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# Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology

EVIDENCE

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Chair: Mrs. Sherry Romanado





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Monday, May 11, 2020

• (1805)

[English]

**The Chair (Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.)):** Good evening, everyone. I now call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 14 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. Pursuant to the order of reference of Saturday, April 11, the committee is meeting for the purpose of receiving evidence concerning matters related to the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today's meeting is taking place by video conference, and the proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website.

I would like to give some reminders to the witnesses and members.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When you are ready to speak, please unmute your microphone, and then return to mute when you are finished. Please speak slowly and clearly so that the interpreters can do their work. As is my normal practice, I will hold up a yellow card when you have 30 seconds left in your intervention and a red card when your time for questions has expired.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses. We have with us this evening the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Canadian Heritage; and the Honourable Maryam Monsef, Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development. From the Department of Canadian Heritage, we have Hélène Laurendeau, deputy minister. From the Department of Industry, we have Simon Kennedy, deputy minister; and Paul Thompson, associate deputy minister.

Each minister will have 10 minutes to present, followed by our rounds of questioning.

We will start with Minister Monsef.

You have 10 minutes.

**Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development):** Thank you, Chair.

Colleagues, hello, *aniin* and *as-salaam alaikum*. I hope you are safe. I hope you are well in whichever corner of this great country you find yourselves.

I'm pleased to join you live from the basement of my home in my community of Peterborough—Kawartha, a mixed rural-urban rid-

ing. Like many Canadians, including you, I am adjusting to a different work and home reality.

Like you, I am thankful to our public health experts and front-line workers, and community leaders, the innovators who are helping us adapt and cope, and for neighbours who care for each other in these times. I am thankful to the PSWs and the early childhood educators, the technicians, nurses, midwives, doctors, grocery store clerks and women's organizations, who are putting everything on the line to keep the rest of us safe.

Many thanks to my own team, and of course, to our IT essential workers.

Unlike millions of Canadians, though, I don't have little ones running around all day to care for and to nurture, since day cares and schools closed. It's hard on many parents, as it is for the children. Like my niece, Ellia, who will celebrate her fourth birthday in two weeks, I miss hugging my loved ones and want the coronavirus to "go away". Like my niece Leila, who will turn 11 next month, I miss my friends and want to return to when I could see them regularly, in person.

Like 86% of Canadians, I benefit from access to high-speed Internet, but in some parts of Peterborough—Kawartha, and in many other ridings across the country, access to high-speed Internet is limited. Under the connect to innovate program, our government has approved projects that will connect close to 400,000 households to high-speed Internet, but the job is not yet complete. I want Canadians to know that in addition to the immediate work we're undertaking to support them through these challenging times, we remain focused on ensuring access to high-speed Internet for the two million Canadians who don't have that access today. In fact, COVID-19 has added greater urgency to this important work.

I'm here today to discuss our government's plan for connecting more Canadians to high-speed Internet, what we've learned from previous programs and to assure Canadians that we are on it. Our government is committed to connecting all Canadians to broadband by 2030 and we've created the conditions to get this done.

Our plan, the first of its kind for Canada, was developed in partnership with Canadians from across the country. It includes a \$6-billion incentive for private sector investments, and to ensure the success of this plan, we established a minister responsible for rural economic development and the centre for rural economic development to coordinate the work across the federal government with our partners in provinces, territories, individual communities, indigenous leadership and within the private sector.

Our plan is working. Our connect to innovate program is investing \$585 million to connect close to 400,000 households across 975 communities. We designed the program to be accessible to different types of Internet service providers. One-third of the funding has gone to the big three telcos, with one-third to smaller providers and another third for indigenous-led organizations.

Connect to innovate program projects have already brought high-speed Internet to 25,000 households. Over 50,000 households across 150 communities that don't currently have high-speed Internet will have access by the end of this year. By the end of next year, over 250,000 households that don't currently have access to high-speed Internet will. That's across 750 communities. By 2022, close to 400,000 households across 972 communities that today have no access to high-speed Internet will be connected, with a baseline speed of 50/10 megabits per second or better. That includes 190 indigenous communities.

These results only speak to the investments made through the connect to innovate program. They don't include households and communities that will be connected through funding delivered by the CRTC, through the low-earth orbit satellite funding, or because of additional investments made via the Canada Infrastructure Bank or other federal programs.

● (1810)

The new \$1-billion universal broadband fund will build on this success, coordinate programs and connect more Canadians to high-speed Internet. We have learned from the connect to innovate program, and will build on that knowledge in our design of the new universal broadband fund.

For example, the hexagon model to track and map connectivity across the country is no more. We now have the ability to track household connectivity status to within 250 metres. Greater precision will allow applicants to submit more targeted projects and will connect underserved Canadians. You can see this for yourself through our new broadband connectivity map, at [Canada.ca/getconnected](http://Canada.ca/getconnected).

Earlier this year, Minister Bains announced that we were setting aside spectrum for smaller communities and ISPs in the upcoming spectrum auction. Fifty megahertz of spectrum will be carved out for small and regional telecom companies to support higher speeds, increased data usage and new applications. This will encourage competition in the wireless market and ensure smaller companies are on a more equal footing with the big three national carriers.

We are pursuing innovative partnerships to connect more Canadians to high-speed Internet, faster. Through the \$750-million fund provided through the CRTC, we will focus on delivering high-speed backbone along major roadways. Through a partnership with

Telesat, our government is investing up to \$600 million to provide satellite-based high-speed Internet to some of Canada's hardest-to-reach households in remote and northern communities. Funding available through the Canada Infrastructure Bank, Infrastructure Canada and Indigenous Services Canada will further leverage investments, bringing additional partners to the table.

Colleagues, I've shared with you what we are doing. Let me address why we are doing it.

What motivates me, and what motivates our government, is the fundamental belief that the rights enjoyed by Canadians should not be defined by geography. Canadians in rural and remote parts of our country need to have the same opportunities to access government and private sector services as Canadians who live in larger centres. Providing Canadians with access to high-speed Internet will help close gaps caused by geography and increase equality of access to health, education and employment in a digital economy. It will help us build better as we recover from COVID-19.

Building this ribbon of fibre is the modern-day equivalent of the ribbon of steel that Sir John A. Macdonald built to stitch our country together. We realized that national dream with the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885, and it seems in 2020 that we are united with a renewed national vision for universal access to high-speed Internet. Like the building of the railroad, partnerships are needed to accomplish this task, but make no mistake: We believe in the role of government to lead Canadians in this effort. Now is not the time for low ambition and absolution of responsibility. Now is the time for government to invest in our collective recovery, to future-proof and be ready for new technology, to bridge the rural-urban divide and to connect all Canadians.

Colleagues, we have had a plan, and now, because of COVID-19, it is even more urgent we proceed quickly. I want to assure Canadians that we get it, we are on it and we will work with every willing partner to achieve our shared goals.

Thank you colleagues, and Chair Romanado.

Back to you for further discussion.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Madam Minister.

Our next speaker will be Minister Guilbeault.

Minister, you have the floor for 10 minutes.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the committee, I am very pleased to speak following upon the comments made by my colleague the Honourable Maryam Monsef.

I am speaking to you from Gatineau, on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people. I am delighted to join you virtually, to see you all, each of us in different corners of our beautiful country. I wish to recognize the important and essential work that you all are doing, even in the current circumstances, to continue the important work of Parliament and the committees.

We are all doing our best to get through the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is important that we join forces and work together for the benefit of Canadian society. This of course includes culture, heritage and sport. Organizations in these three sectors are a vital part of the social fabric of our communities. They generate solidarity, and promote social integration and tolerance. They are also major drivers of the Canadian economy. The cultural sector alone contributes approximately \$53 billion to Canada's GDP, and the sport sector contributes \$6.6 billion. Not to mention the 500,000 jobs they create, the visitors they attract, their international visibility, their reputation for excellence, and, quite simply, the pleasure they give us.

To quote the Prime Minister:

Since the beginning of this crisis, artists have brought us comfort, laughter, and happiness. Athletes have continued to inspire us, encourage us, and make us proud. Those who work in the arts, culture, and sports sectors allow us to live their passion and make us dream. And these days, when we are all at home, isolating, they help us feel a little less alone. These are just a few of the reasons why we must be there for them like they are there for us.

Today, with you, I would like, first, to summarize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on arts, culture, heritage and sports; review the measures our government has taken to support these sectors; and give you an overview of our approach, which is intended to provide quick and flexible assistance to these sectors in the coming weeks.

We are collectively facing the biggest crisis in our history, and organizations and workers in the arts, culture and sports sectors were among the first to be affected. Several factors have increased the pressure on them: the ban on gatherings; the unexpected cancellation of cultural and sports activities; the closure of museums and facilities; the uncertainty that has gripped Canadian and international subscribers and sponsors; and the lack of opportunities to train and qualify for athletic competitions. All of this has added to the pressure on our artists and athletes.

These sectors that we are talking about depend on their connection with the public. From the day containment measures were announced, these sectors have demonstrated exemplary solidarity and creativity, but without a stage, an auditorium, an audience, a season, tours, they cannot survive. If the situation persists, we can expect Canada's creative industry to face increasing and significant financial pressure. Over one month, losses were estimated at \$4.4 billion and about 26,000 jobs. Over three months, they are estimated at \$13.2 billion and about 81,000 jobs.

Many organizations will be able to recover from these losses thanks to the measures already announced by our government, including the Canada emergency response benefit, the Canada emergency wage subsidy, the business credit availability program, and the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance for small businesses, intended for small businesses and organizations. We also ensured that these measures, which apply to Canadian society as a

whole, would be useful to SMEs and non-profit organizations, many of which work in the fields of culture, heritage and sport.

We have also worked hard to free up funds quickly and adapt to the realities of each line of business.

We announced the accelerated processing of funding applications to the Canada book fund and the Canada periodical fund, and we confirmed that income from royalties would not be a barrier for artists and creators seeking eligibility for the emergency response benefit. The Canada Council for the Arts will provide \$60 million in advance funding to help its beneficiaries to meet their immediate commitments.

The federal government has paid for Part I of the CRTC licence fees for the 2020-21 fiscal year, providing immediate financial relief of \$30 million. In addition, an independent panel of experts is set to make recommendations to the Canada Revenue Agency on the implementation of tax measures for print journalism, and we have made several adjustments to those measures to better meet the needs of the publishing and journalism communities.

● (1815)

Finally, the vast majority of the \$30 million invested by our government in a national COVID-19 awareness campaign will be invested in Canadian media: in television, radio, newspapers and magazines, and digital media. All of these measures will provide our cultural, heritage and sports organizations with a breath of fresh air.

That said, we recognize that some of them may not be in a position to benefit from the measures already announced, for all kinds of reasons; for example, they tend to be characterized by cyclical revenues, high self-employment and contract work, and barriers to accessing credit. For others, these measures are not sufficient to allow them to cope with the current crisis.

That is why, on April 17, 2020, the Prime Minister announced \$500 million in funding to establish a new COVID-19 Emergency Support Fund for Cultural, Heritage and Sport Organizations. This fund is meant to complement the measures already announced and to strengthen our safety net, which, I am sure you will agree, I have shown is needed now more than ever.

● (1820)

[English]

Last Friday, I announced how this new emergency fund will be rolled out. The fund will be distributed in two phases in order to meet the financial needs of affected organizations, maintain jobs and support business continuity. Canadian Heritage will divide the funding among select departmental programs and in collaboration with several partners. The breakdown of the funding has been presented.

Here is a summary. Over \$198 million will be provided to the beneficiaries of arts and culture funding through existing programs; \$72 million will be provided to the sport sector; \$53 million will be provided to the heritage sector through the emergency component of the museums assistance program; \$3.5 million will be distributed under the digital citizen initiative to help combat false and misleading COVID-19 information, as well as the racism and stigmatization that are often the result; \$55 million will be distributed by the Canada Council for the Arts; and over \$115 million will be distributed by the Canada Media Fund and Telefilm Canada to support the audiovisual sector.

The use of the remaining funds will be based on needs. The roll-out is already under way. Our program officers are in touch with organizations through the usual communication channels.

We will proceed in two phases. In phase one, eligible recipients will not have to apply for funding. We will use the most recent applications submitted to the program as a basis for topping up funding. Existing recipients of targeted Canadian Heritage programs will be asked to fill out an attestation. Once the attestation has been received and reviewed, the funding will flow shortly thereafter.

Phase two of the program will focus on eligible organizations with heritage collections, and other organizations that, for example, do not currently receive funding from Canadian Heritage, the Canada Council for the Arts, Telefilm Canada or the Canada Media Fund.

The second phase will provide temporary support as follows: funding for eligible organizations with heritage collections through the emergency component of the museums assistance program; and funding for other organizations, some of which do not currently receive funding from Canadian Heritage, the Canada Council for the Arts, Telefilm Canada and the Canada Media Fund. Further details on phase two will be announced over the coming weeks.

We want to find ways to broaden our support. Culture, heritage and sport are at the very heart of our plan. The challenge is to ensure that as many organizations as possible survive the crisis so that Canada's cultural, heritage and sport ecosystems remain intact. This is essential to the recovery we all want for our creators, artists, curators, athletes and coaches; for our society; for our economy; and ultimately, for each and every one of us.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister.

Now we move to our rounds of questions. Our first round is six-minute rounds, and our first MP is MP Rempel Garner. You have the floor for six minutes.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister Guilbeault, for coming to committee.

I was really pleased to hear you talk about the fact that you believe that heritage is a vital part of our social fabric and that artists can bring us comfort during this crisis. I'm just wondering if you can tell the committee what constitutes western heritage.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As a Canadian, I would be one to believe in Canadian heritage from coast to coast to coast, but just last week, I was on the phone with the Alberta heritage minister, Minister Aheer, to talk about how we can collaborate to support the work that we do at the federal level, but at the provincial level as well.

• (1825)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** That's great.

Western heritage is actually a thing. It would be like you asking me about Quebec culture and me not being able to talk about that.

Do you think western heritage is important to Canada?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I believe all parts of Canada's heritage are important to Canada: western heritage, eastern heritage, northern heritage, first nations—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Do you want to hazard a guess about what would be constituted in western heritage?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** If you have suggestions in terms of what it is we can do to help support different parts of Canada's heritage ecosystem, we would be happy to consider them.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Do you think western heritage is under threat right now and perhaps needs a bit of bolstering from, let's say, the heritage minister?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I have tried to outline how our entire heritage ecosystem is under threat right now, from coast to coast to coast. Artists are finding it very difficult right now in Ontario, in Alberta, in Saskatchewan and—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Could you name one artist from Alberta?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Nancy Huston—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** That's a start.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I just finished one of her books.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Okay, great.

How would you, as heritage minister, preserve western heritage if you don't know what it is?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** My role is to support artists throughout this country. Many of our programs are available to organizations in every part of the country.

We're supporting artists in every part of the country. In western Canada as—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Have you met with anybody in Calgary? Outside of the Stampede, have you met with any group?

In terms of ratio between the central Canadian people who lobby you, and let's say, Alberta or Saskatchewan groups, what would you say that ratio looks like?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I can't give you an exact answer for the ratio. We could provide you with that information. As you know, that information is public. What I can tell you is that—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Yes, I know what it is. I was just hoping you would tell the committee.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Over the last few weeks, I have spoken with thousands of people from across the country, from every corner of the country—thousands.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Here's the thing, Minister. Everybody in Canada has had a rough go, but my constituents, arguably, have had a particularly rough go because our economy was already in a downturn because of your government's policies in the energy sector. Therefore, what would you tell somebody in Calgary who's watching this right now who knows your background as a Greenpeace activist? You are the heritage minister, and you don't even talk about western Canadian heritage.

What would you say to them, because they'd probably be pretty cheesed?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** What I can tell you is that the Alberta heritage minister has saluted my leadership to help artists and athletes throughout the COVID-19 crisis on a number of occasions publicly, and—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Minister, I know that. That's fantastic. I'm talking about you and your government, because there are a lot of people in western Canada who think your government really doesn't care about us and our heritage doesn't matter to you. Therefore, I'm giving you a shot here to try to express some empathy and some understanding of what happens in my province, and you've really not given me much to work with.

Given that you're a Greenpeace activist, you're very vocal against the energy sector and you haven't even acknowledged that there's a western Canadian heritage right now, I just wonder if you can—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Madam Chair, I believe I have. I believe I have a number of times, but—

**The Chair:** We have a point of order from the floor.

MP Dabrusin.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.):** My point of order is that we're venturing beyond discussing the ministry and heritage, which is what we were talking about. The questions now are veering into energy conversations and the like, but really he's here to talk about what the minister of heritage is doing and the heritage ministry.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I'd like to respond to that point of order, which doesn't count as part of my time.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** The energy sector actually contributes significantly to the heritage environment in Alberta. It's a huge source of philanthropy and funding for the arts, and a lot of that funding right now has been removed because of the downturn in the energy sector, which has been precipitated by decisions that have been made by the cabinet the minister is sitting on.

I think that this is very material, especially since the minister talked about artists bringing us comfort, and I am an MP from that

part of the country. I think that it's important that we be given the opportunity to talk about our heritage.

I would like the minister, Madam Chair, in terms of relevancy, to talk about his plan to support western heritage because there are a lot of people in my province who don't feel comforted right now and would like some assurances from the government that they at least understand the plight of what's happening in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Thank you.

• (1830)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Next we have Mr. Masse.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** I would agree. I come from an area of the country in which our heritage has defined who we are. We were the oldest European settlement west of Montreal, and then went into a staging point where the auto industry defined us as much as the story of the people. It also defined the way we are as artists. Even with the decline in this industry over the last number of decades, it still makes us who we are today.

I see the connection quite clearly. I quite strongly believe that arts and culture are a significant part of our industry as well as our heritage. They are very much intertwined, so I think that everything is very much appropriate here.

**The Chair:** I'm going to rule to allow the conversation to continue.

Ms. Rempel, you still have some time remaining.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, you haven't talked about western heritage. Have you quantified and can you give me a number on the impact of the decline of the energy sector on philanthropy and the arts and cultural sector in Alberta? How much money are you giving to Alberta out of this fund?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I think I have answered your question a number of times regarding—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Do you plan on giving any of this money to western Canada?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** —western heritage. As I said, I had—just last week—a conversation with the Alberta heritage minister. I've had several conversations with the Alberta heritage minister—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** What are you doing? What are you doing? You have to put together a national strategy for unity.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** —to see how we can help and support the heritage sector in Alberta and Saskatchewan, throughout Canada. I'm working closely with allies from across the country to do that.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Yes, that's the—

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, minister.

The next round of questions goes to Nathaniel Erskine-Smith.

MP Erskine-Smith, you have six minutes.

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

My first question is for Minister Monsef.

We have seen, in the course of this recession, a deep impact on women's participation in the labour force, and very smart economists have called it a "she-cession." Then we also see the female labour force participation to be the most difficult to come back, and have pointed to child care as central to those recovery efforts.

I noted the Prime Minister also recently highlighted the importance of child care to recovery efforts. I wonder if, in your office, working in collaboration with Minister Hussen, we are going to see significant steps down this path with leadership from the federal government.

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Thank you to MP Erskine-Smith. You are absolutely right. This pandemic has hit women hardest.

Women are the majority of those in long-term care. They're the majority of those who have tested positive. They're the majority of those on the front lines of this effort. Sixty-two per cent of the jobs lost due to COVID-19 in March were women's jobs, often low-paid, and often lost by racialized women. Women have also been called out of the workforce because day cares are closed, because schools are closed. Unlike other recessions, this economic recovery is going to require supporting women specifically. Studies show that during the 2008 recession, women with children were the last to recover from that recession.

In addition to supports through the Canada child benefit, in addition to the 40-plus thousand child care spaces that we helped support in our previous mandate, the Prime Minister has mandated me and Minister Hussen to set up a child care secretariat and to build a foundation for better access to child care for all Canadians. COVID-19 further highlights the need and the urgency around that commitment.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** I appreciate that.

With respect to the secretariat, can we expect you and your office as the minister of gender equality to be pushing for that secretariat to be created with haste, and to place that secretariat at the centre of recovery efforts?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** I can assure all colleagues and Canadians that we are working not just with haste within the Government of Canada, but we are pulling in smart experts, economists and feminists from around the country to get it done and get it done right.

• (1835)

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Thanks very much. I really appreciate that.

Minister Guilbeault, I have some questions, and maybe you could correct me, because my information might be mistaken. It really doesn't make sense to me.

I have in front of me an article related to the \$50-million local journalism initiative. Now, civic journalism is unquestionably a public good, and a good that I would like us to support, especially

as we see a struggle with local journalism. However, the vast majority of this local journalism initiative is distributed by News Media Canada and Christian Dognon, who is helping to coordinate these efforts for News Media Canada, was recently quoted saying, "LJI is a support program for the news industry, so we do not want to introduce new competition into already struggling markets".

I guess what I'm struggling to understand is this. Why wouldn't we be encouraging innovation and new entrants to create more of this local journalism? Why would we be excluding new entrants and the competition that we sorely need?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you for the question.

I'm not sure. I haven't seen the article you're referring to. What I can tell you is that we have been supporting local journalism through an investment of \$50 million over five years, which means that this year 200 journalists will be hired in communities that are not as well served from a media perspective as others. The ad-buy campaign we just did on COVID-19 for \$30 million was distributed among more than 900 newspapers across the country, 500 radio stations and TV stations in 12 different languages. I think we value the diversity of the media ecosystem in Canada and—

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** We should. We should especially value the diversity of new entrants into the marketplace. I encourage you to take a second look at the management of that fund because when I see, as one example, the Sprawl—a digital start-up in Calgary—unable to access funding from that \$50 million but able to access a start-up grant from Facebook.... I've been the first person to be hard on Facebook. Facebook has helped to gut the news industry in many ways, and it's trying to rectify that with some small funding. It's incredible to me that a local start-up in Canada would receive funding from Facebook and not from that \$50-million fund. You really do need to take a second look.

The other piece that I'd like you to take a look at is that Google and Facebook make up 90% of online digital ad revenue. At the same time, Google and Facebook have profited significantly from news content that they have done nothing to create.

Has your office taken a serious look at France, Spain and Australia to ensure a fairer profit-sharing model between Google, Facebook and these tech giants and our news media ecosystem?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Yes, we are looking very carefully at what France and Australia have done. As you may be aware, they've acted through their competition bureaus. We are looking at the mechanisms we have in Canada. Obviously, legislation and regulation among countries differs, so these types of bodies don't necessarily have the same types of powers, but we are looking at this very closely.



We've said for many months that we want the web giants to do their fair share, and clearly right now they're not. If we can use existing tools to make that happen, we will. If we need to create new tools, we will.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Thanks very much. They should absolutely pay into our news media ecosystem.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. That's the end of the round.

[*Translation*]

I will now yield the floor to Mr. Lemire.

Mr. Lemire, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank Minister Guilbeault and Minister Monsef for their presence, which is important to us today.

I would like to broach the topic of connecting all Quebecers and Canadians to high-speed Internet, and about access to the cellular network. Madam Minister, would you be prepared to recognize that this is an essential service?

You mentioned that we need to learn from the past and that rights should not be dependent on geography. Could we say that the investments that are being made are not expenditures and that they are essential to the economic recovery of our cities, towns, villages and territory?

[*English*]

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Yes, and it has been.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** So you recognize that this is essential. We can measure that by the answers to the following two questions: does the 2030 deadline seem acceptable to you, and should new money be invested?

[*English*]

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** We put forward, in 2019, the first plan in Canada's history to connect every community to high-speed Internet. We've set aside \$6 billion to date to get it done, and I can assure my colleague that our goal is to expedite the timeline as much as we can, particularly post-COVID.

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** You mentioned that we must learn from past mistakes. I would suggest that perhaps an all-party committee should be set up on this issue, because I think all parties agree, particularly here, that there should be a concerted effort to work together to produce results, regardless of people's political stripe.

I'm wondering when the budgets for the Connect to Innovate program will be approved. Will there be a public and a private portion? The needs are estimated at between \$5 billion and \$6 billion. What will the Government of Canada's share be, and will there be new money coming in, in the short term, this year? I think it is unacceptable to hear that in 2022 there will still be 1.4 million homes that will not be connected.

[*English*]

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Our plan hasn't been developed on the back of a napkin. It has been developed with partners across the country. It has been shaped by the feedback of colleagues such as Gudie Hutchings from the really small communities, colleagues from Quebec, colleagues from every corner of the country and from Canadians themselves.

Our dollars are meant to incent private sector investments. It's to our economic benefit to get this done and to get it done quickly. It's also part of the equity equation that all of us are working hard to address. Therefore, I can assure my colleague that we are on it. Now more than ever, the urgency to get this done quickly is apparent.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** How much do you think it would cost to finance the connection of 100% of Canadians?

[*English*]

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** The investments we've put forward so far are meant to connect about 400,000 households. The \$6 billion invested is going to get us closer to it. We estimate that about \$8 billion is required, and our private partners, as well as provinces, territories and indigenous partners, are helping to further strengthen the federal investments made.

I want to let my colleague know, though, that this requires all players, all hands on deck, but it requires a strong role to be played by the federal government and we have been and will continue to play that strong role.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** What do you think would be an acceptable deadline to guarantee the distribution of the \$8 billion? It's a huge number. It's going to take a combination of partners, and the federal government has a leadership role to play. When are you going to be able to disburse this money?

[*English*]

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** My colleague and I agree that the federal government plays a leadership role. We are playing that role. That money has been invested. Since budget 2016, we have been adding to it, and there are tens of thousands of households that have access to the Internet today that didn't before we formed government.

By the end of this year, there will be an additional 50,000 households connected to the Internet. By the end of next year, there will be an additional 250,000 households connected to the Internet. By the end of 2022, there will be 400,000 households connected in nearly 1,000 communities, including 190 indigenous communities. This is something that should have been done decades ago, but we are on it, and we are on it with great urgency.

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Since the beginning of the crisis, several ministers of your government have recognized the extent of the need, for all Quebecers and Canadians, for access to high-speed Internet service and access to a quality cellular network.

Does this mean that the Connect to Innovate program, designed to connect Canadians, is not quite right? Doesn't that mean you need to move up the time line and invest some new money?

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, we've run out of time for this round of questions.

I will now yield the floor to Mr. Masse.

Mr. Masse, you have the floor for six minutes.

[English]

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Ministers, for being here.

Minister Monsef, do you know how much money Canada has taken in with spectrum auctions?

• (1845)

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** No, I don't specifically. I think my deputy is on the line and he'd be happy to share that.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** It's a relatively public number. It's over \$20 million.

Do you know how much money you raised in the last spectrum auction you had?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** No, but I'm sure you do, MP Masse.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Yes, I do, again because it's actually important to know this file. It was \$3.47 billion. Your government has committed how much of that \$3.47 billion to use right now, in the 2019 budget?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Budget 2019 set aside over \$1 billion both for the universal broadband fund and for the investments we're making in low-earth orbit satellites.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Yes, it was \$1.7 billion. We're missing \$1.77 billion from that spectrum alone. What did you do with the \$1.77 billion? I'll point out that the one that you did put in, the lower amount, is over 10 years, so there still is that money available because only a portion of it, \$170 million, is being spent this year.

Where is the rest of that money from that spectrum alone?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Madam Chair, if my colleague wishes to discuss spectrum, I highly encourage him to either connect with our officials or speak with Minister Bains, who has the lead on the spectrum file.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** You just spent the majority of your testimony talking about spectrum.

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** I think I spent a paragraph talking about spectrum, but okay.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Where else do you expect to connect Canadians from, if you're not going to use the proceeds from the spectrum or the spectrum itself? I've just asked a simple question. As a cabinet minister, what happened to the rest of that money and the mon-

ey that's unspent from that spectrum? We can roll out further spectrum connection right now. The money is there.

The Canadian government has collected over \$20 billion in spectrum alone. Just from the last budget year, the last spectrum alone—you have another one coming up—you have plenty of money to connect Canadians now. You're saying it's important for access and equality, but just not now. The geography isn't the problem. The Liberals are the problem with regard to connecting Canadians, because the money is right there in the government's bank account.

I want to know where that money is. Why did you decide, as a cabinet, to redirect that away from Canadians and connecting them? If it's so important, why not use that money to connect them now? Why go on bended knee to the private sector to try to do something, when the capital has already been raised—at no cost—from the spectrum?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** We have invested more in connecting Canadians to high-speed Internet than any other government. If my colleague is suggesting that we are holding back in any way, I want to assure him that he is wrong.

I also want to remind him—

**Mr. Brian Masse:** That's your own budget document. Your own budget documents say that you're spending \$170 million right now, because you're going to spread the first set of investments over 10 years.

There is still that \$1.77 billion. I want to know why it can't be used now to connect Canadians.

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** We are working to connect Canadians, and I want to remind my colleague that he voted against the funding we set aside to connect Canadians to high-speed Internet.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** If you want to play that game, I can do that quite easily. I can talk about how the Liberals voted against previous spectrum auctions and money used to actually connect Canadians as well.

I've been around here for a while, so I can list out, as long as the cows want to come home, the times the Liberals have voted against stuff, including my border here, including the environment, including Jack Layton's climate change bill when it was through the Senate with the senators there. I can go through a whole list, from the environment to spectrum, of what you guys voted against, if you want to play that juvenile game.

I'm simply asking you, as a cabinet minister—

**The Chair:** Mr. Masse, I'm just going to ask if you can lower the tone a bit, please. It's getting a little aggressive.

Thank you.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Fair enough, Madam Chair, and I apologize if it was aggressive. I don't mean to be that way, but the reality is that when I hear about those types of things, "You voted against that; you voted against this"....

What I'm asking for right now are the resources that this government has collected, and put in their budget and talked about. The minister talked about spectrum. Where are the dollars that were gathered in the spectrum itself in the budget, and where are they now? Where is that \$1.77 billion?

Why won't the government use those funds to connect Canadians now? Is there a reason to make Canadians wait? Maybe there is a reason.

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Where the funds go is to the consolidated revenue fund, firstly, and he knows this because as he's said, he's been around.

Second, we are investing heavily to connect as many Canadians as possible. That plan is working. There is no plan to hold back. If anything, because of COVID-19, we are accelerating those investments.

It's great to see this level of passion, Madam Chair. We're going to need it, and cross-party support, to further accelerate investments.

• (1850)

**Mr. Brian Masse:** My simple point in this is that you have the monies for it now. You don't have to wait around for the private sector.

You created the spectrum where there's a significant cost and there are significant black holes. Why can't that money be used by the government now to accelerate the timeline to connect Canadians? Why is it okay to be equal later but not equal now, especially when kids and other people are connecting to their education, their businesses, their futures.

We have disproportionate costs. Even in communities such as mine that are connected, we have some of the most challenged areas, with some of the highest costs in this country. We have some of the biggest disadvantaged groups, from new immigrants to existing Canadians in impoverished areas. You're making them wait for lower prices and you're making them wait for service.

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** No, we're not.

**The Chair:** That's all the time for that round. For our second round of questions, we have MP Patzer for five minutes.

You have the floor.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm going to continue along the same path that MP Masse was on with Minister Monsef here.

The news actually keeps getting worse. As I look at the connectivity strategy for Canada document put out by the Liberal government for budget 2019, the \$1.7 billion is actually for 13 years, which is going to take us to 2032. Why do we have to wait until 2032 to connect rural communities to broadband?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** We don't, and as my colleague knows with two projects in his own riding well under way because of our investments, we are seizing every moment to connect as many Canadians as possible.

Broadband infrastructure projects take time. We're building the type of infrastructure that can be future-proof, so that it can support additional technological investments. Our government sees this as an economic imperative, as well as one to address inequality across the country.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Yes, I actually spent 10 years working in telecommunications in this province, so I'm keenly aware of investments that have been made in the province, both in the last couple of years but long before that as well.

One of the other things I was reading about in the document was that it speaks about an online portal for municipalities to see all the funding available and how to apply for it. What is the name of the website? Is it up and running, and is it getting used?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Canada.ca/getconnected allows communities across the country to test their Internet speed. It allows for a comprehensive map, which is a significant tool for communities to apply for these projects. We are working to further fine-tune our efforts, as well as our tools, to make sure that more Canadians, particularly those in smaller communities without as much capacity to get grant writing and projects under way, are able to access and provide that service to their communities.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Okay, but a website for a speed test doesn't direct municipalities to where they can apply for funding.

Would you mind trying again?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** The universal broadband fund isn't open yet. However, Canada.ca/getconnected is where folks can go now and where information about programs will be once the universal broadband fund opens.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Okay, so they'll be able to go to that exact website to find out where they can apply for funding. That's good to know.

Further on, when you're talking about the mapping, right now one of the issues we have with mapping is that lots of companies actually use a low-quality signal mapping. They use that as a means to mislead consumers. They say, "Oh, we have your whole area covered," when the reality is that they don't, because obviously you can't do anything with a low-quality signal.

Can you confirm that these maps are high-quality signal mapping?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Yes. My colleague is referring to the hexagon model, which we heard from stakeholders was leaving too many underserved communities out of the scope, so we've now changed the maps so that the radius they cover is within 250 metres. These are more accurate and will lead to more Canadians getting connected.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Is that going to be high quality, though, and not just so that they can get a signal?

The reason I'm concerned is that we're looking at 50/10 megabits per second as a threshold, and right now, companies can say, "Oh, that's provided there." However, when you do a test, you don't even get remotely close to that. That's where the issue lies.

Will it be high-quality signal on that map, or will it continue to mislead consumers?

• (1855)

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** It's a high-quality map. It has been improved, and if folks are looking for applications and announcements, go to [Canada.ca/getconnected](http://Canada.ca/getconnected). You'll be able to do that speed test, you'll be able to see that map, and you'll be able to get connected to other programs, such as through the CRTC fund, which is accepting applications right now.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** You talked about low-orbit satellites. Are you thinking that is going to be one of the main drivers for providing rural Canadians with reliable Internet?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** I think low-earth orbit satellites are going to be needed to connect harder-to-reach communities, particularly in rural, remote and more northern communities. There is a set of tools, though, and high-quality fibre is a big part of our plan.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Yes, because wired is always better. The more we can invest in fibre, the better. Is that part of your plan?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Yes, and it's good to see us on the same page.

**The Chair:** That is all we have for that round. The next five-minute round goes to MP Longfield.

You have the floor.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** I'd like to thank both ministers for being here with us. I'd like to start off with Minister Monsef and then finish up with Minister Guilbeault.

We've been talking a lot about spectrum. In the last session of Parliament, the industry committee spent a lot of time studying this, and I felt for a moment here that I was back in those discussions. To bring them into the COVID-19 era, the way we are allocating spectrum and in fact doing spectrum auctions has changed. We did study areas such as Peterborough, Guelph and even Windsor, and other communities that have a lot of rural around them, getting brought into spectrum auctions. The more profitable parts of the coverage areas were gobbled up and other parts were left fallow and weren't developed.

Could you discuss how the new way of doing spectrum will benefit the communities that are now experiencing difficulties due to COVID-19?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, MP Longfield.

It was probably a lifetime ago, but it was only March 3 when Minister Bains announced that he would be setting aside 50 megahertz in the next spectrum auction to provide a more equal footing for those smaller ISPs, to provide greater support, greater speeds

and greater capacity for new applications for smaller communities that right now don't have that access.

He based that decision on what we heard from industry and what we heard across the country, and many thanks to the committee for their work. We've seen that what this has done in the past is that it's increased the way smaller communities can be connected and enhanced it by about 50%.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Thank you, and the work continues.

Minister Guilbeault, I'm very interested in the heritage funding that has been announced. Guelph has a lot of festivals. We have the Hillside Festival, the jazz festival and the multicultural festival. We have festivals that won't be happening this year, and because of that, there will be some serious impacts on our hotels and the hospitality sector. I'm wondering how the funding you've described will help get us through this year and still be in place for next year's festival season.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you for the question. It's an important question and an important point. On what we're trying to do with this funding, this is not funding for the recovery, for when we are no longer confined. This is really emergency funding to help as many of our arts and cultural organizations as possible make it through the first wave of the crisis.

We clearly understand that we will need to do more. The Prime Minister has said it, and I've said it many times. We will do more to support our heritage, cultural and arts organizations as we rebuild, as we recover from COVID-19. That is not what those funds are destined for. They're emergency funds to help them make it through that first wave of the crisis.

• (1900)

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Will there be a pickup point that we can direct the not-for-profits and the performers to in order to access these funds?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As far as organizations are concerned, I would encourage you to send them to the Canadian Heritage website. Canadian Heritage doesn't directly fund artists. The Canada Council for the Arts does. As I said earlier in my remarks, they have received additional funding to support arts organizations and artists as well.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** You have a complicated file across Canada. The artists also include authors and publishers. At the end of this, publishers will be returning a lot of books, which will leave a void in inventory that we'd love to fill with Canadian authors. Is there any thought toward that?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As someone who has published three books, I know a bit about the issue of copyright and editors. I've worked with many of them. This is an issue that's very dear to my heart. It is in my mandate letter. The Prime Minister has asked me to look into this. I'm assisted in that task by the member of Parliament for Toronto-Danforth, who, you may remember, was chair of the heritage committee that worked on the copyright issue. The file is in good hands, and we will be moving on it as fast as we can.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Beautiful. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

Our next round of questions goes to MP Gray.

You have five minutes.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Minister Monsef, I have a question for you.

With more people working from home and using the Internet to socialize with their friends and family during COVID-19, rural areas are specifically hard hit by data caps and throttling. The bandwidth capacity for a consistent 50 up and 10 down broadband connection is critical.

How many of those rural households have gained access to consistent broadband Internet under these parameters since your government took office in 2015?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** We've set aside investments to connect close to 400,000 households. Just under the connect to innovate program 25,000 have been connected. This year 50,000 will be connected.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Thank you very much.

Also as part of that, through the same program, your government pledged to connect 300 rural and remote communities in Canada to high-speed Internet by 2021. How many communities have been connected? Do you have any information for us? Is it just select communities, or are there a number of communities across the country that have been connected?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** I will pull that up for you right now.

By the end of next year over 50,000 households across 150 communities that don't currently have high-speed Internet will have access.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Will those be primarily rural communities?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Yes. They will be mostly communities that are considered rural or remote, but that also includes communities that are really close to urban centres but don't have access. That includes backbone as well as last-mile investments.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Minister Monsef, according to the CRTC, 87.2% of major Canadian transport roads and highways currently have access to mobile LTE, which is full signal.

Does this actually include full signal, or is this low signal, such as one bar, which is classified as accessible LTE? How many bars would that be that would fall within that percentage?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** There are communities, like my own, that weren't connected to the kind of cell service that would provide accessibility and, particularly, safety. With projects like the EORN

project, for example, we are working to address those cell gaps, because they are a matter of safety as well as a matter of economic growth.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** It sounds as though, when we're talking about percentage of coverage for signal, we're not really specifically clear about what that percentage is.

As part of that though, how would you define rural? When you're saying that we're connecting with all these different rural communities, what would be defined as a rural community?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** That is an excellent question.

Rural includes resource-dependent communities. It includes agricultural communities. It includes those that are close to urban centres but have a mix of both rural and urban. It includes many indigenous communities. Well over 40% of Atlantic Canada is considered rural. Actually, if you want to get into a philosophical discussion about what rural is, I just hosted a round table with experts across the country last week, and there's no clear consensus.

For the purposes of connectivity, we are defining rural as areas without access to 50/10.

• (1905)

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Thank you, Minister.

I have a couple of questions for Minister Guilbeault.

You stated just a few minutes ago that you were supporting news media, and that you would put funding into hiring 200 journalists in communities across the country. What percentage of that would go to local and community media?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** This is entirely for local media. That fund is dedicated to local media.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** How would local media apply for that? Is there a website set up so that they can easily apply for it? Is that all ready to go?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** We would be happy to provide you with the information as to how a media outlet could apply for that funding.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Okay. Thank you.

In addition to that, you had announcements where you launched a \$30-million public advertising campaign on physical distancing and COVID-19, with the purpose of advertising going to various media. Can you confirm what percentage of the spending also went to local and community media?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I could get you the breakdown. What I can tell you is that 97% of it went to Canadian media and, as I said earlier, to 900 print and 500 TV and radio stations across the country, in different languages—Farsi, Italian, Spanish, Mandarin, French and English obviously.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Do you know, Minister—

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, that's all the time we have for that round.

The next round of questions goes to MP Jowhari.

You have five minutes.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to welcome both ministers and the department officials.

I'll be sharing my time with MP Hutchings. Given the fact that I only have two minutes now, I'll focus my questions on Minister Guilbeault.

Mr. Guilbeault, the \$500-million investment in arts and culture was very welcome in my community. I have a very highly ethnic community, and the print media within the ethnic community plays a huge role in keeping the community informed, especially around times like this. Also, it is specifically focused on certain demographics. Seniors rely heavily on the ethnic media, especially the print media, not only to get information about activities in the community but also to get information about how they deal with and manage the COVID-19 challenges we are facing.

Just to give you a sense of this, I have three-plus Chinese print media and about five-plus Persian, three-plus Russian and two English print media alone, and two TV stations and one radio station. We were very excited, but when we actually did a deep dive in trying to figure out where they can apply, these are funds to be able to hire journalists, as you've highlighted, and we're really looking for funds to be able to keep them sustained.

What is happening is that the majority of their revenue was coming from small businesses that now don't have revenue, and they're not buying any advertising. I understand the wage subsidies and I understand they can go and get \$40,000, but what are we doing under arts and culture and as part of that \$500 million for the ethnic print media?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I thank the member from Richmond Hill for the question. It is a really important issue, which is why, as I was just saying, the ad campaign we did for \$30 million on the COVID-19 was done in 12 different languages.

As part of the \$500 million, there is \$70 million that was set aside for local news media organizations across the country to help support them through this crisis, including third-language media across the country. Beyond the wage subsidy and beyond the \$30 million, there's an extra \$70 million that will go to help support these news organizations, on top of the other \$50 million that I was talking about earlier on, which we adopted in the 2019 budget specifically for local media.

• (1910)

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Thank you, Minister. I'd appreciate some sort of guidance from your department for us to be able to reach these funds.

I yield the rest of my time to MP Hutchings.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.):** Thank you.

Ministers, it's always a pleasure to see you here.

Minister Monsef, I think it's great that you agree with me—and that all of our colleagues around the table agree—on the importance of connectivity, for rural especially. It's interesting, because the previous government's connecting Canadians program connected 220,000 households between 2009 and 2012, at speeds of five megabits to one. They were estimating to do 280,000 households between 2015 and 2017, but our government upped that to 350,000 households.

Minister, in your comments, you mentioned that our announced funding of \$6 billion is going toward Internet investments, and that is a contrast to the Conservative approach, which essentially leaves rural and remote communities to pay for these sizable infrastructure projects on their own. Can you tell us in a few minutes how you and our government are working with colleagues around the table to make sure that every single Canadian has access to affordable high-speed Internet and that it doesn't matter where they live?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Madam Chair, I'd like to thank MP Hutchings for her question and for her leadership. She brings the lens of small rural communities to the table, and it is a perspective that is appreciated and very helpful.

Colleagues on this call may disagree, but the philosophical approach to invest.... Colleagues like MP Masse believe that government should take on 100% of the cost. Some colleagues believe that the private sector should shoulder the cost. We, as Liberals, believe—

**Mr. Brian Masse:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair. I did not say that government should pay 100% of the cost. I said that the government should use the money it received from the spectrum auction. There's a difference between the two.

We have a surplus of money in the current spectrum auction, and several have taken place under the Liberal tenure that have not been used, so—

**The Chair:** MP Masse, that is debate, so I'm going to allow the minister to continue for the last 11 seconds.

Thank you.

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** We believe that government plays a big role in connecting Canadians. We believe in the role that the private sector plays, as well as other orders of government. Funds that go to the consolidated revenue fund go to health transfers, to social transfers. They fund other priorities.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister. Unfortunately, that's all the time we have.

[*Translation*]

We will now begin the next round of questions.

Mr. Champoux, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I first want to thank the witnesses for being here with us.

I'd like to speak with Minister Guilbeault about aid provided to the news media, which are very shaken by the crisis. We know they were before the COVID-19 crisis, but this crisis obviously added to the misery they were already experiencing.

The government has put in place measures for businesses and a wage subsidy that I agree help a lot. However, in more concrete terms, Minister, your department has invested \$30 million in advertising across Canada, which is the same amount that the Government of Quebec invested in advertising to help the media.

The \$30 million you invested in advertising brought in about \$1,500 for a local medium like the regional weekly at my home in Drummondville. That's more of a smile than a breath of fresh air. That's not what will allow our regional media to survive and get through the crisis.

In fact, Minister, here's what I want to ask you.

Would you consider investing more money in advertising, because that's what the regional media would like—but would you invest that money directly with the regional media rather than going through the agencies again, or Google when it comes to digital placement?

Would you consider that kind of quick help?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I thank the member for Drummondville for his question.

With regard to advertising, you will recall that your party asked us several times about investment in advertising, namely that there was not enough advertising in the Canadian media, or that there was too much.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** I must correct you on that one.

I'm talking about the current crisis. This is something you could do very quickly.

• (1915)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Yes, I'm getting to it.

We ran a publicity campaign that was 97% invested in Canadian media.

Advertising is one of the elements, but I could tell you about the \$70 million that was set aside for local media in the \$500-million envelope that was announced last week.

As far as the tax credit is concerned, everything is now in place to give access to the \$595 million that will be available.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Minister, my question is really this: would you be willing to discuss the possibility of investing new money in advertising, which would be directly targeted to regional or local media, which are really running out of steam right now?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I'm always open to discussion with the member from Drummondville.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We will begin the next round of questions.

[*English*]

Mr. Masse, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The reason I feel so passionately about some of the questions I've asked is that I come from an area where people are often told they're equal but just not now. I have a problem with that.

I would like to ask Minister Monsef a follow-up question with regard to equality. What does she say to those people—and statistically it's mostly women in service sectors that are very vulnerable, seasonal work as well as part-time work—who do not qualify for employment insurance because they don't have enough hours because of the government policy that sets the employment insurance model, and then don't make enough money from the previous year to qualify for CERB benefits?

What would she like to say to those people right now?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Madam Chair, as a woman in politics committed to addressing those inequalities, I share my colleague's concerns and I most certainly share his need to address the inequality gaps.

To his question around ensuring supports for the most vulnerable, that's been the priority of our government in the response—

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Why are those people not eligible if they don't make \$5,000?

Right now, I represent many people who didn't make enough money for the \$5,000 last year and they didn't make enough money for employment insurance. My riding has one of the highest rates of immigration and new Canadians, and one of the highest rates of poverty. We also have a series of other economic issues.

Why can't the minister and the government change the current model they have now so that these people will be entitled to either employment insurance or the CERB? What is stopping the Liberals from doing that?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Madam Chair, as I was saying, even before COVID we were committed to addressing those vulnerabilities. We lifted a million Canadians out of poverty. We provided affordable housing to a million households. We cut the child poverty rate by—

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Why should somebody pay into employment insurance and not receive a benefit because of an arbitrary number of hours? Those things aren't actually helping individual persons. Why should somebody have to go to a part-time job or a job that does not meet their employment insurance requirements and have to pay that, and then later not be eligible for CERB?

I don't want to hear about other programs. Why is it \$5,000? Why not \$4,000, \$3,000, \$2,000 or no amount of work? They're denied both.

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Madam Chair, MP Masse has been around for a long time, as he says, but he's never seen a crisis like this. We are doing everything we can to support as many Canadians as possible in these unprecedented times.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Now we are moving into the third round of questions, and the first five-minute round goes to MP Dreeshen.

You have the floor for five minutes.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

My questions will actually be going to Minister Guilbeault.

Mr. Minister, in addition to the big city events across the country, COVID-19 has forced the cancellation of literally hundreds of rodeos, community fairs, music festivals and farm fairs and exhibitions, all of which are of great economic importance to the local areas, to our local agriculture societies, to our seasonal entertainers, to our local merchants as well as to individual craft and food vendors.

As heritage minister, just a few moments ago you were struggling to define what western heritage is and how it affects these small town communities. I say this because, as western Canadians, we understand and cherish our pioneer spirit, those strong and gentle hands that built this country, Canada's true environmentalists, its farmers and its ranchers, its surveyors and the fur traders who opened up the west, the merchants and the labourers who kept commerce going, and the brave military men and women who have fought and continue to fight to keep this land strong and free. That's our western heritage. That's what we're talking about.

Earlier you talked about how you're going to be able to connect and help with the arts. It was said that you had written three books. Although my French isn't very good to catch what the titles were, I certainly got the gist of what Ms. Rempel Garner was talking about earlier. I've been a patron of the Calgary Opera, local theatres and the CFL for 20 years, but believe me, it's our oil and gas sector that funds the arts in this country, and it has been attacked by the current government. I am extremely frustrated because of those types of things.

Over my shoulder—and I know you're not supposed to use props—is a photograph of my grandparents' neighbour, Jim Ross

and his Calgary Stampede championship-winning rig and his teammates. He was the man the singing legend Wilf Carter used to sing about. Central Alberta is home to countless rodeo men and women who use their knowledge and their skill in normal ranch-hand routines and they display this expertise to the world.

To the minister, are you aware of the significance of our western way of life? Will you stand firmly against self-promoting celebrities in preserving our heritage to help bridge the rural-urban divide as we all work through these challenging times?

• (1920)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I thank the member for Red Deer for his question and for his passion for the arts and culture, which we have in common.

Heritage is an issue for all Canadians, in all of its diversity and distinction across the country. Our goal is to help arts and cultural organizations across the country to make it through this crisis, regardless of where they are.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Thank you.

You indicated there are going to be funding announcements. There are very few details, which is sort of the order of the day for what we can expect.

Is there a firm deadline to ensure that these funds can get out as soon as possible, preferably in the next couple of weeks?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** That's our goal, absolutely.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** The Public Health Agency of Canada has posted guidelines aimed at helping event planners figure out whether to cancel mass gatherings of people.

When will this government move forward to assist the small fairs and their associated events, which represent such a critical part of Canada's heritage, so that they have a chance to keep their doors open as we move past this community lockdown?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As I said, last week we unveiled details of how the money would be spent to help many different types of arts, heritage and cultural organizations across the country.

I can give you a clear example of where we're helping Albertan organizations more than we would normally for the rest of the country. On the sports side of things, we decided to allocate the money to provinces, not in relation to the number of people in the province but in relation to the number of provincial sports organizations. To its credit, Alberta has way more provincial sports organizations than many other Canadian provinces or territories. Therefore, Alberta will be getting a bigger share of the sports money, that aid, than it would under normal federal-provincial agreements solely based on population.



**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Thank you, but—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** You wanted a clear example of something that the federal government is doing to help Albertans, so there you go.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Okay, I appreciate that.

Of course, going back to what I was saying before, we have the attacks on our oil and gas. We have the same type of thing with animal rights activists who are going after our agriculture. This rural-urban divide is something that's extremely critical, so I hope you're going to be paying attention—

**The Chair:** MP Dreeshen.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Unfortunately, that's the end of your time.

Our next five-minute round goes to MP Lambropoulos.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.):** First, I thank both ministers for being here today. Thank you so much for being here and answering our questions.

My first question is for Minister Guilbeault.

[*Translation*]

There are many industries in Montreal that are related to tourism.

[*English*]

Obviously, we have a lot of cultural festivals. Every summer we have a jazz festival and a Just for Laughs festival. We have many festivals. This is not only going to affect the festivals themselves, but it's going to affect the restaurant businesses, the nightlife businesses, and as was mentioned earlier, hotels.

Montreal is going to be severely impacted by what's going on, especially with the projections that came out on Friday with regard to Quebec and COVID-19. We can see that if we reopen our society, it's going to be extremely dangerous for many people. I believe that we're probably going to remain closed for a much longer period than expected.

First of all, what do you think the impacts will be on these different industries I just mentioned? Do you have any idea what the losses will be for Montreal specifically? Also, what are we going to be doing in the future? Do you see us putting forward more money in order to help support these industries over the summer months?

• (1925)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I thank the member for Saint-Laurent for the question.

As an environmentalist, I tend to look at things as ecosystems. Frankly, I would do the same with regard to the arts, hospitality sector and restaurants. They go hand in hand. They were among the first sectors that were hit—and tourism, obviously—and they are probably going to be the last ones to come back to normal, or a new normal.

That is why our government has been looking at this with an ecosystemic approach: What can I do on the heritage side of things in collaboration with what my colleague Hon. Mélanie Joly can do

on the tourism side of things, and what my colleague Hon. Mary Ng can do on the small and medium-sized businesses side of things, so that once we make it through this crisis, our ecosystems are still intact and we are able to pick it up and start running again?

In answer to your second question, we do not know the scale of the economic impacts in the coming months. We are starting to have some idea, but we will need to have more information.

I want to quickly quote the Montreal board of trade, which saluted our \$500-million aid package that was announced last week for arts, culture and sports organizations as something that will be significant for Montreal and the greater Montreal communities.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** As well, obviously, our Olympians were getting ready for summer 2020, and it's not going to be happening this year. What are the effects on them and how are we trying to help? Can you be more specific as to how we're helping Team Canada this year?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Yes, and thank you for the question.

As I said, of the \$500 million, \$72 million will go to the sports sector. Of that \$72 million, roughly half will go to national federations such as Sport Canada and different types of sports federations. The other half will go to provincial and territorial organizations. Through our partnership with them, the money will be flowing through provinces and territories.

There's also \$5 million that we set aside to help our athletes prepare for the next Olympics. The postponement of the Olympics created all sorts of logistical and financial problems for our athletes, so we wanted to set aside some money to make sure we could be there for them.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Thank you very much.

For Maryam Monsef, obviously women and the status of women is something that is very important to me, so I'm actually going to take advantage of the fact that you're here with us today to ask you a couple of questions about the women who are being most affected at home [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] may be dangerous to their well-being and to that of their children, so that women can remain as safe as possible [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] even if they're in dangerous situations.

**The Chair:** I'm going to pause.

MP Lambropoulos, you're cutting out. Is it possible for you to repeat your question?

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** I'm sorry.

For Maryam Monsef, I don't know what you heard, but I'll repeat the whole thing. A lot of women are in a really dangerous spot right now, being at home, unfortunately. Their children are also in danger. What is our government doing to make sure, during this period of time when people are working from home, that Canadians, especially women and children in Canada, can maintain their safety?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Madam Chair, I understood the question. It is a pretty important question, so I'll leave it to you to determine how much time I have to answer it.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, that is all the time we have for MP Lambropoulos, and I wouldn't want to give you 10 seconds to answer such an important question.

With that, we are at 7:30, and I want to verify with the ministers. I understood that according to the schedule they had to leave at 7:30. I wanted to know if that is still the case or if they're able to stay.

• (1930)

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Madam Chair, if there is a woman suffering abuse in her home right now and you're talking to her via Zoom, there is a hand signal that's been created by the Canadian Women's Foundation. If you see this signal, you can check in on her, or you can connect to a shelter in your community or a women's organization and get her the help.

We're supporting over 400 shelters and over 150 sexual assault centres across the country, in addition to those in Quebec, so if you're suffering in silence and you think that right now there's nowhere to go, there are thousands of Canadians across the country whose doors are open to you. They will keep you and your loved ones safe. You don't have to stay in an abusive relationship.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

For the two ministers, are you able to stay for additional questions? According to the schedule, you had to leave at 7:30. I just want to verify.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I can stay a bit longer.

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** I have to go, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister Monsef, and thank you very much for the important message regarding the health and safety of women across Canada. I appreciate it enormously.

With that, we will move to the next round of questions.

MP Rempel, you have five minutes.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My questions will be directed to Minister Guilbeault.

I know that there's some discussion about how your government has spent I think \$3.5 million on a digital citizen initiative to support democracy and social cohesion related to the spread of misinformation on COVID. I'm just trying to get a sense of what would be covered under that.

Consider this particular statement:

Border measures are highly ineffective and, in some cases, can create harm. We see that in countries that had the worst expressions, the tightest borders.

Would that be misinformation?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** What we're trying to do with this money—and obviously, it's not the federal government doing the work. We've partnered with three organizations across Canada: la Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** That's great.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I'm trying to answer your question.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I'm trying to get a sense of what—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** There is also la Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec and the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, to help Canadians have access to the best possible information on COVID-19, which I think—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I'm not interested in who you're working with. I'm trying to get a sense of the—

On a point of order, through you, Madam Chair, I would remind the minister that this is my time.

I appreciate that the minister might want to talk about who he's working with, but I'm trying to get a sense, given that the government is investing in an initiative that might restrict free speech, of what constitutes misinformation. I asked him if the statement, "Border measures are highly ineffective and, in some cases, can create harm", if it were out in the public, would constitute misinformation, with regard to COVID.

**The Chair:** On the point of order, I will allow the continued questions. I ask that, again, members and witnesses direct their comments through the chair. We will use what we are doing with the special committee on COVID-19, which is that the answer will be roughly around the same time as the question.

Thank you.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As I was trying to say, Madam Chair, it's not up to the government to decide. We're working with these organizations so that they can help Canadians better understand and have access to the most important information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Great.

How about the statement, "Preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the novel #coronavirus"? Would that be misinformation?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Again, Madam Chair, if it's the same question, it's going to be the same answer.

We are working with these organizations, such as the Quebec federation of professional journalists, so that they can provide Canadians with the best possible information and help them detect...because unfortunately there are people who are trying to scam Canadians.

• (1935)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Madam Chair, scamming Canadians—I don't want that.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Neither of us wants that.

**The Chair:** Again, I would ask that we try to avoid the back and forth, and that we go through the chair, please.

Thank you.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Thank you.

I'm trying to get a sense of what these third party organizations would deem to be misinformation.

Would the statement, “evidence shows that restricting the movement of people and goods during public health emergencies is ineffective in most situations”, be deemed as misinformation?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Same question, same answer. It's not the government that's going to decide. We're working with organizations, third parties, so we have independent.... As a signatory of the Buffalo Declaration, you should understand what independence means from—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I can see that I've gotten under the minister's skin.

You have \$3.5 million that you're spending on restricting free speech, and all of those quotes that I just read to you were either from the WHO or the Minister of Health.

If those completely wrong, misleading statements that potentially had tremendous impacts on the Canadian economy and the health of Canadians came from the government, who watches the watchmen, boss?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I would point out that you are alleging that these statements are false.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Do you actually think that there's no human-to-human transmission of coronavirus or that border measures don't work? Is that what you are alleging?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** All I said was that the allegation came from you.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** They are false. They're false statements, but they're false.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** They didn't come from these organizations is what I'm saying.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** No, they did come from these organizations, Minister. The WHO put that out on March 13.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** They did not come from la Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick, la Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec or the Institute for Canadian Citizenship.

**The Chair:** That is all the time for this round.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Are they now in charge of what coronavirus information is?

**The Chair:** MP Rempel Garner, that is the end of that round.

Our next five-minute round of questions goes to MP Hutchings.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, thank you for being with me tonight. I, too, live in a province where culture, heritage and tradition are very strong and important, here on the east coast in my riding of Long Range Mountains in Newfoundland and Labrador. We, too, as all Canadians, recognize how important arts, culture, sports and heritage are in the lives of our artists, creators and athletes. They keep us united more than ever.

Can you bring us up to date on some of the measures that you are taking to support them through this COVID crisis?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** There are a number of things that we've done very early on. When the crisis started, one of the things that Canadian Heritage announced—it's the same with the Canada

Council for the Arts—was that we would honour our existing agreements with organizations for events that were planned, whether or not these events took place. What we told organizations was that, within reason, they could use the funds from the federal government to compensate some of the losses related to COVID-19.

We have accelerated the deployment of existing programs. Also, what we wanted to make sure of was that broader economic measures that were adopted by the federal government would be accessible for arts, cultural and sports organizations. We wanted to make sure that if an author receives a copyright cheque, it doesn't disqualify him from being able to apply for the CERB. As an author myself, and as someone who receives very small copyright cheques every now and then from my editor, that's never for money you've made in the last 14 days. It's for money you made six months ago, or a year or a year and a half ago.

We made sure that the more economy-wide programs we had were well adjusted and adapted to the arts and culture sector. On top of that, we've announced this \$500-million emergency aid package to help where more help is needed.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Great.

Minister, many organizations in my riding are reaching out as they're facing great uncertainty, just as they are all across the country. If their festival, their event, is cancelled, are they going to lose their funding? I think you've indicated that you're going to accept and look after them. At this time, when the new round of funding comes open, will you be accepting new applications?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Absolutely—

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** I have another question for you, Minister. I've had many questions from groups, especially musicians, about how they have cultural festivals. Would their funding be able to help them if their event is cancelled due to COVID-19? Would they be able to move that funding and use it to help them do a virtual event?

● (1940)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** The answer to your first question—I almost interrupted you, my apologies—is yes, absolutely. Our programs are going ahead. Grants and contributions are continuing to happen within Canadian Heritage.

On the second part of your question, the answer is yes. One of the things we are doing is showing the maximum flexibility that we can within our current programs. They weren't designed for the COVID-19 pandemic, so we have to adapt them as quickly as possible and give the flexibility that our partner organizations need to make it through this crisis.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Great. Thank you, Minister. Don't worry about interrupting me. I speak a little too fast. It's another tradition of the east coast.

Minister, it's so important at this time that people get their information from a reputable source. We've all heard of fake news. What advice do you give Canadians on how to make sure of the information they are getting on COVID-19, in terms of what they need to do, what they should be doing and where they should be going, is accurate?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** If there is one piece of advice I would give Canadians, it's to go to trusted news information. Go to your local, regional, provincial and federal health care agencies to get the best possible information. We've seen all sorts of things on the web, many of them, unfortunately, misleading or simply wrong regarding COVID-19. It's important that people verify the source and verify the information they're getting.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** That's great. Thank you so much.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It's just like doctors, I guess. Get a second opinion.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** That's right. Thank you so much, Minister.

Madam Chair, thank you so much.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Hutchings.

We will begin the next round of questioning.

Mr. Lemire, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, I would like to mention that I find it unfortunate that Minister Monsef left the meeting before all the opposition parties had a chance to get through the three rounds allocated to them. However, I will still ask my question.

There's \$750 million for the Broadband Fund. There is \$1.5 billion for the Connect to Innovate program. That's a total budget of \$2.5 billion, essentially to connect all Canadians.

What is the ratio so far between private money and public money for currently funded projects?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I thank the member for Abitibi—Témistamingue for his question.

I'll be pleased to forward this question to my colleagues Ms. Monsef and Mr. Bains. As you know, this does not fall under the purview of the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** The deputy minister is present and may be able to answer the question.

The document provided by the Department of Finance talks about innovating to build a better Canada. Since the creation of the Connect to Innovate program in 2016, the federal government has leveraged \$554 million from the private sector and other levels of government, which has funded 180 projects to date.

Is the private sector making a concrete contribution to this? Has it injected new money into this area? What are we waiting for to get to the \$8 billion that is required? Will the federal government have to make investments to get the private sector to do the same?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Again, I'm not able to answer that question.

Can the deputy minister answer the question, if he is still present?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy (Deputy Minister, Department of Industry):** Yes, I'm ready to answer questions.

The share of private sector investment depends on the project. For the private sector, it is more difficult to invest in some projects because communities are remote from their network, among other things. I can say, however, that the ratio for the most recent program, Connect to Innovate, is about one to one, one dollar from the private sector and one dollar from the government.

My colleague is online and she knows the technical details, if you want to have a more in-depth discussion about it.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** In the first round of questions, the minister mentioned that he could not answer my question. Can I take up that time again to ask a sub-question, Madam Chair?

• (1945)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, your time is up, Mr. Lemire.

Mr. Masse, you have the floor for two and a half minutes during this next round of questions.

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister Guilbeault, this continues my questioning with regard to your cabinet decision. You're aware that you've raised \$3.47 billion in spectrum auctions since you've been elected. You were at cabinet. You're scheduled, budgeted, to spend \$170 million of that for the Canadian connectivity program. At the same time, you'll be spending significantly right now for arts and culture in Canada, including important connections to communities like mine, with over 300 years of francophone cultural connection that we're extremely proud of. We're also faced with the United States bombarding us with their media sources.

What do you say to those Canadians who have to wait for another 10 years for connectivity when your government is pocketing the lion's share of the \$3.47 billion in spectrum auction that you received, and at the same time you're going to be rolling out programs for arts and culture in Canada that will have to wait, for a good majority of Canadians in rural and remote areas, and that in some areas will very expensive to access, because the rates are so high? Why is that acceptable?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As heritage minister, I cannot answer that question. I believe Deputy Minister Kennedy is still on the call—

**Mr. Brian Masse:** You were at the cabinet table. You made that decision with cabinet. You still have the lion's share of the \$3.47 billion that came in available to you in cabinet to redirect towards Internet services right now. Why can't that be a solution? Why do you have to wait on bended knee for private investment when we have \$20 billion historically invested from the private sector? Just recently, with your tenure, we have \$3.47 billion alone from the previous spectrum auction that you were part of and another spectrum coming up right now.

Why do we have to wait? What is wrong at cabinet with actually rolling these things out? Why do you need a private sector to do the arts and culture spread across this country that you could do immediately?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I would like to remind the member from Windsor West that we are investing \$6 billion in the deployment of the network.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** You're waiting for private funds to be part of that, and you have other access to capital. Why wait? Why not deploy that capital now?

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, that is all the time we have for that.

That completes our third round.

We have some officials with us, and we still have about 12 minutes remaining in meeting time, so I can start a fourth round. I just need to get an indication from the Conservatives of who would like the first five-minute round.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Madam Chair, I must leave. I could stay on a bit longer, but unfortunately I can stay no longer.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister. You were scheduled to be here for 90 minutes and you've actually stayed for much longer than that, so I want to thank you again for being here. I know that we have your officials here as well who can continue to answer questions.

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** MP Rempel Garner, are you going to be taking this round? I saw that you were unmuted.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I was just going to say that Mr. Patzer will be taking this spot. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

MP Patzer, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I guess I'm going to go to Mr. Kennedy with some questions.

Mr. Kennedy, I'm just wondering if you would be able to give us a definition of what "rural" means.

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** Thank you for the question.

As a public servant, I certainly think it would depend very much on the program you're referring to. Typically, on broadband programming, for example, you would have a definition of whether something is urban, ex-urban or rural, but that may well differ de-

pending on whether it's another government program in another ministry.

If you like, I could give an explanation of how that works in, say, our broadband program.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Yes, quickly.

• (1950)

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** Maybe Éric Dagenais' microphone could be turned on just to talk a little about how we work with the telcos to ensure that we get built out into rural areas.

I don't know if Éric is available on the line.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Yes, I just want a quick description of what "rural" would be in the context of broadband, just very quick.

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** Sure.

**Mr. Éric Dagenais (Assistant Deputy Minister, Spectrum, Information Technologies and Telecommunications, Department of Industry):** When we sell the spectrum to telcos through auctions, we have deployment conditions that mean that the telcos actually have to deploy the spectrum they buy, so they have to serve the rural areas in the tiers that they buy. Basically, as a condition of the sale of spectrum, the government requires that the telcos deploy and serve rural customers.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** What's the definition of "rural"?

**Mr. Éric Dagenais:** What we do is that we say you have to serve 90%, 95% or 97% of the territory of the tier. That means you end up having to serve the people in that tier. We don't actually have a definition of "rural". We just put a condition on the percentage of the geography that they have to serve and the people they have to serve.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Okay, here's the reason I'm wondering.

Right now, I'm sitting in the city of Swift Current, and we're just shy of 20,000 people. By a lot of definitions, Swift Current is considered a rural community. Within my riding, there are close to 140 communities, the vast majority of which would be under 1,000 people. There are only, I'm going to say, about five or six communities that are over 1,000 people anyway, so the vast majority of the people in my riding live on farms, on acreages or in communities like the one I grew up in. I grew up on a farm by a community that was under 300 people.

When we're talking about connecting rural broadband, my concern is that the metrics can be skewed to say, "The City of Swift Current has 50/10, so that falls into the 37% of communities that are connected already," or we could be using those numbers to pad. I'm just concerned about that.

**Mr. Éric Dagenais:** Okay, sorry. I was talking about spectrum auctions.

If you're talking about the connect to innovate program, smaller communities of fewer than 30,000 people were eligible, and they had to be further than two kilometres away from a fibre point of presence. That's how we defined "rural" for the purposes of the connect to innovate program.

I was talking about spectrum auctions, which I thought was the question.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Okay, that's fair. I'm looking for broadband here.

We were talking about the track records of governments connecting broadband. Between 2012 and 2015, I was working as an installer for a telecommunications company in an area that has three first nations on it. That was during the Harper government's time, and I did some of the first connections on first nations to ensure that they had a fixed, wired Internet solution. It was not wireless. It didn't rely on wireless technology, which is unreliable but seems to be the direction we are going with a lot of these rural broadband announcements here.

Especially if we're looking to get to 50/10, how are we going to then ensure that all of these areas that have a population of fewer than 1,000, or even greater than 1,000, are going to actually be able to achieve 50/10?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** That's a decision that has to be made as we look at the proposals that come in—project by project—to make sure they can meet that specification. There may be some where it's going to be fibre optic. There may be some where it will be fixed wireless. It will depend on the project.

That's the sort of thing we will look at when we're evaluating the proposals. Certainly the objective of making sure that we hit 50/10 is front and centre.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much. That's the end of that round of questions.

The next five-minute round goes to Lloyd Longfield.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be splitting my time with MP Hutchings.

To continue on with Mr. Kennedy, in our part of Ontario, we've been working with the municipalities, with the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, looking at the SWIFT project and the need to combine efforts with the small rural communities and the provinces in which they reside, and with the federal government.

With COVID-19, some of the equations might change. Municipalities might be strapped for cash, or provinces may not be at the table. Have we taken any steps in terms of modelling, going forward, from the federal government?

• (1955)

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** I could again maybe turn to Éric Dagenais to get into the technical detail.

However, when the new program opens, which I think ministers have indicated they will be wanting to move forward quickly, we're going to see very rapidly what kinds of proposals come in and what kind of financing capability the various parties can bring to the table. I think we're going to want to be very responsive to the reality

on the ground. Obviously, circumstances may well have changed with COVID-19.

I realize there's limited time, but if you want to get deeper into the question, I could ask my staff to speak to that.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** I don't want your staff to have to speculate, but I think it's fair to say that we have some work to do in terms of how we evaluate going forward.

I'll turn it over to Ms. Hutchings.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Mr. Kennedy, continuing on the theme of broadband, I think we're all in agreement that urgency is a prerequisite. As the minister said, the importance of this connectivity is similar to the railway going in.

I have two quick questions for you.

Can you give me your comments on where you think we can use passive infrastructure in advancing to these small rural communities? I, too, am like my colleague Mr. Patzer. I have over 200 communities of probably 1,000 people and under. If there is passive infrastructure, can we use that?

What other interim measures is the department looking at to ensure we get people connected as quickly as possible, especially in the era of safety? We have communities with no communication now, at all.

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm so sorry. I missed the front end of the question. I think there was a question about the use of passive infrastructure.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Yes.

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** That is something we're very alive to. I think Janet Yale's panel mentioned this as an issue. That was the panel that came out maybe two months ago.

Certainly you want to take advantage where you can of passive infrastructure, because that's an efficient way to make sure you can make broadband available. The CRTC is currently reviewing access, for example, to telephone poles, so there's already a proceeding being run by the CRTC. That is the area we're very alive to, just to assure the member of that.

In the short term, we obviously want to do everything we can to support the availability of data and voice services to Canadians, and there's a lot of work being done with the telcos to try to ensure that people have access during the crisis period.

I'm not sure if that was the question, but—

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Yes, it was. I was wondering what you were looking at as interim measures that could help communities that have no accessibility either with broadband or cell right now.

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** The first thing is that we want to make sure that when the program is up and running, we go as quickly as possible. An aim will be to try to roll out the new funding under the universal broadband program as rapidly as we can. That's certainly a priority.

In terms of the existing network, there's a lot of work that telcos are doing to expand the availability of their networks, to add additional capacity so it can hold up to the traffic. There's been a huge increase in voice traffic and data traffic and so on. There are some things we've done with them in terms of delaying payment of fees, accelerating the transfer of licences. When one company has some spectrum they can't use and another company can use it, we speed up those transfers so that they can balance the load and more efficiently serve customers during the crisis.

There are things we're doing now, even with the existing infrastructure, behind the scenes. Then, of course, when the new program launches—

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Sorry. I was just going to say that the minister made reference to some changes that we made in CTI and that you're going to see in UBF. Can you give us a couple of examples of how we've made the UBF better going forward in the application process and in the—

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, that wraps up our time for this evening, but I'd like to thank everyone for being here and helping us along the way in this study for the response on COVID-19.

Again, our next meeting is on Thursday, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

With that, I will call this meeting adjourned. Thank you very much, everyone.

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