (JSS 2) achieve FOC; and (g) what is the most recent cost projection identified to Assistant Deputy Minister (Material) for (i) JSS 1, (ii) JSS 2?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 456—Mr. Dave Epp:**

With regard to Canada's submarine fleet: (a) what was the total number of days at sea for each submarine in (i) 2018, (ii) 2019; (b) what was the total spent to repair each submarine in (i) 2018, (ii) 2019; (c) what is the estimated total cost of the current submarine maintenance plan to the submarines in (i) 2018, (ii) 2019, (iii) 2020, (iv) 2021; and (d) what are the projected future costs of maintenance of the submarine fleet until end of life?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 457—Mr. Martin Shields:**

With regard to the replacement of Canada's polar class icebreakers: (a) what is the (i) expected date of their replacement, (ii) roles for these new vessels, (iii) budget or cost for their replacement; and (b) what are the details relating to operating older icebreakers (such as the Louis S. St-Laurent and Terry Fox), including (i) expected years they will have to continue to operate before replacements are built, (ii) total sea days for each vessel in 2017, 2018, and 2019, (iii) total cost of maintenance in 2017, 2018, 2019 for each polar class vessel, (iv) planned maintenance cost of the vessels for each of the next five years, (v) total crews required to operate?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 458—Mr. Martin Shields:**

With regard to the government's plans to build 16 multipurpose vessels for the Canadian Coast Guard: (a) what are the technical operational requirements for each vessel; (b) for each contract awarded in relation to the vessels, what is the (i) expected budget, (ii) schedule, (iii) vendor, (iv) work description; and (c) for each

vessel, what is the (i) total number of crew expected, (ii) expected delivery date, (iii) risks to cost or budget identified in the planning for these ships?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 459—Mr. Martin Shields:**

With regard to the government's profit policy relating to shipbuilding: (a) what risks has government evaluated related to guaranteed contracts for the (i) Arctic OffShore Patrol Ships (AOPS), (ii) Canadian Surface Combatants (CSC), (iii) Halifax class frigates, and what were the results of each evaluation; (b) what is the profit range offered to Irving Shipbuilding Inc. for its work on the (i) AOPS, (ii) CSC, (iii) Halifax class frigates; (c) what is the total profit offered for guaranteed work under the National Shipbuilding Strategy, broken down by each "cost plus" contract; and (d) what are the details of any third party review of Canada's profit policy related to the (i) AOPS, (ii) CSC?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 460—Mr. Peter Julian:**

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency's investigations into overseas tax evasion and the Panama Papers and Paradise Papers scandals: (a) how many of the companies currently under investigation have requested government assistance under the COVID-19 emergency measures; and (b) of the requests for assistance from the companies in (a), how many were (i) granted, (ii) denied?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 461—Mr. Peter Julian:**

With regard to the efforts of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) to fight tax evasion: (a) how many corporate groups, with one or more subsidiaries in one of the top 10 jurisdictions of the Financial Secrecy Index or the Corporate Tax Haven Index, has the CRA identified; (b) how many corporate groups that were implicated in financial or tax scandals or that received what would be considered illegal state aid has the CRA identified; (c) how many corporate groups have filled out a full report for each country, in keeping with the standard outlined by the Global Reporting Initiative; (d) how many corporate groups in (a), (b) and (c) have received or applied for federal government assistance; and (e) for the cases in (d), how many applications have been rejected by the government?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 462—Mr. Pat Kelly:**

With regard to tax year 2020: (a) what are the projections for tax revenue to be assessed on taxable benefits paid to Canadians under each emergency measure proposed; (b) what are the low-end projections for each emergency measure, broken down by measure; (c) what are the high-end projections for each emergency measure, broken down by measure; and (d) what are the estimates or scenario-planning numbers of people applying for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit that fall within each tax bracket in Canada, broken down by each 2019 federal income tax bracket?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 463—Mr. Greg McLean:**

With regard to departmental defences against Canadian International Trade Tribunal rulings: how much has been spent on legal fees, broken down by (i) department, (ii) expense, (iii) case, (iv) internal legal resources, (v) external legal resources?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 464—Mr. Greg McLean:**

With regard to the government's campaign for a United Nations Security Council seat in 2021: how much has been spent on hospitality-related expenses, broken down by (i) date, (ii) item or service?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings*

**Question No. 465—Mr. Brad Vis:**

With regard to the response from Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to COVID-19 outbreaks in its facilities, specifically the Mission Medium Institution in British Columbia and the Port Cartier Institution in Quebec: (a) what protocols and procedures were enacted, and when, in the Port-Cartier Institution once COVID-19 was detected; (b) what protocols and procedures were enacted, and when, in the Mission Medium Institution in British Columbia once COVID-19 was detected; (c) are there standard pandemic protocols and procedures that are synchronized across the national CSC organization; (d) if the answer to (c) is negative, why; (e) if the answer to (c) is affirmative, what are the differences between CSC's response in the Port Cartier Institute when compared to CSC's response in the Mission Medium Institution; (f) at the Mission Medium Institution, on what date was Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provided to staff, and what type of PPE was distributed; (g) at the Mission Medium Institution, on what date was PPE provided to inmates, and what type of PPE was distributed; (h) at the Port Cartier Institution, on what date was Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provided to staff, and what type of PPE was distributed; and (i) at the Port Cartier Institution, on what date was PPE provided to inmates, and what type of PPE was distributed?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 466—Mr. Brad Vis:**

With regard to the \$305 million Indigenous Community Support Fund (ICSF) contained within the federal government's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, of which British Columbia First Nations were allocated \$39,567,000 and British Columbia Métis were allocated \$3,750,000: (a) how much funding was provided to each Indigenous band within or bordering Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, including Cook's Ferry, Skatin Nations, Douglas, Spuzzum, Ts'kw'aylaxw First Nation, Samahquam, Sts'ailes, Bridge River, Tsal'alh, Ashcroft, Boston Bar First Nation, Skawahlook First Nation, Sq'ewlets, Bonaparte, Nicomen, Leq' a: mel First Nation, Union Bar First Nation, Kanaka Bar, Siska, Oregon Jack Creek, Boothroyd, Xaxli'p, T'it'q'et, Matsqui, Shackan, Skuppah, Seabird Island, Chawathil, Yale First Nation, Cayoose Creek, Lytton, High Bar, and Stswecem'c Xgat'tem; (b) which existing agreements are being used to transfer those funds, broken down by band; (c) what reporting requirements are in place, broken down by band and by contribution agreement; (d) how are bands required to communicate to their members how emergency funds were spent; and (e) how are bands required to report to Indigenous Services Canada their receipts or a record of how funds were spent or disbursed to support band members?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 467—Mr. Todd Doherty:**

With regard to government stockpiles of personal protective equipment (PPE): (a) what was the specific volume of PPE supplies in the stockpile as of February 1, 2020, broken down by item; (b) how many supplies of PPE were, destroyed, disposed of, or otherwise removed from the stockpile between January 1, 2016 to March 1, 2020; (c) what are the details of all instances in (b), including the (i) date, (ii) number of items removed, broken down by type of item, (iii) reason for removal; and (d) what are the details of each time items were added to the stockpile between January 1, 2016 to March 1, 2020, including the (i) date, (ii) items added, (iii) volume, (iv) financial value?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 468—Mr. James Cumming:**

With regard to personal protective equipment (PPE) purchased since January 1, 2020: (a) how many items of PPE have been purchased; (b) what was the price of each item at the time of purchase, broken down by (i) date of purchase, (ii) item, (iii) the total amount of each type of PPE per transaction?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 469—Mr. James Cumming:**

With regard to contaminated swabs and faulty or rejected N95 masks purchased by Public Services and Procurement Canada: (a) which suppliers provided these items; and (b) since January 1, 2016, what other purchases have been made by the government from these suppliers broken down by (i) date of purchase, (ii) item or service purchased, (iii) number of units of item or service purchased per transaction?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 470—Mr. James Cumming:**

With regard to procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) since January 1, 2020: (a) how many Advance Contract Award Notices (ACANs) relating to PPE have been posted; (b) for the ACANs in (a), (i) how many bidders were there for each notice, (ii) who were the bidders for each notice; and (c) who won each contract?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 471—Mr. Scott Reid:**

With regard to preparation and response to COVID-19: (a) which provinces and territories have signed the Multi-Lateral Information Sharing Agreement (MLISA), and on what dates were each of their signatures provided; (b) which provinces and territories have declined to sign the MLISA, on what dates were each of their refusals provided, and what objections did each raise to signing; (c) which provinces and territories have withdrawn from the MLISA since signing it, and on what dates were their withdrawals effective; (d) is the MLISA currently in force, and, if not, why not; (e) which provinces and territories have signed the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Memorandum of Understanding on the Sharing of Information During a Public Health Emergency (Sharing MOU), and on what dates were each of their signatures provided; (f) which provinces and territories have declined to sign the Sharing MOU, and on what dates were their refusals provided; (g) which provinces and territories have withdrawn from the Sharing MOU since signing it, and on what dates were their withdrawals effective; (h) is the Sharing MOU currently in force, and, if not, why not; (i) which provinces and territories are using the Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) COVID-19 Case Report Form; (j) what percentage of known COVID-19 cases in Canada were reported to the PHAC using its COVID-19 Case Report Form versus other means; (k) when the PHAC's COVID-19 Case Report Form instructs to "report cases electronically using secure methods or fax", which secure methods does the PHAC utilize, and which methods are used, broken down by provinces and territories; (l) what percentage of known COVID-19 cases reported to the PHAC were reported using fax or paper; (m) how many full-time equivalents does the PHAC employ or have on contract to enter COVID-19 case reports received by fax or paper into electronic means; (n) what is the shortest, longest, and average delay that the PHAC experiences when a COVID-19 case report is received by fax or paper before it is entered into electronic means; (o) what is the reason for the discrepancy between the total number of cases of COVID-19 reported by the Government of Canada on its "Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Outbreak update" website, and the smaller number of cases with specific epidemiological data on the website entitled "Detailed confirmed cases of coronavirus disease"; (p) what are the factors that contribute to the delay between the reporting of the "episode date" of a COVID-19 case and the "date [the] case was last updated", with reference to the data referred to in (o); (q) which provinces and territories have objected to the public disclosure of their detailed COVID-19 case data, as on the "Detailed confirmed cases of coronavirus disease" website, and for each province and territory, what are the details or summary of their objection; (r) why, in developing its COVID-19 Case Report Form, did the PHAC choose not to collect the ethnicity or race of individuals, as done in other jurisdictions; (s) why has the government never used its powers under section 15 of the Public Health Agency of Canada Act to better collect and analyze COVID-19 case data held by the provinces; (t) why has the PHAC not yet published an epidemiological model of COVID-19 that includes a scientifically detailed public disclosure of the modelling methodology, computer code, and input parameters; (u) what are the reasons that the PHAC does not publish a daily COVID-19 model that includes up-to-date estimates of the effective reproductive number (R), such as that produced by Norway, in its model of May 8, 2020; (v) what is the value, duration, objectives and deliverables of the contract issued by the Government of Canada to Blue Dot for the modelling of COVID-19, announced by the Prime Minister on March 23, 2020;

## Routine Proceedings

(w) which other individuals or companies has the Government of Canada contracted for the modelling of COVID-19, and, for each contract, what is the (i) value, (ii) duration, (iii) objectives, (iv) deliverables; (x) do any of the contracts for COVID-19 limit the freedom of the contractors to disclose the information, methodology, or findings of their models as confidential, and, if so, which contracts are so affected, and what are the terms of the confidentiality; (y) what is the total amount of federal spending on the Panorama public health and vaccination data system since its launch; (z) which provinces and territories utilize Panorama's disease outbreak management and communicable disease case management modules for reporting COVID-19 information to the federal government; (aa) to what extent does the federal government have access to COVID-19 outbreak and case data contained within the Panorama system and what are the reasons for the lack of access to data, if any; (bb) what steps has the federal government taken to ensure that, when data exists, it will have access to COVID-19 vaccination data contained within the Panorama system; (cc) to what extent does the Panorama system meet the data collection and reporting goals of the federal government's report entitled "Learning from SARS – Renewal of Public Health in Canada"; and (dd) has an audit of the Panorama system been completed and, if so, what are the details of the audit's findings, including when it was done, by whom it was conducted, and the standards by which it was measured?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 475—**Mr. John Barlow:**

With regard to farm income loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic: (a) has Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada or Farm Credit Canada conducted an analysis on projected farm income loss as a result of the pandemic; and (b) what is the projected loss, broken down by agricultural sector?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 476—**Mr. John Nater:**

With regard to physical distancing and other safety measures for ministerial vehicles and chauffeurs during the COVID-19 pandemic: (a) what specific measures have been put in place to ensure the safety of drivers, including whether (i) ministers are required to wear masks in the vehicles, (ii) there is an occupancy limit to the vehicles, (iii) specific seats within the vehicles may not be used, (iv) there is a prohibition on others, including ministerial exempt staff, riding in the vehicles, (v) any other measures have been made to limit close physical contact between drivers and ministers; (b) on what date was each measure listed in (a), (i) put into place, (ii) amended, (iii) rescinded; and (c) have any ministers required their drivers to drive outside of the National Capital Region since March 13, 2020, and, if so, what are the details of each trip, including (i) date of trip, (ii) destination, (iii) purpose of trip, (iv) number of occupants in the vehicle, (v) whether a minister was in the vehicle, (vi) specific safety precautions taken?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 477—**Mr. Matthew Green:**

With regard to the Large Employer Emergency Financing Facility (LEEFF), since the creation of the program: (a) how many businesses have applied for the LEEFF; (b) how many businesses have been eligible; (c) how many applications from businesses have been denied; (d) of the applications that were denied, how many were from (i) businesses convicted of tax evasion, (ii) businesses convicted of abusive tax avoidance, (iii) companies that have subsidiaries in tax havens; (e) have applications from companies under investigation in connection with the Panama Papers and Paradise Papers been accepted; and (f) what is the current total cost of the LEEFF's expenses, broken down by economic sector?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 478—**Ms. Rachel Blaney:**

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and tax havens: (a) what is the CRA's definition of tax haven; and (b) which jurisdictions have been identified as tax havens according to the CRA's definition?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 479—**Ms. Rachel Blaney:**

With regard to the activities of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) under Part XVI of the Income Tax Act since November 2015, broken down by fiscal year and natural person, trust and corporation: (a) how many audits have been conducted; (b) how many notices of assessment have been issued by the CRA; and (c) what is the total amount recovered to date by the CRA?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 480—**Ms. Rachel Blaney:**

With regards to Veterans Affairs Canada, broken down by year for the most recent ten fiscal years for which data is available: (a) what was the number of disability benefit applications received; (b) of the applications in (a), how many were (i) rejected (ii) approved (iii) appealed (iv) rejected upon appeal (v) approved upon appeal; (c) what was the average wait time for a decision; (d) what was the median wait time for a decision; (e) what was the ratio of veteran to Case Manager at the end of each fiscal year; (f) what was the number of applications awaiting a decision at the end of each fiscal year; and (g) what was the number of veterans awaiting a decision at the end of each fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 481—**Ms. Rachel Blaney:**

With regard to Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC): (a) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC offices, including nationally, what was the total number of overtime hours worked, further broken down by job title, including National 1st Level Appeals Officer, National 2nd Level Appeals Officer, Case Manager, Veterans Service Agent and Disability Adjudicator; (b) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC offices, including nationally, what was the average number of overtime hours worked, further broken down by (i) job title, including National 1st Level Appeals Officer, National 2nd Level Appeals Officer, Case Manager, Veterans Service Agent and Disability Adjudicator, (ii) directorate; (c) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC offices, including nationally, what was the total cost of overtime, further broken down by (i) job title, including National 1st Level Appeals Officer, National 2nd Level Appeals Officer, Case Manager, Veterans Service Agent and Disability Adjudicator, (ii) directorate; (d) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC offices, including nationally, what was the total number of disability benefit claims, further broken down by (i) new claims, (ii) claims awaiting a decision, (iii) approved claims, (iv) denied claims, (v) appealed claims; (e) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC offices, including nationally, how many new disability benefit claims were transferred to a different Veterans Affairs Canada office than that which conducted the intake; (f) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC offices, including nationally, what was the number of (i) Case Managers, (ii) Veterans Service Agents; (g) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC offices, including nationally, excluding standard vacation and paid sick leave, how many Case Managers took a leave of absence, and what was the average length of a leave of absence; (h) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC offices, including nationally, accounting for all leaves of absence, excluding standard vacation and paid sick leave, how many full-time equivalent Case Managers were present and working, and what was the Case Manager to veteran ratio; (i) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC offices, including nationally, how many veterans were disengaged from their Case Manager; (j) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC offices, including nationally, what was the highest number of cases assigned to an individual Case Manager; (k) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC offices, including nationally, how many veterans were on a waitlist for a Case Manager; (l) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC offices, including nationally, for work usually done by regularly employed Case Managers and Veteran Service Agents, (i) how many contracts were awarded, (ii) what was the duration of each contract, (iii) what was the value of each contract;

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(m) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by VAC offices, what were the service standard results; (n) what is the mechanism for tracking the transfer of cases between Case Managers when a Case Manager takes a leave of absence, excluding standard vacation and paid sick leave; (o) what is the department's current method for calculating the Case Manager to veteran ratio; (p) what are the department's quality assurance measures for Case Managers and how do they change based on the number of cases a Case Manager has at that time; (q) during the last five fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month, how many individuals were hired by the department; (r) how many of the individuals in (q) remained employed after their 12-month probation period came to an end; (s) of the individuals in (q) who did not remain employed beyond the probation period, how many did not have their contracts extended by the department; (t) does the department track the reasons for which employees are not kept beyond the probation period, and, if so, respecting the privacy of individual employees, what are the reasons for which employees were not kept beyond the probation period; (u) for the individuals in (q) who chose not to remain at any time throughout the 12 months, were exit interviews conducted, and, if so, respecting the privacy of individual employees, what were the reasons, broken down by VAC offices; (v) during the last five fiscal years for which data is available, broken down by month, how many Canadian Armed Forces service veterans were hired by the department; (w) of the veterans in (v), how many remained employed after their 12-month probation period came to an end; (x) of the veterans in (v) who are no longer employed by the department, (i) how many did not have their employment contracts extended by the department, (ii) how many were rejected on probation; (y) if the department track the reasons for which employees are not kept beyond the probation period, respecting the privacy of individual veteran employees, what are the reasons for which veteran employees are not kept beyond the probation period; (z) for the veterans in (v) who chose not to remain at any time throughout the 12 months, were exit interviews conducted, and, if so, respecting the privacy of individual veteran employees, what were the reasons for their leaving, broken down by VAC offices; (aa) during the last five fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month, how many employees have quit their jobs at VAC; and (bb) for the employees in (aa) who quit their job, were exit interviews conducted, and, if so, respecting the privacy of individual employees, what were the reasons, broken down by VAC offices?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 482—**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:**

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and tax havens: Does the CRA consider the Cayman Islands and Barbados to be tax havens?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 483—**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:**

With regard to tax information exchange agreement signed between Canada and Cayman Islands, since entry into force of the agreement and broken down by fiscal year: (a) how many times has the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) obtained information from Cayman Islands; (b) how many times has the CRA released information to Cayman Islands; (c) how much tax examinations abroad was conducted by CRA in Cayman Islands; (d) how many CRA enquiries have been denied by the Cayman Islands; (e) how many audits have been conducted by the CRA; (f) how many notices of assessment have been issued by the CRA; and (g) what is the total amount recovered by the CRA?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 484—**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:**

With regard to amendments to the Canada Grain Regulations (SOR/2020-63), enacted through the passage of Bill C-4, An Act to implement the Agreement between Canada, the United States of America and the United Mexican States, which amended the Canada Grain Act through an expedited process, bypassing the normal Canada Gazette I posting and public comment period, and were posted on Canada Gazette, Part II, Volume 154, Number 9: (a) what are the details of all meetings, round tables, teleconference calls, town halls, and other means of consultation, in regard to grain, held during CUSMA/NAFTA 2.0 negotiations, including the (i) dates, (ii) locations, (iii) agendas, (iv) minutes, (v) attendee and invitee lists, including government officials and agriculture sector stakeholders, and their organizational affiliations; (b) for the meetings referred to in (a), what are the details of (i) published notices, (ii) reports, including where and when they were published; (c) what are the details of all stakeholder views expressed during these consultations, including minority positions, which were communicated to inform the Government of Canada negotiating position, along with the names and positions of the officials to whom these stakeholder views were communicated; (d) what are the details of all engagement activities with grain sector stakeholders following the CUSMA an-

nouncement where the impacts of the agreement, potential legislative and regulatory amendments, and implementation plans were discussed, as well as the reports flowing from these engagement activities that informed the drafting of Bill C-4 amendments to the Canada Grain Act, including the (i) dates, (ii) locations, (iii) agendas, (iv) minutes, (v) attendees, including from the Canada Grain Commission and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada officials and agriculture sector stakeholders, and their organizational affiliations; (e) who made the decision to have "minimal" consultation on the regulatory changes and an explanation of their rationale for the decision when, as the regulatory analysis document says, the amendments are consequential; and (f) what is the definition of the industry referred to when "industry-led" is used in regard to integrating the Delivery Declaration Form and its implementation into the existing grain delivery structure, particularly whether farmers are included among the leadership of the industry?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

WE CHARITY

**The Speaker:** The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am seeking leave for an emergency debate this evening.

The recent revelations that several members of the Prime Minister's immediate family have received nearly \$300,000 from the WE organization have raised serious questions about the government's decision to enter into a \$900-million agreement with that same charity. This was followed by the revelation of further ties between the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and that organization.

I believe it is clear that this issue meets the threshold for an emergency debate.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have admitted that their failure to recuse themselves from the cabinet decision on this contract was wrong. Conservative members of Parliament have written to the RCMP requesting a criminal investigation, and the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has initiated investigations to determine whether the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance contravened the Conflict of Interest Act.

More and more details are emerging of the relationship between the various entities under the WE umbrella, such as the money flowing back and forth from the charitable wing to the for-profit corporation. This is an organization that provides a platform and endorsements for Liberal politicians. Those very same politicians then make the decisions as to whether or not to approve these sole-source contracts to this organization, and I believe that falls under the administrative role of government.

*Government Orders*

Also, speakers regularly look, in terms of whether or not they will approve an emergency debate request, at whether there are opportunities for opposition parties to raise these issues. I point out that the House of Commons has not been allowed to sit since the middle of March. We have lost our opposition days. We have lost our ability to put questions on the order paper. Many of the tools normally available to Parliament have been eliminated by the government's motion to effectively sideline Parliament.

There are no opposition days coming up. This is clearly a matter in the public interest. This was something that we were looking forward to questioning the Prime Minister on today. He said, last week, that he would be in the House to answer these questions today, but he is taking a personal day.

I hope that this request will be granted to allow members of Parliament and the government to further delve into the sordid affair the Prime Minister finds himself in.

• (1515)

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I want to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I received a letter earlier today advising me of the request.

I do not see this as an emergency debate item at this time, so I am going to have to turn it down.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**FURTHER COVID-19 MEASURES ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, An Act respecting further COVID-19 measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have pointed out that, throughout the pandemic, there has been a certain pattern emerging.

Looking at people in need, what has the government's response been? When people are in need, the government says to wait. Canadians living with disabilities have been told, since the beginning of this pandemic, to wait. Canadians who saw their CERB about to be cancelled at the end of July were told to wait, and now Canadians, again, do not know what is going to happen at the end of August.

Those who cannot go back to work are going to see CERB end, and the government tells them to just wait, but when close, well-connected friends of the Liberal government and of the Prime Minister need help, the government rushes in to help with a nearly billion-dollar bailout.

Let us be absolutely clear. The billion-dollar bailout of WE had nothing to do with students and everything to do with helping wealthy, well-connected friends of the Liberal government.

[Translation]

The WE scandal was never about students or helping students. It was about helping close friends of the Liberal government and the Prime Minister.

[English]

What we also see with the government is an ongoing trend of using a lot of nice words, but they are empty words and symbolic gestures. We see another example of those empty words and symbolic gestures when it comes to systemic racism.

The government has certainly said some nice words, but those are empty words because they lack action. The Prime Minister took a stand. Well, he did not take a stand. The Prime Minister took a knee, but he has yet to take a stand on really addressing systemic racism.

I want to ask Canadians to think back to 2015. From 2015 to 2020, has there been any difference in the lives of people when it comes to systemic racism? What has been the concrete difference that the Liberal government has made? What has the Prime Minister done?

After the images of him in blackface emerged, Prime Minister Trudeau asked us all to judge him on his actions. What were the Prime Minister's actions?

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would remind the hon. member for Burnaby South the importance of referring to elected members by their riding names.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Indeed, the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer has expressed it correctly.

I would ask the hon. member for Burnaby South to avoid the use of members' names in his remarks. Certainly, titles or riding names are perfectly acceptable.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** When the images of the Prime Minister in blackface emerged, we were told to judge the Prime Minister on his actions. What have those actions been? At a time when there is a movement of people demanding concrete action to address systemic racism, the Prime Minister has asked his ministers to come up with a plan for a plan to do something. That is not real concrete action.

What has the Prime Minister done to immediately respond to the calls and demands for action to address systemic racism in policing? When it comes to the RCMP, has the Prime Minister taken any concrete action to address systemic racism in the RCMP? We have seen the images of indigenous and racialized people brutalized by the police. What has the Prime Minister done since to show any leadership? Effectively, he has done nothing.

Indigenous people, black people and racialized people are no better off right now in 2020 than they were in 2015. The Prime Minister has done nothing to make their lives better when it comes to systemic racism in policing. He could have immediately ended racial profiling in policing. That is within the power of the federal government.

*Government Orders*

The Prime Minister could immediately review the use of force and say we need to completely overhaul it. The Prime Minister, if he wanted to, could say we need an emphasis on de-escalation when it comes to conflicts. The Prime Minister could review the budget so that we could be spending more money on health care and responses to health care crises than we do on police. All of these things are possible, but the Prime Minister has done none of them.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

How is systemic racism different now, in 2020, compared to 2015, when the government took office? It is not different.

The Prime Minister has said some nice words and made symbolic gestures, but he has not taken any concrete action to change people's lives.

In the context of this whole movement, at a time when people are calling for concrete action and thousands are taking to the streets to demand meaningful action against systemic racism in the police force and other institutions, what has the government done? Nothing.

The Liberals had an opportunity, and now they have a chance to review the use of force. The Liberal government has the power to make changes that would emphasize de-escalation in conflicts with the police. The Liberal government has the power to alter its funding priorities to give more money to health care workers than to police.

All of that is possible if the government wants to take action. However, it is clear that the Liberal government and the Prime Minister want to make symbolic gestures and pay lip service, but they do not want to take meaningful action to improve people's lives.

[*English*]

I will say it again. What we are seeing is a trend with this government. The government wanted to do the minimum when it came to helping people in this crisis and we forced it. We pushed it, and we demanded more for people.

When it comes to things like systemic racism, at a time when there is a powerful movement asking for change, this government has done nothing to improve the lives of people. People are no better off in 2020 than they were in 2015. When the Prime Minister took a knee, who was he protesting? Who was the Prime Minister protesting? He is in power.

The Prime Minister has the ability to change things right now, but he has done nothing. He has not challenged the status quo. He has not changed anything at the RCMP. He has not brought in any new laws to improve the conditions that people are faced with. He has done nothing to change the reality that if one is black, indigenous or racialized, one is more likely to be brutalized by the police and more likely to be killed by the police, but less likely to be able to find a job or a place to live. Those are the real problems of systemic racism, and this government has done nothing.

I ask the people of this great country to look at the actions of the Prime Minister and the actions of this Liberal government to see that they have tried to do the minimum. They have given us pretty words, empty words, but they lack action.

We will continue to fight for Canadians. They can count on us to have their back. They can count on us to fight for them every step of the way, to demand more and to demand better. That is who we are. That is what we do, and that is what they deserve.

**Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me express my disappointment in the leader of the fourth party to not recognize the work that has been done by this government for black communities across this country and the leadership of this Prime Minister.

Very seriously, without any partisanship, we can certainly say that a lot has been done since 2015. The first thing this Prime Minister did was to reverse the decision of the previous government, the Conservative Harper government, which did not allow the UN panel to come into Canada to undertake a study in an effort to recognize the UN International Decade for People of African Descent. We allowed it to come in.

It issued a report about a year and a half later, and within a couple of months of that report being issued, what did the Prime Minister do? First, it made a symbolic change. We put a black woman, Viola Desmond, on a Canadian banknote. She is the first Canadian woman on a Canadian banknote. That was a really important, symbolic move.

The second thing I could talk about is that the Prime Minister recognized anti-black racism and recognized the UN International Decade for People of African Descent. He has also made sure, for the first time in Canadian history, that two consecutive budgets have had measures directed at black Canadians, including measures for mental health, disaggregated data and community support.

Yes, there is a lot of work to do, but we do nothing by exaggerating positions, as the leader of the NDP has shamefully done here, and not recognizing the work we are doing for black Canadians—

• (1525)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Burnaby South.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** In the statement by the member, who was asked to list out what the Liberals have done since 2015, he said they allowed someone to come in to do a report, and they made a symbolic change, a self-admitted symbolic change.

What has this government done to make people's lives better and to stop police brutality? What has it done to actually stop racial profiling, which it could immediately stop? We talk about mental health. The RCMP's budget is \$10 million a day, which is more in one day than this government has committed for an entire year for the mental health of black people. How shameful is that?

*Government Orders*

The examples given by the member only highlight the inaction of this government.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I hope that the push by the member for Calgary Shepard to have indigenous war hero Tommy Prince on the five-dollar bill will be supported by the member for Hull—Aylmer and all members of the House, because I think it is a noble cause.

My question is related to the WE Charity. The leader of the NDP spent a considerable amount of time talking about WE. The figure was \$912 million. That's a lot of zeros. On top of that, we found out a couple of weeks ago through the fiscal snapshot that we are \$343 billion in deficit and \$1.2 trillion in debt.

My question to the hon. member is this: Within those many zeros, how many more situations of Liberal cronyism and corruption does the hon. member think we will find, if we search hard enough, that are similar to the WE situation?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Speaker, what we have seen in this scandal is a clear example of Liberal rhetoric: the words members use about who they are working for in public, and when the doors are closed. In public the Liberal government has certainly said a lot of very positive things, but behind closed doors it turns out they are actually working to help out their closely connected friends.

In the WE scandal it is very clear that this was never about helping students. The government had ample opportunity to extend the Canada summer jobs program and help students struggling with debt when they go to university, or to help students get into post-secondary education and reduce barriers by providing additional grants.

There is so much that the government could have done, but instead of actually helping Canadian students, it leapt to the aid of well-connected friends of the Liberal Party and the Prime Minister, to give them nearly a billion-dollar contract. That is flagrant. It shows that the Liberal government really wants to work for its closely connected friends, how quickly it will work for them, and how it will tell Canadians who are struggling to continue to wait.

That is the contrast and I think that is completely unacceptable.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was in opposition for 20 years, which I often make reference to in the House. The statements made by the leader of the NDP and some of the Conservatives bring the word "balderdash" to my mind, as they have absolutely zero merit. That program was all about students. The Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and others say that there was an unfortunate oversight that took place and it is being rectified.

To try to give a false impression that it was not about students is completely wrong. From day one, this government has been there to support Canadians in all regions of our country, whether it is through the CERB program, the wage loss program or the many other programs that we have provided to support Canadians in a very real and tangible way.

Would the member not agree that today's legislation is about improving some of those programs that we have brought forward, and that will continue to support Canadians in every region of the country?

● (1530)

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Speaker, the legislation brought forward today is because the New Democrats fought, demanded and pushed for help for Canadians living with disabilities. It is certainly a step in the right direction. The fact that we fought, pushed for and demanded changes to the wage subsidy program to help more workers is a positive step.

I want to make it clear that, every step of the way, the Liberal government did not come to us to say, "Here is an idea. Shall we work together and collaborate?" It came up with an idea that was the minimum possible and then we had to push them. We had to fight with them to actually deliver more for people. Every step of the way, the Liberal government wanted to do the minimum and we had to fight with them to deliver more for people. That has been the way things have happened.

We will continue to fight for people because that is what we do.

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the leadership of the hon. member in bringing to the fore the importance of maintaining a focus on anti-black racism. I am honoured and very proud to have worked for members across the way, including the previous speaker on a very compelling document that was a declaration on how to dismantle anti-black racism, while putting a face on a bill or putting a symbol on taking a knee.

What would be the hon. member's priority, given all of the recommendations that have been put forward on tackling anti-black racism, to take immediate steps to ensure that black Canadians are provided with fair and equal opportunities in Canada?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Speaker, that question is difficult because a lot needs to be done. I do not want to hold it as if I have all the answers, but I do have some that have been built by the community and by people who have looked at this question.

What we need to do immediately is end systemic racism: the anti-black racism that exists in policing. That means specifically ending racial profiling, ending carding in all of its forms, and ensuring that we invest in addressing the social determinants of health, which means investing in affordable housing and more affordable health care. It means decriminalizing personal possession of illicit substances. Instead of giving a criminal response, it should be a health care response. It means ending mandatory minimum sentences, which disproportionately impact racialized black and indigenous people.

*Government Orders*

These are the things we can do. These are concrete steps, not symbolic gestures but real, concrete, legislative changes that will improve the lives of people. That is what we are committed to doing.

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to join my colleagues today to participate in this important debate on Bill C-20, which provides an administrative amendment so we can better support Canadians with disabilities during this pandemic.

It feels like a very long time ago now, but in fact it was just over a year ago that the Accessible Canada Act became law. This legislation had unanimous support in both the House of Commons and the Senate. I hope the same spirit will live on and all parties will support this important piece of legislation that will enable this critical emergency financial support to be provided to Canadians with disabilities.

We know this pandemic has deeply affected the lives and health of all Canadians, but it has disproportionately affected Canadians with disabilities. Persons with disabilities have incurred significant costs to safely get food, medication and other basic necessities. We also know there are additional costs for delivery services and private transportation.

• (1535)

[Translation]

It is also possible that support workers for persons with disabilities may not be available and that they must be paid privately because of a reduction in volunteer and subsidized services.

[English]

As we work together to reopen the economy, we must continue to protect the health and safety of persons with disabilities and ensure we maintain an approach that is inclusive by design. This has meant working together with organizations and persons with disabilities across the country, and using a disability lens to come up with a plan to provide the support they need during this difficult time. This is how our current response has come to have key components, including direct financial support through this one-time payment, employment supports and accessible communications.

I will begin with the one-time payment. This is non-taxable and is \$600 for Canadians with disabilities. We recently announced we would propose legislation that would make this benefit available to more people and expand it to include approximately 1.7 million Canadians with disabilities who are recipients of a disability tax credit certificate, CPP disability or QPP disability benefits, or disability support provided by Veterans Affairs Canada. This payment will help cover the costs of things such as PPE, support workers or increased use of taxis and home delivery services for groceries and transportation.

[Translation]

Seniors who have a disability tax credit certificate and are entitled to the old age security pension will receive \$300 in addition to the COVID-19 special payment, a one-time \$300 payment to seniors.

[English]

Canadians who are certificate holders of the disability tax credit and are eligible for the guaranteed income supplement will receive a payment of \$100 in addition to the special COVID-19 one-time payment to seniors of \$500.

With this new support and the special payments announced last month, all seniors who are certificate holders of the disability tax credit, the DTC, Canada pension plan disability, as well as Quebec pension plan disability recipients and recipients of VAC's disability supports, will receive a total of \$600.

As I mentioned earlier, the legislation before us today would support the delivery of this one-time payment. As minister, I have the authority to issue this type of payment under the Department of Employment and Social Development Act, but new legislative authorities are needed so that the Canada Revenue Agency and Veterans Affairs Canada can share information about those eligible for this one-time payment with my department. It is an administrative measure, but it is important as it is about safeguarding the personal information of Canadians and only sharing it for the purposes of creating and delivering this one-time benefit.

Additionally, Canadians with disabilities who are eligible for the disability tax credit but have not yet applied will have a 60-day window of opportunity to apply for the DTC after the bill receives royal assent.

We heard clearly over the past month that many Canadians with disabilities, despite being eligible for the DTC, have not applied for a number of valid reasons. The 60-day application window could increase the number of Canadians receiving the emergency disability payment quite significantly. We will be working closely with the disability community to ensure that those who want to apply have the access and support they need to do so.

[Translation]

We want to ensure that the proper supports are in place for all Canadians. This one-time payment complements the other emergency supports provided by our government.

[English]

For example, low-income persons with disabilities benefited from the one-time special payment to the GST credit, provided in April to low and modest-income Canadians. Families of children with disabilities got the additional Canada child benefit payment. Workers with disabilities can access the CERB. Students with disabilities can access the student benefit, including a \$750 per month additional amount.

Seniors with disabilities got the senior payment. Persons with disabilities will also benefit from the \$350-million investment we made in charities and non-profits so that they can deliver essential services to communities across Canada.

However, these measures did not sufficiently address the extra costs being incurred by Canadians with disabilities. As I mentioned previously, some examples include personal protective equipment, which is life-saving for many Canadians with disabilities and their personal support workers; the extra costs of personal support workers, or general help in the home; the extra costs of purchasing food, and higher prices for all items; extra Internet costs, associated with physical distancing; extra costs due to the loss of in-kind services and community support, such as transportation and meal provision previously offered by volunteers or extended family; and additional therapy, such as mental health services and physical therapy. I would say that the lack of these services threatens the independence of so many of our citizens.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the members of the COVID-19 disability advisory group. The group was created in April to provide advice on the real-time, lived experiences of persons with disabilities during this crisis. Their advice has helped shape our government's response to the pandemic.

They have offered advice and guidance to a number of federal departments, including the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada, Indigenous Services Canada and ISED. They have assisted in our collaboration with provinces and territories in areas of provincial jurisdiction. I can think of our conversations around long-term health care in assisted living facilities, visitor policies for hospitals and the provision of PPE to personal support workers.

They have made a significant and meaningful difference in our government's pandemic response because they remind us daily of what is at stake. I thank them for their continued work and advocacy.

I have heard clearly from Canadians in the COVID-19 disability advisory group that employment support for persons with disabilities during the pandemic and into recovery is critical to ensure that people with disabilities are not left behind.

● (1540)

[Translation]

We recognize that persons with disabilities are at greater risk of losing their jobs in an economic downturn.

[English]

Many people with disabilities are employed in sectors that have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic, including the service

### *Government Orders*

and tourism industries. This is the reason why we have established a national workplace accessibility stream of the opportunities fund for persons with disabilities. Through this stream, we will provide \$15 million for 2020 and 2021 in additional funding to help persons with disabilities and to help their employers improve workplace accessibility and access to jobs.

Some of the activities supported by this fund will include setting up accessible and effective work-from-home measures, expanding online training opportunities, creating inclusive workplaces, whether virtual or physical, connecting potential employees with employers, providing training for in-demand jobs and, where needed, wage subsidies.

We also launched an important call for proposals under the enabling accessibility fund small projects component, for small-scale construction, renovation or retrofits, for funding of up to \$100,000. Employers are the priority for funding under this call.

Through the youth innovation component of the fund, young Canadians can also express their interest in collaborating with local organizations in their communities to secure funding of up to \$10,000 for accessibility projects.

[Translation]

Another important support for persons with disabilities during the pandemic concerns the accessibility of communications. During any public health crisis, it is vitally important that communications be accessible and that we act on the need to engage with persons with disabilities.

[English]

It has been raised as a key issue by the disability community and the COVID-19 disability advisory group. That is why on Saturday, June 6, I announced \$1.1 million to support national disability organizations and enhance their communications and engagement activities.

This funding is being delivered through the social development partnership program disability component, and will help organizations address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the people they serve. This support will allow organizations to create a barrier-free, multilingual experience for persons with disabilities and ensure they receive accessible and relevant information to support them during this time.

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The Government of Canada is also doing its part to ensure Canadians, including Canadians with disabilities, receive timely, clear and accessible information during the pandemic.

An example of the kind of support that has been given is the ongoing provision of ASL and LSQ interpretation during national press conferences so that deaf and hard-of-hearing Canadians can have access in real time to critical information. I anticipate that the provision of ASL and LSQ will continue. It will continue post-COVID as a significant legacy of the work of Canadians with disabilities and their advocates for so long. This will be a true legacy of accessibility.

I am confident that these support measures will greatly benefit Canadians with disabilities across our country. Our actions are based on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Canada's international human rights obligations, including those under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We are also guided by the Accessible Canada Act, which was passed last June. The Accessible Canada Act is actively informing everything we do in regard to persons with disabilities.

I believe that we have taken a disability-inclusive approach to our pandemic response, but I also believe that the delay in getting this money to Canadians with disabilities, in this time of pandemic crisis, has brought to light shortcomings and barriers within Government of Canada programs and services for persons with disabilities, and these need to be addressed.

Having a tax credit as a gatekeeper for federal programs and services is extremely ineffective in our ability to deliver to a really important and significant group of citizens. I think we can do better. Having the Prime Minister put in my mandate letter a commitment to review government programs and services to come up with a consistent definition of and approach to disability will be key in ensuring that no government is ever again put in a position of having to creatively figure out how to get money to people who are so desperately in need of that money.

We had to use the tax system and we had to deal with the pension system, and we are. We will deliver, but it is not ideal. It is easy to sit here and come up with excuses or reasons, but there are none, so I will commit today to ensuring that we do not put our citizens in this position again moving forward, and to doing the hard work, hand in hand with the disability community, to make sure that they are not put in this position again.

This one-time payment is a very important step, but it is just one of many steps that need to be taken to ensure equality of access and opportunities for people with disabilities in Canada. I think, and I believe, that we will succeed and thrive only when every Canadian can play an equal role in our society. As we work hard to safely restart our economy and recover from the impacts of COVID-19, we cannot leave anyone behind, and we certainly cannot leave our most innovative, creative problem-solvers, who are our citizens with disabilities, behind either.

• (1545)

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, members will recall that the first time the Liberals proposed a single payment to persons with disabilities, we Conservatives offered to recall Parlia-

ment to debate and perhaps improve that initial legislation. The Liberals chose to play political games, and weeks later, after an unnecessary delay, we are back. Parliament is recalled, and we are debating an improved piece of legislation. However, this unnecessary and, for many in the community, painful delay stands in stark contrast to the turning on a dime and the awarding of almost a billion dollars to a charity, which looks very much, to many Canadians, like political payback. It is not just WE to me, but WE to me, to him, the Prime Minister, and his family.

This improved piece of legislation, overdue, is still very complex and will be seen as a challenge to many persons with disabilities in making their applications. What is the minister going to do to ensure timely disbursement of these payments?

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough:** Mr. Speaker, I think the record will show that when given the chance to separate just the disability component—because quite frankly I thought we were all in agreement about it last time—certain parties did not choose to go forward then. We could have been a month ahead of where we are now.

Having said that, I agree; it is definitely an improved piece of legislation, in the sense that it delivers to more people. As I said in my remarks, we cannot escape the fact that we do not have within the federal government a system of direct delivery to citizens with disabilities. We do for seniors, and we do for families and for children, but we need to work on one for people with disabilities.

Yes, this is going to be super complicated at the back end, but people with disabilities need not apply whatsoever for this. They are actually given an opportunity, if they do not hold a disability tax certificate, to get one or apply for one so they can get this benefit. We are going to do the heavy lifting. It is going to be super complicated administratively at the back end, but as a result we are doing the best we can to deliver using a system that really is not functioning at this time.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the minister's speech. I understand that she deeply cares about the living conditions of people with disabilities and thinks that this is an important issue.

It would have been nice if the bill could have been passed in early July. Perhaps people living with disabilities would now have access to that money to help them deal with the challenges they are facing.

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Now that I see that the minister cares about the situation of the most vulnerable members of our society and those who are struggling, I will ask her this question.

The bill that I am sponsoring seeks to increase the number of weeks of employment insurance from 15 to 50 for those who are grappling with a serious illness and should not have the added worry of struggling to pay their rent and make ends meet.

If I were to ask her to support my bill on EI sickness benefits tomorrow, will the minister extend her concern for people with disabilities to others who are struggling?

• (1550)

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough:** Mr. Speaker, I can absolutely assure you that we have decided to up benefits from 15 to 26 weeks for people receiving employment insurance because of illness. That is really important. As we saw with the CERB, we have to support people who are sick so they can make the right decisions for their health and their families as well as for the health of our communities.

I am absolutely determined to change the act and increase the number of weeks from 15 to 26. I am committed to making that happen.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her speech.

I sometimes have a hard time understanding the Liberal government's ability to respond. When it is time to breathe some life into the big banks so they can issue more loans, that gets done instantaneously. When they say they are going to stop giving public funds to companies that send their money to tax havens, it takes 24 hours and then they backtrack, because that is untouchable. When it is time to award a billion-dollar contract, they do so untendered and then award it to an organization run by the Prime Minister's buddies—not to mention that his mother and brother are on the payroll. However, when it comes to providing assistance to people living with disabilities, they waited until July 20.

Why is it that they are incapable of turning around and helping people living with disabilities but they can turn on a dime when it comes to helping the richest, most fortunate Canadians, the banks and the friends of the Liberal Party?

That is strange, is it not?

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough:** Mr. Speaker, we have been supporting persons with disabilities since the beginning of this pandemic.

Families receiving the Canada child benefit get it for their children with disabilities. Students receiving the Canada emergency student benefit get an extra \$750 a month if they have a disability. We know that it is harder for persons with disabilities to find a job and that they have more expenses. Seniors with a disability are entitled to the disability tax credit. We wanted to be sure to reach the group of people who had not received these other benefits. We wanted to be sure to help the most vulnerable who were not included in the other measures.

Even though the system is difficult, I also wanted to make sure that we were not paying some people twice and others not at all.

We wanted to be sure to give money to the people who need it most in the reality of the federal government.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to say, first of all, how much I appreciate the work of the minister in digging down into the weeds of what is a patchwork, if not a minefield, of how benefits and services are delivered to disabled people in this country.

In my riding, this is one of the big surprises that people have any time I speak to them. I am a former financial educator. I used to talk about the disability tax credit often with people, and it was a great surprise to many of them that this was something that could actually apply to people who have mobility restrictions, as well as, on the other side, people who have cognitive deficiencies. Of course, the families and the patients were in the throes of that and finding it very difficult to get the DTC. It has been expanded so that occupational therapists and physiotherapists can sign the certificate, and now also nurse practitioners.

Can the minister tell this House how members of Parliament can further help in this very important work?

• (1555)

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough:** Mr. Speaker, we have a unique opportunity over the next 60 days, or I guess 60 days from when this bill receives royal assent, to really dig in as members of Parliament and help as many of our constituents as possible, and the organizations that help them, access the disability tax credit.

We will be providing support to members of Parliament. We will be providing support to disability organizations to help their members access this tax credit. This will immediately help people, in the form of a \$600 payment, but it will also provide people access to a myriad of other services that the federal government offers for people with disabilities who require the DTC.

I will give an example. The Canada child benefit provides an additional amount each month if the child has a disability. In order to get that additional amount, the child has to be eligible for the DTC. This is completely silly, with all due respect, because there could be parents who perhaps have a child who was just born with a significant disability, and they have to navigate the tax system in order to allow their child to get a benefit the child is entitled to.

It is far from perfect, but having the 60-day window will allow us to get as many people as possible through the door while we fix the bigger problems.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the chamber. I am very pleased, as are my colleagues in the official opposition, that the finance minister has finally, in Bill C-20, announced these long-awaited measures, but it is worth noting that they have come at a very convenient time for the Prime Minister and the finance minister.

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The ethics committee was about to meet and begin a deeper dive into the third ethical scandal facing the Prime Minister and his government. In classic fashion, the finance minister, also under investigation, and also having been found guilty of breaking ethics laws, has tried to distract Canadians with a big money bill and help for people that the government delayed helping when it had the chance.

The Prime Minister has long promised openness, accountability and transparency, telling us that sunlight is the best disinfectant, and he made a commitment to do politics differently, but here we are for a third time as our Prime Minister is being investigated by the Ethics Commissioner for his part in the scandal involving the WE organization. The two times he was found guilty of breaking the ethics laws tell us that we do not need to wait for a report, but need the Prime Minister to come clean.

It is clear that ethical considerations are often thrown to the wayside in the PMO and under the Prime Minister. Truly, it has been a theme since he came to office. First, it was his illegal trip to billionaire island, where the Prime Minister was found to have violated sections 5, 11, 12 and 21 of the Conflict of Interest Act. He accepted gifts of hospitality from the Aga Khan and the use of his private island, which were seen as gifts that could have influenced the Prime Minister. Further, the Prime Minister was found to have contravened the act when he did not recuse himself from the discussions that provided an opportunity to improperly further a private interest.

Then, of course, it was the SNC-Lavalin scandal, in which the Prime Minister was found to have contravened section 9 of the Conflict of Interest Act. Section 9 prohibits public office holders from using their position to seek to influence a decision of another person so as to further their own private interests or those of their relatives or friends or to improperly further another person's private interests. This will not be the only time I mention the Prime Minister's friends and relatives, as it deals with conflicts of interest and his dealings. In this case, it was a clear violation by the Prime Minister when he undertook a campaign to influence the then attorney general into letting his friends at SNC-Lavalin off the hook by interfering in a criminal prosecution.

Now the Prime Minister is being investigated for his role in awarding a nearly \$1-billion sole-sourced deal to an organization that has deep ties to the Liberal Party of Canada and deep and direct ties to the Prime Minister's family and him. The awarding of this contract is now being investigated by multiple committees of the House of Commons and has spawned two probes by the Ethics Commissioner. The commissioner has announced that he is examining the actions of the Prime Minister in awarding this contract and whether he broke the law again by not recusing himself from the decision despite his close ties.

The Ethics Commissioner has also announced that he is investigating the finance minister for his role in awarding the contract and not recusing himself despite his own close ties to this organization.

• (1600)

As I mentioned before, the finance minister is no stranger to the Ethics Commissioner, having been found guilty of breaking ethics laws already because, as I am sure most Canadians can relate, he forgot he had a French villa and a corporation in France. It happens

to the best of us I am sure, but despite the fact that one of the finance minister's—

**An hon. member:** A common man's problem.

**Michael Barrett:** A common man's problem indeed.

Despite the fact that one of the finance minister's daughters worked for WE and his family took a WE-sponsored trip in Ecuador, he did not recuse himself.

Now all of these ethical breaches by the Prime Minister and the finance minister follow the same pattern. The Prime Minister will deny he did anything wrong; then he will try to pass the buck; then he will say that he is sorry and then he will get the rest of the Liberals to cover it up.

He said he is sorry, but we know he is only sorry he got caught. If he were sorry, he would have accepted the invitation to appear at committee. If he were sorry, he would waive cabinet confidence. Really, if he were sorry, could he not have just written a letter to the chair of these committees and said that in light of very public revelations about his failure to recuse himself from deliberations and discussions concerning a nearly \$1-billion sole-sourced agreement with a firm he has direct ties to, he would like to appear at their committees? Would that not have been the transparency the Prime Minister called for?

We know when the Prime Minister says he is sorry that, he is “sorry, not sorry”. That is why he blocked the investigation into the SNC-Lavalin scandal. We know from the “Trudeau II Report” it was the second time the Prime Minister had broken the law, the second time he had the distinction of being the first prime minister in Canada to be found guilty of breaking ethics laws. We know from that report that there were nine people who wanted to provide testimony to the commissioner during his investigation, but were not able to. Why? Their response was uniform: it was because it would reveal a confidence of the Queen's Privy Council.

What does that mean? It means that the witnesses were muzzled by cabinet confidence. It means they were not allowed to testify. They were not allowed to listen to their conscience. How can that be? We heard in this very place that the Liberals fully co-operate with the work of officers of Parliament and the Ethics Commissioner every time.

The then government House leader talked about the historic waiving of cabinet confidences. That is not the case. It is not what happened.

He got away with it. He got away with obstructing that investigation. The Prime Minister was not properly incentivized to follow the rules.

We follow that pattern and we find the Prime Minister yet again facing an investigation.

With the WE Charity scandal unfolding before us and despite the Prime Minister's best efforts to the contrary, it is important to establish the facts as we know them. We know this did not begin with the government picking the WE organization at random in June to administer a program for youth. In fact, we found out that the WE organization was pitching the government in mid-April before the government even announced the program. We know that the organization circulated a proposal to several ministers in mid-April.

On April 19, at a meeting with officials from the finance department and ESDC, a Finance official told another senior official, who testified at the finance committee, Ms. Wernick, the senior assistant deputy minister at Employment and Social Development Canada, that in fact it was she who contacted the WE organization.

• (1605)

It is interesting that a mid-level public servant picked up the phone, got the founder of this organization, which we know has tens of millions of dollars in real estate holdings in downtown Toronto among all of its laundry list of other things it engages in, and said, "It is me calling. Is that WE? It is," and it was the founder on the phone ready to take her call. I am not sure how surprised they were at the WE organization to find out that they were going to be on the receiving end of administering nearly a billion dollars in taxpayer funds.

We also found out at that meeting that this organization was going to benefit by about \$43 million dollars in administrative fees. We heard today one of the ministers say that it was just \$43 million. What is \$43 million between friends?

On April 22, interestingly, the Prime Minister announced that the government would be moving ahead with plans to help young people economically during the crisis and that details would follow later, but while the Prime Minister was making that announcement, the WE organization was submitting a new proposal to the government by email to that same public servant who placed the call only a few days before.

We know that a few days later Volunteer Canada, a national coordinating body for the volunteer sector, reached out to the government to offer support in building a volunteer program aimed at youth. In response, little information was made available while program approval was pending. The government was not interested in Volunteer Canada's expertise or help, and what happened next is most interesting.

The WE organization, which had not been awarded anything at that point in time, contacted Volunteer Canada, which was told that the government did not need its help, and asked for help administering a really big program that was worth about \$912 million. That is interesting. I thought that Volunteer Canada was not needed by the government. That is very interesting, and it is interesting, indeed, that the WE organization was already calling people, knowing that they had this in the bag.

Meetings were held between May 25 and June 5 between those groups, and on June 5 Volunteer Canada told the WE organization

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that it would not be participating, citing several problems with the program, including that the program was going to pay students below minimum wage in any province they participated. That does not sound like help for students.

That is very strange, because the official opposition, the Conservative Party, called for funding for the Canada summer jobs program to be increased beyond what the government had committed this year. I can tell you that in my riding, there were employers approved by the government and who had advised my office that they had students who had applied to work, but that the fund ran out of money.

There were lots of employment opportunities. There was a structure already set up. The Government of Canada was prepared to administer that, but suddenly this new program, plucked out of thin air almost inexplicably, to the benefit of \$43 million for these administrators, at a cost of \$912 million to the taxpayer and paying less than minimum wage to all program participants, was invented by the government.

I think Volunteer Canada's concerns were right on the money. That kind of consulting, which the government got for free, was for a program with all kinds of problems, but the government bashed on, and on June 25 the Prime Minister announced the program, and later that day his minister said that the WE organization would be administering it.

The current government dismisses questions of conflicts of interest in the awarding of the contract, and the PMO and the WE organization have told several media outlets that the Prime Minister's family was not paid to speak at WE events. Later, on July 3, the WE organization announced that it would not be administering this program. On that same day, the Ethics Commissioner, in response to my letter, announced he would be launching an investigation of the Prime Minister.

• (1610)

On July 9, we learned that the Prime Minister's family was paid by the WE organization.

On July 15, the WE organization issued a statement that it was returning to its roots and would conduct a review of its structure and activities. When a cheque is about to be cut for \$912 million, due diligence by the government would have meant that it would have taken a look at what WE's structure and activities were: a board in shambles and a bank covenant not met.

A review of structure and activities should have been done by the Government of Canada before it offered its friends at WE Charity \$43 million in a bailout. It is an unusual pattern, to say the least, but these ethical breaches by the Prime Minister certainly followed the same pattern I mentioned before.

Members will remember from the SNC-Lavalin scandal that the Prime Minister's first response was that the allegations in *The Globe and Mail* were false. We know that this was demonstrably false now. That was proven when it was deemed that he broke the law. The Liberal Prime Minister broke the law. His statements were false.

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The Prime Minister's ties to this organization, the finance minister's ties to this organization and the Liberal Party's ties to this organization are deep and there are many.

It is hard to believe that there was no one in the cabinet room and no one on the line who saw this conflict, this problem on the horizon. Is it that everyone knows what happens when someone stands up to the Prime Minister? We saw that with the member for Vancouver Granville, the former attorney general. We saw that with Dr. Jane Philpott, the former president of the treasury board. She stood up to the Prime Minister. What happened to Dr. Philpott? What happened to Canada's first female indigenous attorney general? The Prime Minister fired them, and those Liberals sat silently when that happened. They were complicit in that cover-up and they are complicit in this one.

The Liberals filibustered at the ethics committee on Friday and waited until they talked out the clock. They spoke virtually uninterrupted for hours about all things unrelated and demonstrated misunderstanding in some cases and hypocrisy in others. I took to the floor to encourage them to have the courage of their convictions to vote. If they were going to vote against, they should let the chips fall where they may. Votes are won and lost all the time. However, they moved to adjourn the meeting. They did not have the courage of their convictions. They wanted to further the cover-up.

Therefore, we had the announcement for this bill. The Prime Minister has said it is all about helping people. When the WE Charity scandal first broke, he said that it was all about helping the children. I think it is all about helping the friends, family and donors of the Prime Minister. Canadians deserve better. The Prime Minister must allow the Ethics Commissioner to do his work unobstructed, with transparency, that disinfected value that sunlight brings. He should waive cabinet confidence. What does he have to hide?

I call on all Liberals to have the courage of their convictions, to appeal to their better angels and to let the Prime Minister know that what he represents is not what Canadians deserve.

Canadians deserve better. They have elected 338 members. They have elected a Liberal caucus that can let their leader know that his behaviour is unacceptable. If they will not ask him to resign, why do they not at least tell him that he must appear at committee, must waive cabinet confidence and must own this scandal?

• (1615)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite encapsulates what the Conservative approach to being in the official opposition has really been about over the last number of years. It has been the character assassination of the Prime Minister, or the Minister of Finance or others. It has been fairly clear. All one needs to do is review what has happened over the last number of years. While the Conservatives are so determined to continue that character assassination, we as a government will continue to work day in and day out to serve Canadians in all regions of our country.

The very issue we are debating today is Bill C-20. It is about supporting people with disabilities. It is about making changes to

the wage subsidy program. Canadians want and expect the House to deal with these things. Could the member provide any comments whatsoever with respect to Bill C-20, something Canadians want to see passed?

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, it is hard to know where to start after the member's outburst. He said that we were all about character assassination, yet one has to have a character to assassinate, and that is not what we see here.

If we look at the measures that have been put in front of us today, we have been asking for these things to happen for months. However, the Liberals wanted to talk about anything but this. Now they want to talk about it because of another one of the Prime Minister's scandals. He has embarrassed our country on the world stage. This is being reported in media around the world. This is his hallmark. When he says that Canada is back, Canada is back on the front pages in a really negative way under the Prime Minister, under the member's Prime Minister.

It is a shame that the Liberals filibustered that committee last week. It is a shame that the Liberals waited so long to bring measures to the House to help Canadians.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his very thoughtful comments on the scandal that is taking place now in our country. It is a common practice when one enters into a contract to do due diligence. In this case, no such thing took place except that the Prime Minister handed over a big fat contract of \$912 million to a friend's organization.

How much due diligence does the hon. member believe happened and if proper due diligence had happened, what could have been the result compared to what we have right now?

• (1620)

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, over the last few days, we heard the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth say that she believed public servants had done their due diligence. Our professional public service is known for just that, being professional. However, it is around the cabinet table where it looks like that due diligence fell short. It did not look at the potential conflicts, of which there are many. It did not look at the publicly available information that the board of this organization was in a shambles. While rumours abound and close ties persist, there was no comment or concern about the financial jeopardy this company was in.

Therefore, due diligence could have certainly saved the country a lot of embarrassment, but it also could have saved the government a lot of embarrassment. Financial prudence is not the government's hallmark. For once, we would like self-awareness for brand Canada from the Liberals.

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**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of sitting in on the ethics committee and I know the hon. member heard long stories. We heard stories in Latin. We heard biographies. We heard everything and anything from the Liberal side except holding the government to account. There was an understanding that a deal was struck that the Prime Minister would indeed be invited to this committee to be held accountable in that regard.

Given the hon. member's experience on the ethics committee, what does he have to say about the long-standing tradition of prime ministers simply shirking their responsibility to be accountable at committee? Does he believe the Prime Minister has a duty to report to the ethics committee to allow that committee to seek out its mandate in holding the government to account?

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, in my remarks, I mentioned that if the Prime Minister were sorry, he would not be waiting for invitations, or waiting to get dragged to committee or waiting further embarrassment by order of the House. He would offer to attend. Knowing that the ethics committee is undertaking this work, the Prime Minister should be writing to the chair and offering to come to committee. We saw that before with a member who had great integrity, the member for Vancouver Granville. She offered to appear before the justice committee. She said that she was available, at the chair's call, to attend. That is integrity. That is what we expect.

We have seen the Prime Minister use cabinet confidence to shield answers from being released. In this case, the Prime Minister has said that he is sorry. He needs to make a public declaration that this is not what we will see in the commissioner's report, that there was no obstruction. We cannot have confidence in our public institutions when we have a prime minister who obstructs every investigation, and multiple investigations, into his ethical violations and when he breaks the law.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for walking Canadians through this scenario. I will remind him as well that it is not just the Ethics Commissioner that is launching an investigation. There is the potential for the Commissioner of Lobbying on breaking lobbying rules on the part of WE, as well as the potential of an RCMP investigation. This is a multipronged, multifaceted situation.

I really want to focus on the dates that the member spoke of, April 19 to the 22, when all of this was going on: the phone calls and emails leading up to the Prime Minister's announcement on June 25 about the Canada summer student grants program and that WE was going to be the group or the partner that was going to deal with this program. Curiously, on July 11, after this scandal broke, 450 people who had been hired to administer this program were laid off by WE. Clearly, the fix was in that WE was going to get this long before the Prime Minister's announcement because of the fact that it had hired.

I wonder if the hon. member could comment further on that and his thoughts about the fix being in on this program.

• (1625)

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, it is troubling when we look at that timeline, and there were too many dates to plot on the time-

line in the 20 minutes I had to tell Canadians and the House of the sequence of events that we had seen.

We know that many times throughout the process the WE organization demonstrated certainty that it would be administering this program. Where did that assurance come from? Why was the Prime Minister announcing a program only days after this organization had first been contacted and ultimately submitted the accepted proposal to him at the same time he was announcing the program?

There are many questions, but there is no question that the fix was in from the beginning.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague speak about integrity and ethics. My father often told me that charity begins at home.

I am wondering if my colleague thinks it is ethical for a political party to apply for the emergency wage subsidy. Would it not be justified to ask the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics to study whether a political party can legitimately apply to a program such as the emergency wage subsidy?

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, it is important that when we look at the scandal we have in front of us, we do not get distracted by shiny objects. I am sure that the softballs the Bloc Québécois like to throw to the Liberals are much appreciated. The Prime Minister appreciates them, but the member is confusing apples and oranges here, or *des pommes et des oranges*.

This program was about a charity administering funds for a volunteer program, but that is not what it was. It was paying students less than minimum wage in a program that was designed only as a \$43 million bailout for friends of the Prime Minister and those Liberals. Let us not get confused or distracted. This is about the Prime Minister rewarding his friends, punishing his enemies and always letting Canadians down.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Kanata—Carleton.

I am very pleased to be speaking today. This bill that was tabled in the House shows the importance of the Canada emergency wage subsidy and of the adjustments proposed by the government. These changes will provide better support for Canadian workers and employers.

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I think that most if not all of the members in the House will agree that the COVID-19 pandemic is the worst crisis our generation has ever encountered. It has caused the largest and most sudden economic contraction since the Great Depression 90 years ago. Fortunately, the Canadian government was quick to show leadership and to help protect jobs and stabilize the economy.

Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan represents nearly 14% of the country's gross domestic product. This includes \$230 billion in direct measures to protect the health and safety of Canadians and to deliver support to Canadians, businesses and other employers. It also includes \$85 billion in tax and customs duty payment deferrals to meet liquidity needs of Canadian businesses and families. We implemented this plan to assist Canadians, protect jobs, support employers and make sure that Canada is in a better position to rebound in the post-pandemic recovery.

Since the beginning of this crisis, we have not hesitated to take action and improve assistance programs when necessary. That is precisely what the Minister of Finance did last Friday when he announced the proposed adjustments to the Canada emergency wage subsidy. I will get back to that in a minute, but first a reminder.

The Canada emergency wage subsidy is an important part of our COVID-19 economic response plan. It covers 75% of wages paid to workers by eligible employers up to \$847 a week. The CEWS came into effect on March 15 and is available to eligible employers that have experienced a revenue decline of 30% or more, except for the month of March, when the threshold was 15%.

Last May, the government announced that it would be extending the CEWS for 12 weeks, until August 29. We also extended eligibility for the CEWS to several types of employers, including indigenous government-owned corporations that carry on a business, registered Canadian amateur athletic associations and private schools and colleges.

Since its inception, the Canada emergency wage subsidy has supported approximately three million jobs. Some three million Canadians were able to keep or return to their job despite the pandemic. This also means that millions of children, spouses and parents benefited from the jobs these breadwinners were able to keep or return to.

Now let us take a look at the changes announced by the Minister of Finance last week and that we will be debating this week.

First, the government is proposing a further extension of the Canada emergency wage subsidy and has provided program details until November 21, 2020. It intends to offer more support until December 19, 2020.

• (1630)

Second, we are proposing to make the CEWS available to employers who have experienced a revenue drop of less than 30%.

Third, the new wage subsidy will be made up of two components, specifically a base subsidy available to all eligible employers that have experienced a decline in revenues, and a top-up subsidy for employers that have been most adversely affected by the COVID-19 crisis. These changes will make the CEWS more effective, and ensure that it better meets employers' needs. Employers

with a larger revenue decline could obtain a larger subsidy. Employers that get back on their feet sooner will be entitled to a gradually declining subsidy as their business picks up.

It is important to point out that a different structure will apply to employees who are temporarily laid off. In their case, the amount of wage subsidy will stay the same until August 29, at 75% of the employee's wages or remuneration. Our intention is to adjust the wage subsidy over time for employees who are temporarily laid off in order to align with the level of support provided by the CERB or EI. This will make for fairer treatment and make it easier for temporarily laid-off employees to transition from the CERB to the Canada emergency wage subsidy so that they can reconnect with their employer. The changes we have proposed, which we will be discussing this week, are based on consultations with business and union representatives concerning adjustments that could be made to continue to protect jobs while stimulating economic growth.

We got a lot of feedback, but three things stood out. First, the 30% revenue decline threshold is too stringent and could discourage growth. Second, the hardest-hit sectors need more support. Third, extending the program until August 29, as planned until now, is not enough for some employers that need to get back on their feet.

In conclusion, the changes we are proposing address certain concerns. The adjustments will help employers create and maintain good jobs. They will also increase the number of workers rehired in all sectors, by more employers. That being said, we understand that the situation continues to evolve rapidly. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and make additional changes as needed. The current version of the program will be in effect until November 21, and we intend to continue to provide support until December 19.

The opposition parties have read the bill, so they know what our intentions are. I am eager to hear the debates this week, and I hope that every member in the House will support the government's efforts to help Canadian businesses in these difficult times.

• (1635)

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his remarks.

I have a few questions I would like to ask him.

*Government Orders*

[*English*]

How many angry phone calls has the member received in his constituency office regarding complaints about delays in the corrections to fill the gaps in the emergency wage subsidy? How many angry phone calls has my colleague received from constituents about the delay in the one-time payment to persons with disabilities? This question is probably the most relevant: How many angry phone calls has my colleague received from constituents upset about the billion-dollar WE boondoggle?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** Mr. Speaker, we have had some calls, but not many about the issues my colleague just mentioned.

In my riding of Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, we have answered well over 1,500 individual emails and 2,000 or 2,100 phone calls. I can say that people are very polite and very conscious of the fact that we would not be in this position if the federal government had not been there to support workers and people in need.

Tomorrow and Wednesday, we will have time to go over all of this with all of my colleagues. I hope they will ask themselves what they would have done in the current government's place.

The best answer would be that they would have done the same thing we did.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I think that the Bloc Qu b cois members were all prepared to leap to the defence of our constituents' interests.

In fact, the wage subsidy was the Bloc Qu b cois's idea, because we believe in the importance of maintaining the employment relationship between employers and employees. We even got the government to increase it from 10% to 75% by modelling our approach on what is being done elsewhere.

In my riding, the wage subsidy was used by 62% of businesses. That means 62% of businesses in Granby's industrial area used the wage subsidy because they were struggling.

I would like to thank my dear colleague for his speech and ask him whether he believes that the Liberal Party of Canada faced the same difficulties as the businesses in my riding of Shefford that urgently applied for the Canada emergency wage subsidy.

• (1640)

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, and I can confirm that that is the case, just like everywhere else in Canada. It is not so bad if we come up with solutions.

My colleague knows what those solutions are as well as I do. I hope all members of the House will have a chance to speak on this tomorrow or the next day. We will be voting, and I hope our colleagues will support us.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

I would also like to take this opportunity to ask him a question.

Why does he think the Liberal government awarded a nearly \$1-billion sole-source contract to administer a government student assistance program to a charity that had no prior experience?

Does he think that not trusting the public service, not putting out a tender, and giving a contract to friends of the Prime Minister's family is a good use of public money?

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** Mr. Speaker, I will thank my hon. colleague, because I am polite.

We are not about to start the same debate all over again. We have said everything there is to say on the matter, and I think it is important to put ourselves in the shoes of the young people waiting for the subsidy. I think it has been properly distributed across Canada, not just in the Liberal Party, but among all parties.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Ethics; the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Consular Affairs.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak to Bill C-20 today. It is an important piece of legislation that recognizes the importance of restarting our economy, supporting our workers and helping Canadian businesses address the challenges of COVID-19.

My riding of Kanata—Carleton is full of entrepreneurs, full of people putting themselves forth to create businesses and opportunities. I am very grateful for them, but they need our support. These are hard-working people. They are business owners trying to help us move our country forward. They create job opportunities that strengthen my community and communities right across the country. They also help us grow the middle class.

Our government has seen how severely Canadian businesses, Canadian workers and their families have been impacted by COVID-19. The pandemic has been especially hard on them, and they continue to face economic hardship and uncertainty.

[*Translation*]

All across the country, companies of all sizes have had to reduce their operations or temporarily shut down to help slow the spread of the virus.

[*English*]

Since the beginning, we have worked hard to protect jobs, and we are unwavering in our efforts to protect even more jobs and to encourage employers to rehire workers previously laid off as a result of COVID-19. We know how very important this is to our economic recovery and positioning Canadian businesses, non-profits and charities to more easily resume normal operations following the crisis.

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

As we gradually reopen the economy and take the first steps to recover from the repercussions of COVID-19, we know that it will take time for things to return to normal. All sectors of Canada's economy have been affected by this pandemic. One day, this crisis will be behind us, but we have not reached that point yet. In the meantime, our government will continue to ensure that employers receive the support they need during these difficult times.

From the beginning of this crisis, our government has continuously assessed the repercussions of COVID-19 in order to respond accordingly. As part of Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan, we implemented the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which helps employers of all sizes continue to pay their employees.

● (1645)

[English]

The Canada emergency wage subsidy is here for businesses, non-profit organizations and registered charities and will help them pay workers and manage the many challenges their business is facing in this pandemic. This means that, despite the decrease in their income due to the crisis, employers are able to keep workers on the payroll and rehire those they have previously laid off. The wage subsidy is the kind of support that makes sure business owners have one less thing to worry about in this time of unprecedented uncertainty.

Back in May, to ensure Canadian workers could continue to have the support they need in these uncertain times, the Government of Canada announced its intention to extend the Canada emergency wage subsidy by an additional 12 weeks, which brought the end of the program to August 29, 2020. We also extended eligibility for the Canada emergency wage subsidy to more employers to help support more Canadian workers. To date, the subsidy has helped around three million Canadians keep their jobs and have a paycheque to count on throughout this crisis. That number continues to grow.

[Translation]

As the crisis continues to evolve, the Canada emergency wage subsidy must also evolve.

[English]

We consulted with businesses and labour organizations so we could hear directly from Canadians on how the program was helping workers and businesses across the country and what adjustments we could make to help it support businesses even more through the safe and gradual economic reopening. We heard them, and with the invaluable input received through these consultations we are proposing further changes to the design of the Canada emergency wage subsidy.

The proposed changes to the Canada emergency wage subsidy would allow the program to support more workers and businesses, better protect jobs and promote growth, and be there for Canadians as the economy continues to open. The flexibility would ensure that the wage subsidy meets the diverse needs of our businesses as we move forward. For businesses that continue to see significant challenges, we would provide significant support to help them keep their workers on board, and businesses that are seeing a steady re-

covery will be able to rely on predictable support that would help them afford to keep and rehire workers.

First, we are proposing to extend the Canada emergency wage subsidy to November 21, 2020, with the intent to provide further support into December.

[Translation]

We are proposing to expand the program's eligibility requirements to include employers that have experienced a revenue decline of less than 30%. The base subsidy for eligible employers would gradually decrease as revenues increase. To help the employers that have been hit hardest by the pandemic, we are also proposing a top-up subsidy of up to 25%.

[English]

Generally, an eligible employer's top-up subsidy under the Canada emergency wage subsidy would be determined based on the revenue drop experience when comparing revenues in the preceding three months to the same three months in the prior year.

[Translation]

Only employers that have experienced an average revenue drop of more than 50% over the preceding three months can get this top-up subsidy.

● (1650)

[English]

In addition, a safe harbour would be available to ensure that, through August 29, employers would have access to a Canada emergency wage subsidy rate that is at least as generous as they would have had under the initial Canada emergency wage subsidy structure. This means that through July and August, an eligible employer with a revenue decline of 30% or more would receive a Canada emergency wage subsidy rate of at least 75%.

With these proposed changes, the Canada emergency wage subsidy would continue to provide substantial support for Canadian employers and employees who are most adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our government continues to assess the impact of COVID-19. As we have said since the very start of this crisis, we stand ready to take additional actions if they are needed.

[Translation]

Through programs such as the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program for small businesses, we are helping businesses across the country keep their doors open and continue to provide the services that Canadians need. We will get through this together. We will succeed by working together.

*Government Orders*

[English]

Today, I encourage all hon. members to put the immediate needs of Canadians first, lend their support and vote in favour of this bill.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague is aware of the deeming rule, which was included in the CEWS package at the very beginning. In the case where businesses applied the first month and then the amount was increased to 30%, some no longer qualified, so they did not apply. However, there was a deeming rule, which apparently indicated that a business qualified for that next month even though it no longer met that eligibility. A number of businesses in my riding were not aware of that and did not apply for it.

I wonder if the member is aware as to whether that deeming rule is still in place for those businesses retroactively to be able to get the support they desperately need. With this new layout of the land, will that still be included for them, going forward?

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon:** Mr. Speaker, I am not well versed in that particular aspect of this legislation. I understand that there were discussions about retroactivity and how this could be made to be fair. I do not have an answer for the member at the present time, but I can certainly find one, if she would like me to come back to her with an answer.

[Translation]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

We have been listening to speeches about the content of this bill all day. That is great. There are a lot of good things in this bill. However, there are some things missing. There is always something that could have been done better. Since the government is recalling the House anyway, I wonder why it is not taking this opportunity to introduce a bill that addresses all of the demands, or at least tries to help as many people as possible.

Take, for example, the artists who would normally spend the summer working at festivals or touring and doing shows all over the place. Most of these events are cancelled this summer.

They obviously get a little help from the CERB in the summer, but the CERB will be over at the end of August. These people normally earn a significant portion of their incomes in the summer, which sees them through until the following summer and the next festivals. Now they will have no income for the rest of the year because they are not eligible for the Canada emergency wage subsidy.

These artists and artisans will probably have to find another job and change fields, which will cripple the local, regional and Quebec cultures, especially francophone culture.

Can my colleague tell me why the government did not use this bill to announce assistance for seasonal workers, such as artists? Artists are clearly being penalized and will find themselves in an untenable situation come fall.

I could go on, but I will let my colleague discuss this with the Minister of Canadian Heritage, for whom I have a lot of respect.

• (1655)

[English]

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon:** Mr. Speaker, he may as well confer with the expert. I am a lover of arts, culture and music, and I really worked with the minister. I want that aspect of our society to thrive through this. I know we put money aside, somewhere in the range of \$3 billion, for our tourism industry. That is another industry where they need to make their money in the summertime.

I really do appreciate the member bringing that up. It is absolutely key, and I will be working with the minister to make sure that arts and culture are part of this package.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, to continue with the idea of those who will be left behind once the CERB comes to an end at the end of August, this will not just happen for artists, but for so many. COVID has shown the many holes that exist within our social systems and within those programs. Sadly, a lot of them have been chipped away after consecutive governments, time after time. Specifically, I think about our EI program and the fact that throughout the 1990s, the Liberal government stole about \$50 billion. The Conservatives after them, in 2015, stole \$54 billion from our EI system.

As the member across the way talks about all these wonderful programs that have been created, I would like to get back to talking about the programs that existed before and ways that the government has recommitted to expand them, to grow them, to ensure they are strong and will continue to support people beyond COVID.

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon:** Mr. Speaker, we had to put out some short-term, get-it-out-there solutions, because this really was an unprecedented event. However, I am hopeful that it will actually shuffle us toward reassessing all of our social safety networks. How do we look after people better in this country? Those discussions are under way today, and I am looking forward to being a part of them. We can take this emergency we are in, this crisis we are in, and we can use it to do even more good work for Canadians in the future.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to let the House know that I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk and I look forward to this opportunity to address the House.

First of all, I want to pay tribute to the men and women, the businesses, the entrepreneurs, the hard-working people, the front-line essential workers in my riding of Red Deer—Lacombe who have done yeomen's work throughout this very difficult time in our nation's history. I am happy to report that central Alberta has been very stoic and also very capable in dealing with COVID-19. We have had very few cases in our province and I hope that continues going forward.

*Government Orders*

Before us today is a bill and the many missed opportunities are the theme of my speech: the missed opportunities in this legislation and missed opportunities for Parliament to have done its job. I do not want to harp on that, but we have been basically sidelined with a very marginal committee. One political party in the House probably regrets that alliance it set up a little while ago. I could be talking about missed opportunities for some people to even come to work today, but I am not going to talk about those. I am going to talk about the missed opportunities in this legislation.

The first thing I want to talk about is CERB and the missed opportunities in this legislation. Many MPs in this room probably already know and have probably already heard from their constituents about something called the CERB clawback. Early on when CERB was put out, people received money. Some who applied for it received maybe a little more than they should. They had an advance payment that was not associated with their work time or with a pay period. Now the government is clawing that money back. It is doing it by just stopping payments cold to people who are actually going to continue on. We know that the government wants to continue on because it has announced several times that it is going to extend the CERB. Why did it not at least notify people that for the next two weeks they would not be getting the CERB? That would have been the polite thing to do. There are lots of Canadians facing this right now. Or the Liberals could have amortized the amount that needed to be clawed back over the next extended period of time so they would not leave a family who is already barely getting by on 25% of what that household normally brings in. But no, that is not what the government is doing at all. It is really unfortunate and a missed opportunity in the legislation to do right by Canadians.

There is \$252 million of reannounced money that was going to go to the agriculture sector whether we had a COVID-19 crisis or not. The business risk management tools are not cutting it for our farmers. There is market access loss as a result of COVID-19 border closures and restrictions. Nothing in this piece of legislation is going to address the needs of the farmers of this country that not only feed us, but also feed the world at times. We are one of a handful of countries in the world that is a net exporter of food. We need to support our agricultural sector, and it is a missed opportunity in this legislation. We are going to have further contraction in our agricultural sector as a result. However, farmers by and large do not vote Liberal, so we should not be at all surprised that there is no support in this round three of legislation, or round four, whatever we happen to be on now with one-day parliamentary sittings.

I talked about the oil and gas sector during question period. I am a former rig worker. I am proud to say I was a roughneck during my younger years and was very proud of the work I did. I still have my coveralls, my hard hat, all my PPE from those days. What is the Government of Canada doing right now? Is it advancing the oil and gas sector's interests and positioning the sector to be able to thrive once the world economy takes off again so that we can have a window of market opportunity to get back on track? Who knows, maybe even the oil and gas sector could generate some revenue that would get us back to a semblance of a balanced budget, but there is nothing in there. Where is the money for the oil and gas sector? Here is some money for some orphaned wells because Liberal policies have been so onerous that a bunch of companies went bankrupt

and orphaned some of their wells. The Liberals say they will give them some money now to clean up those abandoned wells. It's basically a lifeline to the end of life for this industry. That is what the Liberals have offered.

This is the energy that we all use as Canadians to heat our homes, to power and fuel our economy, to get our kids to school and sport, and ourselves to work, but it is not important to the Liberal government. Why? It is because I do not think a whole lot of rig workers vote for the Liberal Party of Canada.

• (1700)

Through the Community Futures regional relief fund in my constituency, small businesses were given a million dollars. That was gobbled up instantly. This was supposed to be an opportunity for small business owners to go to their local Community Futures in Alberta, or it would be different depending on what province they are in, but it was supposed to be a last-resort effort. It was over-subscribed instantly because despite everything the Liberals have done with the closures they have made, every single Canadian has been impacted by COVID, but they pick winners and losers in their programming. There are so many people who have not been able to qualify for the other programs they have tried to rely on this regional relief fund and it is not working. It was over-subscribed instantly. Again, people in my riding had to be told, no, the government is not going to be there for them. It is a problem.

Hospitality and tourism is probably the hardest-hit sector of our economy. I know that the restaurants and coffee shops have had a really tough time. I know they used some of the programs for those who qualify. They used the wage subsidy for those who qualified. However, it is not just these folks. There is a whole sector of our economy, and my colleague from B.C. brought this up during question period today. There are guides and outfitters. I am going to talk about this because I used to be a guide on Great Bear Lake.

*Government Orders*

When I was in university, I did not wait for the government to hand me a cheque. When I was a university student, I actually went out and got a job as a fishing guide on Great Bear Lake, and I worked my tail off from sun-up until sundown, which in the north is the whole day. That is what I did, and I was proud of the work I did. It was hard work in a rough environment. I was getting bitten by mosquitoes, blackflies, name it. I was in six- or seven-foot waves on an icy cold lake trying to catch fish for people who paid an awesome, large sum of money, in my mind at that time as a 19-year-old, to come for the pleasure of catching a fish. Not a single one of those lodges on Great Bear Lake, to my knowledge, is open and there is absolutely no help through any of the programs that have been offered. How do they demonstrate a loss of revenue in March, April or May when their guests do not show up until June, July, August and September?

Fishing guide operators on Vancouver Island, who have been trounced by the DFO regulations and this minister's regulations for the last couple of years, are now being trounced by COVID regulations. If 80% of their clients are from outside of Canada, what has the government done to help these folks? Well, the government has done nothing, because a whole lot of people who own firearms and go hunting and fishing probably do not vote for the Liberal Party of Canada. Where is the help for them? It is the same for the oil and gas sector and the same for the farmers of this country. The help is not coming, not at all.

There was another opportunity here when it comes to making the difference. The government, back in early 2015-16, had a problem with something called “cash for access”. Cash for access was that scandal, and it was a big deal because it showed and exposed the cozy relationship of a bunch of Liberal insiders with the government who were getting quid pro quo for donations to the party. The Prime Minister said that it could not be them; the problem had to be the rules. Therefore, he changed the rules when it comes to how fundraising is actually done. He changed the Canada Elections Act because he had to blame the rules, but never mind the ethical blind spots that had been pointed out by the previous ethics commissioner. That was what the Prime Minister and the Liberal government of the day did. They changed the law.

They could have changed the law today to deal with the WE scandal. The Liberals could have changed the ethics laws to create a repeat offender designation, for a government that seems to have a few repeat offenders. We all know that the Liberals' criminal justice approach is to let people go and give them a slap on the wrist, so why would we expect anything different when it comes to a change in the ethical law? Nonetheless, they had that ability before them.

• (1705)

In fact, the Liberals could have set mandatory minimum fines on an escalating scale for repeat offenders, and we know that the government is okay with registries. They could have created a registry of repeat ethical offenders for their own government. Think of the job creation in the Ethics Commissioner's office, if only the government were focused on actually doing something positive for Canadians.

There were a lot of missed opportunities, and I think we can agree that the current government does not have Canadians' interests at heart.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's speech.

He began his speech by saying that there was absolutely nothing in this bill to support our farmers. I am glad he brought that up because, over the past two weeks, I have been meeting with farmers in my riding, and they all tell me that the best solution is to make sure supply management is never compromised again.

My party introduced a bill calling for a supply management exemption along the same lines as the cultural exemption in negotiations with trading partners.

I do not know if my colleague agrees that the same kind of system should be in place and if he is prepared to support an exemption for supply management, because his party has never stated its position on the subject.

[*English*]

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Madam Speaker, my colleague would be interested to know that probably the largest segment of the supply-managed farmers in Alberta lies within my riding in the counties of Lacombe and Ponoka, and the party position of the Conservative Party of Canada has always been to support the supply-managed sector. In fact, the House has convened earlier for emergency legislation to deal with extending credit to the supply-managed sector.

If there is something more that is needed, and my colleague from Beauce spoke about this earlier today, then we would always do something reasonable to support any aspect of the agricultural sector.

• (1710)

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague from Red Deer—Lacombe talked about a lot of missed opportunities, and I know there is a gap within this legislation that will make the legislation inaccessible to many employers, particularly in week four of the wage subsidy. However, it is a complex web, and the hon. member for Carleton said earlier that one would basically need to be an astrophysicist or have a degree in mathematics to figure it out.

It is going to cost businesses a tremendous amount of money from hiring accountants and consultants, so I want to ask my hon. colleague about this particular piece of legislation and the impact it's going to have on businesses that are still suffering in his riding and across the country, as it relates to the wage subsidy.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Madam Speaker, I have spoken to many businesses in my constituency over the last number of months. Many of these business owners and operators have called me with despair in their voices about their frustration with the current programs the government is offering, because they either did not qualify or the thresholds seemed to be changing. I remember in the early days of the programs being announced that people had to pay attention, because every day it seemed like rubrics for all of the programs were about to change, but the frustration is still there and my colleague is absolutely right.

I am just going to reiterate what my colleague from Carleton said earlier today: If it is easier for a person to make money sitting at home, getting a benefit from the government, there is no incentive for that person to work. There will be no incentive for these businesses to even apply for these programs, or try to get the help they need, if it is going to be a net negative cost for them, because they have to hire the expertise in order to do so.

This is a typical shell game that is played by the Liberal government, where it is more interested in the announcement than the actual benefit it will have for Canadians. The programs are going to be so complicated and so onerous that we are going to exclude people just because they do not have time right now. They are too busy trying to keep their doors open, keep their employees paid, and keep the hounds away on the personal finances of their home, outside of their business, to sit here and try to go through a bureaucratic flowchart to try to access a little more government money. When we take a look at some of the problems that some of the businesses are having right now and some of the calls, especially on the CERB where the clawbacks are coming, we can ask if the risk is really going to be worth the reward. That is something I am going to have to leave in the hands of the businesses in my riding, but it is another missed opportunity.

We should keep things simple, make programs that work for the benefit of Canadians, and always incentivize people working and earning a living. The dignity of a job and the dignity of a business, running in a profitable scenario, is always what the government should be striving for.

**Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Madam Speaker, before I start, I would like to thank the member for Red Deer—Lacombe for sharing his time with me today.

COVID-19 has truly delivered a devastating blow to the world that we used to know. This pandemic has claimed the lives of so many, and I want to express my sincerest thoughts to all those who have lost family and loved ones to COVID-19, including in my riding of Haldimand—Norfolk. My prayers are with them all.

Right across Canada, we have seen the effects of the pandemic not just on our health but on our economy as well. Businesses are struggling and various industries have had to downsize, and as a result, many people have, unfortunately, lost their jobs. My riding of Haldimand—Norfolk has not been immune to these impacts, but down in Ontario's garden, we are not strangers to challenging times. We know how to pull up our socks, push through and adapt when necessary.

I would like to cite a couple of examples of this. As with many other businesses across our country, those in Haldimand—Norfolk

have done what they have had to do not just to survive, but to contribute to the effort against COVID-19 as well.

The first example is a company called Battlefield International, in Cayuga. As soon as the pandemic began, this company, which normally develops products for the aerospace and defence sectors, began designing its own manual ventilator automation control, also known as the MVAC, for use in the health care community. Another example is a business called Hometown Brewing Company, which started making hand sanitizer and even donated some to community organizations in need. It is actions like these that shine a light during these dark times.

Even though many businesses and people in Haldimand—Norfolk have shown their strength through these difficult times, they continue to need our help as well. They need support, and the Conservatives are here to help them.

Today we are debating legislation that intends to extend the Canada emergency wage subsidy and change the eligibility criteria. The bill would also implement a one-time, tax-free payment of up to \$600 for Canadians with disabilities.

Throughout this pandemic, the Conservatives have supported the wage subsidy, but we have consistently called for changes to be made that would better support businesses and workers. One of the changes that we have been advocating for is a sliding scale to allow companies with less than a 30% revenue decline to receive the wage subsidy. That way, as the economy starts to reopen, businesses could continue to receive much-needed support to get back on their feet. In fact, representatives from a car dealership in my riding contacted me recently to express their concern that the 30% revenue decline requirements were just too stringent, especially given the economy is beginning to open.

Flexibility in the eligibility requirement is needed, as we have been saying for quite some time, and while this should have been done much earlier, I am happy to see that the Liberals have finally listened to us. After this legislation passes, any business that can show a drop in revenue will be able to apply for the wage subsidy. The amount that employers will receive will depend on the percentage of revenue that they have lost, compared within a certain time frame.

*Government Orders*

This may sound simple, but unfortunately the formula that has been presented by the Liberals is anything but simple, as my colleague from Carleton has outlined well today. It will only cause confusion for small businesses, more paperwork and more hiring of outside expertise. I spoke with one businessman on the weekend who said that he is not even going to bother applying, because he figured he would have to pay his accountant more than what he would get out of the program. At a time when people are trying to get back on their feet, red tape and overly complex government policy are the last things that these small business owners need or deserve.

That said, I do support the extension and the changes made to the Canada emergency wage subsidy, but I hope the Liberals will listen to the concerns of the Conservatives and simplify the administration of it.

I will also be supporting the one-time, tax-free payment of up to \$600 for persons with disabilities. It is unfortunate, though, that this did not come about sooner.

• (1715)

After waiting months before announcing support for Canadians with disabilities, the Liberals finally proposed a plan in June to distribute the payment. However, the problem was that too many people did not qualify because the plan was restricted to those who were already claiming the disability tax credit. A lot of people do not apply for that for a variety of reasons, maybe because they do not have enough taxable income or because the application process, once again, is just too onerous, but planning to give the special COVID-19 payments to persons with disabilities without doing it in a broader way has meant that a lot of people who really need it the most are not going to get it.

Today's proposal, which expands eligibility to include those on the Canada pension plan disability and veterans on the disability allowance, is a big improvement and I am pleased to see it. I just wish that it had been done last month, when the opportunity was first there.

The Conservatives have pointed out flaws in the programs, and proposed solutions to deliver them, for months now. If Parliament had been resumed, we could have had meaningful debate on this issue and made amendments that would have resulted in Canadians with disabilities receiving their support by now. Quite frankly, I think it is shameful that the Prime Minister and his party continue to block the return of Parliament. There are still too many people falling through the cracks, people who need and deserve our support.

By denying members of the opposition the ability to use the tools that we have as members of the opposition to bring forward these concerns in this chamber, many Canadians are not having their voices heard, or if they are, it is happening way later than it should. Parliament needs to return not only so that the problems with the Liberals' programs can be fixed in a timely manner, but also so that Canadians can get answers to why the Prime Minister and his cabinet decided to give a \$900-million sole-source agreement to WE Charity.

Since learning that members of the Prime Minister's family were paid almost \$300,000 to speak at WE Charity events, we have also found out that the Minister of Finance has direct family ties to the charity as well. Neither the Prime Minister nor his Minister of Finance thought that it was unethical to be part of a decision-making process where a contract was given to an organization that pays members of both of their families. Madam Speaker, I hope you agree with me that it is a serious problem when people in these positions do not recognize that conflict of interest.

Although the Liberals think that simply apologizing will make everything better and make the situation go away, the issue is that they keep having to apologize. They should not have had to in the first place, and they would not have had to if they had done the right thing. Canadians deserve answers, and the Conservatives will continue to hold the Prime Minister and the government accountable.

Before I close, I would like to bring up one last point, which has to do with what I did not see in the legislation today, something that I wish I had.

Since the pandemic began, the Conservatives have been putting forward constructive solutions to help Canadians. As provinces continue to reopen, people are optimistic about their futures and are anxious to get back to work. However, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, many employers are facing significant staffing challenges, even though we have record unemployment numbers in the country. Canadians want to work and businesses need workers, but the CERB is penalizing workers for picking up shifts.

I have had way too many stories on this issue come to me and my office in my constituency. Right now, Canadians making just one dollar more than the CERB limit of \$1,000 lose the benefit completely. I know a woman who cannot work the fifth Sunday in the month in an essential job in an essential service because if she does, she will be two dollars over the limit and will lose it all. That is wrong.

Under the Conservative plan, workers making between \$1,000 and \$5,000 over the limit would qualify for the back-to-work bonus, so that whatever they did, the more they work, the more it is worth working. They would get a top-up that would be phased out by 50¢ on the dollar. It should always pay to work, and we believe that this should have been included in the plan. We would encourage everyone to push for that improvement going forward.

*Government Orders*

• (1720)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, toward the end of her speech, the member made reference to the issue of employment. I cannot help but reflect on how well, prior to the pandemic, the Canadian economy was doing. In five years, well over a million jobs were created. If we compare that with the tenure of the Harper government, during which the member opposite was a minister, at least for part of those years, we outperformed the previous government in job creation by virtually 2:1 per capita, based on number of years.

Would the member agree that this government is in a far better position to deal with unemployment than the previous Conservative administration was? I think history will show that we were far more successful.

**Hon. Diane Finley:** Madam Speaker, the hon. gentleman is very entertaining in his recollection of history, because he is ignoring the fact that the numbers he is citing occurred during the greatest economic meltdown that the world has seen in over 50 years, going back to the late 1920s.

In this century, we are facing something that I do not think any developed country has ever seen. We are seeing record high levels of unemployment, yet we have record skill shortages. Employers cannot get the people they need, even the ones they had before, because they are getting paid not to work. I am even hearing stories that teachers who had been laid off for the summer and were going to go on EI for the usual \$1,200 or \$1,500 a month are now getting \$500 a month more. They are saying they do not want to go back to teach until January because it is not worth it to them; they are better off staying home.

That is wrong. That is the wrong way to manage an economy. We need that talent. We need those skills out there. Our kids need to be educated, and we need to make sure that when people are working they are better off than when they are not.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I heard my colleague mention the increased support for Canadians with disabilities, which she welcomes.

For example, persons with disabilities, including those on veterans pensions, can receive the subsidy even if they have not applied for the tax credit. She also stated that she would have liked to see this type of amendment in the last iteration of Bill C-17, which was introduced in June.

I agree with her that it was urgent and it is even more urgent today to help persons with disabilities. My question is simple.

Had these changes been included in the last iteration of the bill, would my colleague have agreed to have unanimous consent to fast-track the bill at that time?

[*English*]

**Hon. Diane Finley:** Madam Speaker, we have a process in place right now to deal with this bill, and all the parties agreed to it unanimously this morning.

My big concern is that what is being offered now as support for persons with disabilities is what should have been offered a month ago. If it had been, there would have been a reasonable chance that the people who needed the money would already be getting it in their accounts. It is tax-free. They need the money. They have been facing these expenses and trying to carry them for the four months we have been in lockdown.

The Liberal government could have done this.

[*Translation*]

They could have done it at least a month ago. What is taking so long?

They did not do the right thing, but they are finally doing it. That is good.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North talked about how great an economy the Liberals were a part of before COVID hit. I would like to remind him of our reality, where we are now.

For Canadians out there who are watching today, we have seen our debt increase by one-third within four months. This is at a time when our natural resource sector is on its knees, as my colleague for Red Deer—Lacombe mentioned, and is being pummelled even harder by the government. What we need for the future of our energy workers is a positive future so that those workers can get back to work and our natural resources can help to start paying off the debt.

Does the hon. member think the economy is better today, or was it better before?

**Hon. Diane Finley:** Madam Speaker, is the economy better today than before? There are certainly millions of fewer people working, and a lot more are actually being motivated not to work in the jobs they are qualified to do, which have a unique place in our society. The teachers I was just speaking about are an example.

There are jobs that need to be done, but the system as it stands now is a disincentive for too many people. Yes, a lot of people who need help are getting it, and that is good, but it should be managed in such a way that as the economy opens up—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the Queen's Privy Council.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there are a number of things I could speak about. It will be a challenge to keep my comments within 20 minutes, but I will give it my best shot.

*Government Orders*

A bit of misinformation has come up over the last few hours of debate. There is one item in particular that I have to address, because the member opposite just made reference to it, and that is the issue of when we could have had the relief for individuals with disabilities in Canada. Just so the record is very clear for my friend across the way and my Conservative colleagues in particular, the opportunity to implement this was there weeks ago when the government, the New Democrats, the Green Party and the Bloc Party were all prepared to allow the legislation to pass. There was only one political entity in the House of Commons that said “no”, and that was the Conservative Party.

I know the Conservatives like at times to rewrite history, but this was really not that long ago. Thinking of individuals living with disabilities and how serious of an issue that is, I am very pleased that we finally have the Conservatives onside to allow this bill to move forward, so those with disabilities will be able to receive the much-needed support we wanted to provide to them.

When I say “we”, I am talking about members on all sides of the House—

**An hon. member:** Spin at its finest. We see that a lot these days.  
● (1730)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I am sorry. We have been very good at giving each other time to speak. Can we allow the parliamentary secretary to continue?

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, that was one comment. My other comment is based on a question that I had posed and that the Conservatives also posed. It is the question of how the economy is doing today compared to the way it was. It is a fair question.

We can look at the pre-pandemic economy, from prior to coronavirus. Coronavirus has had a very profound impact not only on Canada's economy but also on the economy around the world. This is something that is affecting every country, and some countries are doing a better job than others in terms of managing and providing for their citizens. Generally speaking, prior to the pandemic, Canada's economy was doing exceptionally well. When we compare it to the Stephen Harper days, members will find that it was doing exceptionally well, especially in terms of job creation.

There will always be a different approach from a Conservative administration than there will be from a Liberal administration. A Liberal government understands and appreciates the role a national government can play in providing the incentives necessary to support the economy and to move us forward in terms of creating jobs, opportunities and hope. We provide individuals who do not have much, through tax incentives and directed grants, the ability to become that much better off. We have demonstrated that very clearly.

What I want to say to Canadians today is that when the pandemic started and it was necessary for the government to engage, the government, without hesitation, made it very clear that it did not want Canadians to have to worry about paying bills. We wanted to ensure that Canadians knew we were going to be there for them in a very real and tangible way.

A Conservative member was being somewhat critical and said that the Liberals spent a lot of money. Yes, we have spent a lot of money. However, I believe that money has been well spent. If we listen to Conservatives, we do not hear any of them saying to cut back on any of the specific program dollars we have allocated. Conservatives recognize that programs like CERB are helping more than eight million people. Over eight million people are being helped by CERB.

We must remember that the CERB program started from nothing. Previously, there was no CERB program. It came into its very existence because of the coronavirus. That process, from the creation of the program to its getting money into the pockets of Canadians, happened relatively quickly. The program was not that complicated. It was more important that we put money in the pockets of Canadians so they could buy groceries, pay their bills and stay in their homes. That was the priority of this government, and we have seen the results.

The impact the coronavirus has had is second to no other. We would have to go back generations and generations to find this type of economical and social impact. There are people who have had to go through a great deal of hardship. I send my condolences to the families and friends of those who have passed from the coronavirus, to those who have been infected and to the individuals going through some very difficult times.

I recognize, appreciate and value the work of essential workers. We often talk about health care workers or first responders, as we should, and recognize the important role they have played. What about the long haul truck drivers who are ensuring groceries get to the supermarkets we are so dependent upon? What about the taxi drivers who are driving individuals to health care facilities?

● (1735)

Many essential workers have stepped up to ensure that we are able to continue to provide the types of services that are absolutely critical for us as a society. I express my appreciation, and the government's appreciation, to all those individuals who continue to contribute to the lives of individuals in a very real way.

There comes a point when we recognize that it is not just the government's cabinet ministers who sit around the table. The leader of the New Democrat Party said the NDP forced the Liberals to do this or that. If we listen to the leader of the NDP, everything we have ever done is because the NDP forced us to. The reality is that this government listens to what Canadians are saying. We introduce the programs. I was on virtual phone calls every day to the cabinet indirectly providing input, as many of my colleagues were. There were technical briefings provided for all members of the House. It did not matter which political party members were part of.

With regard to the coronavirus, our Prime Minister challenged us to consult and work with our constituents and report what we needed to do to ensure that Canada comes out okay. There should be no surprise that when we generate programs from nothing that there is going to be a need for modification of those programs. One would expect that.

*Government Orders*

I made reference to the Canada emergency response benefit allotment of \$2,000. It was very simple so that we could get money into the pockets of Canadians as quickly as possible. I remember the former government House leader would say that small business is the backbone of Canada's economy. Other members have said likewise. We understand that if we want to see the economy grow, or minimize the negative impact on the economy, we have to recognize the important role that small businesses play and support them. This government is doing just that.

We see that through loans and from dialogue created with financial institutions, in terms of their important obligations to businesses and directing money through wage subsidies. That is what this legislation is changing. It is taking into consideration many changes that are necessary. These things are having a very real impact. They are not necessarily all coming from the mind of the leader of the New Democratic Party. These are flowing from ideas from constituencies and from Canadians in every region of our country. This is a government that is committed to working with other levels of government. It is brilliant. We just committed \$19 billion to help restart the economy working with the provinces.

From the get-go, we have understood how important it was to work with the different levels of government because we each have a very important role to play in serving our constituents and Canadians. The Minister of Employment embodies a great deal of what many of us hope to achieve, and she shared that in some of her comments, if not directly, then indirectly. I will be a little more direct. The minister is very passionate about disabilities. We saw that with the historic disability accessibility legislation we brought in last year. It was quite a moment. I was not only happy for Canadians, but I felt good that a minister who felt so strongly about that issue was able to see it come to light.

● (1740)

Today, she was talking about the importance of somehow fixing the disability system and the way we allocate money out, whether it is tax credits or direct cash. What provides me comfort is that we have ministers like that, who are so committed to trying to make a difference, who share that personal story and are prepared to fight for those individuals with disabilities. It is individuals such as her, and I would suggest that she does not have a monopoly on it, because many, if not all of us in our own way, either directly or indirectly, try to influence government policy.

For myself, I can think of a wide spectrum of things that I would like to kindly gesture the government to move toward. There is no end to the things that I would like to see happen, but I recognize that it takes time. I think one of the issues that will come out of the coronavirus is that we will see a number of future modifications to programs that will be in the long-term best interest of a wide spectrum of people. I am anxious to see those types of changes take place in the coming years.

I want to highlight the impact at the grassroots level, and what is happening at the grassroots level today, compared to January or the beginning of February. For example, I have many constituents who travelled to India, particularly Punjab, and to the Philippines, on holidays. They were enjoying their holiday, but unfortunately, with the coronavirus and the shutdown of airports and all sorts of issues,

thousands of individuals were trapped abroad, hundreds from my own riding. For many, it has taken weeks, if not months, to ultimately be able to return, but we do not really hear about those examples.

The examples we typically hear about are of small businesses having a difficult time being able to keep their doors open, and it does become an issue of cash flow. When we look at the wage subsidy program, I believe it is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 2.5 million jobs that have been subsidized to date. I believe this is the minimum; it is probably quite a bit more than that, but I am not 100% sure. I can tell members that many of those jobs would have completely disappeared without the wage subsidy program. When an employer might have just as well laid someone off indefinitely, that program provided the employer an option instead. As a direct result, two million to three million Canadians were able to continue with the jobs they had.

I make reference to the eight million people in the CERB program. I am very much interested to see how that shakes out in the riding of Winnipeg North, but I do know there are tens of thousands of people in my home province of Manitoba. I hate to imagine what the economic plight of many of those individuals who have collected the CERB would have been like had it not been for that program. I have a family member who was dependent on that program. We all have friends and know of others who needed that sort of general program to be there as a backstop to support Canadians. I am very proud of that particular program.

● (1745)

When we think of other ways in which we can support Canadians, the Canada child benefit program allows for a direct deposit of cash into the accounts of families. Some of those families, because of COVID-19, are that much more challenged. The government brought through a top-up for the Canada child benefit program, helping thousands of people in virtually every province. I know I often refer to the Canada child benefit program. Under a normal situation, just over \$9 million every month goes into the riding of Winnipeg North. That was topped up because it is easily identified and it is a good way to get money into the pockets of Canadians.

The GST affects us all. Somewhere in the neighbourhood of 12 million people benefited from the GST one-time payment also.

One of the things I am very proud of is that many of us have been wanting to support seniors. I tabled a petition earlier today about how we can support seniors. I am very grateful that the current Minister of Seniors, through an email, said she would love to be able to speak to the group at a meeting of my committee on seniors. It was wonderful. Seniors are important to all of us. It was so nice to see that we were able to create one-time payments for individuals on OAS. For the poorest seniors in Canada, we gave a separate increase to the GIS, which totalled about \$500 for individuals who qualified for the GIS and OAS increase.

*Government Orders*

The point of this is to recognize that the coronavirus changed things profoundly. This government worked with everyone it could to ensure it could provide programming to make sure that Canadians would get out of this coronavirus situation and be well served when it comes time to restart the economy. We are starting to see that today. We are in a better position today to deal with a second wave, if it occurs, because of the hard work of legislators in the House of Commons and because of the fine work being done by the provinces, city councils, non-profits and private individuals.

With that, I will leave myself open for questions.

• (1750)

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it has been a very entertaining free market of speech topics today by the member opposite. There are so many channels he changed. It is typical of a remote-control handler. One thing is that he did not stop at the WE channel. He did not touch on that.

Why does he not tell us about his Prime Minister's scandalous contract with the WE foundation to benefit his Prime Minister's, and his cabinet's, friends?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, speaking of channel changers, the Conservatives since day one have always been on the same channel of character assassination. It does not matter what issue is facing Canadians, the Conservatives really do not care. They are more focused on character assassination.

I did not comment on the WE charity because we have spent billions and billions of dollars. We have brought in new programs. We have been trying to minimize the negative impact of the coronavirus on Canadians as a whole. We are getting our country in a position where we will be stronger and healthier going forward. We are remaining focused on doing work for Canadians. That is our priority.

We will let the Conservatives dwell at the bottom of the cellar and figure out the crisis, or how they can attack what character next on the agenda.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed watching my colleague beat his chest and go on about economic growth to find out who did more, the Liberals or the Conservatives.

Since I would like to help them reconcile, I will simply tell my colleague that the parties are a lot alike in times of crisis because the Liberals and the Conservatives have the same tendencies.

By that I mean that the Liberals were quick to support the oil and gas industry. One figure that comes to mind is the \$500 million that was given to Coastal GasLink. That \$500 million from the Business Development Bank of Canada, the BDC, was equivalent to what was spent on Quebec's entire forestry strategy from 2017 to 2020. The government gave \$500 million to one project and the same amount to the entire forestry industry over three years.

They have reconciled, but can my colleague explain to me why there is a double standard for the forestry industry and the oil industry in times of crisis?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, that is not reconciliation. The Conservatives say we have shut down the oil industry. The member opposite just said that we have opened up a whole new area. I guess the difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives and New Democrats, and possibly even the Bloc, is that Liberals recognize that the environment and the economy can in fact go hand in hand.

If we do the proper environmental work and consultations with different levels of government, indigenous people and stakeholders, we can develop the economy and protect the environment. I guess that is where Liberals differ from what I would qualify as the unholy alliance of the Conservatives and New Democrats. I will leave the Bloc out, for now.

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am glad to be here today to hear on the record the credit being given to our party for pushing the Liberal government to do the right thing. Unfortunately, those who are just tuning in may think that the member for Winnipeg North is the only member of the Liberal Party who gets a chance to speak in the House.

The question is simple. We need to know the answer right here on the record. I would like to hear the member's thoughts on this. When the Liberals first proposed a program for people struggling to get by on the disability tax credit, they left out 60% of people with disabilities. The second attempt they have brought here today leaves out 40% of people living with a disability.

Will the hon. member acknowledge that this disability tax credit program leaves out everybody who is designated on ODSP provincially?

• (1755)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, the last thing I would want to do is to give the impression I know everything about all things.

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

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** I do not know the details the member is referencing, but what I can tell the House is that as a government, we have been developing programs that have been to the benefit of Canadians as a whole. There has been special targeting of seniors, and now individuals with disabilities.

There are opportunities going forward, no doubt, as we see in this legislation, for modifications or changes. There are ongoing discussions that take place with provinces. I made reference to the \$19 billion restart program that incorporates health. I do not know all of the details, but where it is valid for us to make some changes or to ensure that we have the support necessary to do that, I am glad we have a government in Ottawa that is open to listening.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always interesting to hear the hon. member. I am glad he acknowledged that he does not know all things about all things, so I appreciate his moment of transparency in that regard.

I would make a quick note, before my simple question, regarding the rewriting of history. I was speaking with another colleague just before coming back to the House, and we said how incredible it is that this year started out with what very well could have been the issue of the year, which was the rail blockade. For the member to suggest that the economy was moving along in the right direction prior to COVID is a rewriting of history in an epic way, so I would encourage the member to look carefully at his government's record in that regard.

One of the things I have heard from many constituents about a number of the programs, including the wage subsidy, is that they are concerned about the complexities associated with the application and the accounting. For large corporations that have accounting departments, legal teams and whatnot, it is quite straightforward: They send the application to their department and it gets all sorted out. However, for a small business, a mom-and-pop shop or those smaller entities that need the support, I do not think that increasing the complexity of the wage subsidy was the right direction, so I would certainly like to hear from the member across the way how he can reconcile the increasing of complexities in the program.

Instead of increasing the complexity, should it not have been made simpler, especially for those small and medium-sized enterprises, to access these applications with ease so the economy can get moving in the right direction again?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, first, with regard to the indigenous issue or the blockades that were taking place, there were actually a number of issues, as there are in any given year, that made it to the national level. I know there was an airplane that was tragically shot down, which many people, at least on this side of the House, felt very passionate about, and I would like to think all members of the House did. There were a number of different issues.

I was here for a number of those years when Stephen Harper was the prime minister. If we do a cross-comparison, we will find, in terms of economic performance, that we did better 2:1 when it came to issues like jobs, compared to the Harper administration. That is the type of history we cannot change, and that is what I was referencing.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my good friend from Winnipeg North for his impassioned speech.

I want to talk about big cities. As a member representing part of the city of Toronto, I got a lot of feedback from the mayor, as well as local city councillors such as my counterpart Jennifer McKelvie, on the need for us to support cities with a safe restart. There is \$19 billion that has been allocated, and we have an agreement with the provinces to invest in cities to make sure we have a safe restart. Can my friend tell us how this will impact his home province of

Manitoba and what kind of direct supports the City of Winnipeg will be getting as a result of this agreement?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize that municipalities in general, whether smaller rural municipalities or larger urban centres, are more challenged in terms of being able to generate the revenues necessary in order to perform many of the responsibilities they have. Public transit would be a good example, or even, to a certain degree, child care support in the provinces. The federal restart program goes a long way in supporting municipalities and encouraging provinces to become engaged to ensure that we have things such as child care, which enables—

• (1800)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Skyview.

As the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, I welcome this rare opportunity to participate in a parliamentary debate ever since democracy was shut down by the government. The legislation before us today, Bill C-20, consists of several random diversionary payouts and other changes that more properly should have had extensive examination in a parliamentary committee before being passed into law.

I support helping Canadians who are struggling with the unprecedented events of our time, like the COVID-19 pandemic. I do not support the transfer of large amounts of taxpayer dollars to organizations that personally benefit family members of Liberal MPs. The decision to accept an unconfirmed, unsolicited proposal from an unregistered lobbyist representing an organization that had members of the Prime Minister's family, and perhaps others with close association to the Liberal Party, on its payroll in the amount of hundreds of thousands of dollars, is a level of corruption beyond the comprehension of most Canadians.

When the Canada student service grant was announced, WE Charity was not in the announcement. Even after sordid detail after sordid detail was revealed, the Prime Minister defended his ethical lapse in the same way he responded to groping a female reporter and dressing up in blackface. He repeatedly lied: deny, deny, deny. He could get away with that in a neutered media. The floor of the House of Commons, however, is another matter.

The amount of money in the WE Charity scandal is staggering: almost \$1 billion. What reasonable Canadians fear is that this revelation of payments to individuals directly associated with the Liberal Party is the tip of the iceberg. There is a reason the Prime Minister is hiding from Canadians by not facing Parliament, conveniently taking a so-called vacation day, a “we” day. The Prime Minister likes his daily cuckoo-clock appearances where he can avoid actual questions. Awarding an unsolicited contract with no fair, competitive tendering process should require resignations. The fact that the contract was awarded to an organization with family members of Liberal MPs on the payroll is indefensible.

*Government Orders*

Let us look at where the millions in administration fees were going until somebody pulled the plug, waiting for the heat to die down. WE Charity has been effectively described as operating like a cult. First was its scheme to pay for volunteer labour and next was the plan to pay students for volunteer labour at below minimum wage. That proposal raised a few eyebrows, except now we have learned this is how the WE organization operated its various companies: with naive, idealistic young people put on a salary and then being required to work 60 to 70 hours a week. The salary was calculated at a normal 37-and-a-half-hour week, so effectively, the WE Charity found a loophole to get around provincial minimum wage laws.

With the backing of the federal government, WE Charity figured it found another loophole to avoid minimum wage laws. If young people complained, they were shamed into accepting workplace conditions by being reminded that the school children who donated their pennies, nickels and dimes to the WE Charity expected all the money to go to help underprivileged children in Africa. Little did those school children know that their pennies were being collected to buy commercial real estate in downtown Toronto and to pay fat speaking fees to family members of Liberal MPs. This is what happens when Parliament is shut down and people with no ethics or scruples are in charge. There is a total lack of accountability.

Let us look more closely at the legislation before us today. Of all of the measures contained in Bill C-20, I am particularly interested in measures that support Canadians living with disabilities. Bill C-20 proposes to direct a payment to individuals who qualify for the disability tax credit.

• (1805)

Seven years ago, I introduced a private member's bill, Bill C-462, restricting the fees charged by promoters of the disability tax credit. My intention for bringing that legislation before Parliament was straightforward. I wanted to see increased protection for disabled Canadians from the predatory practices of certain individuals who referred to themselves as "tax credit promoters". They see the tax credit as an opportunity to profit on the reduced circumstances of others.

The disability tax credit is a non-refundable tax credit that reduces the amount of income tax that either individuals living with disabilities or their supporting persons have to pay. Parliament voted in this tax credit, with the recognition that Canadians with disabilities faced extra financial challenges. Bill C-20 proposes payments of up to \$600 for Canadians living with disabilities.

My constituents question whether the reason for the lump sum payment contained in Bill C-20 can be accepted at face value or whether it is a taxpayer inducement to get Canadians to forget about the WE Charity corruption scandal.

When I found out that some individuals were being charged 20%, 30% or as much as 40% of the tax credit, I thought that Liberal members of Parliament agreed that those kinds of charges were unfair. This is especially true when considering that the purpose of the disability tax credit is to support Canadians living with serious disabilities.

As the member of Parliament that includes Garrison Petawawa, I am acutely aware of the number of Canadians living with disabilities who are in my riding. The soldiers and veterans in my community are at a greater risk for a number of disabilities because of the sacrifices they have made for our country. The tax credit is of special importance to them.

In bringing forward Bill C-462, I also wanted my constituents and all other Canadians to know that they could access their local member of Parliament regarding any federal tax credit, without being charged a percentage of the tax credit. Seven years ago my private member's legislation to help disabled Canadians received unanimous support of that Parliament. Even the current Prime Minister, who at that time was an opposition MP on the WE Charity speaker circuit, voted to support my legislation.

What happened? There was an unfortunate change in government. Canadians are still waiting for the regulations for that legislation to be enacted.

Why the delay? The change of government brought the usual Liberal hangers on, the lobbyists who look for ways to game the system at the expense of other Canadians. Liberal lobbyists derailed protections for disabled Canadians with the full support of the Prime Minister and his party.

Disabled Canadians are some of the most vulnerable in our society. With all the money the federal government is shovelling out the door, like today's legislation and the WE Charity scandal, and without the proper scrutiny of Parliament, money intended to help Canadians goes elsewhere.

These same disability tax consultants saw a big payday when the Canada emergency response benefit, CERB, was introduced. One such consultant started offering a service that charged clients a fee of \$160 to assist them with their CERB application. This is what can be read on its website, "We have no upfront fee, you pay us only when you get your CERB payment. Due to these rough times, Canada Tax Reviews has reduced our fee from 33 per cent to an 8 per cent fee for this program." Every four weeks, those who still have not found jobs have to reapply for CERB. Each time a person uses that tax consultant to apply for CERB, as fees vary, a \$160 is charged. That is a payday of almost \$1,000 to a tax consultant from somebody who collects the full CERB, someone who could have used that money to pay rent or to put food on the table.

If the government audits a taxpayer and finds that he or she did not qualify for CERB, that taxpayer will be required to pay back the full amount, including any fees paid to tax consultants. If the government had carried through with the will of Parliament and implemented Bill C-462, an act restricting the fees charged by promoters of the disability tax credit, the abuses happening today would not be happening.

*Government Orders*

• (1810)

Bill C-20 needs to go before a parliamentary committee the same way the sweetheart \$912 million Canadian student service grant contract to a Liberal insider should have. Canadians deserve no less. The last time I looked, Canada was still a democracy. It is time Canada started acting like one.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for laying out, honestly, what is going on around here. One thing she failed to mention was this. How much of a role does she think Gerald Butts is playing in all of what is going on right now?

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, this scandal is like so many we saw in governments that Gerald Butts participated in before this one, the Wynne government and the McGuinty government. We are seeing all the same types of scandals going on. They paid Liberal insiders large amounts of money for contracts. In Ontario, it was the hydro consumers who ended up paying inflated electricity fees and that money went directly from the consumers' pockets to the big Liberal supporters who got the contracts for the wind turbines and solar farms. We are seeing the fingerprints of Gerald Butts all over the scandals that are ongoing today.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments.

She talked a lot about people with disabilities. She seems to really care about this. It is also an important issue for the Bloc Qu b cois. In fact, last month we proposed splitting Bill C-17 to give people with disabilities access to financial support so they could deal with the pandemic like many other groups. Last month, the government once again ignored people with disabilities.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts. Would she agree that it was unfortunate that, because of the Conservative position, these individuals had to wait another month to get the assistance they should have gotten a long time ago, or even at the very beginning of the pandemic?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Actually, Madam Speaker, were it not for the Liberals trying to put forth legislation and ram through money, not putting a separate bill forward in the first place to cover individuals living with disabilities, we would not have this discussion right now.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member made reference extensively with respect to parliamentary process. One of the things we have witnessed over the last number of months is more questions than have previously been asked. In fact, today we are sitting during the summer. We have had four regular days of sittings for parliamentarians. We have had extended question and answer periods.

It seems to me, with the exception of opposition days and private members' business, that we have seen probably a great deal more accountability on the issue of questions and answers than we saw with the previous administration. I would remind the member that

she was part of a previous administration that actually prorogued Parliament.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, I accept this opportunity to continue the statement I was giving during statements by members, when I was interrupted by the deputy House leader, who knows very well that we cannot propose points of orders during those statements, and cut off summarily.

The part that people did not hear was that the unfortunate reality was this abuse of charity, a charity wherein the money is supposed to go to less privileged people in under-developed parts of the world, meant that the people most affected by this WE scandal were some of the poorest on this planet.

Unlike dressing up in blackface or groping a female reporter, this time the Prime Minister is not going to get away with hiding on some fantasy island or avoiding scrutiny by shutting down Parliament. We are going to ensure that the entire scandal, piece by piece, as deep and as wide as it might be, is uncovered for Canadians to know.

• (1815)

**Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC):** Madam Speaker, COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of our lives, and we have heard it said many times before, but I have not had a chance to deliver a speech in this place since the pandemic began. While this is certainly not ideal, here we are, and I feel the need to speak for my constituents and have it on the record.

This pandemic has not only had an economic cost, but has also had a human cost, and not just in loss of life. My heart goes out to all those who have suffered a loss, and also to families who have been separated by borders and quarantine measures. I have heard from so many of my constituents who were and are still stranded abroad, desperately trying to get home to see their families. I have worked very hard to reunite families when possible. This has been a stressful time for everyone, and not being able to be with loved ones only makes the situation worse. I had to self-isolate from my family, which was very difficult to do, and so I sympathize and empathize with everyone going through this.

The emotional toll this has taken will need to be evaluated for years to come. The impact on the immigration department and its response times will also need to be addressed. The backlog we are facing is unprecedented.

Now, I know we are here to debate Bill C-20, but I would be remiss if I did not thank my constituents for their efforts during this truly difficult time. We had charities and businesses step up to provide for our community in the hardest of times. Meals were made and distributed, hand sanitizer and masks were delivered, and front-line workers have been exceptional. I am so proud of how we came together.

*Government Orders*

I also feel the need to express my thoughts for those who were directly impacted by the hail storm that ravished my riding on June 13. Many homes, vehicles and properties were damaged, causing further stress to those who were impacted. I would like to thank my provincial and municipal counterparts for all they are doing for emergency relief for my constituents. I will continue to work with all levels of government on this.

On Bill C-20, while I support getting help to Canadians who are struggling, I would be doing a disservice to my constituents if I did not pause and reflect on the timing of this. I have been very vocal in my displeasure that the House has been suspended. While I am pleased that the House is sitting today, it is certainly convenient timing. I have had constituents contact me who have been very concerned about the behaviour of members of the government in recent weeks as it relates to the WE Charity. It is unconscionable, to me, that this has happened. It is terribly concerning. I am pleased that the Ethics Commissioner is conducting an investigation, which is the third investigation of this Prime Minister.

I have been watching the finance committee and ethics committee, although I will say that I have been left wanting, given the quality of responses from this government. Even the simple questions cannot be answered. Now, we have seen charities come out and say publicly that they had been afraid to comment on WE in the past, given its ties to this government. There is a charity in my riding that reached out. It is ready to contribute and has all the necessary structures in place to do so. It is asking when it will hear back on this failed program, which brings us to today.

Parliament has been shut down since March, and this week, the government has decided that it is time to sit again, which is very convenient timing. What I can tell members is that, despite the government's best efforts to divert attention away from the WE scandal, Conservatives will continue to scrutinize its actions and hold it to account since it has proven that it cannot be trusted with taxpayers' money or to make ethical decisions.

As we have heard debated today, Bill C-20 would extend and expand the eligibility criteria for the wage subsidy, implement a one-time \$600 payment for persons with disabilities and extend or suspend certain legislated and judicial timelines. We in the official opposition have been proposing solutions to fix the wage subsidy program since April. It is now the middle of July, and instead of implementing our changes to help businesses and workers, the government is making things worse by overcomplicating it. We know that the original subsidy that was announced left businesses falling through the cracks, which meant that the program saw less than one-quarter uptake. I have had businesses in my riding contact me indicating that they do not qualify, and we have raised examples with the government, but no action has been taken.

• (1820)

This new wage subsidy we are speaking about today is unnecessarily complex, with rules and regulations that will trap businesses in paperwork and accounting fees, making it harder for them to get the help they need, the help they needed back in April.

When we make a policy on the fly without listening to proposals, it proves the government is lacking a plan to help Canadians to get back to work and restart our economy. Throughout the COVID-19

pandemic, the government has either been wrong or slow to act. This failure has cost Canadians.

The Liberals were slow to close borders, which left people stranded who were trying to determine whether they should return. They were wrong on PPE and did not replace the medical supplies sent abroad in February. They were slow to enhance airport screening, allowing the virus to spread from passengers returning to Canada. They were slow to roll out programs for those who were struggling. They were wrong not to include gender-based analysis, which could have helped fix their programs to keep Canadians, especially women, from falling through the cracks. The Liberals were wrong to leave small businesses behind, forcing many to close permanently. We know that small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy. The Liberals were wrong to raise taxes, in the form of the carbon tax, when Canadians were already struggling to make ends meet. They were wrong to abandon the oil and gas sector, promising help within hours or days, but offering nothing, which was felt very strongly by those in my community. They were wrong not to fully fund the Auditor General's office so constituents could see how their tax dollars were being spent. They were wrong to shut down Parliament, refusing to let MPs do their job and provide crucial oversight.

I am hopeful that the government will listen to our suggestions. Part of our proposal is to implement the back-to-work bonus. Our plan is to make the Canada emergency response benefit more flexible and generous so that workers can earn higher wages as businesses begin to open. Under our plan, Canadians who lost their jobs through no fault of their own during the pandemic would continue to receive their full \$2,000 from CERB. In addition, as businesses reopen, workers who make between \$1,000 and \$5,000 per month would qualify for the back-to-work bonus. This CERB top-up would be gradually phased out by 50 cents for every dollar earned over \$1,000.

*Government Orders*

As I stated earlier, I support help for those who are struggling. A one-time payment, as proposed in Bill C-20, is a result of our efforts in the opposition to better serve those with disabilities. We were prepared and offered to recall Parliament to debate this measure. Sadly, that did not occur, which further delayed this payment. My hope is that those who qualify and apply for the disability tax credit, as proposed in Bill C-20, will be able to access it in a timely manner.

The judicial aspects of the proposed legislation does not address how court backlogs, particularly those in the criminal justice system, will be resolved. The rights of victims and their families must be central as we move forward. The government must ensure that victims see justice in a timely manner. It is fundamental.

Finally, since the pandemic began, the official opposition have been putting forward constructive solutions to help Canadians. Our goal has been, and continues to be, to help get workers and local businesses back on their feet as quickly as possible. We know that our economic recovery will be driven by Canadians' hard work, innovation and good spirits. We know that to be competitive, we need to unleash the power of the private sector to help Canadians get back to work.

We need to support small businesses. We need lower taxes. We need to cut the red tape and make Canada an attractive place to do business once again. This is how we approach constructive solutions. We will continue to fight to get Canadians the help they need and will continue to call on the government to put forward a transparent plan to guide Canada's recovery. Canadians deserve no less.

• (1825)

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague from Calgary Skyview touched on a number of things. One thing she did not touch on was the energy sector and the significant impact that COVID has had on top of all the bad policies that have come from the government.

The Minister of Finance stated back in March that relief was hours or days away. It is 118 days later and there is no relief. Some are suspicious that it is not an accident, but rather a deliberate plan on the part of the government to put the final nail in the coffin of the energy sector.

Could the member comment on that?

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Madam Speaker, it seems like the hours and weeks may turn into years. There has been no focus on the energy sector, and a lot of my constituents feel the pain. It was bad before COVID-19 and it has only gotten worse since then. We are very disappointed with the government's response on this.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I heard my colleague talk about immigration and processing delays. In fact, the Bloc had asked for unanimous consent to move a motion to fast-track the files of “guardian angel” asylum seekers who work in long-term care facilities and in the health care sector. This proposal was rejected by the Conservatives.

What is my colleague's opinion on this type of request to prioritize and fast-track certain cases for processing?

[*English*]

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Madam Speaker, when I was talking about the response in immigration, I was talking about the constituents who were stuck outside of Canada and the response to bring them back to Canada. In regard to anything that helps Canadians deal with the pandemic, that would be something I would support.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned a number of areas where the government had failed throughout this course of time. There is another area specifically, which is the Canada summer jobs program. The Liberals decided to extend the amount of time that it could run, they increased the wages to minimum wage, they included part-time work, they gave more opportunities for businesses to apply and yet they provided no more funding for the program.

This was set up. We had our wonderful, professional public service ready to run it. Instead, the Liberals chose to roll the dice, with an ethical violation as the outcome.

Could my colleague comment on the importance of that program and how the government failed to implement it?

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Madam Speaker, before I came here, I had to make calls to people who had received the funding, but so many had applied and were left out. Some of those were crucial services, especially during this pandemic. It was very important for the government to ensure that funds were available for those people who had applied and who were categorized as crucial service programs.

• (1830)

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague touched on a number of very important issues.

We have heard rumours in the last number of days, like we did in the last election, about a home equity tax. There is an old adage, and I was a volunteer firefighter for a number of years, that where there is smoke, there is fire. When one sees smoke a number of times, one must see that there must be fire.

Could my colleague talk about how devastating a home equity tax would be on Canadian taxpayers?

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Madam Speaker, on this side of the House we all know that side of the House raises taxes, so this is not a surprise to us. The carbon tax is an example at this time.

## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

### ETHICS

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I find myself often rising to ask questions of the government with respect to its handling of ethical matters, and no more appropriate a time have we found to address the government on these questions than in light of the scandal that currently has engulfed the Prime Minister's Office.

For a third time, the Prime Minister is under investigation by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, twice having been found to have broken the law. On the front lines of this latest scandal with the WE Charity, the Prime Minister is in the company of another minister who has been found to have broken ethics laws in this country: the Minister of Finance with his forgotten French villa.

We hear from the finance minister and the Prime Minister, time and time again, that they are sorry. They are sorry they were caught, because right out of the gate with any of these issues the immediate response is that there is nothing to see here.

We remember with the SNC-Lavalin scandal the very first reaction by the Prime Minister was that the story in *The Globe and Mail* was false. Since then, the Ethics Commissioner investigated and found in the Trudeau II Report that the Prime Minister did contravene the Conflict of Interest Act. The story in *The Globe and Mail* was true.

We know that when it was before cabinet, and members of cabinet spoke out against the lack of ethical integrity at the table, the member for Vancouver Granville, the former minister of justice and attorney general, was fired. Canada's first female, indigenous attorney general was fired.

We know that when another member of cabinet with integrity, the former president of the Treasury Board, Dr. Jane Philpott, raised the issue as well, she was kicked out of caucus with the member for Vancouver Granville.

We know from those two reports, the Trudeau Report and Trudeau II Report, that the Prime Minister likes to reward his friends. We know from the ejection of the member for Vancouver Granville and the former president of the Treasury Board, the Hon. Dr. Jane Philpott, that the Prime Minister punishes his enemies.

Accountability is not found today in the office of the Prime Minister, so we look to the government benches and ask Liberal members if they have the courage of their convictions and the intestinal fortitude to demand better of their Prime Minister.

● (1835)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, at times I wonder if the member goes to bed at night trying to influence his dreaming capabilities so he can raise some sort

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of issue with the government of the day that he can put a negative spin on. I was reviewing the question the member posed that ultimately led to the speech we just heard. The question was this: Why did the Bloc party vote with the government to prevent us from dealing with an issue that was in the House of Commons prior to the last election? He was upset with the Bloc because the Bloc voted with the government, but the Bloc agreed that the issue was from the previous Parliament and we did not need to talk about it.

If we were to go back to previous elections, I am sure we could find a number of interesting scandals that Conservatives were involved in. Do members remember the Senate scandal? Maybe we should regurgitate one of those scandals and have them go before the ethics committee.

At the end of the day, there has been a great deal of transparency and accountability. We have seen the Prime Minister, even when he was in opposition, bring forward things such as proactive disclosure. We have seen that the Prime Minister has been very candid in recognizing if he makes a mistake. He then apologizes for it and takes actions to rectify it.

In the end, I truly believe that we need to move forward. The report the member referred to, the second report on the Prime Minister, was dealt with in the House. We are not the only party in the House that agrees with that. I suggest the member remain focused on some of the good things that are happening. Maybe the member could spend less time dreaming about how he can create crisis situations and instead look at ways we can improve the system. I am not saying the system cannot be improved upon; the system can be improved upon.

There will be mistakes. Conservative ministers made mistakes and went to the commissioner. I urge members to remember that the commissioner is relatively new. That position only came into being in 2008, so there have only been two prime ministers and two governments that have been subjected to the commissioner. It is a learning process, and we have a Prime Minister who understands that. When mistakes are made, he is very straightforward and he co-operates with the Ethics Commissioner.

I see those as positive things. I only wish that Conservative opposition members would give some attention to not only the negative side of life but also to the positive side of life. Maybe they could bring forward ideas so we can ensure there is more accountability and transparency.

I am very open-minded, and I look forward to the rebuttal in the form of a question from my friend, but I would like to see us move forward. I would like to see if we can come up with some positive contributions to how we could change the system and ultimately see an improvement. I know he has it in him to come up with some positive recommendations. I would implore him to suggest one or two of them in a positive light.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, the member opposite talked about things that I dream up at night, when these are, in fact, the nightmares Canadians are having with respect to the ethical scandals we are seeing from the Prime Minister's Office.

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The question I originally asked, which brought about this late show, had to do with the Liberals working with the separatist Bloc party to prevent the Ethics Commissioner from presenting his report at the ethics committee. That is the lack of accountability of the Liberals. It is the same ethics report that the Prime Minister refused to allow nine people to testify for, or to provide evidence to the commissioner about.

A positive recommendation I have for the member opposite is that the Prime Minister voluntarily offer to appear at any standing committee of the House. A second recommendation I would make to the member is that the Prime Minister agree to waive all cabinet confidences this time, not just the ones that have already been broken through various reports.

These are recommendations the member opposite should encourage the Prime Minister to follow. Those are recommendations that the Liberal caucus should really encourage the Prime Minister to take, because if he does not, Canadians will be unable to have confidence in their institutions and their public office holders. Frankly, they deserve better.

• (1840)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, just to emphasize, the member opposite is focused on trying to blame the Bloc for voting with the Liberals to prevent something from a previous election coming before a House of Commons standing committee. This is the same Bloc that often votes with the Conservative Party against the government. The member is imputing motives that might not necessarily be justified, I would suggest, and I am trying to be as nice as I can with regard to it.

When I think of standing committees, in the back of my mind I am trying to think if Stephen Harper ever appeared before one. I wonder if the member is aware that, even though the office of the commissioner has only been around since 2008, there were a number of Conservatives—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have just come to the House from the hearings of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights. We spent all day in powerful hearings about the genocide happening in East Turkestan or Xinjiang in China where Uighur Muslims are facing all kinds of horrific human rights abuses simply on the basis of their faith and ethnic background. There was a clear consensus among witnesses that there is a genocide ongoing in Xinjiang, and there was a call from witnesses to take strong action here in Canada to respond to that genocide; indeed, to make meaningful our historic commitments to saying “never again”, that we will never again allow a people to be eradicated or attempts to eradicate them in this kind of way. Adrian Zenz, a senior researcher, described what is happening in Xinjiang as the largest mass incarceration of a minority since the Holocaust.

The calls to action included Canada's imposing Magnitsky sanctions against those involved in this gross violation of human rights, and also a response that would look at the use of Uighur slave labour in our supply chains, with stronger legislation to prevent

products that are produced through slave labour from making their way into our supply chains, as well as stronger measures to prevent government co-operation, like we have seen with Nucotech and security firms that are also involved in gross violations of human rights in East Turkestan.

The last panel at our hearing brings me to this question today, because we had an opportunity to hear from Kamila Telendibaeva, the wife of Huseyin Celil. Mr. Celil is a Canadian citizen of Uighur background who is currently in prison in China. He has been in prison in China for over a decade, and he has not had access to consular services. It is a horrific situation. He is the father of four, but he has never had an opportunity to meet his youngest son, because his wife was pregnant at the time he was taken. However, he was not arrested in China. He had travelled to Uzbekistan on a Canadian passport and was arrested in Uzbekistan and transferred to China. He has a wife and four sons here in Canada, the youngest of whom he has never met.

This horrific situation, the genocide of the Uighurs, in particular the detention of this Uighur Canadian, should seize Canadians and the government. I raised this issue at the Canada-China committee with our ambassador on February 5. Unfortunately, he initially seemed unaware of the case, and then he said that Mr. Celil was not a citizen. I note that the Minister of Foreign Affairs has since corrected this, but it remains a fact that we have regular mention, and rightly so, of other Canadians who are detained in China, but we have not seen nearly the same level of attention paid to cases involving Canadian citizens who originated abroad. Cases such as Mr. Celil, Fan Wei or others have simply not gotten the same attention in statements by our ambassador as cases that involve those born in Canada. That is very disappointing, because I think that we should all believe in a principle that a Canadian is a Canadian, and yet we have not seen a strong enough response.

During the testimony today, witnesses asked that the government not only make right what was made wrong but that it also take further steps, including appointing a special envoy to look into this case. I want to know what the government's response is to those calls to action and—

• (1845)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank members of the standing committee and those who have taken the time to present and share their thoughts on this very important issue.

Huseyin Celil is a Canadian citizen. As the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have consistently stated, the government is seized at all levels by cases of Canadians detained in China, including the long-standing case of Mr. Celil. Mr. Celil has been in detention in Xinjiang since 2006.

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The provision of consular services to Canadians in China is governed by a bilateral agreement that details consular obligations and entitlements of our two countries in order to facilitate the protection of the rights and interests of our citizens. It is also governed by the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Canada expects China to live up to its obligations under these agreements.

In the case of Mr. Celil, despite repeated and ongoing attempts, Canadian officials have not been granted consular access. The government is deeply concerned about the case of Mr. Celil and will continue to raise his case at every opportunity at senior levels. Canadian officials will continue to advocate for Mr. Celil and seek consular access to him to verify his health and well-being and offer him assistance.

Mr. Celil is of the Uighur ethnicity, and Canada is deeply concerned by the mass detention of Uighurs in Xinjiang based on their ethnicity and religion and under the pretext of countering extremism. We acknowledge the pain and hardship experienced by Mr. Celil's family as a result of his detention. Consular officials are in communication with Mr. Celil's family and will continue to provide support until they are reunited.

Uighurs have been disappearing into detention in China, and getting information about their whereabouts can be incredibly challenging. Publicly and privately, in multilateral fora and in bilateral conversations, Canada has consistently called on the Chinese government to address the situation. Canada has called on the Chinese government to allow the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Special Procedures immediate, unfettered, meaningful access to Xinjiang.

Our government will always stand up for Canadians in need of assistance abroad. We recognize and affirm that Mr. Celil is a Canadian. We will continue to advocate for him and make every effort to obtain consular access to him.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for speaking from the heart.

I want to follow up on some of the testimony we heard. The government has said words with respect to this issue, but we need strong action.

Irwin Cotler, a former Liberal justice minister, said this is a genocide that requires us to respond in accordance with our international obligations under the genocide convention. We must recognize it and respond to it. We must recognize that we have a responsibility to protect and then deploy a range of measures to protect, to do what we can, whether this involves Magnitsky sanctions or other actions. We should also ensure that we do not have slave labour in our supply chains. That is a problem right now, and we need tougher legislation dealing with slave labour in our supply chains, especially coming from Xinjiang.

I wonder if the member would be willing to recognize specifically that China has not met its international obligations when it comes to consular access, and comment on the suggestion that we should have a special envoy to deal with this case.

● (1850)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada remains deeply concerned about the ongoing detention of Mr. Celil.

As with all cases of Canadian citizens detained abroad, our officials have repeatedly sought consular access to determine Mr. Celil's well-being. While Canada has submitted numerous official requests and made high-level interventions in the case, China has not granted Canadian officials access to Mr. Celil.

Canada is deeply concerned by the mass detention that is taking place based on ethnicity and religion and under the pretext of countering extremism. We will continue to advocate on Mr. Celil's behalf and call on China to allow consular service officials to visit him.

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:51 p.m.)







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