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Chair: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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• (1200)

[*Translation*]

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

Welcome to the 17th meeting of the House of Commons Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic.

[*English*]

This will be a hybrid meeting. Members will be participating via video conference or in person.

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

[*Translation*]

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name, and please direct your remarks through the chair.

[*English*]

For those joining via video conference, I would like to remind you to leave your mike on mute when you are not speaking.

Also, please note that if you want to speak in English, you should be on the English channel and if you want to speak in French, you should be on the French channel. Should you wish to alternate between the two languages, you should change the channel to the language that you are speaking each time you switch languages.

While I have your attention, for those of you who are at home and have your boom over, please ensure that it's not too far or not too close so that we get the true sound of your voice coming through and we spare the ears of our wonderful interpreters.

[*Translation*]

Should members participating by video conference need to request the floor outside their designated speaking times, they should activate their mic and state that they have a point of order.

Those in the Chamber can rise in the usual way.

Please note that today's proceedings will be televised in the same way as a typical sitting of the House.

[*English*]

I don't believe we have any ministerial announcements today, so we'll proceed to the presenting of petitions for a period not exceeding 15 minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

For the members participating in person, we ask that they please drop off their signed certificates at the table once the petitions have been presented.

Presenting petitions, Ms. May.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, I rise to present two petitions on this anniversary of the massacre at Tiananmen Square.

The first petition is from petitioners concerned about human rights in the People's Republic of China and the detention of practitioners of Falun Dafa or Falun Gong. They call on the Government of Canada and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to impress the importance of universal human rights upon the government of the People's Republic of China and to allow swifter accommodation of human rights within the People's Republic of China.

The second petition pertains to human rights within Canada. It calls on the Government of Canada to follow and be accountable to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to fulfill the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and to move forward swiftly to meet the expectations of justice for the Wet'suwet'en people.

The Chair: Next is Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and colleagues, on this sombre anniversary.

I want to present a petition dealing with a specific human rights issue: the issue of forced organ harvesting and trafficking. It is an issue in China but it is also a human rights issue in other places.

I'm presenting a petition in support of Bill S-204. This bill would make it a criminal offence for a Canadian to go abroad and receive an organ for which there hasn't been consent. Forms of this bill were presented in previous parliaments by Borys Wrzesnewskyj, by Irwin Cotler, and by me.

The petitioners are hoping that this 43rd Parliament will finally get this important legislation over the goal line to protect vulnerable people who are victims of organ harvesting and trafficking around the world.

• (1205)

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

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Good morning, Mr. Chair.

I have another petition from my constituents calling upon the Government of Canada to stop targeting licensed, law-abiding firearms owners, and to cancel all plans to confiscate their legally owned private property.

The petitioners of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon highlight that the majority of guns used in violent crimes are smuggled into Canada from the United States, and therefore, legal Canadian firearms owners should not be used as scapegoats by the Liberal government.

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

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Chair, it's an honour to be presenting a petition from Nanaimo—Ladysmith. This is an appropriate petition given that tomorrow is United Nations World Environment Day and the theme is biodiversity in 2020.

The petitioners are calling upon the government to expand the marine protected areas. They're requesting that the federal Ministry of Fisheries and Oceans work with all the relevant government branches to simplify multilateral communication and responsibility on the subject of marine protected areas.

The Chair: We will now proceed to statements by members for a period not exceeding 15 minutes. Each statement will be for no more than one minute, and I offer a reminder that members who go over the time limit will be interrupted.

We'll start off with Mr. Long.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to begin by thanking essential workers from all sectors in Saint John—Rothesay and across New Brunswick who have been working around the clock to keep the people of our community safe, fed and well supplied during this pandemic.

Since we rose, my team and I have also been working around the clock to ensure that all New Brunswickers whose finances have been affected by this pandemic—from workers who were laid off to essential workers, seniors, students, small business owners and persons with disabilities—receive the federal financial relief they need. The tremendous sacrifices we have all made to help flatten the curve now are beginning to pay off.

We are also focused on working with our federal, provincial and municipal colleagues to build our region's economy back better as we emerge from this crisis. Together, we will keep the curve flat and ensure our region's economic resurgence.

The Chair: We'll now go to Mr. Baldinelli.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Chair, I'd like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the life and memory of a truly remarkable woman, Wilma Morrison, a nurse, community volunteer and historian whom we all came to rely upon. Wilma worked tirelessly in promoting and preserving the culturally rich and important history of black Canadians residing in our community. In

April, Wilma passed away at the age of 91 after a courageous battle against COVID-19.

Wilma was a member of the Nathaniel Dett Memorial Chapel British Methodist Episcopal Church, which is now a designated historic site. When the church was threatened with being sold and destroyed in the 1990s, Wilma helped save the chapel and the significant volumes of heritage and the genealogical books and records which document the contributions of black residents in our community. The church is now a focal point of the Niagara Freedom Trail tour, which Wilma played a large role in helping to develop.

I last saw Wilma in February, and I can tell you that in meeting her you could not help but feel better because of the time you had spent together. You also came away from your discussion recognizing that there was so much more for us to accomplish as a community and country.

Wilma Morrison will be missed, but her legacy will continue.

The Chair: We'll now go to Ms. Fry.

• (1210)

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the terrible acts of violence against black persons in the United States have brought racism to the forefront in Canada, yet racism has been systemic and insidious here for generations, not as openly violent as in America, but here in our institutions, workplaces, schools and society.

Over the last 30 years, Canada has enacted progressive legislation to protect minorities, with the charter, employment equity and anti-hate laws. However, statistics show that indigenous peoples still have the highest rates of suicide, the poorest health outcomes and the most incarcerations, that visible minorities, despite education, are underemployed and underpaid, and that many black men are carded and suspected of criminality regularly.

Crisis brings anger and fear. It cracks the thin veneer of tolerance in quiet, polite times. COVID-19 exposed anti-Chinese hate and amplified the reality of black and indigenous lives. We are all shaken and empathetic, but our denial and ignorance can no longer stand. We must listen and act, collect disaggregated data and set goals with policies and programs to achieve them.

To build a strong, peaceful, prosperous nation, everyone must belong, and everyone must build it together.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Savard-Tremblay, you have the floor.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Chair, the aerospace industry is a strategic sector that plays a fundamental role in the Quebec economy. It's a pillar of economic nationalism that makes us shine internationally.

In Quebec, the aerospace industry represents more than 200 businesses, 42,100 jobs and sales totalling more than \$15 billion. In addition, 80% of our production is exported. It should also be noted that 70% of Canadian research and development in the field is carried out in the greater Montreal area.

This pride is followed by great concern. Planes are on the ground, and orders have been cancelled. The aerospace industry has been hit hard by the Canadian stock market since the start of the year. Revenues are falling, and workers are being laid off. Furthermore, last month, the Institut du Québec denounced Ottawa's absolute neglect of this industry. We will quickly need a major, sustainable policy to revive this extremely important sector.

The Chair: We will now continue with Ms. Petitpas Taylor.

[English]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Chair, six years ago today, unthinkable violence shattered the quiet community I serve. Like countless others in Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, this event remains deeply personal to me. At the time I worked with the three RCMP members who died in the line of duty, and two others who were injured.

I have never spoken about this in Parliament, instead saving my remarks for the annual three kilometre Three Fathers Memorial Run. The first run happened on Father's Day 2014, just days after we said goodbye to constables Doug Larche, Fabrice Gevaudan and Dave Ross.

In the years since, the Three Fathers Memorial Run and community efforts have made the legacy of our darkest day one of love instead of hate. We have planted trees, raised scholarship funds at the run, gathered at our memorial and otherwise honoured those who ran to danger.

COVID-19 keeps us from gathering this year. We will stand together by staying apart, but I want all Canadians to know that we stand forever, Moncton strong.

The Chair: We'll now go to Ms. Rempel Garner.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Chair, when lockdowns hit, the people in my riding were already facing a challenge. Federal policies designed to shut down our primary industry had left thousands out of work. Now there are thousands more in that situation, but none of this has broken our spirit.

I would like to thank all of the community associations, faith groups, cultural associations and business leaders in my riding for taking the time to meet with me regularly during these difficult times to help fight for the support our community needs. I'd also like to thank them for working hard for our community themselves.

I thank the Edgemont Community Association for its grocery and pharmacy delivery program. I thank Thorncliffe for its help a neighbour in need program. I thank Sandstone for its lunches for kids in need program. I thank Berkshire Citadel for its emergency food bank program. I thank Northern Hills for the many programs and services it offers. I thank Huntington Hills, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year without a big public party, for its babysitting and grocery delivery program.

I am so proud to represent our community. I want to thank everyone in it for their resilience, strength and compassion towards one another.

• (1215)

The Chair: We'll now go to Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Chair, I'd like to acknowledge National AccessAbility Week.

This week is dedicated to highlighting the important contributions Canadians with disabilities make to our society, and the efforts of individual Canadians, communities and workplaces to remove barriers to accessibility and inclusion.

Just under a year ago, our government delivered on creating a more inclusive and accessible Canada by passing the Accessible Canada Act. As we address the COVID-19 pandemic, our priority remains helping persons with disabilities maintain their health, safety and dignity.

The creation of the COVID-19 disability advisory group speaks to this commitment. It's a great example of the government's approach to including the lived experiences and the advice of persons with disabilities in our pandemic response.

I invite members to visit Accessible Canada on Twitter and Facebook to find out how to join in celebrating National AccessAbility Week this year.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Lamoureux now.

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

Mabuhay. It's a very special time of the year. Back in November 2018, the House of Commons passed a resolution recognizing the month of June as Filipino Heritage Month.

As the chair of the Canada-Philippines Interparliamentary Group, I encourage people to celebrate the many different contributions people of Filipino heritage have made to Canada's great diversity.

On June 12, 1898, the Philippines became an independent country. On that day, we want to acknowledge the importance of that significant event. We're encouraging people to be engaged and to encourage others to get a better sense of the many contributions of the Filipino heritage community. The Filipino community in Canada is quickly approaching one million people, which is something worthy of note.

The Chair: Now we'll go to Mr. Melillo.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Chair, I'm incredibly proud of the generosity of people across the Kenora riding as we face this pandemic together. Throughout our riding, individuals and organizations are stepping up to serve their communities.

Businesses like the Lake of the Woods Brewing Company have overhauled their production to make hand sanitizer. Restaurants such as Quesada, culinary students from Seven Generations, and faith groups like Jubilee Church in Kenora have been providing meals to the homeless. Members of Northern Youth Programs in Dryden are delivering PPE to remote first nation communities. The Ne-Chee Friendship Centre is delivering emergency food hampers and partnering with Dr. Grek to provide job opportunities to the homeless population. True North Aid partnered with Grand Council Treaty #3 to donate furniture to communities in need.

That is in addition to the many charities that operate year-round and the countless volunteers who are the lifeblood of their communities. This public health situation has made their work more challenging and ever more essential.

I would like to express my appreciation to them and encourage all Canadians to follow their example.

The Chair: We'll now go to Mr. Morrissey.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Chair, today I wish to acknowledge and thank Canada Post workers across the country and in my riding of Egmont for their commitment to maintaining prompt and friendly service during the COVID-19 pandemic, even as they have experienced unprecedented mail volumes.

While many of us have been asked to stay home, millions of Canadians are still being called into work every day, and we are relying on these front-line workers now more than ever. Canadians, especially in rural communities like mine, often rely on traditional mail systems to receive important documents and medications they need and to continue supporting small businesses through e-commerce. Canada Post's timely and reliable service ensures that these activities remain possible. In my own encounters with Canada Post over the past few months, service has remained commendably stable, with minimal delays.

The hard work of Canada Post workers who are making this happen should not go unnoticed, so the next time you encounter Canada Post workers, don't forget to thank them for keeping Canada connected, even while we're apart.

The Chair: We'll now go to Mr. Brassard.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Chair, during this time of crisis in Barrie—Innisfil, it has been incredible to see community and faith-based organizations, businesses and individuals step up and mobilize to help people in their time of greatest need, like the Barrie and Innisfil food banks, which have been under enormous pressure for their services; Louise Jones, with The Front Steps Project, promoting physical distancing while raising money for the food banks; the Barrie BIA, for its downtown heroes program; the Rotary Club of Innisfil, supporting the seniors of Sandy Cove; the Barrie and Innisfil community foundations; the Barrie Chamber of Commerce, for its work on behalf of businesses and the people they employ; the OHL Barrie Colts, who have scored in the kitchen supplying 30,000 meals to local social agen-

cies; the David Busby Centre; Women and Children's Shelter; and Barrie Families Unite, a Facebook page now with 9,400 members, created to help the community with information related to COVID-19.

Finally, on behalf of everyone in Barrie—Innisfil, I sincerely thank our front-line workers, health care and first responders. They have sacrificed so much professionally and personally. We are, and forever will be, grateful to them.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Paul-Hus, you have the floor.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Chair, in August 1943, Canada, the United States and Great Britain met in Quebec City to prepare for the Normandy invasion. In the morning of June 6, 1944, 14,000 Canadian soldiers landed on Juno Beach. Of those soldiers, the Régiment de la Chaudière was the only francophone unit in the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division to take part in D-Day.

As the member of Parliament for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles and former commander of the Régiment de la Chaudière, I have had the privilege over the years of honouring these heroes who sacrificed everything and fought bravely to defend the Canadian homeland and liberate Europe. I am proud to do so again today.

On June 6, 2020, we will celebrate the 76th anniversary of this turning point in the Second World War, and we will commemorate the acts of bravery and the sacrifices of Canadian soldiers. It is our responsibility to instil in future generations respect for this moment that shaped our history. Be proud of all Canadians who fought. *Aere perennius.*

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll now go to Ms. Ashton.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Chair, we cannot remain silent. George Floyd's murder by police has mobilized people across the U.S., Canada and the world against anti-black racism and hate.

In police violence in April alone, three indigenous people were killed by Winnipeg police, including 16-year-old Eishia Hudson. We must accept that systemic racism is alive and well in Canada and listen to those living it. We must end the overwhelming poverty faced by black and indigenous communities, poverty exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We must respect the rights of indigenous people defending their lands against corporate greed, like the four first nations that stood up to Manitoba Hydro's work camp operating during a pandemic.

We must speak out against those inciting hatred and violence, including President Donald Trump. His use of military force against the American people must be denounced. Let's be clear: Donald Trump is a racist. He is a fascist. As Dr. Martin Luther King said, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

We cannot remain silent.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Blanchet, you have the floor.

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

Tomorrow, we will mark World Environment Day. I would like to celebrate rather than mark it, but the circumstances aren't right.

Today, we learn that the government is taking advantage of the pandemic to quietly authorize 100 oil and gas exploration drilling projects east of Newfoundland. That's 100 drilling projects without environmental assessments. That's 100 drilling projects to support the economy of the past, when the pandemic is giving us an opportunity to focus economic recovery on the future.

However, the government has made a public commitment to a green economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic. This cannot be reconciled with allowing 100 oil and gas exploration drilling projects to go ahead without environmental assessments.

The pandemic has proven that the federal government had the means to respond massively when it felt it was facing a crisis. The pandemic has proven that, if the government took the climate crisis seriously, it would be able to act.

It has to make a choice for the future. The public's confidence depends on it, as does the cordiality of its relations with the Bloc Québécois and Quebec.

The Chair: Mrs. Kusie, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Chair, 31 years ago, more than one million Chinese citizens decided to stand up for their freedoms, which led to the pivotal Tiananmen Square protests. In response, the government brought in 300,000 troops to subdue the protesters. Ten thousand were arrested, and many were killed.

The Government of China has suppressed details about the number of casualties from that day, but groups estimate there were hundreds, if not thousands. The government also continues to censor posts relating to the massacres in China, which means that for a

younger generation who didn't live through the protests, there is little awareness about what truly happened.

The rule of law is a foundational principle in Canada and it is protected by our democratic system. Canada must always hold this principle sacred and must commit to defending it both at home and abroad.

As we honour the bravery of those who faced the Chinese military in 1989, we can also be grateful for our freedoms and realize the importance of defending them.

• (1225)

The Chair: We will now go to—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Chair, I rise on a point of order.

I'm not hearing the French interpretation.

The Chair: Okay, we'll see if there's a technical problem.

I'll say something in English. Let me know if you can hear the interpretation.

[*English*]

Please let me know if the translation is happening. No?

We will pause while our technical people get everything in place.

• (1230)

The Chair: Okay. We will give it a shot. We will try again.

Can everyone hear me?

[*Translation*]

Great.

[*English*]

We will continue with Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the pandemic has been difficult for people all across Canada, but in my home province of Nova Scotia, we've experienced so much heartache.

For a place as friendly and beautiful as Nova Scotia to experience Canada's largest mass shooting is inconceivable. At a time when we would normally join our friends and family to mourn loved ones and fellow Nova Scotians, we were forced to stay apart, but that didn't stop us. We joined each other virtually in song and in spirit to mourn those we had lost.

When we thought our hearts couldn't take anymore, we heard the news that a Cyclone helicopter out of 12 Wing Shearwater had crashed on its way back to HMCS *Fredericton*. Six lives were lost. Collectively, we mourned.

Then we received news that one of Canada's iconic Snowbirds was down and that Captain Jennifer Casey from Halifax was lost in the crash. Together we mourned.

We will not let tragedy take away our spirit and what it means to be Nova Scotian. “As sure as the sunrise, as sure as the sea, as sure as the wind in the trees, we rise again”.

[*Translation*]

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

Please note that we will suspend the proceedings every 45 minutes in order to allow employees who provide support for the sitting to replace each other safely.

[*English*]

The first question goes to Mr. Poilievre.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Chair, the government says it has started 53,000 infrastructure projects. The PBO says that 20,000 of them are missing from the list.

Would the government table the list of those 20,000 projects, including the start date, the amount spent, the location and what's being built?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Chair, as the PBO knows, we have more than 33,000 itemized projects that we provided to his office. These are projects like the 1,550 solar panels installed in the district of Hudson's Hope, B.C., improvements to the Legacy Trail between Canmore and Banff, the rehabilitation—

The Chair: Mr. Poilievre.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the government claimed that there were over 50,000 projects. Now the Deputy Prime Minister says it's 30,000 projects. That means there are 20,000 missing projects.

Will the government table the full list, including the start date and what's being built for those projects?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as a reporter, I was always careful not to misquote people, so let me be clear on what I said: There were 33,000 itemized projects that we provided to the PBO. There are also approximately 12,000 municipal projects that have been funded through the gas tax fund.

I encourage the member opposite to speak to mayors across—

The Chair: We'll go back to Mr. Poilievre.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, so there are 20,000 missing projects. Will the Deputy Prime Minister table the list of those projects today, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me talk about some of those 33,000—actually, 33,049, to be precise—itemized projects—

The Chair: Mr. Poilievre.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, there are 20,000 missing projects from the list. Will the Deputy Prime Minister table the list of the missing projects today, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me help the member opposite with some precision. As I said, 33,049 projects have been itemized. There are also approximately 12,000 municipal projects. I want to—

The Chair: Mr. Poilievre.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the government said there were 50,000 projects. They say that they only have a list for 30,000 projects. We know 50,000 minus 30,000 equals 20,000. Those are the projects for which there are no start dates, no locations and no description. We don't even know what they built. According to the PBO, they total \$5 billion a year. That's \$5 billion a year in missing projects.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister table the list for the 20,000 projects today, yes or no?

• (1235)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the member opposite seems to have a problem hearing precisely what I am saying. I've heard him say 30,000 a few times, but I think I've been quite clear that the number of itemized projects is 33,049. This includes 8,548 projects in my own province of Ontario, 4,594 projects in B.C., 3,502 projects in Saskatchewan, 3,096 projects in Alberta, 2,800—

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

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, so the Deputy Prime Minister will not agree to table the list.

The government claims they've spent \$10 billion a year on infrastructure. The PBO says there are only lists adding up to \$5 billion a year.

Here's a simple question. Will the Deputy Prime Minister commit to tabling in the House of Commons the list for the remaining mysterious and, so far, unlisted projects, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our government is committed to being very precise on what we are doing in infrastructure, so let me be precise. There are 33,049 itemized projects and an additional 12,000 municipal projects funded through the gas tax fund, which is an excellent way for municipalities to build. The mayors are extremely keen on it. Members of this House should talk to them.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Blanchet, you have the floor.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Chair, I'm going to read a motion that was unanimously adopted by the members of the Quebec National Assembly:

That the Quebec National Assembly deplores the fact that the share of health expenditures covered by Canadian health transfers has decreased by more than half since their introduction, from 50% to 23%;

That it calls on the federal government to quickly review funding for Canadian health transfers to significantly increase funding for this year and subsequent years by at least 6%, without conditions;

That it reiterate the importance of respecting Quebec's jurisdiction in the area of health.

Let's remember that, in the mid-1990s, the federal government decided to balance its budget by cutting transfers to Quebec and the provinces. Today, we are in an even more dramatic situation as a result of these cuts.

Will the Canadian government comply with the unanimous request of the Quebec National Assembly?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his very important question.

Today more than ever, all Canadians and all Quebecers understand the importance of health, the importance of what the provinces do for Canadians and Quebecers.

We all also understand the importance of close federal-provincial co-operation in the fight against the coronavirus. That is exactly what we're doing now. We are supporting the provinces in the fight against the coronavirus. We need to do that, and we are doing it.

I want to talk a little bit about our seniors. We all understand the very serious situation that our seniors are in, and I'm very proud of the women and men—

The Chair: Mr. Blanchet, you have the floor.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Chair, to put it simply, we don't understand each other at all.

The federal government receives money that it has an unconditional obligation to transfer to the Government of Quebec, so that it can fulfill its own exclusive responsibilities toward people who benefit from the health care system. The Canadian government is taking money that belongs to Quebec and holding it back. It regularly decides to set conditions for giving Quebec the money that belongs to it.

Today, all the members of the Quebec National Assembly, who come from all over Quebec and from all political stripes, agree that it's our money and that it should be returned to us because we need it to provide services that fall under our jurisdiction.

Does the Government of Canada consider itself superior and above a unanimous vote of the Quebec National Assembly?

• (1240)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his question.

The federal government sees itself as a partner with all the provinces. We are Quebec's partner, and we understand, especially today, in this coronavirus crisis and in this economic crisis, that we have to work closely together.

Of course, we respect provincial jurisdiction. At the same time, the federal government is prepared to do whatever is necessary. The proof of that are the brave women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces who are in Quebec today. They are truly saving the lives of seniors in Quebec. We are all proud—

The Chair: Mr. Blanchet, you have 30 seconds left.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: The Quebec National Assembly isn't asking you to be its partner. It's asking you to give it its money so that it can fulfill its mandate. If withholding of money from Quebec hadn't been historic, we wouldn't have had to ask for the help of

soldiers or take emergency measures to support the long-term care facilities. We would have had the necessary means.

Can you give the money to Quebec? That's the only way to be a worthy partner.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, today we are working closely with Quebec. I have to say that I very much appreciate the co-operation we've had from Quebec. It's absolutely necessary, today, to save the lives of Quebecers. For our part—

The Chair: I must give the floor to Mr. Singh.

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

My first question is whether the government recognizes that there is a continuing crisis in long-term care centres and that, at this time, there aren't adequate human resources to provide the services our seniors need.

Is the government prepared to reverse its decision to withdraw the Canadian Forces until there are adequate resources to protect seniors in long-term care centres?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: I thank my colleague for his important question.

As I've already said, the people doing the most important and most appreciated work in Canada today are the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces working in Quebec and Ontario to help our seniors.

Obviously, this can't be a long-term solution. I don't think a single person in Canada thinks that, in the long term, our soldiers should work—

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm talking about the present and what needs to be done in the short term. We need a commitment from the federal government. It must ensure that the Canadian Forces, which are doing a lot of hard work, continue to do the work that needs to be done now, until there are adequate human resources to protect our seniors.

Can I get a commitment from the federal government that it won't withdraw the Canadian Forces until we have adequate human resources to protect our seniors?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Again, I thank my colleague for his question.

I'm talking about the present. I'm talking about today. Today, the Canadian Armed Forces are there, and I am proud of its members. I want to thank these women and men, and I think all Canadians should thank them.

I think we all agree that this isn't a long-term solution. I want to assure all Canadians and all members of the House that we are now—

• (1245)

The Chair: Mr. Singh.

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Chair, it's really clear, based on the military's report, that the conditions in long-term care were horrible, but what was most chilling were the conditions in the for-profit long-term care homes where staff were worried about using equipment because of the cost of that equipment. They were reusing syringes and using expired medication.

Will the government agree that there is no place for profit in the care of seniors, of our most vulnerable?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would really like to thank the member opposite for that question.

I have to say that, like him, I feel that some of the most chilling sections of those appalling reports were the ones he just cited. To know that people were reluctant to use the physical material that our elders needed to be cared for because of concerns around the cost should be deeply worrying to all Canadians.

When it comes to the future of long-term care in Canada, I think we need to act with speed but not haste. Clearly, a lot has—

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the openness, but I want a commitment. Will the federal government agree that profit has no place in the care of vulnerable seniors in long-term care?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me agree that no seniors should ever not have the physical materials needed for their care because the people providing that care are worried those materials cost too much. I think we are all rightly appalled by that.

The Chair: Mr. Singh, you have about 15 seconds left for a short question.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Liberal backbenchers have also agreed and raised this concern that we need national standards, that we need a care guarantee. Will the Liberal government commit to working towards a care guarantee, national standards, to protect our seniors?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our government will commit to the essential and profound reform of long-term care in Canada, and in that commitment, let me say all options need to be on the table. We need to work collaboratively with the provinces, as we have been doing.

I'd like to thank the provinces—

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

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Chair, an estimated 47% of small businesses in my riding are ineligible for any form of relief. We've heard for weeks that help is on the way. Our offices are inundated with more calls and messages pleading for help.

When can I tell Roy from C+ ranch, Jack and Sheldon from Central Display, and the hundreds of other seasonal event and tourism-based businesses that help truly is on its way?

The Chair: I just want to assure the honourable members that when there is a pause, the time is stopped, and they do get their full time.

We will go to the honourable minister.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Of course, we know that the tourism sector is very deeply impacted by the pandemic and the economic crisis, and that's why the wage subsidy is there until the end of August. That's why there's the CEBA, the \$40,000 loans, and that's exactly why there's the rent relief program.

We know we have to do more, and that's why we also announced over the weekend \$70 million to support the tourism sector, and more help is on the way.

Thank you.

Mr. Todd Doherty: On May 5, Nav Canada quietly announced the closure of 18 flight service stations across Canada, with a disproportionate 11 in my province. Was the minister aware of these closures prior to the May 5 press release?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport): Mr. Chair, yes, I was very much aware of the decision. It was after a very extensive amount of consultation with Nav Canada that we made the decision that it was possible to do this safely.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Was the minister aware that, with these closures, over 75% of British Columbia is now without critical flight information systems during nighttime and inclement weather operations?

• (1250)

Hon. Marc Garneau: Yes, Mr. Chair, I was very much aware of this. This is for a very restrained period of time, between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

We looked at every airport—

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

Mr. Todd Doherty: Does the minister know how many medevac flights take place daily in British Columbia?

Hon. Marc Garneau: The number of medevac cases that exist across the country is monitored through Nav Canada, and we make sure that—

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

Mr. Todd Doherty: Does he know how many of these flights will be impacted by Nav Canada's flight service station closures?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, we evaluated this very carefully before making our decision with respect to medevacs and also resupply.

Mr. Todd Doherty: The flight service stations provide up-to-the-minute critical flight information for our provincial medevac programs. These closures are now putting flight crews and patients at risk. Does the minister know how many medevac flights take place daily in B.C.?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I disagree with the assessment provided by my colleague. We did this because we were confident that safety would be preserved. Those airports are still open during the night.

Mr. Todd Doherty: This decision was made without any consultation with the provincial government, the communities, the airlines, the airports or the health authorities. Can the minister answer the question as to why that was done?

Hon. Marc Garneau: We evaluated it very carefully according to four sets of criteria before making our decision. We're confident we made the right decision.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Without FSS, flight crews will be forced to make uninformed decisions that could jeopardize passenger safety. Does the minister believe this is acceptable?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, we carefully assessed the risks before making our decision, and we are comfortable with it.

Mr. Todd Doherty: The air transport industry has been decimated and is on life support. What is the minister doing to ensure that it doesn't flatline?

Hon. Marc Garneau: We have made certain programs available to the airline industry, and we're watching the situation very carefully.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Will the minister commit to waiving airport ground rent for the next five years?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, we waived ground rent for this year, and all options are on the table for the future, depending on how long things last.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Will the minister commit to interest-free loans to help airports cover operation costs?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, as I said, we are keeping all options open. We want to make sure the airline industry is able to restart after the pandemic.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Will the minister suspend federal excise tax on jet fuel?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, we are evaluating all possibilities to ensure that the airline industry gets through this pandemic.

Mr. Todd Doherty: While shuttering some services, Nav Canada signals a rate increase of 29%, and airports across the country are increasing AIFs. Under this minister's watch, Canada has become the most expensive aviation jurisdiction in the world.

Is the minister concerned that Canadians are bearing the brunt of these monopoly fee increases?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, we live in unprecedented times. There have been difficulties with Nav Canada, which has lost 80% of its revenue. It had no choice but to raise the fees it charges the airlines.

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

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions are for the Minister of Health.

I'll start by asking, what is the current public health advice on the safe distance for members of the public to be apart from one another?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade): Mr. Chair, we are encouraging Canadians to practise physical distancing in an effort to keep all Canadians safe during this pandemic.

Hon. Mike Lake: There wasn't a number mentioned there, and it wasn't the fault of the minister who answered the question.

In the House of Commons right now, approximately how many members are there, in the building?

The Chair: Is the question being asked of a minister in particular?

Hon. Mike Lake: I hope this isn't going against my time, as there seems to be some confusion. I'm asking the Minister of Health because I thought she would be here today.

The Chair: The honourable minister will answer that.

• (1255)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the question.

I would say it's about 40 or 50 MPs. Your whip should know that.

Hon. Mike Lake: Unfortunately, right now I don't get to ask my whip questions. Maybe after the next election I will.

Is that number of members considered safe?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, we are in physical distancing here.

I do have an answer to his question. The recommended physical distance is six feet or two metres away from each other to stay safe.

The Chair: If I can pause for a second, Mr. Lake, do you have a headset, by chance? We're having a hard time hearing you.

Hon. Mike Lake: I do not, actually.

The Chair: Okay. We'll work on that.

Hon. Mike Lake: I'm moving a little closer to the mike.

It's a significantly restricted committee meeting, as everyone knows, and the restrictions are almost entirely applied to opposition members.

If we were to work together to find agreement for the very same members to sit in the very same seats under regular parliamentary rules, would we be safe according to the best available advice?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, we take our advice from the Public Health Agency. I can assure the member that what we are doing here is on their advice to keep Canadians and members safe in this House.

Hon. Mike Lake: That's perfect.

In my understanding, the only meaningful difference between the way people are sitting there right now and sitting as a regular Parliament with full parliamentary functions would be the the location of the Chair.

Is there any scientific evidence that suggests that it's safer for the Chair to be sitting on the floor of the House of Commons at that table, rather than a few feet back in his or her chair?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, I think the honourable member is sort of skating around the issue.

We have put in place measures that give the opposition more opportunities than ever before to ask questions on any issue.

That said, the ability to vote remotely is a fundamental part of Parliament's work. Does my colleague agree with that?

[*English*]

Hon. Mike Lake: I'll point out that the opposition does not have the same opportunities on opposition days, because there are none right now. Also, they have no ability to move private members' business legislation because there is no opportunity right now.

Does the evidence from Canadian health experts indicate that it's safe for members of Parliament to be in the House of Commons on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, but unsafe for members of Parliament to be in the House of Commons on Fridays?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, this is a decision by the House to make sure there's a balance between the role of the opposition, which is fundamental—I was there for years and years, Mr. Chair; remember those days?—while also respecting Health Canada's public health directions. While we were discussing the opposition days, the Conservatives were totally absent from the discussions, and I wonder why.

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Chair, I will ask the whip how many opposition days the opposition has in this arrangement that was passed by the Liberals and the NDP.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I am sorry, but the whip is not in the House, Mr. Chair.

What we're saying here is that we put in place a system that allows the opposition to ask any questions. We checked what was done across Canada in different legislatures, and we're ahead of everybody.

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Chair, can the minister outline the evidence that shows it's less safe for members of Parliament to work in Parliament while maintaining social distancing, but it's more safe for the very same MPs to be out kayaking on Dow's Lake while maintaining the very same physical distancing?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, I don't know about the kayaking because I'm always here working, as are other MPs, but I can tell you something. There are more occasions for questions in the House. There are questions on any topic. We have nine committees working, more than all the other legislatures, and I wonder why they take more time than less.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: We'll now continue with Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions are for Minister Joly. If she wants to be prepared to answer, that will save us some time.

In Chaudière-Appalaches and Bas-Saint-Laurent, tourism alone accounts for 15,000 jobs and \$650 million in economic benefits. This economic sector is vitally important for my riding.

What is Minister Joly's plan to support the industry?

• (1300)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I thank my colleague for his question. I know he is a strong advocate for the tourism sector in his region, which I've had the opportunity to visit several times.

A series of measures have been put in place, from the Canada emergency wage subsidy to the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance and, more specifically, the assistance provided to Quebec by Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, Quebec's tourism industry is currently asking for \$650 million.

What is Ottawa's plan to support Quebec's tourism industry?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: As I said, our plan involves putting measures in place, of course. In addition, new funding will be provided through CED.

I will have some good news to announce in that respect in the next few days.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, when will we receive this good news?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Chair, I understand my colleague's impatience. As I just said, it will be in the next few days.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, yesterday, the Treasury Board President said in the House that we need to be transparent and give concrete answers and good answers.

When will the minister make this announcement?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I'll be announcing some good news in the next few days. I will be pleased to give my colleague the good news—

[*English*]

The Chair: We have a point of order from Ms. Collins.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Chair, Minister Joly's voice was only about as loud as the translation, so it was very hard to make out her answer. I'm wondering if she's on the right channel, or potentially maybe there's some technical difficulty.

The Chair: We'll take a very short pause to check with our technical people and check with Minister Joly to find out if everything is in place.

Thank you very much for bringing that up.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Chair, I think everything is back to normal.

The Chair: Okay.

The problem seems to have been resolved.

[*English*]

Can everybody hear the translation?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Généreux, you have the floor.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for her non-answer.

At the end of last week, the minister announced \$70 million, \$30 million of which was already earmarked for advertising in other parts of the world and which Canada will recover. That is a good thing. However, that does not include Quebec.

When will the announcement be made?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Chair, I spoke to the CEO of the Alliance de l'industrie touristique du Québec, Martin Soucy. He says that he is very pleased with the federal government's action so far and very optimistic.

Of course, we are in contact with the Alliance de l'industrie touristique du Québec. We will have some good news to announce in the next few days.

Furthermore, this morning, I spoke again with Quebec's Minister of Economy and Innovation, Pierre Fitzgibbon, so that we can really support—

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

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Fitzgibbon has announced that he will not go as high as \$650 million for Quebec's tourism industry.

Will the Minister of Economic Development announce additional funding to make up for Quebec's missing share?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: We will always stand by the tourism sector. We have been doing so since the beginning of the pandemic and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I am not sure whether the minister will be answering my next question.

As is the case throughout Canada and elsewhere in the world, many seasonal workers in the fishery and tourism sectors will probably not be making what in Quebec are called “unemployment stamps”.

How is the government preparing to meet the demand of all seasonal workers across the country to ensure that they have what they need in the fall and get through the winter?

[*English*]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion): Mr. Chair, we know the particular predicaments of our seasonal workers. We have an EI seasonal pilot in place that adds another five weeks to the total number of EI weeks, and we have committed to making that seasonal pilot permanent. We also know that seasonal workers are worried that they haven't accumulated enough EI hours or weeks to qualify. We're looking into how we can help everyone.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I want to make sure I fully understand. I understand that there was actually a five-week pilot project. Did I understand correctly that this program will be made permanent?

If so, what will be the eligibility requirements?

[*English*]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I can confirm our commitment to making this pilot permanent. We're working out the details. More importantly, we're going to make sure that everyone has the support they need as we recover from this pandemic.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, the Union des municipalités du Québec and the Fédération québécoise des municipalités received \$2.2 billion from the government, whereas they were asking for \$10 billion. The government said that additional amounts would probably be made available.

In Quebec, one of the rules imposed by the federal government is that 20% of all money spent must be spent on municipal buildings, fire stations, water tanks and other items that serve the community.

Is the government planning to relax its measures to allow municipalities to spend the money more appropriately?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities): Mr. Chair, we are very proud of how we are investing in infrastructure across the country.

We are working with the province of Quebec and the municipalities to invest in projects. We are working directly with the province of Quebec, we are also working together on the gas tax, and we will continue to do so.

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll now go to Mrs. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Good morning, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

My first question is for Minister Anand.

Is the contract with Becton Dickinson for vaccine syringes a sole-source contract?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement): Mr. Chair, the precise terms of our contracts are not being disclosed at the current time, given the importance of making sure that we protect our supply chains. When the time is right and the pandemic is over, we will make sure to be fully transparent with regard to these terms.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I think the minister's excuse that providing a bit of transparency to Canadians would jeopardize our supply chain just doesn't wash.

Has her department found a secret PPE manufacturer that no other country has heard of?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Chair, let me assure the member opposite and all members of the House that our country is facing unprecedented needs as we fight COVID-19. This is an urgent time. Contracting under the national security exceptions, including for sole-source contracts, has been done in the interest of Canadians—

The Chair: We'll go back to Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: On the one hand, Minister Anand highlights agreements with Canadian companies that are making PPE, but on the other, she refuses to name foreign manufacturers that have been awarded sole-source contracts totalling hundreds of millions of dollars. Why the disparity?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Chair, as you and the member opposite are aware, we are procuring millions of items of PPE across a range of goods. In some cases we are disclosing names of suppliers, but this is done in conjunction with the permission we are being given by a supplier. We need to be careful in these times—

The Chair: We'll go to Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Are the Canadian companies currently listed on PSPC's website that are making PPE for Canada legally prevented from selling PPE to other countries?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Chair, as the member opposite can appreciate, the terms of each individual contract will determine what the supplier is able to do with its own product.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Chair, at the very least, and as a service to the rest of the world, will the minister reveal the name of the supplier and manufacturer that sold Canada millions of substandard KN95 masks, so that other countries will not make the same mistake?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Chair, I understand the question being posed to me. However, let me assure the member opposite and this House that we are negotiating a range of exits from this contract with the supplier, and we do not want to jeopardize those negotiations by revealing this information at this time. When the time is—

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to turn to another topic. Since the signing of an agreement with Thornhill over two months ago, how many ventilators has the company provided to the government?

• (1310)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Chair, as the member knows full well, we are in an arrangement for 40,000 ventilators that are produced here in Canada. Thornhill is

one of those vendors. They have started to produce those ventilators, and we received a substantial number from them.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Can Minister Bains please clarify what a “substantial” number of ventilators means when we have received only 203 of the 40,000 ventilators that they say they have ordered?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Chair, as you know full well, the number one priority is to protect Canadians and their well-being and to make sure that we have the appropriate number of ventilators to support our provinces and territories. I can say with a great deal of confidence at this moment that we continue to work with the provinces to meet their needs.

The Chair: Ms. Block, ask a very short question, please.

Mrs. Kelly Block: The last time that we saw a schedule outlining what had been ordered and what was received, it was reported that we had received three ventilators from Thornhill. Can you please tell us what a “substantial” number of ventilators from this company is?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Chair, as I've indicated, our government's priority is to make sure we have sufficient personal protective equipment, including the number of ventilators that provinces and territories and our front-line health care workers need, and we continue to address those needs.

The Chair: Very good. Before going to the next line of questions, I would like to remind the honourable members to place their questions through the chair and not directly to the person to whom the question is directed.

We will now proceed to Mr. Kitchen.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, PPE for our front-line health care workers has been in extremely short supply. This is despite the fact that the Government of Canada maintains the national emergency strategic stockpile, or NESS, intended to support the provinces and territories when there is an emergent need for medical supplies.

We know now that NESS has not been properly maintained under this government and that millions of masks, gowns and gloves have been thrown in the trash without being restocked. When the minister initially told Canadians that wearing a mask would do nothing to protect against COVID-19, was she also aware at that time of the lack of PPE stock in NESS?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, I want to assure Canadians that we are working together with provinces and territories to make sure that Canadians are kept safe from COVID-19, and this includes working with them to supplement their own stockpiles of PPE and medical equipment. So far, we have been able to fulfill all of the requests from provinces and territories, and NESS is still meeting its 24-hour delivery date.

As we said, we will continue to support Canadians during this difficult time.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Well, the science was extremely clear on the effectiveness of masks in January, and it has not changed since.

Mr. Chair, last week at the health committee, the Red Cross stated that Canada has received 42 tonnes of PPE and other supplies from both Taiwan and China. The Minister of Health recently stated that there is an 80-20 split for supply shipments, with 80% going to the provinces and territories and 20% going to the NESS. Can the minister tell this House exactly how much of the 42 tonnes of supplies has gone to the NESS?

Hon. Anita Anand: As the Minister of Procurement, I can say that we are responding to requests from the provinces and territories and we are delivering PPE to front-line health care workers under the 80-20 arrangement, which is working very well for our provincial and territorial colleagues, and we are responding to emergencies in addition to doing that distribution.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: What is the breakdown of the items received from Taiwan and China through the Red Cross? How many masks, gowns, gloves, etc. have been received?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Chair, the items that we are receiving externally and via our procurements are all put into the NESS and then delivered out to the provinces and territories on the basis of the 80-20—

The Chair: We will go to Mr. Kitchen.

• (1315)

Mr. Robert Kitchen: The minister has had months to work on addressing the issues. Surely they could tell us that information. I can tell the minister that as of May 26, overall, Canada has received roughly 9.6 million face shields, 39 million gloves, three million gowns, 11.9 million N95 masks, 101 million surgical masks and 203 ventilators. It's simple math to figure out what 20% of that is.

Can the minister tell us where in Canada these 20% of supplies are being stored?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Chair, the 20% of items that are not being distributed out to the provinces are stored in the warehouses of the Public Health Agency of Canada when they arrive in Canada.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: What is the location of those warehouses?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Chair, the Public Health Agency of Canada's warehouses are in multiple locations, including one in—

The Chair: We go back to Mr. Kitchen.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: As we are concerned about a second wave, has PHAC begun to replenish the stockpile in all NESS locations?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, it is our top priority, of course, to always ensure that there is an adequate supply for people in Canada during this important crisis.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Since we sent expired supplies to China, what are the expiry dates of the supplies that we received in return from China?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Chair, may I suggest to the member opposite that as he himself has recounted, we are procuring millions and millions of PPE supplies. Expiry dates on these supplies vary by product and by order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Very good. We'll now take a very short pause in order to change up and continue the line of questioning.

[Translation]

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC)): Thank you for your patience.

I now invite Mr. Therrien to take the floor.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Chair, we know that the Canada emergency wage subsidy program is funded by Quebec and Canadian taxpayers' money.

Since March 15, the Liberal Party of Canada has taken in about \$1 million of taxpayers' money. A poll released yesterday tells us that 57% of Quebec taxpayers want the Liberals to pay back the money.

My question is simple: will they pay back the money?

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance): Mr. Chair, the Canada emergency wage subsidy is designed to help employers protect the jobs that Canadians depend on and rehire workers who have already been laid off. The support is for employers in all sectors and of all sizes, including not-for-profit organizations, who have been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To date, more than 2 million employees across the country have been supported by the subsidy and we will continue to support—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We'll go back to Mr. Therrien.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Chair, the million dollars they collected, under the principle of communicating vessels, will end up in the election coffers and will be used to fund the partisanship of the Liberal Party. It is inevitable. That means that the money of taxpayers, be they Liberals or not, will end up funding the Liberal Party's election campaign. It makes no sense.

My question is very simple: will they pay the money back?

• (1320)

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, we do not discriminate between workers anywhere in the country.

We are going to support employers so that they can keep their employees. That is why we established the Canada emergency wage subsidy (CEWS). We will continue to encourage employers to support workers during this pandemic.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Chair, according to the same poll, 51% of Liberal voters say that they must pay back the money.

Will the Liberal Party listen to its own supporters and pay back the money?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, the support applies to all employers across the country. We support workers and we want them to be able to continue to work.

Our message to Canadians is clear: no matter who you work for, our government supports you. The wage subsidy is designed to help workers in all sectors of the economy get through this crisis.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Chair, it is disrespectful not to listen to the voters who are saying that they have to pay back the money.

It is a real lack of respect to give us the answers they have been giving us since we started talking about this issue.

Out of respect, will they pay back the money?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, we respect Canadians from coast to coast to coast. That is why we established the CEWS and we will continue to support workers during this crisis.

The CEWS is supporting more than 2 million employees across the country right now and it ensures that they can continue to—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We'll go to Mr. Therrien again.

Mr. Alain Therrien: We are talking about one of the two richest parties in Canada. The other one is finally going to back down on the wage subsidy. We hope so.

The Liberals have raised \$8 million since the election on October 21. If everything they are telling us about protecting workers is true, let them answer the following question: how many workers would have been fired by the Liberal Party without this subsidy? If they mean it, let them tell us.

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, the CEWS supports the workers. We will continue to help employers access this important program. As I said earlier, our message to Canadians is clear: no matter who you work for, our government supports you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Mr. Therrien, you have about 40 seconds left.

Mr. Alain Therrien: This Liberal government has created a program that its party is using. That is fine, but for them to play a recorded message when they are asked about it is not fine.

We know that the Liberals have collected \$1 million since March 15. We recently learned that they were going to extend the program by three months. If they do not want to pay back the money, that is unacceptable. Can they at least tell us that they will not dip into the program for the next three months?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, I am going to repeat myself, but it is important to know that the purpose of the CEWS is to support workers across the country. Employers are currently using it and we encourage them to use this program. We are going to support Canadians right to the end.

[English]

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We'll now go to Mr. Baker, the member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be splitting my time with the member for Saint-Laurent. My question is to the Minister of National Defence.

Minister, the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces have always been there to risk their lives to serve Canadians, whether at home or abroad. During the COVID-19 pandemic, here in Etobicoke Centre and across Canada, they answered the call to

serve once again when 1,600 troops were deployed to long-term care homes in Ontario and Quebec as part of Operation Laser to care for and protect our most vulnerable: our parents, our grandparents and our loved ones.

My constituents have had the privilege of observing their service up close when the Canadian Armed Forces deployed to the Eatonville Care Centre, a long-term care facility right here in Etobicoke Centre. Once again, their professionalism, sense of duty and capabilities have saved lives.

I know I speak for the members of my community when I say we are grateful beyond words to the Canadian Armed Forces members who are caring for my constituents in Etobicoke Centre and for people across Canada.

Minister, can you please update us on Operation Laser in our long-term care homes? With this Sunday being Canadian Armed Forces Day, can you tell us how we can best support our troops, who are risking their lives to serve Canadians once again?

• (1325)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the honourable member for Etobicoke Centre for the question and for the tireless work he has done for his constituents.

Mr. Chair, the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces have been there for Canadians from the beginning of this pandemic. They were instrumental, through Operation Globe, in repatriating 650 Canadians. That commitment to supporting their fellow Canadians has never stopped, and they have continually put themselves in harm's way to protect our most vulnerable. I'm so proud of the extraordinary work the Canadian Armed Forces have done in long-term care facilities in Ontario and in Quebec. Our women and men have been working 24-7 in these facilities to care for our parents and our grandparents.

Because of that important work, we have designated Operation Laser as a special duty operation, which will ensure our women and men get the benefits they are entitled to. We're also pursuing hazard pay, and that work is ongoing.

As we come up to Canadian Armed Forces Day this Sunday, I ask all members of the House and all Canadians to take a moment to appreciate the outstanding work that all of our serving members do, both at home and abroad. I also want to give a special thanks to the families of our serving members.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We'll now go to Ms. Lambropoulos.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Chair, last week, George Floyd, a black man, was killed by a police officer from the city of Minneapolis. A few months before that murder, Ahmaud Arbery was gunned down by a former police officer and his son while jogging.

[*English*]

Police brutality and systemic racism are not an American problem alone; they are problems in Canada as well. They are problems in my home province of Quebec and in my city of Montreal, and we need to do better for Canada's black communities.

According to the Canadian Human Rights Commission, while anti-black racism is more subtle in Canada, its roots run deep and are embedded in our society. They are built into our institutions and perpetuate the social and economic disparities that exist in everything from education and health care to housing and employment.

[*Translation*]

In light of these tragedies, last week, we saw Americans and Canadians stand up to protest anti-black racism and to show solidarity with black communities.

[*English*]

It is unacceptable that anyone should be afraid for their safety because of the colour of their skin, even more so when the fear is of the very bodies and institutions that are meant to protect us. All levels of government must step up.

Mr. Chair, what is our government doing to make life safer and fairer for black Canadians?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth): Mr. Chair, I commend the MP for Saint-Laurent for not choosing silence. Anti-black racism, racism, and discrimination are present in Canada in our communities, our workplaces and our kids' schools, and we need to be willing to speak up. To keep silent is to condone racism. Yesterday I attended the solidarity march in the Region of Waterloo. Thousands came together safely and peacefully to say "enough is enough".

Inequities and systemic racism exist in our institutions. For a truly inclusive Canada, we must all step up, practise being allies, and make workplaces, communities and public spaces safer, informed by people's lived experiences.

Our government is taking action. Our new appointment process is resulting in GIC appointments better reflecting Canada's diversity. We recognize the UN International Decade for People of African Descent. We've invested in mental health supports for black youth. The anti-racism secretariat is working to address systemic racism in all federal departments and agencies. The immunity task force will provide desegregated data so decisions are informed by science and evidence, and the requested capacity-building investments will be announced this summer.

I look around and see allies, Mr. Chair. We must continue to do the work necessary. It won't be easy, but if we each do our part, I believe we can get there.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We'll now go to Mr. Bachrach, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Chair, it's been a week since the Parliamentary Budget Officer told us that he was unable to get details on thousands of infrastructure projects that this government has funded.

Will the minister please tell us whether in that week she has had a chance to provide the PBO with the information he is seeking?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question.

We're proud of the historic investments our government is making in infrastructure. We provided more than 33,000 itemized projects to the Parliamentary Budget Officer's office. In addition, there are also approximately 8,500 CMHC projects related to housing, which we do not make public for reasons of privacy and security.

In addition, there are approximately 12,000 municipal projects that have been funded through the gas tax. I invite the member opposite to discuss with mayors across the country, including in his own riding, how—

• (1330)

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We'll return to Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, I'm going to ask the question again.

Has the PBO received the information on thousands of infrastructure projects that this government has funded, information that he is clearly seeking?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Chair, as I have said, we have provided more than 33,000 itemized projects to the PBO's office. In addition, there are CMHC-funded projects related to housing for which there are privacy and security concerns, including with relation to women's shelters. In addition, there are also approximately—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We'll go back to Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, with regard to the municipal projects, these are projects that this government has funded. Does this government not keep track of the details of the projects that it funds?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Chair, I had hoped to save this response for the Conservatives, but the current 10-year gas tax agreement, which does not require municipalities to provide us with an itemized list, was negotiated and signed by the Conservatives in 2014.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, can the minister please provide this House with an assurance that the Auditor General will not run into similar difficulties when the audit of this government's infrastructure program is conducted?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Chair, we've been very clear. We are transparent with the projects that we are funding. We have provided the information for the over 33,000 projects. We will continue doing that going forward.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, Canadians clearly want a low-carbon future, yet this government's climate lens only applies to a portion of the infrastructure projects it funds. Can the minister please explain why?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Chair, we believe that we need to make sure that we take climate change into account when we do infrastructure projects. It's critically important. It makes a real difference when we invest in projects that lower emissions, that are more sustainable, that build a more resilient future. We will continue to do that. We have built projects across this country, from renewable energy to public transit projects to projects that reduce emissions.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): That will conclude the two and a half minutes.

Ms. Elizabeth May: I have a point of order.

I'd appreciate some clarity, Mr. Chair. I know that we're not operating under normal parliamentary rules, so I can't point to the standing orders that object to the interruption of speakers during the time when they're posing or answering a question. I find that during interruptions—like “What are kayaks made of?” and “Were you out kayaking?”—I have trouble hearing the honourable minister. I'm having trouble hearing the answers. Do those points of order apply in the committee format, or are they only when we're meeting as a House as a whole?

I don't appreciate being heckled as I try to object to heckling.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I thank the honourable member for her intervention.

Members will know that as Ms. May indicated, the regulation for this committee is unique. It is specific to the operations of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic. As such, there is an expectation that the normal rules of comportment for these proceedings apply, and we're certainly at the behest of members to do our best to make sure we conform to that. The interruptions, of course, are tolerated. However, members are asked to ensure that when a member has been recognized to speak and has the floor, that member should be able to deliver his or her remarks without obsessive or unnecessary interruptions so that other members, who will surely want to hear what the member has to say, will not be interrupted in the course of doing so. Let's proceed with that

We're finished with the two and a half minutes. We're now going to Mr. Boulerice.

[*Translation*]

I invite Mr. Boulerice to take the floor. He has two and a half minutes.

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

Does the minister realize that municipal employees provide essential services to our fellow citizens?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: I thank my colleague for his question.

Absolutely.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Is the Deputy Prime Minister also aware that, because of the current crisis, cities are on the verge of a major financial collapse?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Absolutely. We understand that municipalities are essential to our country, especially today when we are going through a major crisis because of the coronavirus.

• (1335)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: What measures is her government taking to support our cities in this current crisis?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: As the Prime Minister said on Monday, this government has already taken concrete action by advancing money that municipalities—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Mr. Boulerice has the floor.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Does the Deputy Prime Minister realize that advancing the delivery of a cheque is not the same thing as releasing new funds to help municipalities?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: I realize that, absolutely. It's a good thing, it's important, and it's going to help the municipalities. I also understand that it is not enough. We are going to do more.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: I have a suggestion. Since public transit companies are under tremendous pressure, why not give them access to the Canada emergency wage subsidy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: I agree that public transit is an essential service for Canadians. Today, we are in talks with the municipalities and the provinces to find ways to support the municipalities. We are going to do that.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Mr. Boulerice, you have time for one last question.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: CHSLDs are still in crisis at the moment. Especially in Quebec, health care workers are exhausted and at the end of their rope. Can those workers count on military personnel remaining on site to help them take care of our seniors?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, our men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces continue to play an absolutely extraordinary role for our seniors in the CHSLDs. We are in talks with Quebec on this matter.

I want to thank them for what they are doing. It is heroic and essential.

[*English*]

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We'll now go to Mr. Baldinelli.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Mr. Chair, the media in my riding today are reporting on the closure of a popular tourism business that has been in operation for the past 26 years. Despite its best efforts to stay alive by accessing existing government programs, loans and additional debt are not the liquidity this sector has been requesting from the government.

While the Minister of Economic Development did announce a \$4.5-million grant to our local tourism marketing organization this past weekend, which is appreciated, it is not a plan. It's late and it falls way short of what many of my tourism stakeholders have been seeking.

What is the minister's plan for supporting tourism?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food): Mr. Chair, we know that the tourism industry is hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are working tirelessly to help all our small businesses across the country.

That is one of the reasons why we have invested \$675 million in our six regional development agencies. In addition, over the next 18 months, Destination Canada will also receive an investment of \$30 million.

[*English*]

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: I appreciate the minister's efforts, but I was hoping that the minister of tourism could respond to that question. Our sector needs a response. More importantly, it needs a plan.

The minister talks about knowing the stakeholders and talking to the stakeholders. Then she would be aware that the two largest tourism employers in Niagara Falls, the Niagara Parks Commission and Niagara Casinos, both of which are provincially owned self-funding organizations employing about 6,000 people, can't access the wage subsidy program.

Minister, will the government consider designating these entities as prescribed organizations under the Canada emergency wage subsidy so that they can become eligible for this important program?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Do we have a minister who wishes to respond? Are we waiting for someone?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, currently we are holding consultations on the wage subsidy and its extension. I invite the member to participate in that online consultation, which will end tomorrow.

We will continue to work with businesses across the country to see how we can support them during this very difficult time.

• (1340)

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: It's disappointing—that pause and the wait for a response from the minister of tourism.

Our sector needs a plan and it needs a response. More debt and more loans aren't the solution. They need liquidity, and they need answers today.

Again, I was going to pose this question to the Minister of Economic Development.

Our seasonal tourism workers in Niagara are concerned that they will not qualify for EI this winter because they simply will not

work enough hours or earn enough income this summer because of COVID. Many have not even been called back to work yet. It was only because of the efforts of our Conservative government that the CERB benefit was extended to seasonal tourism workers.

Minister, has this government considered these future EI issues facing seasonal tourism workers?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I can assure the member and all Canadians that we absolutely are considering this very difficult issue. He will recall that we addressed it already for fish harvesters. We're looking to see how we can address it for other groups of workers as they face the potential of not having accrued enough EI eligibility, whether it be in hours, days or weeks. I can assure him that we are working on that very diligently.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Mr. Chair, my question now is for the minister for international trade. An employer in my riding, the Solvay group, has a Canadian subsidiary named Cytec, which is a leading producer of ultra-high-purity phosphine products that are essential in the manufacture of semiconductor chips. In fact, their Cytec site, which is located in the riding, is one of the largest producers of phosphine gas.

Unfortunately, the Liberal government has caused excessive and unexplained delays in granting the export permits needed by this company. Every day the government delays, Solvay/Cytec loses market share to its aggressive competitors, located primarily in Asia.

Minister, when will the government approve Solvay/Cytec's export permits?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As the minister responsible for international trade, I am here to answer his question.

I do want to assure Canadian companies that are looking to grow and to expand into those international markets that we're working very hard to make sure they continue to have access to those markets. We have a great service in the Canadian trade commissioner service to help them navigate through the markets that they need to get into.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We are going to take a short break to allow several members of the support team to change shifts. It should take between one minute and a half and two minutes.

[*English*]

We didn't have to wait as long as we thought. We can carry on.

[*Translation*]

We can proceed to the next round of questions.

I invite the honourable member for Mégantic—L'Érable to take the floor.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Chair, Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta are jointly calling on the federal government to help save public transit.

Despite the fine promises made by the former Minister of the Environment, will the Liberal government do its part to help public transit get through this crisis?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I thank the honourable member for his question. We absolutely agree that public transit is essential to our economy and the reopening of our economy.

We will continue to work closely with the provinces to support municipalities and public transit.

Mr. Luc Berthold: A number of employers who have applied for the Canada summer jobs program have still not received confirmation for their summer jobs, even though their applications have been approved by MPs' offices.

When will the final confirmations be made?

[English]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, as you know, in these extraordinary times we have introduced additional flexibilities into Canada summer jobs. MPs are receiving their lists in waves so that we can get as much information to employers and MPs as quickly as possible. The next wave is coming. We have over 50,000 Canada summer jobs in our job bank. It's very exciting for our young people.

I can reach out to the member—

• (1345)

[Translation]

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We'll go back to Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, summer is coming and the students who are available want to work, but they will turn to the CESB, because their employers have not yet received confirmation for their Canada summer jobs.

Why is the minister encouraging young people to stay home instead of going to work?

[English]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: It is quite the opposite, Mr. Chair; quite the opposite. We are in fact encouraging students and young people across the country to work. They want to work. They want to serve and be productive in our community and help out in this time of crisis. There are over 50,000 jobs in our job bank. For students who want to work, there's work available for them, and students want to work.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, why did the minister reduce the number of jobs in the ridings of Mégantic—L'Érable and Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier?

[English]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I apologize, but I am not aware of the particular jobs in the member's riding. To the best of

my knowledge, we have not cut jobs anywhere. I will follow up with him, definitely, after this committee meeting.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: The municipality of Saint-Sébastien, near Lac-Mégantic, cancelled its youth day camp this summer because program officials rejected its application for summer jobs, despite the fact that one position had been approved by the member of Parliament.

The Liberal government is not following the recommendations of members of Parliament. Why?

[English]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I can assure the member we are working hard to make sure that jobs recommended by MPs are funded if they meet the eligibility criteria, and as I said earlier, I will follow up with the member's office directly.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: The municipality of Adstock is considering cancelling its day camps because four applications for summer jobs were rejected by the federal government.

There was a positive recommendation from the member of Parliament, but the government is not following that recommendation and is depriving kids of a day camp this summer. Why?

[English]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I can advise this committee that the Canada summer jobs program was oversubscribed this year. That tells us lots of employers are looking for young people to work. We're looking to see how we can support employers and go beyond the initial 70,000 jobs, but that more jobs are wanted is good news for our economy.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, the recommendations made by members are not being followed.

The Amélie et Frédéric support organization in Neufchâtel had asked for a summer employee. The member for Louis-Saint-Laurent prioritized the request, but the Liberal government did not accept it.

The Lac-Etchemin Production du plateau solidarity food cooperative was asking for two positions. The member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis recommended them, but the request was not accepted.

Why is the federal government rejecting recommendations from members of Parliament?

[English]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I recognize we have leaned very heavily on MPs as we rolled out Canada summer jobs this year. We know MPs know their communities better than anybody else, and we have really appreciated their efforts to give us the best advice possible on what jobs should be filled.

As I said, we're working through these lists, and I will follow up with the member after this committee meeting to see if I can offer assistance.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Mr. Berthold, you have 30 seconds left.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Summer is coming. Young people are going to choose to take advantage of the CESB, the benefit for students. There is money for summer jobs that still has not been announced. There were three times as many applications from employers than summer job offers.

When is the minister going to free up the funds and finally allow young people to go to work this summer?

[*English*]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As part of our \$9-billion investment in students, we created over 100,000 new positions for young people across the country. That's in addition to the 70,000 jobs in the Canada summer jobs program. We're looking at ways to find even more jobs, and I hope to have further details in the upcoming days or even weeks, but let me assure the member that it is good news for our country that jobs are available and that young people want to fill them.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We'll now go to Mr. Hallan, MP for Calgary Forest Lawn.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Chair, Amanda suffers from a serious disease called cystic fibrosis. Because of her condition she is also vulnerable to severe COVID-19. Although she's one of the lucky 95 very ill Canadians who will receive the medication Trikafta through a special access program, she is concerned about the other 4,000-plus Canadians with cystic fibrosis who can't get the medication because of the lack of government approval and the minister's failure to listen to patients.

Conservatives have been calling on the government to delay changes to the PMPRB guidelines, changes that would likely make it harder for patients to get the medicine they need, and the government finally listened, but will the minister acknowledge there are still real flaws with the proposed changes?

• (1350)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I think there is some confusion about the connection between the PMPRB and the access to Trikafta.

Vertex has not applied for distribution of Trikafta in Canada. I encourage all MPs to write to the company to encourage the company to apply for permission to sell the drug in Canada. Certainly we will be able to look at that drug in an expedited way, and we also are excited to have the company apply.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We'll go back to Mr. Hallan.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to switch gears and continue with the tone my colleague Mr. Lake set.

Canadians sent us to this House to be their voice and uphold democracy and debate. Definitely this is an unprecedented time. We're going through a pandemic and many things have been brought to light, such as anti-black racism, systemic racism and questionable things this Liberal government has done to support Communist regimes such as China. With help from their allies from the NDP, they've ensured democracy and this House were shut down and turned into what my colleague called a fake Parliament.

They propped the Liberals and dropped democracy. Why did this Prime Minister shut down Parliament? Was it so we couldn't ask questions and hold him to account?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I understand that he used a question to ask me why he can't ask questions, Mr. Chair. That's what I understand.

To be honest, I'm not going to take lessons from the Conservatives on democracy. I was sitting on the opposition benches when they prorogued Parliament twice, Mr. Chair—not once but twice.

What we did here was find a formula that allows the opposition to play a role and that also respects public health guidance.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, Canadians are shocked that the NDP leader gave the key to democracy to the Liberals, who threw it in the Rideau Canal.

At a time when we remember the innocent lives lost in the horrific atrocities committed in India against Hindus and Sikhs in 1984, when we remember the massacre in Tiananmen Square, and when we reflect on the murdered indigenous women and girls, this is when we need Parliament the most.

We need to bring our constituents' voices through debate and by bringing forward motions, and this is something that the NDP-Liberal coalition has shut down. Why did they shut down this Parliament, and when will they bring back a real Parliament?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, we are gathered here to discuss, debate and answer questions from the opposition, and also to answer questions from colleagues everywhere across the country. I wonder why my colleague has a problem with that, the fact that his own colleagues can participate from every province. They have more time to ask questions every day. We'll be meeting on a regular basis this summer. There are nine committees actually working where they can ask questions on anything.

I think this is supporting democracy. We are doing our job, and they should do theirs.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: That's what they want, Mr. Chair. They want to have question period without any answers and without being answerable to Canadians.

On March 24, the Minister of Finance stated that help was hours or possibly days away, yet still there is nothing. No company has received support through the promised BDC and EDC financing or the emissions reduction fund, and the LEEFF program's predatory interest rates and conditions make it almost impossible for companies to access.

When is help and real support going to reach Canada's energy industry before it's too late?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the honourable member for his question.

We recognize that the energy sector is absolutely critical to our economy and the 576,000 Canadians who benefit from this sector. That is why we put forward \$1.7 billion to clean up orphan wells that have been abandoned. This will create immediate job opportunities and also make sure that we protect our environment.

The measures that we have put in place to support the energy sector are targeted at workers, particularly those working in small and medium-sized enterprises, which will benefit from the liquidity measures that we have introduced.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We'll now go to the next round.

Mr. Melillo, go ahead with your questions.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have been hearing from many business owners and different organizations in the Kenora riding who are anxiously awaiting news on whether they've been approved for Canada summer jobs funding. Can this government please provide a timeline for when all final funding decisions will be made?

• (1355)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: I would say that this week there'll be another list—well, tomorrow, Mr. Chair—and next week as well. It's also through working with employers, and the more quickly they give us the information, the more quickly we can get the jobs out.

I'm happy, again, to reach out to this member and see whatever I can do to get jobs in his riding moving quickly. We're doing the best we can, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Eric Melillo: I appreciate that answer from the minister.

I was just wondering if the minister can tell us this: After a business's application has been approved by the department, how long does it generally take for that approval to be communicated to the business?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, that actually depends on what day of the week it's approved. We try to get lists from the week out every Friday and back to members, back to employers, depending on the information they've provided us on their context.

Again, I'm happy to follow up with the member to give him more specific details.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Can the minister tell this committee what the average wait time is for a business to be notified after it's submitted its Canada summer jobs application?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, that depends on the quality of the information initially provided by the employer. Oftentimes, we have to follow up to get further details to figure out what the job details are, to make sure that it's meaningful work for the individual, to check on the salary range. Of course, it really depends on the employer—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We'll go back to Mr. Melillo.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Does the minister's department have any information that she can share on how many businesses are currently awaiting responses in terms of their applications?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I don't have that information at my fingertips, but I will commit to the member to see what I can get him as soon as possible.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Post-secondary students are generally finished school by May or June each year, and they start looking for summer work much earlier than that.

Given that the CSJ applications don't open until December or January of each year, in many cases, sometimes by the time the application has been processed, many qualified students have found work elsewhere. Many organizations in my riding have told me that this timeline makes it very difficult for them to recruit workers.

Going forward, will this government commit to opening up applications earlier in the year to give businesses and workers more time to plan?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Thank you for the question. That's an excellent suggestion, Mr. Chair.

We are looking to make improvements and streamline the Canada summer jobs program moving forward. As you know, we've added flexibilities to the program this year. I will absolutely take that suggestion under advisement and take the opportunity when I follow up with the member to get more details of what he has in mind in terms of timelines.

Mr. Eric Melillo: With many businesses across Canada struggling to make payroll, the summer jobs funding is more important than ever for many.

Can the minister give the committee members some insight into what's being done to ensure funding flows as quickly as possible to the approved businesses?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: As I've said, Mr. Chair, we are doing a number of things differently in many programs this year as a result of this pandemic, including adding flexibilities into the Canada summer jobs program so that we can take advantage of every possible opportunity for every student across this country.

If we had stuck to the original way of doing this, Mr. Chair, we would have missed out. Although it has been a ton of work for Service Canada and for our MPs, I think we will be very happy with the results at the end of the summer.

Mr. Eric Melillo: I would like to direct my next question to the Minister of Public Safety.

During our last exchange, I asked the minister if he had any statistics pertaining to the origin of firearms used in crimes in Canada. Mr. Chair, he responded by saying yes, we do. However, he then subsequently failed to actually provide any of those details.

I would really like to provide the minister with the opportunity to tell all members of this committee and all Canadians what evidence his department has to justify their firearms confiscation.

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I will be happy to return to the member's question, but first I'd like to take the opportunity, if I may, to acknowledge the anniversary of a terrible tragedy that occurred six years ago today in Moncton, New Brunswick.

On that terrible day, Mr. Chair, three members of the RCMP—Doug Larche, Fabrice Gévaudan and David Ross—were murdered, and two other officers were seriously injured.

Mr. Chair, the tragic memory of that terrible day will not be forgotten, not by the families of the fallen, not by their fellow officers, and not by the people of Moncton.

Mr. Chair, we all honour their memory, their service and their sacrifice, and we shall remember them.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We will now move on to the honourable member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ms. May.

Ms. May, go ahead.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you, Chair.

Through you to the Prime Minister, there is a pattern in history of leaders sometimes using a crisis that absorbs people's attention to do things they otherwise might not do for fear of global condemnation, such as in a pandemic. We see President Bolsonaro of Brazil turning more brutality against indigenous people in the Amazon.

My questions focus on the People's Republic of China, which I think is doing the same thing, and on Prime Minister Netanyahu in Israel.

To the question of China, we now see the People's Republic of China cracking down in Hong Kong in ways that violate the commitment to one country, two systems.

What will the Government of Canada do to help Canadian citizens, even if they are dual citizens of the People's Republic, to get home to Canada?

• (1400)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Chair, we know that the one country, two systems concept is what has been underpinning the liberty and freedom enjoyed by the people in Hong Kong. We are very deeply concerned by the imposition, unilaterally by Beijing, of a national security law that would undermine that very foundation.

Mr. Chair, we're working with allies to look at the implications that this imposition would have on the various arrangements and agreements we have in place with Hong Kong.

Ms. Elizabeth May: I hope I will hear from the government in coming days about what we plan to do for the citizens of Canada who are in Hong Kong.

I want to thank the Prime Minister for yesterday making it clear for the first time that the Government of Canada will press Prime Minister Netanyahu not to proceed with his plans to illegally annex parts of the occupied territories of the West Bank.

I would like to ask this: What specifically is Canada doing to prevent this blow to any future prospects of peace in the region?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Chair, both in private and in public, I and the Prime Minister have said that we are committed to the two-state solution and that we view unilateral annexation as contrary to international law.

I have spoken to the foreign minister of Israel. I have spoken to my colleagues in the Middle East. Mr. Chair, this is a long-held position of the Government of Canada throughout government, and we have made sure that we say that both publicly and privately.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): If I may, Minister, your video is currently off. We're not getting your video feed on your responses. I know that we'd all love to see you.

We'll go back to Ms. May for her next question.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the honourable minister for those responses.

Changing the subject but on the same question of issues that may be falling through the cracks due to COVID-19, the climate crisis continues apace. I mentioned in this place a week ago, in questions, that the new reading of global concentrations in the atmosphere, of 417 parts per million in carbon dioxide is a measurement that's unprecedented not only over centuries but unprecedented over the last one million years. Since then, a new study in Science News, relying on paleoclimatology, said it's actually unprecedented over the last 23 million years.

In other words, if we're looking at flashing red lights on the dashboard of human survival, the flashing red light of climate emergency is getting much brighter and much more frightening than the COVID-19 emergency.

When will this government meet the commitments of the Paris Agreement to a new, revised and more aggressive target within 2020, as required by the Paris Agreement?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Mr. Chair, certainly the government agrees with her that this is a crisis. It is a crisis that is moving at us perhaps more slowly than COVID-19, but it is a crisis whose impacts will be devastating if in fact we do not act, both in Canada and as a member of the global community.

This government has made a commitment to develop a plan that will see us meet and exceed our 2030 targets under the Paris Agreement. We have made that commitment. Obviously, we will continue to work to do that in advance of the next COP. We've also committed to achieving net zero by 2050, which science tells us we must do. We remain fully committed to doing that.

Of course, I am very happy to have these conversations with my honourable colleague and to continue them as we move forward.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): That will finish the time permitted for that round.

We'll now go to Victoria and Ms. Collins. Ms. Collins, go ahead with your question.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Small businesses are telling us that the commercial rent program is not working. In Victoria and Oak Bay, I've heard from countless businesses who are going under because their landlords refuse to take part.

Will the minister admit that this is a flawed program and allow tenants to apply without their landlords so that these small businesses don't fall through the cracks?

• (1405)

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, I would tell my honourable colleague that we worked collaboratively with the provinces to offer this program.

We're encouraging landlords to use this program to support tenants. As we know, these are provincial jurisdictions. We will continue to monitor this program. We encourage landlords to use it.

Ms. Laurel Collins: That didn't answer my question. Will the government allow a business to apply without their landlord, or is the minister okay with letting these small businesses fall through the cracks?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, again, our government is working closely with the provinces and territories to deliver the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance. Although the tenant-landlord relationship is ultimately the responsibility of the provinces—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We'll go back to Ms. Collins.

Ms. Laurel Collins: This is a federal program, but my community relies on tourism, and now this sector and the small businesses that depend on it are facing lasting financial harm or complete collapse. Over 20,000 workers rely on these jobs. Local visitors and the current federal programs are simply not enough to keep them afloat.

Will the government provide specific, targeted support to tourism businesses so that they and their workers can weather this storm?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

We know that the tourism industry is hard hit by COVID-19. We are working tirelessly on the impacts to the Canadian economy. Strong measures have been put in place to provide support to many Canadian businesses. That is why we are investing \$675 million in our six regional development agencies. Over the next 18 months, Destination Canada will also invest \$30 million with provincial marketing organizations.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Ms. Collins, you may ask a very quick question. You have about 20 seconds left.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Tourism needs specific, targeted support. Has the government considered adapting the wage subsidy program to address the unique challenges that tourism businesses face, or considered additional supports for tourism with linkages to environmental sustainability?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Mr. Chair, we know how hard hit the tourist industry is. I happen to know the tourism sector well because I worked in it for 20 or so years.

Because we know that, our government is establishing a series of programs designed to help companies in general, and workers. For small businesses, we have invested \$675 million through our six regional development agencies. In the next 18 months, Destination Canada—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Unfortunately, Madam Minister, you have no more time.

[English]

Now we're going to Mr. Johns from Courtenay—Alberni.

Go ahead with your question.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, The Globe and Mail has reported that only 16,000 landlords have signed up so far for the Canada commercial rent assistance program, while CEBA has had over 630,000 applicants.

In the same small business survey, respondents said that the rent subsidy is most important to saving their businesses. Small businesses are at the mercy of their landlords' applying to the program, and many won't. This program is flawed, and the uptake is low.

Will the government fix it so that small businesses get the support they need?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, our government has stepped up to provide rent relief to businesses while at the same time helping property owners to retain rental income through this crisis. We are continuing to monitor this program, and we will support landlords and tenants during this very trying time.

Mr. Gord Johns: Only 16,000 landlords have applied. Why is the government using a 70% drop in revenue as the requirement to access the program instead of the 30% used for the wage subsidy? Why do businesses have to wait until they're in total ruin before the government comes to help them?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, landlords have been submitting applications, and they represent over 60,000 employees for rent subsidies in the first week of the program. This represents almost \$100 million in rent reductions across Canada.

We are inviting property owners to do their part in helping small businesses and their employees to get through these challenging times.

• (1410)

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Mr. Johns, you have about 50 seconds. Go ahead.

Mr. Gord Johns: Well, they need to listen to the hundreds of thousands of employees who rely on those businesses, who are going to rely on your help and who aren't going to get it.

Many businesses lease retail space from local governments that are not eligible to apply for the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program. Will you amend it so they can apply, or are they on their own?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Again, Mr. Chair, we are working in collaboration with provinces to offer this program, and we will continue to encourage landlords and tenants to talk to each other and work together to be able to have access to this relief. We will continue to monitor the program as we move along.

[Translation]

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We now continue with Ms. Pauzé.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Chair, the government wraps itself in virtuous green, but its actions are a different colour entirely. This morning, we learned that the government has approved 100 offshore exploratory oil and gas drilling projects to the east of Newfoundland.

Is the government using the pandemic to pull a fast one?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Chair, we have always said that the environmental assessment processes must guarantee strong environmental protection but that the processes must also be efficient. The ministerial regulation published today does both. The regulation has established a clear and efficient process; it will be subject

to regulatory requirements that meet the strictest environmental standards—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Ms. Pauzé, the floor is yours.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, those 100 exploratory oil and gas drilling projects are exempt from environmental assessments.

What use is the environmental assessment process if we do not use it for 100 offshore oil and gas drilling projects?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Chair, this ministerial regulation establishes a clear and efficient process for assessing exploratory drilling projects in the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore area. The regulation will guarantee that all drilling projects comply with the strict standards of environmental protection.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, the Minister of the Environment sits on the committee tasked with establishing a green recovery after COVID.

Is this morning's announcement part of the green recovery?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Chair, I am not sure I completely understand what my colleague thinks of it all, but, like all ministers, I am working on the issues that we are facing. We are discussing the things that we will have to do in the future.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, why did the government choose to make that announcement at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Chair, this regulation was subject to a lot of consultation. A consultation process was launched in April 2019 and we heard from 81 indigenous groups and 58 stakeholder groups. We conducted another consultation in March and April of this year. Our process has been—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We go back to Ms. Pauzé again.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, a number of groups had asked for this most recent consultation to be postponed because of the pandemic.

Is the government also going to take advantage of the pandemic to tear up the Paris Agreement?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Chair, what my honourable colleague is saying is completely false.

We conducted two consultations that were months long. This year, the March consultation was extended into April to give stakeholders the opportunity to say what they felt was very important.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, at the height of a pandemic, do the Minister of Natural Resources and his colleagues want to deregulate as they see fit, and do so just because the oil and gas lobby asks? Does the government intend to restart the economy by making the oil and gas industry a priority? Will our recovery be green or brown?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Chair, we have always said that environmental processes must be efficient, while still ensuring strong protections. We have been open and transparent all through these initiatives and we undertook a rigorous consultation process that goes back to 2019—

• (1415)

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We go back to Ms. Pauzé again.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, how does approving 100 oil and gas exploration projects help the government to keep its promises to reduce greenhouse gases?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Chair, we have established a process that guarantees very strong environmental protections. The process is efficient, as Canadians want. It is good for the country, for the environment, and for the economy.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, how does approving 100 oil and gas exploration projects without an environmental assessment make for a green recovery? Is the recovery green or brown?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Chair, as I have said, the ministerial regulation establishes a clear and efficient process that will be subject to regulatory requirements meeting the strictest environmental standards and protecting the marine life and the oceans. That is very important and we are going to establish an efficient process that provides very strong environmental protection.

[English]

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We will now go to the next round of questioning—the last round, actually—with Mr. Vidal from Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

Mr. Vidal, go ahead.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, it's been a while since I've been here in Ottawa, and I must say that both I and the constituents who elected me to be here would much prefer you to be sitting in your Speaker's chair and that the mace be on top of the Clerk's table instead of underneath it. This would signify that we are in an actual session of Parliament.

However, with what little time I have today, I want to ask a number of questions that represent concerns raised by my constituents over the last several months.

First of all, we have received many calls and emails from constituents concerned about people either mistakenly receiving CERB or about fraudulent claims for CERB.

Through you, Mr. Chair, can I ask what precisely the government's plan is to recoup these funds?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I can assure the member that we have not compromised the integrity of this program whatso-

ever. Both CRA and ESDC have a number of data tools, analytical tools and other tools at their disposal to make sure, based on both the SIN numbers we receive and other measures, that anyone who received a payment that they should not have received will be followed up and will be expected to pay it back.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Chair, yesterday in response to a question from my colleague Mr. Albas, the minister identified moving some integrity measures to the back end of this process. I have, on numerous occasions, heard this identified as tax time.

Mr. Chair, with all due respect to the minister, as an accountant who has prepared tax returns for over 30 years, I can say that we do not have a system in our tax system that allows us to measure the period of income that would be required to determine whether somebody fraudulently claimed CERB or not. The system just does not do that.

Is it the government's plan to revamp our whole tax system, or what exactly are these back-end measures that she refers to? Is it possible that they have no intention of recouping these funds?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, we have every intention of following up on every red flag that has been identified in our system. I have referred to tax time as a marker that I've put down to ensure Canadians that this is a time by which we will have gone through all of this.

We are doing this on an ongoing basis. I can provide the member with more details. I wish I had the technical knowledge to dive into the technicalities, but rest assured that we're following up today, tomorrow, next week, next month, on every single red flag in the system.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Chair, two weeks ago, in response to my question, Minister Blair confirmed that some of the firearms he has banned are in fact used for hunting and thus to provide food for my constituents and their families in northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Chair, why, then, in the middle of a pandemic, did this government decide to attack food security in northern Saskatchewan by banning the tools that we use to feed our families?

Hon. Bill Blair: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for an important opportunity to provide clarification.

The weapons that we prohibited are not weapons that were designed or intended to be used either in hunting or for sport shooting.

Mr. Chair, these are weapons that were designed for soldiers to use in combat to kill other soldiers. They have no place in civil society. Notwithstanding some of the confusion that we've heard from the members opposite, we did not prohibit hunting weapons such as the 10-gauge shotgun and the 12-gauge shotgun. We prohibited weapons designed to kill people.

• (1420)

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Chair, last week I had the opportunity to speak to Robert. He's a bison and grain farmer in my riding. He recently discovered that he is facing a 50% reduction in slaughter capacity for his bison due to the pandemic. In addition to the revenue reduction, he is now facing increased costs—along with a carbon tax, I might add—to feed his family for a much longer period of time.

It's unbelievable to Robert that Minister Bibeau put the blame on farmers for not using AgriStability and the other business risk management programs when she knows full well these programs need drastic changes.

Mr. Chair, when will she make the changes to these programs so that they work for farmers like Robert and his future generations?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will never put blame on farmers. I would encourage them to use the business risk management programs because there are monies in these programs. We are talking about \$1.6 billion for an average year, and it could be much more this year.

Specifically for the meat sector, we have put \$50 million on the table for the beef farmers and \$77.5 million for food processing so they can have a higher capacity to process.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): There's time for a very short question, Mr. Vidal.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I believe one of the primary functions of a member of Parliament is to provide financial oversight. We are now being provided only four hours to review \$87 billion of government spending since April 1. Frankly, this is unacceptable. Does this government really think it's appropriate for members of Parliament to have only four hours to scrutinize \$87 billion of spending on behalf of Canadians?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The honourable minister may respond.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for this important question. We look forward to doing this.

We look forward also to reminding the member that a large portion of that has already been studied, approved and voted on by members of this Parliament, which is absolutely the essential thing to do, because as we work on the urgency of actions by this government, we also need to maintain transparency.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton): That concludes today's meeting.

As a result, the committee stands adjourned until Monday, June 8, 2020, at noon.

Meeting adjourned.

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