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# Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 024**

Wednesday, June 17, 2020

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Chair: The Honourable Anthony Rota





## Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic

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• (1200)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

[Translation]

Welcome to the 24th meeting of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic.

[English]

As a reminder to all members, in order to avoid audio issues, members participating in person should not also be connected to the video conference.

[Translation]

For those joining via video conference, I would like to remind you that when speaking, you should be on the same channel as the language you are speaking.

[English]

As usual, please direct your remarks through the chair, and I emphasize “as usual”, please.

We don't have any ministerial announcements today. We will proceed to tabling of documents.

[Translation]

The hon. Minister of National Revenue has the floor.

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue):** Mr. Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table in both official languages the 2019-2020 annual report of the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman, entitled “Transformation through Disruption”.

**The Chair:** We will now proceed to presenting petitions.

[English]

I will remind members that any petition presented during a meeting of the special committee must have already been certified by the clerk of petitions.

[Translation]

For members participating in person, we ask that they please come and drop the signed certificate off at the table once the petition is presented.

[English]

I remind all members to be as concise as possible, especially today as we have a large number of petitions with only 15 minutes to get through them, and we don't want to cut anyone off.

We'll start off with Ms. Fry.

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I present a petition that has been signed by 4,147 persons. It reads:

We, the undersigned, citizens of Canada, call upon the House of Commons in Parliament assembled to use our tax dollars to foster a more pluralistic Canadian news media by providing subsidies only to Canadian-owned publications, as a free and diverse press is essential to a healthy democracy.

The petition references five separate reports that have been made, one by a royal commission and the others by Senate and House of Commons parliamentary committees.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** We'll now go on to Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have two petitions to present today. The first is with respect to Bill S-204, a bill in the Senate that would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ without consent from the donor. Petitioners are supportive of that bill and hope we will be able to get it passed in this Parliament.

The second petition deals with the issue of firearms in Canada. Petitioners highlight the fact that virtually all gun crime, including the recent terrible shooting in Nova Scotia, involves illegal firearms used by those who are not eligible to possess them. Petitioners call on the government therefore to take strong action on the issue of illegal firearms, and at the same time not to be targeting law-abiding citizens with additional red tape and confiscations that are not at all addressed to the real problems of gun crime that we face.

Petitioners also ask that the government ensure that future changes to firearms policy be made through Parliament, through the people's elected representatives, and not by the government acting unilaterally outside of Parliament, this in order to ensure proper oversight and accountability.

**The Chair:** We'll go now to Ms. May.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to present two petitions today. The first deals with the issue of oil tankers on the west coast of Canada. Petitioners call on the government to establish a permanent ban on the entire west coast to protect British Columbia's fishery and tourism and coastal communities.

The second petition, which is somewhat dated, obviously, urges the Government of Canada not to buy the Trans Mountain pipeline, which is described as a pipeline that is old and likely to leak, as it just did.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Boulerice has the floor.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am presenting two petitions. The first, which has been signed by over 1,000 people, points out that artists, artisans and technicians are at the heart of our cultural industry. These jobs, which are already precarious, have been hard hit by the current pandemic-related crisis. They expect to receive financial support. Pilot projects on guaranteed income, particularly in Finland, show all the benefits this can bring. These people are therefore asking that a guaranteed minimum income be granted to people in the cultural field and, subsequently, if possible, to all Quebecers and Canadians.

My second petition has been signed by over 2,800 people. It is recognized that many refugee protection claimants registered and worked during the crisis in our health care system, particularly in long-term care facilities, and that they also performed other essential tasks. These 2,800 people are asking that the status of these asylum seekers be regularized. These people are asking that at least permanent resident status be granted to these claimants in recognition of all the work they have done here in caring for our seniors and patients, among others. Their goal is for these claimants to be able to continue their lives in Quebec and Canada.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We'll now go to Mr. Erskine-Smith.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Through e-petition 2410, thousands of Canadians have drawn attention to the cruelty of the transport of horses for slaughter and human consumption.

The petitioners draw attention to videos that show the cruelty to these beautiful and intelligent creatures being transported in crates that are not designed for their size for 10 to 13 hours, with no access to food and water, in violation of our laws and in violation of the rules of the International Air Transport Association. They call on the government to halt air shipments of horses exported for human consumption, due to the ongoing violation of Canadian and IATA regs.

Thanks are owed to Shelley Grainger, Jann Arden and all the Canadians who supported this petition.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. Vis.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Chair, constituents in my riding of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon call on the federal government to address the infrastructure deficit constricting traffic on the Trans-Canada Highway in the Lower Mainland.

They highlight the impacts of this very real strain on commuters and our economy. In fact, on my way to the airport to get here, despite COVID-19 reducing traffic volumes, I still hit a bottleneck at the the Mount Lehman interchange. Petitioners call on the government to commit to the expansion of the Trans-Canada Highway through Abbotsford and beyond.

**The Chair:** We'll now go to Ms. Wagantall.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

I am presenting three petitions today and have been asked by those who have signed these to make it clear that their expectation was that they would be presented to the House of Parliament, not to a committee, and through the Speaker of the House, not a chair.

In that regard, I am very disappointed that our private members' bills are being impacted by the hijacking of our Parliament.

They've indicated that sex-selection abortion is legal, as Canada has no legal restrictions on abortion. Sex-selective abortion is antithetical to our commitment to equality between men and women. A 2019 DART & maru/Blue poll conducted for the National Post showed that 84% of Canadians believe it should be illegal to have an abortion if the family does not want the child to be a certain sex.

International organizations, including the World Health Organization, United Nations Women and the United Nations Children Fund have identified unequal sex ratios at birth as a growing problem internationally; however, Canada's health care professionals have also recognized sex selection as a problem here in Canada.

Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Canada, call upon the House of Commons to pass a criminal code prohibition of sex-selection abortion.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** We are continuing with Mr. Bergeron.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I have the pleasure of presenting a petition signed by 928 citizens from the south shore of Montreal.

Considering the various nuisances resulting, day and night, from the operations of the Saint-Hubert airport for the surrounding populations, the signatories ask the Government of Canada to take the concrete actions deemed necessary so that the flight zone, corridors and air ingress and egress are limited above residential neighbourhoods for all types of aircraft.

They are asking that the Saint-Hubert airport regulate all its activities in order to ensure health and safety: curfew, schedule, frequency, altitude and flights, and noise abatement measures.

They are asking that the airport authority be subject to full impact studies and public hearings for any changes that could have an impact on the quality of life, health and safety of citizens.

They are asking for an independent, accountable committee made up of representatives of the cities concerned, non-partisan citizens and invited experts to be set up to manage the nuisance arising from airport activities.

Finally, they are asking that the airport be returned to the jurisdiction of the greater Longueuil community, and that it assume management control by appointing a majority of members to the board of directors.

• (1210)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We'll now go on to Mr. Manly.

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure and an honour today to present a petition for the constituents of Nanaimo—Ladysmith. This one is in relation to the southern and northern resident killer whales, which have been declared a threatened and endangered species under Canada's Species at Risk Act.

The petitioners are asking Parliament to strengthen the killer whale recovery plan, which is required under the Species at Risk Act and administered by Parks Canada, by legally requiring a reduction in underwater noise from commercial, recreational, and transport vessels; limiting the amount of tanker and freighter traffic in the Salish Sea east and south of Vancouver Island; placing a moratorium on chinook, herring, sport, commercial and native fisheries until stocks rebuild; and legally requiring electronic chip identifiers in, and mandatory recovery of, lost fishing gear drifting in the ocean.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** We'll now go on to Mr. Johns.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Chair, it's an honour to table a petition, e-petition 2342, which was supported by 5,878 petitioners.

They cite that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has announced that the Pacific herring population dropped by nearly a third between 2016 and 2019. The unexpected drop in the herring population has resulted in unexpected overfishing of existing stock.

Pacific herring is the basis of the food web that supports salmon, killer and humpback whales, cod, halibut, sea birds, and the independent species on the Pacific coast.

They cite that first nations have constitutionally protected rights to herring, which are an important food source and an integral part of first nations culture.

They call upon the government to suspend the 2020 fishery, which has passed; to fairly compensate fishers for any economic losses—so they're looking to the future—and to ensure that decisions are made with full participation of first nations and local communities, which hasn't happened, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Seeing no further petitions, we will now proceed to statements by members.

We'll start with Mr. Lamoureux.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

June 21 is National Indigenous Peoples Day. Think about the many wonderful contributions to who we are today as a nation from first nations, Inuit and the Métis nation. They all have their own distinct heritage, language and cultural practices, Mr. Chair.

Canada's diversity is, in fact, our strength. In co-operation with indigenous organizations, the Government of Canada chose June 21 back in 1996, working with many different stakeholders.

On June 21, join me and others from all over Canada in recognizing the many contributions that first nations, Inuit and the Métis nation have made to the very fabric of our society. Truth and reconciliation are important to me, as I know they are for all members of this House, and I believe June 21 helps us all have a better understanding of what truth and reconciliation are all about. I would ask all Canadians to participate in activities on June 21.

**The Chair:** Mr. Steinley is next.

**Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** This is a very special time of year for many students in my Regina—Lewvan riding and across Canada.

To all who are graduating from high school, convocating at university, completing your trade certificate, celebrating the end of grade eight and, yes, even to our little kindergarten graduates, congratulations. These milestones are something to be celebrated. Even though most commencement ceremonies are not currently possible due to limitations on gatherings, this year's graduates need to be and should be recognized. They have been through a lot over the past three months.

I want to take this opportunity today to acknowledge both their accomplishments and their sacrifices. The class of 2020 is just one of many groups in this country that have put their own desires to the side so that we can follow through on our mission to end the spread of COVID-19.

The selflessness, maturity and leadership shown, especially by our grade 12 grads, have been nothing short of admirable.

Congratulations to all classes of 2020 graduates. We are very excited to see what the future holds for you all.

**The Chair:** We will go now to Mr. Erskine-Smith.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Mr. Chair, widespread mask use will dramatically reduce the spread of COVID-19. I quote the CEO of our local Michael Garron Hospital, Sarah Downey, who said that they hope to put a mask on everyone in east Toronto.

We're lucky in the east end to have Michael Garron's team. They opened one of Ontario's first COVID assessment centres, they delivered a mobile assessment centre into Crescent Town to hunt the virus down, and they led a community campaign that put an army of people to work sewing thousands of cloth masks. It's a credit to Michael Garron's leadership and an even bigger credit to every person who has sewn a mask for the campaign.

My local constituency office is helping to distribute these masks, but I want to highlight the work of the Toronto Beaches Lions Club, which is in its 85th year, and particularly the work of Lion Nick Trainos, who has delivered thousands of masks himself.

We all have a role to play in tackling this health crisis. Whether we're in line at the grocery store or riding public transit, at any time when we're out in public and might be near someone else, we need to wear a mask. If you live in Beaches East York, we'll mail you a cloth mask for free through our website at [beynate.ca](http://beynate.ca).

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Bérubé has the floor.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Today, I am pleased to be the voice of Édith Cloutier, director of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre. Whether we are talking about Abitibi, Harricana, Kinojévis, Témiscamingue, Nottaway, Kipawa, Chicobi, the Collines Kékéko or the community of Obaska, the Anishinabe heritage is a source of pride for everyone. As it does every year, the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre celebrates National Indigenous Peoples Day.

The Friendship Centre is part of a vast indigenous movement in the cities. In Quebec, the movement is celebrating 50 years of friendship. There are 13 centres at the heart of a social transformation and of a bridge between peoples that open the door to the discovery of a cultural richness that is both so close and largely unknown.

Friendship centres have thousands of members of the first peoples who contribute to Canada's cities and invite people to share their knowledge and traditions. Friendship centres are motivated by the desire to bring people together around a social, cultural and community ideal, are encouraged by the quality of the ties forged and are determined to build a more just, inclusive and egalitarian society for all.

I wish everyone a happy National Aboriginal Day on June 21.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I don't know if I'm the only one to have had this problem, but Ms. B rub 's video cut out a few times.

**The Chair:** Did anyone else have this problem?

**A voice:** It cut out a few times.

**The Chair:** We'll check it out.

[*English*]

We'll continue with Mr. Zuberi.

Can you hear me, Mr. Zuberi?

I understand he's having some camera issues, so we'll skip over and come back to him. We'll go to Mr. Falk.

**Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Last week I posed a question to the Liberal House leader, who tried his best not to answer any questions on behalf of the Prime Minister. I asked if the Prime Minister really believes that Parliament works best when elected officials hold government to account. Why did he shut down Parliament for months on end? The response was lots of words, but no answers.

During this time of COVID-19, Prime Minister Trudeau told Canadians to go home and stay home. I asked Minister Rodriguez if the Prime Minister really said that. It was a simple question. That question too was met with no answers.

Finally, I followed up with "Did the Prime Minister disregard not only provincial regulations but his own directives when he crossed provincial boundaries for his weekend trip to the Quebec cottage?" Again there were lots of words, but no answers.

Canadians are tired of all these nonsensical responses. Mr. Chairman, the non-answers that Canadians are receiving from Liberals expose the Prime Minister's blatant disregard for truth and transparency. It's no wonder that Justin Trudeau and the Liberal government won't let Parliament sit.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** We are now continuing with Mr. Robillard.

**Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aur le-Fortin, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, the exceptional circumstances we are currently experiencing are difficult for everyone. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to send a message of hope and encouragement to my constituents in Laval, and more specifically to all our seniors.

I want them to know that our government has been working tirelessly since the beginning of the crisis to ensure the financial security of all Canadians, especially our seniors.

In fact, just recently, our Prime Minister announced tax-free financial assistance of up to \$500. This assistance will be paid to all seniors during the week of July 6. This is in addition to the many previous measures already announced to support seniors.

I'm asking seniors not to lose hope and to stay strong. We are here for them.

• (1220)

**The Chair:** Mr. Zuberi, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Chairman, I'd like to recognize Ms. Terry Aitken, who recently retired as a program coordinator at Volunteer West Island, a non-profit organization that recruits, trains and refers volunteers to give back to the community. Over the past decade, Ms. Aitken has coordinated volunteers and programs to help prevent social isolation among seniors and help maintain their autonomy.

Thanks to Ms. Aitken, my office, as well as those of previous members of Parliament from Pierrefonds—Dollard, has been able to serve low-income households through an annual income tax return service. Our tax clinic lets people file taxes at no cost.

Barbara, a senior citizen, is one of those who accessed our service, and in Barbara's words, "I worked all my life as a single mom raising two children, but in retirement my income is modest. I'm really grateful to people like Terry, who give back."

Despite offices being closed because of COVID-19, Ms. Aitken and my staff work to continue to maintain our tax clinic. On behalf of the constituents of Pierrefonds—Dollard, I want to extend my warmest congratulations to Ms. Aitken for her years of service, and to Barbara, who makes our work meaningful.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. McKinnon is next.

**Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Today I highlight local residents Carli Travers and Robert Burungi for their efforts spanning over a decade in creating and operating a school, Abetavu, in Uganda, funded by donations from fellow Canadians. Through Abetavu, they care for hundreds of vulnerable children and work to raise the larger community out of poverty. They also share their passions for helping others right here in Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam.

In the past year, however, while giving their time in free soccer clinics to our local kids, they were confronted with drive-by racial slurs. I celebrate Carli and Robert for their courage in facing down this offensive behaviour, and I appreciate the local leaders and the broader community who stepped up to denounce these hateful acts.

This is a daily reality for far too many Canadians, however. Racism and systemic discrimination continue to exist in our society. We must all step up as allies.

Thank you, Robert and Carli, for your commitment to the well-being of our community and that of our fellow humans.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Berthold has the floor.

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** I want to say a few words to all young Canadians.

We haven't forgotten about you. The pandemic has cost you dearly in experiences, relationships and friendships. Classes are being held at home, sports activities have been cancelled. There are no group get-togethers, no grad, no after-grad parties. I'll admit that

celebrating coming of age in your parents' backyard is not the most cool.

While we old people talk about the pandemic, CERB, the deficit and economic recovery, you young people are developing your talents on TikTok and following influencers on Instagram and YouTube. Exchanging news on Snapchat is becoming the norm.

Do you remember the last time your parents told you to put down your cell phone and that you didn't have a life because you were always in front of your computer screen? That must have been in March, before the damn virus descended on us.

My grandparents' generation lived through World War II. My parents' generation experienced the post-war recovery. My generation didn't really have a hard time. You will be the young people of the COVID-19 pandemic. You are the future of this country. I have confidence in your ability to rise above these challenges. The future is technological, digital and global, and you are the best at it. With you, Canada will be in good hands.

**The Chair:** Mr. Iacono has the floor.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.):** During the pandemic, my riding of Alfred-Pellan has shown generosity, solidarity and citizen involvement.

I am thinking of our Meals on Wheels that worked miracles, supported by our generous donors, and of our companies, such as Pirate de Laval, Au Blanc d'oeuf, Pâtisserie St-Martin, Pâtisserie Vimont and Dek-kor Céramique, who offered meals and sweets to our essential workers.

There is also George Courey or LA Sport, who provided personal protective equipment to our guardian angels in the long-term care facilities. The list is long, and I can't name everyone, but I know you were there.

I would like to say thank you for your involvement. Thank you for making a difference.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We will go to Mr. Albas.

● (1225)

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I never ever thought I would be doing a member's statement about my friend Neil Jamieson, in large part because Neil would have been the very first person to blast me for having the idea.

Neil was very candid that way. You see, Neil was not the type to seek credit or attention. He was one of those persons who, while successful in business, was even more successful quietly toiling away in the background. He had a real passion for youth sports, in particular his Penticton Vees, and he enjoyed racing cars at the local speedway.

Neil contributed to far more causes than I could possibly tell you about in this short period of time, but I will say this: There are many necessary ingredients needed to build a vibrant community, none of which come together by accident. They happen because behind the scenes, people like Neil Jamieson work hard, give back and build a stronger country for us all.

I am sad to say earlier this month we lost Neil to cancer. He was 60 years old, a father to Jackson, a husband to Michelle, and a community leader. Neil was a great friend to us all, and we will not forget him.

Rest in peace, Neil. Rest in peace.

**The Chair:** Mr. Uppal is next.

**Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC):** Mr. Chair, the economic turmoil in Alberta did not start because of COVID-19 or the decline in oil prices. Since this government took office in 2015, hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost. Billions of dollars of investment have left the energy industry because of disastrous policies brought in by this Liberal government—policies like Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines bill; Bill C-48, the tanker ban; and the job-killing carbon tax.

Alberta's energy industry creates thousands of jobs right across Canada and pays for much-needed infrastructure right across the country. Months ago, the Liberals promised support for the energy industry, but Albertans are still waiting.

Alberta's innovation and prosperity are necessary for Canada's economy to recover from this pandemic. It's time for this government to support the energy sector and let it prosper, not strangle it with over-regulation and half-hearted efforts of support.

Why don't the Liberals see that when Alberta prospers, all of Canada prospers?

**The Chair:** We will go to Ms. Qaqqaq.

**Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq (Nunavut, NDP):** *Matna*, Mr. Chair.

Before I really launch in, I want to say how difficult it is sometimes to stand here as an indigenous woman, not only in a system that wasn't built for me but in a system that was meant to eliminate us as indigenous peoples.

In Nunavut, we know the rate of suicide is nine times that of the rest of Canada. Seven out of 10 children go to school hungry. One person in three lives in an overcrowded or mouldy home. Women in the north are three times more likely to experience a violent crime. Systemic and systematic racism is real.

Mr. Chair, National Indigenous Peoples Day is on June 21, as has been mentioned repeatedly today. Even though indigenous peoples in Canada have faced and continue to face incredible inequality, we have strong and beautiful contributions to make, whether in the arts, in music, in education, in medicine, in politics or in any aspect of life.

Mr. Chair, we're done with empty words and sympathy. Systemic and systematic racism is real. We need the federal government to put their money where their mouth is and provide action.

*Inuuvunga.* I am Inuk. I am part of a resilient people and proud to be.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I have boundless admiration for people who are extraordinarily talented.

Guided by a passion for peonies, Martinus Mooijekind, horticulturist and former mayor of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, has put all his love, creativity and know-how of the last 10 years into creating a brand new peony in an extraordinary pink. This majestic peony, entirely developed in my riding, will officially bear the name "Pauline Marois".

Jocelyne Hudon describes this horticultural masterpiece. She says that, inspired by the strength and conviction of her muse, the Pauline proclaims her independence loud and clear by opening her petals wide. She adds that, straight on her stem, the Pauline resists the wind and scatters her stamens that have become peonies to cover the fields like the militant taking possession of her country.

What beautiful words, which express so well the importance of Ms. Marois for Quebec!

What a nice way, Mr. Mooijekind, to dedicate your life's work. I offer you my sincerest thanks and congratulations.

• (1230)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We will go to Mr. McCauley.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Chair, there are many people in Edmonton West who have stepped up in support of our community during this crisis. While there are too many to list, I would like to highlight our faith leaders, who continue to serve their congregants virtually and Edmontonians as a whole.

I want to thank Pastor Brett at the West Edmonton Christian Assembly for collecting food for those in need. I thank Issam, Yasin, Hika, Imam Bassam and Imam Nasser from Rhama Mosque for partnering with Capital Region Housing to deliver hundreds of backpacks, and Rabbis Ari and Zolly for hosting Zoom gatherings and helping seniors. I thank Reverend Francis at Annunciation Catholic Church for making face masks for visitors to the Misericordia Community Hospital. I thank Father Leo at Good Shepherd Catholic Church for making food hampers for the needy.

Thank you to all of our faith leaders for continuing to serve not only their flocks but all Edmontonians of all faiths during this crisis.

**The Chair:** Ms. Zann is next.



**Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, on the morning of Sunday, April 19, my constituents and I awoke to a devastating tragedy that was playing out in our normally peaceful little corner of the world here in Cumberland—Colchester, Nova Scotia. It was a 13-hour rampage through the countryside, the largest mass shooting in the history of Canada, an act of violence by an angry, abusive man with a history of domestic violence and with access to guns—a lethal combination. It proves that private violence can become public violence and must be taken seriously as a danger to public safety.

I thank the Canadians who reached out to Nova Scotians from coast to coast in our time of grief. We now reach out as allies to denounce misogyny, systemic racism, casual cruelty and calculated brutality, because the fight for social justice never sleeps.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** We will now proceed to the questioning of ministers.

[*English*]

Please note that we will suspend the proceedings twice to allow employees who provide support for the meeting to substitute for each other safely.

First up is the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Scheer.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister seems more prepared to put on the charm to win a seat on the UN Security Council than to deal with the pandemic here at home.

Instead of coming to Parliament and correcting errors in his programs for the benefit of Canadians, the Prime Minister has too often stayed home, calling the leaders of other countries.

Why is the Prime Minister spending so much time pursuing his personal ambitions and failing Canadians, when we're in the worst crisis in a century?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Chair, it's only the Conservatives who don't seem to understand that we're in a global pandemic. We can't solve it alone, and we need to work on it as an international community.

In the calls I've been making over the past several months and in my conversations with leaders, we've been talking about COVID-19, our response and investments in health and safety.

We will continue to work with the rest of the world to meet this challenge, to help Canadians and to create a better world.

[*English*]

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister claims he has been making these phone calls to talk about a coordinated response to COVID-19, and on June 11 the Prime Minister had a call with the Sultan of Oman. Will the Prime Minister today condemn Oman's repeated arrests of anti-government protesters?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, we have continued to be engaged around the world on issues that matter to Canadians, whether it's defeating COVID-19, making investments or working

with partners around the world to advance common causes. We're going to continue to engage in the world, because that's what Canadians expect.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** But you won't condemn that human rights abuse.

I'll give you another chance. On May 6, the Prime Minister had a phone call with the Emir of Qatar. Will he condemn Qatar's use of slave labour to build a soccer stadium?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, Canada has long been engaged in the world, including with people we don't always agree with, but it is important to work together on issues where we do agree and make sure that we're continuing to speak loudly and strongly for human rights, which Canada always does.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** When it comes to a personal vanity projects, he won't condemn human rights abuses. He just calls them "disagreements".

Well, on June 11, the Prime Minister spoke with the President of Rwanda. Will the Prime Minister condemn the murder, frequent arrest, torture and imprisonment of opposition politicians and investigative journalists, yes or no?

• (1235)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, over the past months and indeed years, Canada has re-engaged with Africa. We've worked with a number of strong African leaders on issues that matter to people, while at the same time highlighting how our support and our working together can improve the situation around human rights right across the continent. We will continue to work with leaders across Africa.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** That was a yes-or-no question. The Prime Minister can't bring himself to criticize dictators and despots around the world who abuse human rights, and we know that he likes to fund UNRWA to curry favour with nations that are ideologically opposed to Israel's right to exist.

Not only has UNRWA helped the terrorist organization Hamas and provided educational materials that attack Jews, but just last year its leaders were found to have been involved with "sexual misconduct, nepotism, retaliation, discrimination and other abuses of authority, for personal gain, to suppress legitimate dissent, and to otherwise achieve their personal objectives".

Why is the Prime Minister funding UNRWA?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, we made the decision to restore funding to UNRWA because we know that working towards peace and prosperity in the Middle East go hand in hand. We have brought in greater safeguards and greater accountability for UNRWA through our involvement in it, but we also know that creating better opportunities and better support for people in the region is part of the path towards peace.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister's record on foreign affairs has been a complete disaster. He surrendered to Donald Trump, offering up concession after concession. He went to China to get a free trade deal, and all he came home with was a nickname from the Communist Party that is so offensive the Speaker has ruled I can't repeat it in this chamber. His erratic behaviour during the Trans-Pacific Partnership talks angered our allies in Australia and Japan. Of course, who can forget his disastrous trip to India?

Mr. Chair, which one of the Prime Minister's foreign policy blunders is he most embarrassed by?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, after 10 years of neglect and embarrassment on the world stage, Canada re-engaged five years ago, and in that time we've become the only G7 country to sign a free trade deal with every other G7 country. We've led the way on multilateralism. We've secured our most important trade partnership.

At a time of protectionism, of challenges with the United States, we've moved forward on protecting millions of Canadian jobs, and we did that in a team Canada approach, with premiers across the country, including Conservative premiers, stepping up. It is only the Conservatives in Ottawa that continue to put politics—

**The Chair:** We will now go on.

[Translation]

I will give the floor to Mr. Blanchet.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The prime minister's made a friend. It seems that, as it should be, the supply will be a formality that the Liberals themselves won't give much importance to. There is a virtue in that. We're going to look together at what the message is being sent by the way this government has been working for some time. Here are a few questions from the recent past.

For example, the Prime Minister claims that every Thursday he talks to the premiers of Quebec and the provinces and that everything is fine. However, the premiers say that things aren't going well at all in terms of health transfers and that the Prime Minister refuses to adjust and increase these transfers.

What message does his current attitude send to Quebec with respect to health care transfers?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, I want to thank the leader of the Bloc Québécois for working with us on many initiatives here, in the House, to help Quebecers and all Canadians.

In the last three months, four bills have been passed to address the needs of our seniors, our families and our young people, and

they have been supported by different parties in the House, including the Bloc Québécois.

We're going to keep working together. That doesn't mean we'll always agree on everything, of course. This is Parliament, after all. However, we will continue to work, and I want to sincerely thank the leader of the Bloc Québécois for all his co-operation.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet:** The Prime Minister makes some good jokes. There wasn't a hint of a beginning of a word that had anything to do with my question. They all must have known it on the other side, because they were all smiling at me, as if they thought it was funny that I wasn't given an answer.

At the beginning of the crisis, the Prime Minister transferred \$500 million to the provinces for health care because he thought it wouldn't last long, waiting until the fall, when the premiers would talk to each other and he too would have to talk to them about health transfers. We're asking him to make another \$500 million transfer to all the Canadian provinces, but we're in the dark.

What's the Prime Minister's message to Quebec?

• (1240)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Indeed, Mr. Chair, as my hon. colleague across the way suggests, we are talking with the provinces about an additional health transfer, because we recognize that a secure economic recovery is a priority for all of us in this country. That is why our proposal of \$14 billion includes transfers that will help the provinces with respect to the health care system.

We've been working together from the beginning, and we're going to continue to work hand in hand with the premiers.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet:** Working together in a pandemic is average. That's probably why it isn't working: the provinces aren't saying the same thing he does. His \$14 billion proposal is widely denounced by the provinces and Quebec as a very systematic approach to invade areas of provincial and Quebec jurisdiction.

Now he's putting on a quasi-electoral show where he says, with an angry look on his face, that he's going to defend the interests of Canadians, as if that meant stepping on the bodies of the provinces. Is that the message he's trying to send?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, all levels of government agree that we must do everything we can to protect Canadians during this pandemic and to ensure a safe reopening of the economy across the country.

At the federal level, we are proposing significant measures to help the provinces, such as the opening of modified early childhood centres to allow people to return to work, personal protective equipment and assistance to municipalities.

The safety of Canadians affects all levels of government. That is why we are working with the provinces and territories.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet:** He is not working with the provinces and territories. He just says so here. The provinces and territories are not saying that they are working with the Prime Minister. He says—this is his heritage—that he wants to encroach on their areas of jurisdiction by using federal money that comes from the provinces. There is no agreement or understanding; there is a denunciation of federal interference.

When we presented the federal government with a series of proposals that would demonstrate a spirit of co-operation with respect to Quebec's demands and our demands for Quebec, we were hung up on. There was no sound, no picture: he had made a friend who was going to vote for him.

Is that the Prime Minister's co-operation? Is that the message he is sending to Quebec and Quebecers?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, we fully understand that, for political and ideological reasons, the Bloc Québécois always wants to show that things do not work between the federal government and the provinces, particularly Quebec.

However, I can assure you that conversations are continuing with all the provinces, including Quebec. Positive discussions are continuing on how we can work together to ensure the health and safety of all Canadians. That is exactly what we are doing. That does not mean we will always agree, of course, but it does mean that we are having concrete conversations that will help Canadians. We are putting in place measures that will move us toward a safe reopening.

**The Chair:** Mr. Singh, you have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Chair, families were weeks away from not knowing whether they could put food on the table before the government finally extended the benefits to help Canadians out. This should never have happened. Families should never have been worried about where they were going to get support just weeks away from their support running out.

What is the plan for August for families that may not be able to go back to work?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, I agree with the honourable leader of the NDP. This should never have happened. We do not want to be finding ourselves in the midst of a global pandemic, yet we are. Every step of the way, as a government, we have been responding to be there for Canadians to help them by modifying, adjusting, expanding and extending, in this case, the Canada emergency response benefit for an additional eight weeks to make sure that Canadians are supported through this difficult time.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Will the Prime Minister accept and admit that the EI system is broken for most Canadians?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, one of the things this pandemic has shown is that we need to do better around vulnerable Canadians, and we need to look at what we can do right now to help people. However, we also need to look at the longer term, including—

• (1245)

**The Chair:** We'll go back to Mr. Singh.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Will the Prime Minister fix EI so that it helps all Canadians in need?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, we're always happy to move forward on improvements to our systems to help more Canadians, and that's something that we're very much looking at every single day. We're focused on this crisis, however.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Will the Prime Minister improve EI to help all those who need it?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, of course the priority is to help people in need right now, but improvements and changes to serve more people—

**The Chair:** Mr. Singh has the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Canadians living with disabilities have been ignored throughout this pandemic. We forced and pushed the government to commit to helping Canadians living with disabilities almost two months ago, but still there is no help for them. When will Canadians living with disabilities get the help they need?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, from the beginning of this pandemic, the minister for Canadians with disabilities has worked with the community, worked to help out, and we as a government have stepped up on helping many, many people.

There is more to do, which is why we put forward legislation to send extra help to people with disabilities. Unfortunately, politics got in the way of that. We will continue to work on how to help people with disabilities.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Chair, New Democrats are prepared to support legislation that helps all Canadians living with disabilities. When will the government bring forward legislation that helps them? We will support that legislation right away.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, we brought forward such legislation last week. Unfortunately, the Conservatives denied unanimous consent to be able to move forward to help people with disabilities with an extra \$600—

**The Chair:** We will go back to Mr. Singh.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** It's been over two months. Canadians with disabilities need that help right away.

It's a matter of the choices that this government is making in terms of who it's choosing to help and who it's not helping. We just learned today what we've known for awhile: that the wealthiest 1% of Canadians own as much as the bottom 40%.

Will the Prime Minister make a choice to make the super-wealthy pay their fair share?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, since we came to office, we've moved forward on making the tax system fair, on ensuring that everyone pays their part. The first thing we did was raise taxes for the wealthiest 1% so that we could lower them for the middle class and for people working hard to join it. We will continue to focus on helping vulnerable Canadians in this pandemic and going forward.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Chair, the right wing is going to be talking about fiscal prudence. I think it's a great thing to talk about, but fiscal prudence doesn't mean cutting services to people: It means cutting giveaways to the wealthiest.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to closing offshore tax havens, to closing loopholes that allow the wealthiest to continue to concentrate wealth in their hands while working people suffer?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** The Liberal Party has always been the party that has understood that fiscal responsibility goes hand in hand with helping the most vulnerable. We came into this COVID crisis with the best balance sheet in the G7. We put that to use to help Canadians get through this, and we will have an economy that will come roaring back because of the strength of all Canadians.

**The Chair:** We'll now stop for a quick pause so that our staff can switch in a safe way.

[Translation]

We will now resume the meeting.

Mr. Rayes, you have the floor.

• (1250)

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Chair, the Conservative Party has been asking for an economic update for weeks. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, Yves Giroux, is also asking for one. It is clear that the information the government provides to us every day through the Prime Minister himself, outside his residence, is too incomplete for us to be able to interpret it properly. The former Parliamentary Budget Officer, Kevin Page, also said so.

This morning we learned from the Prime Minister himself that there would be no economic and fiscal update, but an “economic snapshot”, a new term he invented. What we have just learned today is quite incredible.

Why wait until July, when all parliamentarians will be at home with their constituents, when Canadians and Quebecers will be on vacation and journalists will be taking a well-deserved break? The Prime Minister is waiting for that date to provide us with information. This shows a lack of respect for all parliamentarians here and for Canadians who want the truth about the expenditures related to the measures taken by the government. Why wait?

**Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Chair, we have known since the beginning of the crisis that it is very important to be transparent with Canadians. That is why we have shared information every day about our investments to protect Canadians and businesses. This continues to be our approach. We have to look at the information that we have and do not have.

So our approach right now is to inform Canadians by providing this economic snapshot. July 8 is a very appropriate choice of day. As our economy and our investments cautiously recover, we will

have more information. As a result, Canadians will have enough information and we will be able to make plans for the future.

**Mr. Alain Rayes:** I'm not making this up. Just this week, the Prime Minister said that an economic update would simply be an exercise in invention and imagination. We can understand why the Prime Minister would say such things, given that, for him, deficits are not a serious problem and budgets balance themselves. However, we don't understand how the Minister of Finance, who comes from the financial sector, would support that.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador provided an official economic update on June 4, 2020. Saskatchewan even tabled a budget on June 15. Quebec will do the same on Friday, June 19. On the other hand, our Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance are unable to provide us with an economic update. If this is an invention, as he says, how is it that the provinces are able to give us the facts so that all parliamentarians here in the House can make the appropriate decisions?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** I think members know that we are in a crisis right now. We are dealing with a very dynamic economic situation. We have to look at the 10 provinces and the three territories to see how we can adequately deal with the current situation. That is our approach. A cautious reopening will help us be better informed. We will then be able to analyze our current situation. That will provide a lot of information to Canadians. It is very important in terms of planning for the future.

• (1255)

**Mr. Alain Rayes:** We are going to find out right now whether our Minister of Finance knows the figures.

What is the level of the deficit since the beginning of the pandemic?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** We have made investments of more than \$150 billion that have gone directly to Canadians and to businesses—

**The Chair:** Mr. Rayes, you have the floor.

**Mr. Alain Rayes:** Mr. Chair, now that we know that the CERB will be extended, I would like to know how much it has cost over the last three months.

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Based on the economic snapshot, in the coming weeks, I will be pleased to inform Canadians of where we are—

**The Chair:** Mr. Rayes has the floor.

**Mr. Alain Rayes:** Mr. Chair, we will be voting on supply today. We have been told that the CERB will be extended, but the Minister of Finance cannot even tell us how much it has cost over the last three months. That is unacceptable. It is disrespectful to the general public, who are paying through their taxes for these announcements that the Prime Minister makes every day from the steps of his house.

How much has the CERB cost in the last three months? Providing us with that figure is simple. Clearly, the minister knows what it is.

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, we know that about eight million Canadians have used the CERB, a very important program to protect them. It gave them \$500 a week. So if we do the math, it is clear.

We are now going to extend the CERB to protect people. With a cautious reopening, I think fewer and fewer people are going to be using the CERB—

[English]

**The Chair:** We will now go on to Ms. Dancho.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Chair, the Liberals announced the Canada student service grant over two months ago. The program was supposed to encourage students to volunteer in their communities with a \$5,000 grant incentive for school this fall. We've received no details in those two months.

Really, there are only two and a half months left of summer, so it's now or never. Will this program be launched by the end of June, yes or no?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth):** Mr. Chair, I appreciate the member taking the time to recognize the importance of youth being able to participate. We have not only brought forward and modified the Canada summer jobs program; we have also created a suite of programs so that students and young people in our country can be part of the solution and help heal communities. The Canada student service grant will be doing exactly that.

Yes, information will be coming out shortly. We know that the “I want to help” portal will be launched—

**The Chair:** We will go back to Ms. Dancho.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I'll take that to mean the minister has no idea when the program will be launched.

This government is really fabulous at making announcements, but their follow-through is really not so fabulous. As a case in point, despite another exciting announcement over two months ago, the commercial rental assistance program, CECRA, has failed to live up to the Liberal hype. Fewer than 300 businesses have had access to this program in Manitoba. Only \$39 million of the \$3 billion allocated for this program has actually been used, which means it's only lived up to 1.3% of its potential.

Is the government revamping the CECRA program, yes or no?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, we've seen over the course of the last few weeks that the provinces have come on board and have decided, in many cases, to restrict evictions for commercial tenants.

This has been an important part of the discussions we've had with them over many weeks.

In that regard, what we're seeing with CECRA, with the rent program, is that we're getting more and more applications. I'm encouraged with the pace that we're seeing it come on board right now. I'm looking forward to presenting more information as we have more applications.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** There is no incentive for landlords to sign up for this program. It's not working and it has very little uptake. The minister is aware of this. The program needs to be revamped if it's going to be effective.

My constituent Saralyn has been separated from her American fiancé for well over 100 days. Their wedding was scheduled for the end of March. Unfortunately, it was cancelled because of the border closures. Last week, this Liberal government yet again made an announcement that got everybody's hopes up when it announced that it would be allowing families to reunite despite the U.S. border closures. However, long-term partners and couples engaged to be married were unceremoniously left out.

Will this government allow American-Canadian couples to be reunited, yes or no?

**Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness):** Mr. Chair, this has been a challenging issue. We have made every effort to restrict non-essential travel across our borders in the interest of protecting the health and safety of Canadians. As the member quite rightly indicates, this last week, by order in council, we allowed for families to be able to stay together—married couples and other family members—so that when a non-status spouse came to the border, we didn't separate those families.

Mr. Chair, we're working tirelessly. If the member has a specific example and wishes to reach out to my office, we'll do what we can to help.

• (1300)

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** [Technical difficulty—Editor] in Winnipeg. In fact, constituents of Liberal members in Winnipeg have reached out to me, because they have received no response from the Liberal members of Parliament. That answer really doesn't come close to being adequate to make up for the hardships faced by these couples from the Liberals' inaction.

You know, I just find it really disappointing, although not surprising, that much of this Liberal government's action over the course of the pandemic has been a lot of substance over style, gestures over concrete actions. They're spending money like it grows on trees, and yet the Liberal finance minister seems completely incapable of doing his job and telling the truth to Canadians about the country's finances.

To make matters worse, they've shut down Parliament for the summer during the worst crisis in living memory, so we will have no opportunity to fix these broken programs or the new problems that are surely to emerge this summer.

My constituents depend on the competency of this government and the programs they announce. On behalf of them, I say this to this Liberal government: Do better. Canadians deserve it.

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, I just want to point out to the member that the measures we've put in place for Canadians have had an enormous impact on people's situations and an enormous impact on our ability to weather the storm. When eight million Canadians are on the Canada emergency response benefit, I think we can see the scale. When more than 660,000 small businesses get loans, I think we can see the scale.

To say that these measures have not been materially important is actually completely missing the point. We will continue to support Canadians even when Conservatives tell us not to. Even when they say the programs are not working, we will look at the real impacts they are having on Canadian families and on Canadian businesses. We will continue to provide support in the face of irresponsible challenges.

**The Chair:** We will go now to Mr. Warkentin.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC):** Thank you.

The minister continues to fail Canadians. Eighty-four days ago, the finance minister said that there would be help for Canada's oil and gas sector. He said that it would be in place within hours, if not days.

This is for the minister: How many companies have now received the liquidity support that he promised?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, I think it's important to know that we have had literally tens of thousands of companies in Alberta among the hundreds of thousands of companies across the country that have accessed the Canada emergency business account. We've had companies from Alberta look at the large enterprise—

**The Chair:** We'll go back to Mr. Warkentin.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Mr. Chair, the minister continues to mislead Canadians. The oil and gas representatives say that not a single company has received the promised liquidity through the BDC, loan guarantees through EDC or funding through the emissions reduction fund.

When will the minister fulfill his promise and give these supports to these companies?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, we will continue to work to support enterprises across the country. The programs we put in place are having an impact. We're making sure that those programs are able to be delivered, and the reserve-based lending approach under the BCAP will certainly be there to help those companies in the energy sector in Alberta to weather this challenge.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** The minister said 84 days ago that liquidity would be available to these companies within hours, if not days.

Can the minister name one company that has received the promised liquidity support?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, we'd be happy to get to the member, if he makes the request directly to my office, the lists of companies that have received many different forms of loans. There will continue to be opportunities for companies to get further loans.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Is the minister calling oil and gas representatives who say that nobody has received this support as of yet liars?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, of course, there are companies that are working through the program. Of course, the BDC and EDC are working to make sure that their programs are available as broadly as possible.

We will continue—

**The Chair:** We will go back to Mr. Warkentin.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Mr. Chair, Todd Brown, CEO of Cequence Energy Ltd., summed up the frustration of many in the energy sector when he said, "I feel deceived. I feel like it was a fanfare by the federal government to try and provide window dressing to an industry that I am not sure it supports."

Capital expenditures continue to be cut by the energy sector. Window dressing won't help. How many jobs does the minister estimate will be lost permanently in the sector due to his inaction?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, I think we need to acknowledge that the energy sector in Alberta is going through extremely challenging times. That is absolutely the case, and it is for that reason that we've put in place a number of different alternatives for those businesses to get access to credit. We'll continue to work to make sure that those access-to-credit programs are available and that they're able to support businesses in this time of need so that they can support their employees and keep them employed.

• (1305)

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Mr. Chair, in budget 2018, the Liberals gave manufacturing 100% deductibility for clean tech and emissions-reducing capital investment. The oil and gas sector, which is already the largest private sector investor in clean tech, was exempt from this announcement.

Will the minister now extend it to oil and gas companies?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, we continue to be focused on measures that are going to have an impact on businesses as they face up to the COVID-19 challenge, and there will be things that we will need to continue to look at in the future. That's not a measure that we're currently examining.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Mr. Chair, maybe he'll consider this one.

The Hibernia project was given an exemption to Bill C-69 because of flaws that we identified early when this government was passing that legislation. The exemption was given to ensure that jobs could be saved.

Will that exemption be given to all other provinces that produce energy in this country?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change):** Mr. Chair, I think the honourable member should go back and look at Bill C-69, which improved the environmental process in Canada to ensure that good projects could go ahead and that they were good projects.

There is a provision in there relating to regional assessments, which relates to the offshore in Newfoundland, but it is not an exemption from Bill C-69.

**The Chair:** Mr. Warkentin, you have time for a brief question, please.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** The exemption was given to the Hibernia project. Will that be extended to other provinces?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson:** I'm sorry, but the honourable member is simply incorrect. There is no exemption to Bill C-69. This is a regional assessment that was done for the purposes of exploratory drilling off the east coast.

**The Chair:** Mr. Warkentin, you can ask a 10-second question, if you'd like.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Will that same regional exemption be given to Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia?

**The Chair:** Honourable minister, give a 10-second answer, please.

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson:** As I say, Mr. Chair, there is no exemption. It is a specific process, a regional process within Bill C-69, and I'd be more than happy to ensure that the honourable member has access to the information associated with how that works.

**The Chair:** We'll now go on to Mr. Doherty.

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Chair, this question is to Minister Bennett.

Minister Bennett, over the last five years I've personally provided you with evidence of growing tensions of non-first nations and first nations within my region. I've provided you with evidence of harassment and intimidation of residents and tourists even at gunpoint, yet you still refuse to act. Why?

**The Chair:** I want to remind the honourable members to place their questions through the chair and not directly to the minister.

The honourable minister may reply.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations):** To the honourable member, as we move forward on the historic Supreme Court decision on Tzeachten and on the path to self-determination for first nations, Inuit and Métis coast to coast to coast, the relationships with neighbours are extraordinarily important. We know that tensions exist, but we also have great confidence, as we—

**The Chair:** We'll now go back to Mr. Doherty.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Minister, your inaction on this file has sown division in my riding, even among first nations. It's led to tremendous economic losses for ranchers and business owners. Lodge owners, tourism operators and ranchers can't even get approval to access the roadways to their own operations. These businesses are now worth nothing.

Let me read from a recent letter between one first nation in my riding and a long-standing lodge owner whose business was once valued in the millions of dollars. The letter says, "We have an appraisal which provides us with a framework in which to develop a reasonable offer. What that appraisal tells us is that because you do not have legal access to your property, the commercial value of your land interest and business is zero."

Minister, does this sound like good-faith negotiations to you?

**The Chair:** Once again, I want to remind the honourable member to place the question through the chair.

The honourable minister may reply.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Through the chair, I want to reiterate to the member that coming to the table in open-minded, open-hearted dialogue is the way we will get through these issues together, and it is the way forward for Canada.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Mr. Chair, the government claims that it does not have control of what a Crown corporation does, even when it goes against the published "Buy in Canada" policy for shipbuilding and ship repair.

Can the minister table with this chamber, at his earliest convenience, the relevant sections of the Marine Atlantic act that prohibit him from requesting that this Crown corporation follow Canadian government policy?

**Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance):** Mr. Chair, I will gladly respond to the honourable member by asking the minister to send a response.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Minister, during the COVID crisis your government was seeking to take control and provide direction to boards of private companies that took loans. If the minister can do this, why can't the minister direct a Crown corporation to follow the "Buy in Canada" policy to create jobs in Canada rather than in eastern Europe?

● (1310)

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, we are certainly not trying to take responsibility for private sector boards of directors.

In putting forth the large enterprise financing facility, we've acknowledged that there may be occasions on which the federal government might want to have an observer status, but that is nothing like taking control of a board of directors.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Can the minister table the documents that prohibit cabinet and the minister from providing direction to the board of Marine Atlantic, given that the minister is proposing \$140 million for the Crown corporation in this year's estimates?

**Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Chair, in response to the question from my colleague, Marine Atlantic is a Crown corporation and makes its own decisions with respect to the acquisition of ferries.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Mr. Chair, China has now alleged that pests were found in shipments of Canadian logs. Last year the Chinese Communist Party made similar egregious and unfounded allegations against Canadian canola, ultimately blocking shipments and causing devastating hardship for Canadian producers that is still being felt today.

Liberal inaction has already decimated our softwood lumber industry, which cannot afford another blow.

How does the government plan to address these allegations?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion):** Mr. Chair, I want to thank the honourable member for that question.

The excellent quality of Canadian forestry products has allowed Canada to build confidence and trust among buyers around the world. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is committed to protecting Canada's farmers and produce and supporting trade and commerce opportunities.

Canada received notification of non-compliance from China related to the discovery of pests in the shipments of hardwood and softwood logs. Canada—

**The Chair:** Mr. Doherty, you may have a very brief question.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** How many Canadians are currently waiting for airline refunds?

**Hon. Marc Garneau:** Mr. Chair, we do not have an exact number for the number of people who would like to have refunds; however, we are aware of the fact that many would like to have refunds.

In other circumstances I would encourage—and do encourage—the airlines to do the best they can to refund them.

**The Chair:** We'll now go to Mr. Nater.

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Chair, the Canada emergency business account is still being denied to far too many small businesses. Under the new non-deferrable expenses stream, expenses such as the purchase of goods for resale are excluded, once again making many small businesses ineligible. Why?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Mr. Chair, I'm pleased that 669,000 businesses have received this support. More businesses will get this support starting this Friday.

**Mr. John Nater:** Mr. Chair, that doesn't answer the question. Under the new stream, many expenses that are normal to businesses, especially farm businesses, aren't eligible.

For example, for farmers and agribusinesses, the costs of livestock feed, seed and fertilizer are not considered non-deferrable expenses for the purposes of the Canada emergency business account.

What farms does the minister know of that don't have livestock feed, seed and fertilizer as expenses?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Mr. Chair, it is exactly those farm businesses that we want to see helped through the Canada emergency business

account, and non-deferrable expenses are exactly the expenses that this account and these loans will help those business with.

I look forward to continuing to work with our farming businesses across the country, and all businesses, so that they are supported through this difficult period.

**Mr. John Nater:** Excluding livestock feed, fertilizer and seed from the calculation of expenses is actually excluding these farm businesses. Will the minister change those requirements?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Throughout this entire time, we have worked steadfastly and then listened to feedback from businesses, and we will continue to do that. Nothing is more important to us than ensuring that our businesses are supported through these difficult times.

**Mr. John Nater:** Mr. Chair, let me help the minister. One small change that would have an impact is to allow those without a business chequing account to access the Canada emergency business account. Will she make that change that we've been advocating for months?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Those small businesses that operate on personal accounts are critical and important. During this difficult time, we absolutely want to ensure that they are supported, and we will—

**The Chair:** We will go back to Mr. Nater.

**Mr. John Nater:** Mr. Chair, when will that happen?

● (1315)

**Hon. Mary Ng:** We're working as hard as we can and as fast as we can to make sure that those businesses are supported.

**Mr. John Nater:** Mr. Chair, mental health, particularly rural mental health, was a challenge before COVID-19; it is now made all the worse by these events. While many mental health services have been shifted online, for those without reliable high-speed Internet, the feeling of isolation is made worse.

Over the past weekend, I spoke with a local farmer and advocate who had to drive off-site to participate in an online mental health forum to talk about seeking the same therapy that he couldn't access online. When will the government make meaningful improvements to rural Internet access so that Canadians have access to services they need?



**Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development):** Mr. Chair, life during COVID is incredibly difficult for Canadians, and the lack of access to high-speed Internet makes it that much more difficult. We have been working since the beginning of our mandate to connect over a million households to high-speed Internet, but our work is not done. We are working to expedite our efforts to ensure that every Canadian has access to this essential service.

**Mr. John Nater:** Mr. Chair, this Sunday is Father's Day. It's also a time when we recognize men's mental health, a cause for which my friend from Edmonton Riverbend has been an advocate for nearly a decade. Sadly, over 75% of deaths by suicide involve men, and far too many of these are young men. With the isolation caused by COVID-19, access to normal supports is limited. Gyms and fitness centres are closed, affecting both the physical and mental health of Canadians. Far too often, alcohol and drugs are seen as coping mechanisms.

What actions will the government take to support mental health services, and particularly access to addiction services, during this time?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board):** Mr. Chair, I'm pleased but certainly affected by the question that I'm hearing. I would like to congratulate the member for raising this very difficult issue.

We are, of course, all mindful in this House of the particular difficulties that all Canadians go through, including men and fathers, and I would like to assure this House that we have done very significant things over the last few weeks, including implementing a \$350-million community fund, making an investment to fight homelessness and an investment for provinces to provide mental health services, including helping provinces and territories pay for the essential front-line workers who are so key in those sorts of circumstances.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** We will now continue with Mr. Bergeron.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Chair, the federal government is proposing to pay \$14 billion to Quebec and the provinces to help them cover part of the costs incurred to deal with the COVID-19 crisis. We know that the governments of Quebec and the provinces need much more than that, but this money would still be welcome, if the federal government did not attach conditions to it.

Yesterday, when I asked the government to give this money with no strings attached, a comedian on the other side said that we were asking for a blank cheque. As if the federal government, which does not manage any hospitals, which does not manage any long-term care centres, which does not manage any day care centres, which does not manage any public transportation services, knew anything about that.

Could the federal government, which knows absolutely nothing about it, simply transfer the money to the governments of Quebec and the provinces, which do know about it and have sole jurisdiction in this matter?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos:** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank our colleague for raising this extraordinarily important issue.

Since the beginning of the crisis, we have worked very effectively with all the provinces, including Quebec, to support workers, of course, but also communities and cities, to support the essential and so important investments by the Government of Quebec in personal protective equipment and health care.

There is also the \$500 million we announced from the outset to support front-line workers, who are so important in the delivery of physical and mental health services. We are going to continue to do so, because this is an extraordinarily important issue for all Quebecers.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Madam Chair, this government is getting its own responsibilities mixed up, as we have seen with border management. At the beginning of the crisis, people were flooding into the country clearly at the borders, ports and airports. What did it take for the government to finally come to its senses and shut down the airports and the borders? The City of Montreal had to send people to the Montreal airport to hand out leaflets, because there were no border controls.

Instead of taking care of provincial and Quebec affairs, take care of your own affairs. Transfer the money without strings attached.

• (1320)

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons):** Madam Chair, since the beginning of the crisis, the government has been shouldering its responsibilities regarding borders and has been working with all the provinces, including Quebec. Things are moving forward, and that is perhaps what is bothering the Bloc Québécois, which likes to bicker. When there is no bickering, it makes something up.

We are in dialogue with Quebec and all the provinces, and things are moving forward.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Just pay out the money and there will be no problem and no bickering.

Madam Chair, the federal government, which knows absolutely nothing about water systems and water treatment, cannot even provide indigenous people with drinking water.

How can it delay the payment of money owed to Quebec for water systems and drinking water infrastructure projects?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Madam Chair, I assume that the Bloc Québécois knows a lot about water systems and so on.

The Government of Canada works directly with the Government of Quebec every day. We are funding major projects throughout Quebec and we will continue to do so. We will always do what is best for all Quebecers.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** It's all well and good to talk about it, but we need concrete action. The federal government is responsible for indigenous rights under its own Constitution.

What happened during the railway crisis? The government sat on its hands for weeks, asking the Government of Quebec to send the police to take down the barricades. Instead of looking after other people's jurisdictions, it should look after its own. Just transfer the money to the provinces and Quebec so that they can deal with the health crisis we are currently facing.

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Madam Chair, the Bloc Québécois seems to want to play the role of spokesperson for the Government of Quebec. I can assure you right away that the Government of Quebec is playing its role very well and that it is communicating directly with us. We do not need the Bloc Québécois for us to come to an understanding with the Government of Quebec.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP)):** You have 24 seconds left, Mr. Bergeron.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** If they didn't need us, things would be settled. The problem is that they keep messing around. Money is sitting in the federal coffers right now that should be paid out, particularly for housing. An amount of \$1.4 billion is owed to Quebec for housing.

What are you waiting for to pay out that money?

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Mr. Rodriguez, please give a short answer.

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** We are discussing the housing issue and all the other issues with Quebec. We are making progress with the Government of Quebec, to the great chagrin of the Bloc Québécois. We are here for Quebec.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Before we continue, let me remind honourable members to direct their questions through the chair.

[English]

We will go to the honourable member for Ottawa South, Mr. McGuinty.

**Hon. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'll be sharing my time with the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine today.

My question is regarding the steps the government is currently taking to ensure that families, and especially families with young children, find themselves supported right now and as we go forward into the recovery phase of COVID-19.

I was pleased to see the government implement a one-time increase through the Canada child benefit by \$300 per child, but I have heard from many parents in my own riding that they need additional support.

[Translation]

The government must continue working to support families in the future. We must ensure that parents receive income support and that they have access to affordable child care services. Not only are these the right measures to help families, but they're also necessary to support Canada's economic recovery.

My question is for the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. Can he explain what the government does to support families through this difficult period?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development):** Madam Chair, I would like to thank my honourable colleague for Ottawa-South for his important question and really hard work and advocacy on this really important issue.

[English]

Our government's message to families right now is very simple: We are here for you. That is why we have taken concrete action to support families and parents throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, from CERB to the one-time increase to the Canada child benefit. However, we understand that families need more long-term support. That is why I am proud to announce that our government will be moving forward to increase the Canada child benefit once again, on July 20, to help families keep up with the cost of living.

We understand that Canada's economic recovery depends on parents with children being supported and being given the option to return to work. In addition to the increase to the Canada child benefit, we are moving forward with our promise and our commitment to provide an additional 250,000 affordable child care spaces.

Madam Chair, we are committed to being there for parents throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond so that they can take care of themselves, their children and their families.

• (1325)

[Translation]

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The honourable member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Mrs. Romanado.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.):** While businesses in my riding of Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine are beginning to safely resume their activities, it is obvious that the government's response to the COVID-19 crisis has played an extremely important role in helping them weather the storm.

[English]

The Canada emergency response benefit ensured that citizens in my riding could count on a stable income even if their workplace was closed or if they lost their job due to COVID-19. The Canada emergency wage subsidy helped employers keep their staff on payroll even when their revenues disappeared. The Canada emergency business account ensures that small businesses in my community can continue to keep the lights on.

Madam Chair, now that people are beginning to head back to work and businesses are beginning to open their doors and serve customers, many are looking to the government for information on how our economy will look in the months to come.

Can the Minister of Finance please tell us when he will update this House on the state of the economy and Canada's fiscal position?

[Translation]

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** I would like to thank the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne for her question and her hard work during this crisis.

[English]

Since the beginning of this crisis, we have obviously worked hard to protect the health of Canadians. With the best situation, from a fiscal standpoint, among G7 countries, and with the lowest debt as a function of our economy, we have also been able to deliver direct support of more than \$150 billion to individuals and to businesses across the country to allow them to get through this period of crisis.

While the situation continues to be very volatile, and obviously it's difficult for us to know exactly what the future will bring in this sort of situation, we do realize that it's important for us to continue to be transparent with Canadians. That's why on July 8 our government will move forward to present an economic snapshot of our current situation to ensure that Canadians understand where we are and to help them have confidence in our future together.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** We will go to the honourable member for Nunavut, Ms. Qaqqaq.

**Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq:** *Matna*, Madam Chair.

I will be sharing my time with my colleague, MP Garrison.

The Black Caucus letter was signed by 26 members of the cabinet. It calls for the federal government to “eliminate the barriers to access to justice and public security for Black Canadians and indigenous people”.

Madam Chair, we already have a map. We just need this government to follow it. Calls to action and justice from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, from the report on murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, from the Qikiqtani Truth Commission, from Pauktuutit are clear and at least a start.

The ministers know this. I know this. We all know this. Why are we still being forced to wait to see action instead of just empty words?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** Madam Chair, I can commit to ensuring that our government is focused on action and outcomes. That's exactly why we continue to put measures in place. It's so we can measure not only those actions but the outcomes, because results matter.

We are hearing from communities, and I agree that a lot of work and a lot of conversation has taken place. I make that commitment that we will be focused on action and outcome.

My mandate letter is public. I will be working with all departments and agencies to ensure this work is done. I look forward to working with allies in all parties as well as Canadians from coast to coast. We will get this work done together, Madam Chair.

**Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq:** Madam Chair, you can look at news from before I was born and apply the same issues to 2020.

When a video was released of an RCMP officer using the door of a police truck to run down and hit a man in Kinngait, many were shocked, but not us in the north. The relationship with the RCMP in the north is so complicated that many don't even call the police because they are afraid for their own safety.

We have been let down repeatedly. Black people and indigenous peoples of this country share those challenges.

The federal government has the power to create change. When will we see action, not just empty words?

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** We will have a brief answer from the minister.

• (1330)

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Madam Chair, this is a very important question, and I want to assure the member that regardless of where they live, all people in Canada deserve to feel safe in their communities. That of course includes Inuit people, particularly Inuit women.

Trust in our policing services is critical to the safety of our communities, and this includes the trust of those who are affected and ensuring that their voices are heard.

We agree that bias-free and culturally competent policing is essential. We've been working across government and with Pauktuutit, as the member opposite mentioned, so that Inuit people of Canada can move forward in partnership in their priorities.

We will continue to work with them, Madam Chair, to bring justice to all Canadians.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** We will go to the honourable member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):** Madam Chair, this government has had five years to introduce legislation to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences, one of the key factors in the systemic racism that has produced a corrections system in which 30% of those imprisoned are indigenous. Now repeated instances of violence against indigenous and Black Canadians have resulted in rightful outrage across Canada, and a call from the Parliamentary Black Caucus for action to transform policing and reform the justice system, including eliminating mandatory minimums.

Here's where the story takes a strange turn. Apparently, 26 out of 36 cabinet ministers signed on to the Black Caucus letter. That's two-thirds of the cabinet, including the deputy prime minister and the justice minister, all of them signing as if they haven't been the government for the last five years and have no responsibility for the failure to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences.

Instead of just another expression of good intentions, why aren't we seeing legislation being introduced in this House today to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Madam Chair, I thank the honourable member for his commitment to this issue.

Our government is committed to advancing sentencing reform that will stand the test of time. We will continue to work with our provincial and territorial partners and all actors in the criminal justice system, as well as taking advice from our courts and listening to all Canadians.

I can assure the honourable member that we're committed to achieving a modern and efficient criminal justice system that addresses the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples. Minimum mandatory penalties are one subject for investigation we are looking at. Black, racialized and marginalized Canadians need to be assured that the system will not be systemically racist in their interactions with the system. We know that this systemic racism exists within the system and we are working to fix it.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Mr. Garrison, you have 24 seconds left, if you'd like to ask a quick question.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm not doubting the minister's sincerity. I'm doubting this government's commitment to getting the job done.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called for an end to mandatory minimums. Fast-forward a few years to 2019, and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls called for the elimination of mandatory minimums. Again the government promised to act, but here we are a year later with no action plan in place for the inquiry's calls to justice.

Again, when can we expect to see legislation before the House to eliminate mandatory minimums?

**Hon. David Lametti:** Madam Chair, once again I thank the honourable member for his very legitimate concern here.

We're looking at a variety of different sentencing reform provisions. One subject matter in what we are looking at includes mandatory minimum reform.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The honourable member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Mr. Vis.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Chair, Canadians are concerned about our national sovereignty under this Liberal government, and for good reason. They've shut down the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations. The National Research Council of Canada sees no issue in collaborating with CanSino Biologics, and by extension, the People's Liberation Army of China, on the development of a COVID-19 vaccine. Now we've learned that Minister Champagne, Canada's top diplomat, has liabilities to China's state bank of over \$1 million.

Can the federal government provide some shred of assurance that they are committed to defending Canadian sovereignty in the face of an ever-encroaching Beijing government?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I thank the honourable member for that question.

Canada has a complex multi-dimensional relationship with China, and it certainly presents challenges. Our position is clear. Our

engagement with China is "eyes wide open". Canada has been clear about our principles and our commitment to the rule of law and our deep concern for our citizens. We continue to advocate and fight for the release of our Canadian citizens, Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig. We continue to defend our farmers and our producers. We're going to remain firm and resolute in defending our principles and our interests.

• (1335)

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Regarding Canadian interests, when can we expect a decision on Huawei, or should Canadians plan for another delay by the government?

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, we've been very clear that we are conducting a comprehensive review in not just examining technical considerations but deeply considering the security concerns.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** For some time now, the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities has foreshadowed a new green-focused COVID-19 infrastructure program. Unfortunately, details are sparse. The communities best acquainted with their local green infrastructure needs are being left out of the discussion entirely. My constituents are concerned especially about the health of the Fraser River and the threat of flooding.

Will the Fraser River, the most productive salmon river in the world, receive the supports it needs from this new program?

**Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities):** Madam Chair, I'm always happy to talk about our investments in green infrastructure, but in protecting our environment generally, this has been a huge focus of our infrastructure plan. We've been making investments across the country, both to reduce emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

I'm happy to talk to the member about possible opportunities, whether it's through my portfolio or through another department.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Producers in my riding are having trouble securing labour for the upcoming blueberry harvest. What will the Minister of Agriculture do to encourage labourers to return to work to protect Canadian food security and make sure that our blueberry crop, a staple crop in the Fraser Valley, is taken care of this year?

[Translation]

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food):** Madam Chair, the issue of labour in the agriculture sector is truly problematic.

In partnership with provinces, we use different ways to encourage Canadians to work on our farms. That is why we have transferred 3 billion dollars to the provinces to allow them to increase essential workers' salaries, including those in the agriculture sector.

[English]

**Mr. Brad Vis:** I'd love some clarification on whether seasonal labourers actually qualify for that program, because right now we're at risk of losing the entire harvest. We need answers now.

Regarding Employment and Social Development Canada, we heard in the HUMA committee last month that during the pandemic approximately 19,000 ESDC employees were teleworking, with 12% of staff continuing to come into the office. With over 26,000 employees, this leads me to believe that not all departmental staff are reporting for duty.

Can the ESDC minister inform the House how many employees at ESDC have not been able to complete full-time work since the COVID-19 pandemic began?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Madam Chair, I'm very proud to highlight the important work of our civil servants in ESDC. They have gone above and beyond to deliver services to Canadians, and the benefits they rely on, through Service Canada.

We have redeployed 3,000 staff and set up a 1,500-agent call centre to ensure that Canadians continue to have access to the benefits they rely on every single day.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** I was driving by the grocery store the other day and I passed by my local Service Canada office. I'll note that the employees at my grocery store make minimum wage. The employees at Service Canada make a lot more than that, but they don't think they can go back to work.

When will we get our employees at Service Canada back to work to support Canadians and do the excellent work they are capable of doing?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Madam Chair, it is really unfortunate for the Conservative Party to dump on our amazing world-class civil servants. They are doing an amazing job. They have processed benefits for Canadians in amazing time. They have redeployed and done heroic work to get benefits to Canadians.

It is a shame that party puts them down every single chance they get.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Mr. Vis, I would ask you not to interrupt others while they are speaking, out of respect for the House and out of respect for whoever has the floor, similar to when you had the floor and nobody interrupted you.

At this point in time we will take a pause for a change in staffing and we'll be right back.

• (1335) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1340)

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** We are ready to restart.

The honourable member for Huron—Bruce, Mr. Lobb.

**Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC):** Thank you very much.

My first question is for the agriculture minister. I know she has been asked this question many times. It's in regard to the carbon tax.

Nothing seems more unfair to Canadian farmers than the carbon tax—the carbon tax that is applied when we heat our barns for our hogs, our chickens, our laying hens. As well, in the fall, when we go to dry our crops, we are charged this carbon tax.

I wonder whether she has had a chance to think further about it and has an update for farmers across this country on how she plans to stand up and help them out a bit.

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau:** I just want to confirm that our pollution pricing policy is still designed to grow a clean economy and we are planning on doing a review in 2020 for the sectors most affected in terms of trade.

For more details, we can refer to my colleague, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** The last time I was here for this version of Parliament, I was asking the Minister of Agriculture about AgriStability and AgriInvest, the basic farm programs that would help farmers in tough times. She referred to the website and said the farmer could plug in his numbers. She referenced that one of her farmers was going to get \$11 a head from AgriStability, which I'm sure she regrets saying at this time.

Has she had a chance to further review this, to take a look and see what's out there? I still receive daily calls from farmers in my riding, pork farmers in my riding who need support. It seems as though they come up every time.

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau:** Madam Chair, the businesses management programs are very important for our sector. We are grateful in Canada to have these programs. We are working hard with the provinces to improve them.

AgriStability is one way to support farmers when they have a loss in revenues. When we talk about the pork sector in particular, it is AgriRecovery, and the provinces are responsible for putting the program in place.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** I would suggest that's putting a lot of burden on the provinces. They are responsible for education. They're responsible for the delivery of health care and many other things. If you are trying to tell farmers today that there is no help from Ottawa in regard to these support programs, they would be very disappointed to hear that.

Is that what the minister is saying here today, that it is up to all the provinces and premiers to come up with these programs and that they will go it alone, without federal support, beyond AgriStability?

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau:** That is absolutely not what I said.

The business risk management programs are cost shared, with 60% coming from the federal government and 40% from the provincial government.

When we talk about AgriRecovery, we move this program forward province by province.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** The minister is welcome to come back to Huron—Bruce any time she likes and give that answer to pork farmers, or just farmers in general. They will not like the answer she has provided them.

I have a question for the finance minister, if possible. I think we know where the expenditures are roughly going to be for this year. They're going to be in the neighbourhood of \$600 billion-plus. I wonder if he has had an opportunity to take a look at what next year's expenditure would be. I wouldn't ask him about revenue, because that is going to be a little difficult to look at.

However, on the expenditure side, does he have a range that he could provide the House today?

• (1345)

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Madam Chair, we will continue to provide updates to the House and to Canadians on the spending we're doing in order to support them and to support enterprises to get through this time.

We have provided details to the House of Commons finance committee on our expenditures to date. Of course, we will continue to support Canadians. The measure of that support will be directly related to the challenges they are facing, and that will follow the health outcomes in our economy.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Mr. Lobb, you have time for a brief question.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** I have one other question. I had an email from a constituent yesterday, and it's in regard to the charitable tax credits.

I wonder if the minister is looking at raising those rates to allow generous people in our communities to maybe make a larger donation to a charity that may be in need. Is that something they have looked at in the near term or in the long term?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Madam Chair, let me first of all just say that we are always encouraged when we see Canadians step forward and make charitable contributions. We have seen some pretty incredible contributions this week. In fact, there was one very significant \$60-million donation for COVID relief from a family.

We're going to continue to advocate for that, and we have a very generous program of deductions available for charitable tax approaches, and that system is one we'll continue to look at in the future.

[Translation]

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The honourable member for Beauce, Mr. Lehoux.

**Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC):** Madam Chair, in my riding, the livelihood of businesses like the Groupe Ferti in Sainte-Marie depends on foreign workers. Without them, they lose contracts as well as the expenses incurred to bring them over, which are not reimbursed.

When will the government help our small and medium-sized businesses?

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau:** Madam Chair, I agree with my colleague that temporary foreign workers are absolutely essential to the agriculture sector. That is why we have invested 50 million dol-

lars to help them implement the necessary measures for the mandatory quarantine period.

**Mr. Richard Lehoux:** Madam Chair, my team is overwhelmed by the pleas we receive from small business owners, who no longer know what to do without the foreign workers. I'm one of 338 MPs, so imagine how many small businesses are in a similar situation across the country. Our businesses have received financial support, but what they need now is labour.

What is the government's response to them?

[English]

**Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors):** Madam Chair, in order to ensure labour market needs in key sectors continue to be met, our government is facilitating the safe arrival of temporary foreign workers to Canada.

For temporary foreign workers who are already in Canada and impacted by COVID-19, we have additional strategies in place to address work rights and status restoration. We are continuing to ensure that we have the people we need to fill the essential jobs that Canadians rely on. It's important that we recognize the important work done by temporary foreign workers in Canada, and we will continue this program.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Lehoux:** Madam Chair, businesses struggle to recruit local labour, in part because of four small letters. I will take the time to enunciate them well: C-E-R-B. Small and medium-sized businesses need labour to survive and they must also rely on foreign workers.

So, when will the government help them?

[English]

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's very important to understand that, as we move forward with our extension of the CERB by eight weeks, we continue to signal to businesses that we do not want to disincentivize work. In fact, that's why we're beefing up our attestation to include a requirement on workers to seek work and to take it when it's reasonable to do so.

We know there are jobs out there, Madam Chair, but there are also many Canadians who cannot find work, and we are there for them.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Lehoux:** Madam Chair, several businesses and farmers in my riding, who rely on temporary foreign workers, have been extremely worried since the recent announcement that Guatemala and Mexico would no longer send workers to Canada.

How will Quebec manage to fill the thousands of job vacancies?

• (1350)

[English]

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough:** Madam Chair, we are very concerned about the cases of COVID in temporary foreign workers and those who have lost their lives, and we are making sure that we address the concerns raised by both foreign governments and by employers across the country.

We're taking steps. We are a country that values and is committed to worker safety, and we're doing everything we can to make sure all workers are safe and feel safe in their work environment.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Lehoux:** Madam Chair, the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund is quite popular in Beauce. So much so that funds will soon be gone. As a matter of fact, the minister dipped into them to give them to people in Montreal. In rural ridings like mine, we're getting leftovers, Madam Chair.

When will the minister unveil her real plan for the regions?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, for this opportunity to speak, since I strongly disagree with my colleague, because we have a good plan for the regions.

We've doubled the budget allocated to Community Futures Development Corporations, or CFDCs. My colleague was very happy when we did, as were, indeed, many of his Opposition colleagues. Of course, we know very well that there's a huge demand. That is why we want to continue working with SMEs and supporting business owners in the regions, because regional businesses matter.

We're there to help them.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** You have time for one quick question, Mr. Lehoux.

**Mr. Richard Lehoux:** Madam Chair, the minister answered the question and told us that the program existed. However, more than half of businesses have not received an answer because of a lack of funding. What is the minister's real plan? We need funding now.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The honourable minister has time to give a short answer.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** We do have the funding. We've doubled the budgets. If Mr. Lehoux has a question or a project to submit, let him come to me so we can discuss it and resolve those situations.

[English]

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Next is the honourable member for Sarnia—Lambton, Ms. Gladu.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Last week the Prime Minister announced that immediate families of Canadians would be able to cross the border from the U.S. to address reunification issues like child custody, medical issues and spousal reunification, but people who are engaged and people who are long-term partners and who are not common law were excluded. In addition, it's left to the discretion of individual CBSA agents to determine whether or not they can come in.

Will the minister address this gap and provide clear criteria to the CBSA that includes fiancés and those who are long-term partners?

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I'll begin by thanking the member opposite for her question and her strong advocacy on this. I've appreciated her advocacy and her advice, but I would also remind her that the steps that we have taken were put in place to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

We have responded to concerns that were raised about the need to keep families together, and that's why we introduced, by order in council, very clear rules and instructions to CBSA. CBSA is doing the important job of ensuring that all travel to Canada is essential, and they are acknowledging and recognizing the exemptions that have been put in place, which are quite appropriate under the circumstances, Madam Chair.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Excluding long-term partners and people who are engaged is actually a charter violation of discrimination based on people's family situation, so that needs to be addressed.

There are also property issues occurring. Many people in my riding store their boats over in Port Huron. Currently, because it's not considered essential travel, they have to go and hire a foreign national skipper to bring an extra boat to bring their boat over so that it can be cleared, instead of just being allowed to go and retrieve their property.

Will the minister provide an exemption for Canadians to retrieve their property from the U.S.?

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Again, I thank the member for the question, and I'm not without sympathy for Canadians who find themselves in that position, but I would simply remind the member, and all Canadians, that our first priority has to be the health and safety of Canadians. We have had to put in quite appropriate and necessary restrictions on non-essential travel. We're working very closely with the provinces and I will tell you that there have been strong concerns expressed by our provincial partners about ensuring that all international travel coming across the Canadian border is in fact essential. We are doing our best to uphold those rules.

At the same time, when people are faced with these difficult situations, we'll work with them to try to find solutions to their concerns.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** [Technical difficulty—Editor] truckers are going back and forth across the border every day as are other folks conducting commerce. There are many Canadians who own property in the U.S. who are not allowed to go to their property, which is a condition of their insurance and it is causing some hardship.

Will the minister create an exemption for them?

• (1355)

**Hon. Bill Blair:** The member opposite quite rightly identifies some of the hardships that Canadians, and all of us, have experienced as a result of this pandemic, but the steps that we have put in place are necessary to keep people safe. I'd also remind the member that the movement of essential trade and goods across our borders is what puts food on the shelves and pharmaceuticals in our drug-stores. It provides Canadians and Canadian industry with the supplies and the equipment they need to do their jobs. The movement of essential workers is also something that is necessary and allowed.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** The minister needs to be aware that these Canadians who are being put through these hardships are willing to self-isolate and obey all the rules on both sides of the border, and they have a right to access their properties, which is being denied by the government extending the border restrictions.

Let's move on to the Minister of Finance.

The rent subsidy program is not working. There is no incentive for a landlord to apply and give up 25% of their revenue, so I'm not understanding why the government created a program that has no incentive to participate.

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Madam Chair, I want to thank the member for the question so that I can repeat what I said earlier.

We've seen that the provinces have moved forward to restrict the evictions of commercial tenants in many cases. We know that this will help to ensure that commercial tenants and landlords can work together to come to an agreement. That is what the emergency rent proposal was intended to do. We are starting to see many more applications. I am confident that we will see this program as successful over the long term.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Apparently, there's only 1% uptake in that program, so I would argue that this program is not successful and there's no incentive.

Finally, Norma is a 53-year-old student in my riding, who should be eligible for the student benefit because she goes to Lambton College. However, when she called to apply she was told that she's probably fraudulent because nobody attends school at 53. That is agism. What does the minister have to say about that?

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough:** I'd be happy to work with the member to see exactly what the circumstances of her constituent are and work to resolve them.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Next is the honourable member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ms. May.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

We know what the COVID-19 emergency response from government looks like. One year ago today, on June 17, 2019, the House voted that we were in a climate emergency. When can we expect to see the government take the climate emergency similarly and seriously?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the honourable member for her question.

Climate change remains a high priority for this government. It is a crisis. It is something that we as Canadians need to address, as

does the broader international community. We made a commitment to move forward to address and exceed the target that we had established previously. We made a commitment to achieving net-zero by 2050. We are fully committed to ensuring that we move forward in a manner that will allow us to achieve both.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** With all due respect, we know what the government looks like when it's taking an emergency seriously. It listens to the science and it applies the programs that science requires. In this case, the climate emergency, the scientific advice came in the IPCC report from October 8, 2018, that the window on 1.5°C, the Paris target, was closing. The current target put in place by Stephen Harper is five years old and is about half of what needs to be done.

If this government treated COVID-19 the way they treat climate, we would have told Theresa Tam, "We can't stay six feet apart. You'll have to be happy with three feet."

Again to the minister, when will we see a target consistent with the science?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson:** Certainly, climate change is a science issue. It's not a political issue. It should not be a partisan issue. We are guided by the science in everything that we are doing. We developed the pan-Canadian framework, which has 50 different initiatives to allow us to reduce emissions. We said that we know we need to go further, and we are in the process of developing an updated plan that will ensure that we do that. We will be standing up a panel to consult the Canadian public on a pathway to net-zero by 2050, and are working actively every day to ensure that we do that.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** When will we see the requirement under the Paris Agreement for a new target tabled by Canada within calendar 2020?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson:** Madam Chair, we have been very clear that we would be updating our target in advance of the next COP. That has not changed. We will be doing that. I look forward to being able to bring that forward and discuss it with all Canadians.

• (1400)

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** To the honourable minister, I don't know. It's very difficult because clearly there are well-intentioned ministers and well-intentioned people.

Do you know the difference between 417 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the global atmosphere with a well-intentioned minister and 417 parts per million with a disinterested or hostile minister? The answer is that there's no difference at all.

We are in a worsening climate emergency. I need to hear clearly from the minister, and I hope I will this time. Will we comply with the Paris Agreement and come up with a new target within calendar 2020?

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to remind the member to address the questions to the chair.

The honourable minister may respond.



**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This government has been very clear. We are fully committed to addressing the climate crisis. It is an enormous priority for us. We have put a plan in place. We have worked very hard to develop an additional number of initiatives that will go forward with respect to a new plan and a new target, supplementing the work that was done by the previous Minister of Environment and Climate Change. We all feel extremely strongly about this in the House. Certainly it's the reason I got into politics in the first place. It's something that I've spent many years of my life working on, and it's something to which I personally, and the government as a whole, are firmly committed.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** I appreciate the good words, Madam Chair. I've heard them before. What I have not heard is the firm commitment to at least double our target within calendar 2020 to comply with our goal of holding to 1.5°C. It's a critical goal and the window is closing.

In COVID-19 this government has acted with resolve. It's been an astonishing whole-of-government approach. When will we see a similar level of commitment from this government to address the climate emergency?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think the honourable member should be aware that, even in the context of a very challenging circumstance with respect to COVID-19, this government has moved forward with key elements of its climate plan, including the pricing on pollution, including ensuring liquidity for large corporations was put in the context of commitments to climate change. This government has been very clear this is an enormous priority. It's a priority guided by science. It's a priority we are working on not just domestically but internationally, and it is something we will continue to work on because we must.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Next is the honourable member for Windsor West, Mr. Masse.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll be splitting my time with the member for Timmins—James Bay, Mr. Angus.

Bonifacio Romero died May 30. Rogelio Santo died June 4. Both were Mexican migrant farm workers who died of COVID-19 in Leamington. They died alone. They died without their families, and they died in our country when no one cared.

Can the minister tell the families of Mr. Romero and Mr. Santo what they have to say about their deaths in our country?

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough:** Madam Chair, on behalf of the Government of Canada, we are deeply saddened by the death of these two temporary foreign workers. It shouldn't have happened, and it did.

We're working very closely with Mexican officials and with the employer. We're digging in. We put in place robust quarantine measures that yielded very good results, instead of worker safety. We're now trying to figure out how this happened, perhaps through community transmission, but I can assure everyone in the House, we

are very sad and we are working to correct these incredible, deplorable situations.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Saddened is not sorry. Saddened won't change the lives of their loved ones and their families without them. When the minister signed their access into our country, the issues around migrant workers and the way they're treated in our country had been well documented by Migrant Workers Alliance and others for decades. When the minister signed their coming into this country with the conditions of COVID-19, she signed their death warrant.

What does the minister have to say about the fact they knew about these issues and they did nothing about protecting the workers before they came to Canada?

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough:** Madam Chair, we are terribly sorry this happened in Canada. This shouldn't have happened, and we're working very hard to figure out what happened.

Madam Chair, we are very proud of the way we have worker protection in this country, but the temporary foreign worker program is in need of an overhaul, and we are working to make sure workers' rights are protected. We are working with employers, farmers and foreign governments, in particular the Mexican government, and we are deeply sorry of course for the families of these workers.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Madam Chair, I will not be heckled that I'm being shameful for raising this issue and what really took place here. These issues are real. They are not new. They didn't happen just this last month. They've been very real in our country, and I will not be told I'm being shameful for raising these hard issues in this chamber. I'm proud to do so on behalf of those workers and their families.

• (1405)

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough:** Madam Chair, since the beginning of COVID, we've been working with countries around the world, including Mexico, to make sure sufficient safeguards for workers were in place in the quarantine period and beyond. We know that system is broken, and we are working hard to fix it. We again sincerely offer our condolences to the families of these workers.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Next is the honourable member for Timmins—James Bay, Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This week the Minister of Indigenous Services signed a letter to his own cabinet colleagues telling them not to block justice for indigenous and black people. This is a minister whose own department and government has been found guilty of “wilful and reckless” discrimination against first nations kids, so why doesn't he just take a spoonful of his own medicine and end the legal battle against first nations kids?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services):** I thank the member for the question.

Indeed, as the Prime Minister has said time and time again, and as we have said time and time again, we will compensate first nations children for the harm that they have suffered. The member knows this well. There are three cases that are outstanding, and we are making modest progress but very positive progress on these cases. I hope to have more information to share with the House at a later date.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Modest progress...? This week the minister was willing to chastise the RCMP commissioner and rebuke her for her failure to live up to the best. Now he's telling us "modest". I don't know if he read the Human Rights Tribunal ruling. It found the government guilty of "wilful and reckless" racial discrimination that was "intentional" with no regard for the consequences to children, and children have died.

Is he willing to say that his ongoing legal battle that is now up to \$10 million is modest progress?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Madam Chair, in the course of implementing those court orders, the budget of Indigenous Services Canada allocates over \$600 million to achieve equity between first nations children and non-first nations children. This is significant progress over years. Progress is slow. It is sometimes too slow, and we keep moving aggressively to make sure that first nations children aren't left behind. We will continue to do so, Madam Chair.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** This is the last question, Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Thank you. Let's talk about how they implement this budget.

In order to pretend compliance with the Human Rights Tribunal, his officials told child and family services that they had "unlimited prevention funding" for prevention work. That was the quote. Then, after the organization spent the money, he refused to pay. In Saskatchewan, they're owed \$47 million.

Why doesn't he stop telling people how to take a knee, and tell us that he is going to pay that money that was promised to front-line child and protection services across Canada?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Madam Chair, as part of implementing child and family services legislation reform, we're moving forward with first nations to ensure that they exercise that right of self-determination, to ensure that they have control and custody of their children. We will absolutely continue to do so.

We are also, as part of COVID, allowing and ensuring that first nations communities, and children aging out of care, are properly supported as well. The federal government will not cease to ensure that first nations children are indeed properly taken care of in the conditions set forth by first nations communities.

[Translation]

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The honourable member for La Prairie, Mr. Therrien.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to get back to the fact that the party that formed the government, the Liberal Party, used the wage subsidy program for par-

tisan purposes. I looked at section 2 of this program. I was surprised. I was wondering how the Liberal Party had had access to it.

Section 2 says that those who are entitled to it are companies or businesses—so clearly not the Liberal Party—, individuals or persons—so not the Liberal Party—, or charitable organizations.

Is the Liberal Party of Canada a charitable organization?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** We've decided to offer the wage subsidy to each business, across the country, in every sector of the economy, in order to protect its labour force so it can continue to operate. It's a very important measure.

It will help our economy and will continue to protect employees all over the country.

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** He is not answering my question. The minister says that it's for all businesses, but the Liberal Party of Canada is not a business.

My question was a bit mischievous, because I knew very well that it would not get an answer. The Liberal Party is against the wall. It can't answer those questions, because it's much too embarrassed to do so.

In my opinion, the Liberal Party is at the bottom of the list. The last point concerns a prescribed organization.

Is it as a prescribed organization that the Liberal Party was able to obtain its wage subsidy?

● (1410)

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** I think that all MPs in the House understand that, in a time of crisis, it is necessary to protect employees. That's our goal. We did reach it through the Canada Emergency Response Benefit as well as the wage subsidy.

We will maintain our approach, which helps all Canadians experiencing difficulties because of COVID-19.

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** The government's situation is really embarrassing. We now know that it's through the prescribed organization category that it managed to obtain the wage subsidy.

My question is simple. I don't know whether it'll get an answer.

Which minister had the bright idea of suggesting that the Liberal Party of Canada put its hand in the cookie jar? Whose wonderful idea was this?

Was it the Minister of Finance or the Minister of National Revenue?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Madam Chair, as a government, we've decided that it was necessary to protect each business in the country that saw its revenue drop because of COVID-19. This way, they can protect their employees and their revenue. It's very important. This means that after the crisis, people and businesses will be in a better situation.

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** We're not making headway with the answers, but I think that we are with my questions.

A Liberal Party of Canada minister says that they'll include this in the rules and that they'll line their pockets. This looks like a conflict of interests.

Who's guilty of having a conflict of interests in this government?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Madam Chair, it was a lot simpler than that. We've decided that Canadians who needed help and who were experiencing difficulties would receive help from the government. This was our approach.

A business that experiences a drop in revenue can access the wage subsidy to retain its employees.

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** He keeps going. The Liberal Party of Canada is a business, and we're hearing it from the finance minister. I thought he was a lot wiser.

During the pandemic, some people died. There were 5,298 deaths in Quebec and 8,254 in all of Canada. Some people were sick, others felt isolated, some businesses went bankrupt, and some people lost their job. Meanwhile, this party was lining its pockets.

Are you ashamed of your actions?

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I remind the honourable member that he must speak through the chair.

The honourable minister has the floor.

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** We know that people and sectors are struggling all over the country. That is why we have decided to allow everyone experiencing difficulties to access our programs, such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit and the wage subsidy.

This is our approach, and it's a good approach to improve our situation.

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Mr. Therrien, please ask your question directly since you only have 20 seconds left.

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** They've improved it. They raised the wage subsidy from 10% to 75% of payroll for three months and now, they're up to six months.

Which member of this government said that it was so good that he wanted more?

Who's guilty of increasing again and again the amount of money they put in their pockets?

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The honourable finance minister has time for a short answer.

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Madam Chair, as I've already said, our government decided that it was necessary to protect Canadians from all parts of the country going through tough times because of COVID-19. It's a good approach.

[English]

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Next is the honourable member for Carleton, Monsieur Poilievre.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** There will be no budget and there will be no fiscal update, but there will be a snapshot. The dictionary defines "snapshot" for a hunter as a shot quickly taken without deliberate aim.

Is that how the minister describes his own spending?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Madam Chair, we know it's important to continue to be transparent with Canadians. We're looking forward

to providing, now that we're in a more stable situation, some understanding of our situation from an economic standpoint. It will provide Canadians with the information they need to have confidence—

• (1415)

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Mr. Poilievre.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** He is transparent. We can see right through him. Hopefully, we can get some snapshot answers.

Will the minister indicate whether his snapshot will show the debt exceeding a trillion dollars?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Madam Chair, I am looking forward to providing the economic information on July 8, at which time Canadians will get a good understanding of the investments we've made and our underlying economic situation.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** The question was this: Will the debt exceed a trillion dollars in this fiscal year?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Again, Madam Chair, we look forward to providing the information that Canadians need in order to give them a good understanding of not only the investments but also how we've protected them during a difficult time.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** He'd be the only one looking forward to a trillion-dollar debt. Can he at least confirm whether or not we will have one this year?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Again, Madam Chair, we look forward to providing the information that will come out in our July 8 presentation. It will give Canadians a good summary of not only what we've done but also the framework for what—

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Mr. Poilievre.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Some snapshot, Madam Chair. According to the prestigious accounting firm MNP, half of Canadians were \$200 away from insolvency at the end of every month. After the COVID disaster and future interest rate hikes, how many does the minister expect will reach insolvency in the next couple of years?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Madam Chair, the important thing for us to acknowledge is that, going through a situation this difficult, Canadians have needed to get support from the federal government. That's why we moved forward with the emergency response benefit. That's why we've helped enterprises with the wage subsidy. Those programs have helped put a significant amount of money into Canadians' pockets at a time of particular—

[Translation]

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Mr. Poilievre has the floor.

[English]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Again, there's no answer.

Now let's move on to infrastructure. The government says that it has funded 52,122 infrastructure projects. Will this snapshot give the date, location, cost and project description for every single one of those projects, yes or no?

**Hon. Catherine McKenna:** Madam Chair, I am very pleased to see that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed our historic investing in Canada plan continues to create jobs. We were up from 31,000 full-time equivalent jobs in 2016 to more than 91,000 jobs last year. We've invested in more than 53,000 projects, confirmed by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, and more than \$51 billion—

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Mr. Poilievre.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Will the government table a list of all 52,122 projects, yes or no?

**Hon. Catherine McKenna:** Madam Chair, I know how much the member opposite loves reading reports, so I encourage him to read the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report where he confirms the more than 53,000—

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Mr. Poilievre.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** I did actually read the report and it confirms that the government has not supplied a list for all 52,000 projects. There are roughly 20,000 missing. Here's a simple question: Will the government provide a complete list of all of these projects, yes or no?

**Hon. Catherine McKenna:** Madam Chair, can the member opposite confirm, yes or no, that he has actually read the report?

We have provided details of those projects to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, and he should be jumping for joy because we have created more than 91,000—

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Mr. Poilievre.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Thank you very much.

The minister asked me a yes or no question. Have I read the report? Yes, I have read the report. Yes, it is possible to answer a yes or no question. That was the comment, so I will give the minister a fourth opportunity to do so.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer says there are roughly 20,000 missing projects. Will this snapshot that we expect in July provide a complete list of those projects, yes or no?

**Hon. Catherine McKenna:** Madam Chair, I want to make it 100% clear that the PBO confirmed that these projects exist, that they are creating jobs across the country and that they are growing our economy, and we are going to continue moving forward.

Let me remind everyone in the House, and Canadians, that the member opposite was part of a party that wanted to cut infrastructure programs. I'd like to know which of the 53,000 projects the member opposite would like to cut.

• (1420)

**The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Please note that pursuant to the order made on May 26, the House is set to meet at the conclusion of the proceedings of today's meeting for the sole purpose of considering the business of supply.

[*Translation*]

The Committee meeting is adjourned, and the House sitting will start soon after. The bell will ring to call in the members, and the session will start with a parade.

The meeting of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic is now adjourned.







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