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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Saturday, April 11, 2020

The House met at 12:15 p.m.

Prayer

• (1220)

[*English*]

RECALL OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The Speaker: Colleagues, before we begin our proceedings, I would like to say a few words.

[*Translation*]

Similar to the last time the House was recalled, the arrangements we are used to are again different today. We are fewer in number, and other special measures have been put in place on the basis of the recommendations of public health officials.

[*English*]

To that end, I understand there will once again be agreement to see the application of Standing Order 17 suspended for the current sitting to allow members to practise physical distancing. I encourage all members to follow this and other recommended best practices during today's proceedings.

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

[*Translation*]

In addition, we will suspend the sitting every 45 minutes for one minute in order to allow employees who provide support for the sitting to replace each other safely.

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

I wish to inform the House that pursuant to Standing Order 28(3), I sent a notice of meeting calling the House to meet this day and on Thursday, April 9. I sent every member a message explaining why the House was being recalled. I now lay this notice on the table.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): We are gathered here during a time of grave concern because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Canada and the entire world are going through a crisis that none of us anticipated.

[*English*]

Today, as members of Parliament, we are delivering a clear and unified message to Canadians that we will not let them down, we will not forget them and we will support them in this time of crisis.

Therefore, I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

[*Translation*]

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

(a) the application of Standing Orders 15, 17 and 56.1 be suspended for the current sitting;

(b) the government responses to petitions 431-00046 to 431-00123 be tabled immediately and that those to questions on the Order Paper numbered Q-260 to Q-308 and Q-310 to Q-368 be made into orders for return and that the said returns be tabled immediately;

(c) Tuesday, March 24, 2020, and this day shall not be considered as sitting days for the purposes of Standing Orders 34(1), 37(3), 51(1) and 110 and subsection 28(12) of the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons;

(d) a bill in the name of the Minister of Finance, entitled A second Act respecting certain measures in response to COVID-19, be deemed to have been introduced and read a first time and ordered for consideration at second reading later this day;

(e) Statements by Ministers be taken up immediately following the adoption of this order and that a member of the Green Party also be permitted to reply to the statement;

(f) following the responses to the ministerial statement, the House shall resolve itself into a committee of the whole to consider matters related to the COVID-19 pandemic for a period not exceeding two hours provided that, during the proceedings of the committee, (i) the Speaker may preside, (ii) the Chair may preside from the Speaker's chair, (iii) the Chair shall call members in a fashion consistent with the proportions observed during Oral Questions, (iv) no member shall be recognized for more than five minutes at a time which may be used for posing questions to a minister of the Crown or a parliamentary secretary acting on behalf of the minister, (v) members may be permitted to split their time with one or more members by so indicating to the Chair; and at the conclusion of the time provided for the proceedings, or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, the committee shall rise;

Business of the House

(g) when the committee of the whole rises, the House shall begin debate on the motion for second reading of the bill referred to in paragraph (d); a member of each recognized party and a member of the Green Party may speak to the said motion for not more than 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments, provided that members may be permitted to split their time with another member; and, at the conclusion of the time provided for the debate or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill shall be put without further debate or amendment, provided that, if a recorded division is requested, it shall not be deferred and that, if the bill is adopted at second reading, it shall be referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage on division, and deemed read a third time and passed on division;

(h) when the bill referred to in paragraph (d) has been read the third time and passed, the House shall adjourn until Monday, April 20, 2020, provided that, for the purposes of any standing order, it shall be deemed adjourned pursuant to Standing Order 28, and, for greater certainty, the provisions of paragraphs (m) to (p) of the order adopted on Friday, March 13, 2020, and subparagraph (f)(ii) and paragraphs (i) to (m) of the order adopted on Tuesday, March 24, 2020, remain in effect;

(i) during the period the House stands adjourned, the House may be recalled, under the provisions of Standing Order 28(3), to consider measures to address the economic impact of COVID-19 and the impacts on the lives of Canadians;

(j) if, during the period the House stands adjourned pursuant to this order, the Speaker receives a notice from the House leaders of all four recognized parties indicating that it is in the public interest that the House remain adjourned until a future date or until future notice is given to the Speaker, the House will remain adjourned accordingly, provided that, in the event of the Speaker being unable to act owing to illness or other cause, the Deputy Speaker or either of the Assistant Deputy Speakers shall act in the Speaker's stead for all the purposes of this paragraph;

(k) during the period the House stands adjourned pursuant to this order, any return, report or other paper required to be laid before the House in accordance with any act of Parliament, or in pursuance of any order of this House, may be deposited with the Clerk of the House on any Wednesday, provided that committee reports presented pursuant to an order of this House may be deposited at any time; and such return, report or other paper shall be deposited electronically and shall be deemed for all purposes to have been presented to or laid before the House;

(l) during the period the House stands adjourned pursuant to this order, the Standing Committee on Health, the Standing Committee on Finance, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, and the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology may hold meetings for the sole purpose of receiving evidence related to the COVID-19 pandemic, provided that, at such meetings, (i) committee members shall attend and witnesses shall participate via either videoconference or teleconference, (ii) committee members attending by videoconference or teleconference shall be counted for the purposes of quorum, (iii) proceedings shall be made available to the public via the House of Commons website, (iv) notices of membership substitutions pursuant to Standing Order 114(2) may be filed with the clerk of each committee by email, and further provided that these committees (v) shall each meet at least once per week, unless the whips of all recognized parties agree not to hold a meeting, (vi) may each receive evidence which may otherwise exceed the committee's mandate under Standing Order 108, (vii) shall meet within 48 hours of the receipt by email, by the clerk of the committee, of a request signed by any four members of the committee;

(m) the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be instructed to study ways in which members can fulfill their parliamentary duties while the House stands adjourned on account of public health concerns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the temporary modification of certain procedures, sittings in alternate locations and technological solutions including a virtual Parliament, provided that (i) during the period the House stands adjourned pursuant to this order, the provisions applying to committees enumerated in paragraph (l) shall also apply to the committee, however, the committee may consider motions related to the adoption of a draft report on this topic, (ii) the committee be instructed to present a report no later than May 15, 2020, (iii) any report which is adopted pursuant to subparagraph (ii) may be submitted electronically with the Clerk of the House, and shall be deemed to have been duly presented to the House at that date;

(n) in addition to receiving evidence, the committees enumerated in paragraphs (l) and (m) of this order, while meeting by videoconference or teleconference, may also consider motions requesting or scheduling specific witnesses, and these motions shall be decided by way of a recorded vote;

(o) for the purposes of committee meetings convened under paragraphs (l) and (m), priority for the use of House resources shall be given, in the following order, to (i) meetings of the Standing Committee on Health, (ii) meetings of the Standing Committee on Finance, (iii) meetings which are specified by the agreement of the whips of all recognized parties, (iv) all other meetings, in the order in which the meetings were convened;

(p) the House call on the Auditor General of Canada to conduct an audit of (i) the spending undertaken pursuant to the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act, (ii) the exercise of the provisions of the Financial Administration Act, and the Borrowing Authority Act enacted by Part 8 of the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act, and that the Auditor General report his findings to the House no later than June 1, 2021;

(q) the House call upon the government to take such measures as are necessary to ensure that the Auditor General has sufficient resources to conduct the work he has been asked by the House to do, including the audits called for in this order and the orders adopted on Wednesday, January 29, 2020, and Friday, March 13, 2020;

(r) the government implement measures without delay to address gaps in the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), or other programs, existing or proposed, to address the needs of seasonal workers, those who have exhausted their Employment Insurance benefits, students, owner/operators, those who continue to receive a modest income from part-time work, royalties, and honoraria, and that, in addition, the government work to ensure essential workers who receive low wages will receive additional income support during this time of crisis, and commit that those who have applied in good faith for and received benefits through CERB or other programs to support them through this crisis will not be unjustly penalized;

(s) the government implement, in the short-term, support measures for Canadian small and medium-sized enterprises, which will be partially non-refundable, with the primary objective of maintaining jobs and reducing debt related to fixed costs, while maintaining access to liquidity in the form of loans; and

(t) the House note that the measures included in An Act to amend the Financial Administration Act (special warrant), the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act, and the bill referred to in paragraph (d) are for the purpose of dealing with the unique circumstances and the time period of the COVID-19 situation and recovery.

• (1230)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion deemed adopted and Bill C-14 deemed introduced and read the first time)

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QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

[Text]

Question No. 260—**Mr. Michael Barrett:**

With regard to the government requiring employees to sign non-disclosure agreements: (a) how many public servants currently employed by the government were required to sign a non-disclosure agreement, broken down by department or agency; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a), by section or branch of the relevant department or agency?

(Return tabled)

*Business of the House***Question No. 261—Mr. Kelly McCauley:**

With regard to Canada 150 commemorative plaques: (a) how many plaques have been approved for distribution; (b) what is the breakdown of plaque distribution by province and by city; (c) what is the location and the rationale for the award of a plaque to each location in (b); (d) what is the total cost of the plaques and what is the cost per unit; (e) have the plaques been installed with government resources, and, if so, (i) which department is responsible, (ii) what is the labour cost associated with the installation; and (f) are there any maintenance costs, and, if so, what are they?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 262—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to vehicles purchased by the government for the G20 Summit: (a) how many vehicles were purchased; (b) what was the market value of each individual vehicle purchased at the time of purchase; (c) how many of the vehicles in (a) were put up for sale by the government; (d) of the vehicles in (c), how many were sold; (e) what was the individual selling price for each vehicle sold; and (f) of the vehicles in (c), how many (i) remain, (ii) are still up for sale, including the individual selling price, (iii) are being used by the government, (iv) are in storage?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 263—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to Department of National Defence capital equipment projects over \$100 million: (a) what is the name of each project that has received financial authority for project implementation from the Treasury Board Secretariat since 2010, and (i) when did each project receive its initial financial authority, (ii) what was the value of each authority when initially granted, (iii) what is the value of the project's final or most recent authorities, and the date of change of financial authority; and (b) what is the name of each project that has received financial authority for project implementation from the Minister of National Defence since 2010, and (i) when did each project receive its initial financial authority, (ii) what was the value of each authority when initially granted, (iii) what is the value of the project's final or most recent authority, and the date of change of financial authority?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 264—Ms. Heather McPherson:

With regard to the \$1.6 billion in funding to support Alberta oil and gas, announced in December 2018: (a) how were these funds allocated, broken down by (i) public body, such as department or Crown corporation, (ii) program, (iii) quarter, or fiscal year, if quarterly data is not kept; and (b) in the case of funds disbursed as loans to businesses, for each loan, what are the details, including (i) the amount of the loan, (ii) the recipient, (iii) the purpose of the loan, (iv) the public body and program authorizing the loan, (v) the quarter in which it was granted, or fiscal year, if quarterly data is not kept?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 265—Ms. Heather McPherson:

With regard to programs, departments and Crown corporations participating in the Clean Growth Hub: (a) how much was allocated to each program since 2015, excluding the Business Development Bank of Canada, the Canadian Commercial Corporation, and Export Development Canada, broken down by (i) department, (ii) fiscal year; (b) since 2015, how much was spent by each program, excluding the Business Development Bank of Canada, the Canadian Commercial Corporation, and Export Development Canada, broken down by (i) program, (ii) department, (iii) fiscal year, (iv) province in which the money was spent; and (c) how much was spent by the Business Development Bank of Canada, the Canadian Commercial Corporation, and Export Development Canada on loans or programs specifically related to clean technology or sustainable development since 2015, broken down by (i) program, (ii) Crown corporation, (iii) fiscal year, (iv) province or country, if the money was spent abroad?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 266—Mr. Arnold Viersen:

With regard to the Department of Justice's consultations on medical assistance in dying (MAID) eligibility criteria and request process: (a) how many online submissions were received; (b) what is the breakdown of submissions by (i) province or territory, (ii) urban or rural area, (iii) other demographics; (c) for each question in the consultation, what is the breakdown of the number of submissions for each of the possible answers; and (d) what is the breakdown of (c), by (i) province or territory, (ii) urban or rural area, (iii) other demographics?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 267—Mr. Alex Ruff:

With regard to government evidence or studies related to the effectiveness of measures being considered by the government in relation to firearms: (a) what measures are currently being considered or implemented; (b) for each of the measures in (a), does the government have any evidence that such measures would be effective; and (c) based on the evidence in (b), what will be the projected impact of each measure, including the effect on various crime rates?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 268—Mr. Alex Ruff:

With regard to the government missing the deadline to raise our bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) status from "Controlled Risk to BSE" to "Negligible Risk to BSE" with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) in the summer of 2019: (a) why did the government miss the deadline; (b) has the government sought a waiver or exemption with the OIE for the missed deadline; (c) has the government filed an application with the OIE for the "Negligible Risk" status, and, if so, on what date was the application filed; (d) what measures have been put in place since the missed deadline to ensure that future deadlines are not missed; (e) has the government received any indication from the OIE regarding whether or not the status will be raised to "Negligible Risk" in March 2020; and (f) will the raising of the status be delayed and, if so, until when?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 269—Mr. Bob Saroya:

With regard to the government's response to question Q-143, indicating that the \$56,000 owed to the managers of the Aga Khan's private island in the Bahamas has been paid: (a) did the government pay the balance, or was the amount owing settled in another way, and, if so, what are the details of how the matter was settled; and (b) as of what date was the payment made or the outstanding amount settled?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 270—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to expenditures on gifts for diplomats in relation to the ongoing campaign for a UN Security Council seat: (a) what is the total amount spent on gifts; and (b) what are the details of each gift, including the (i) description, (ii) cost per unit, (iii) number of units purchased?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 271—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to expenditures made by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in relation to its current civil litigation action against the Conservative Party of Canada regarding the use of footage during the 2019 election campaign: (a) what is the total of all expenditures incurred to date in relation to the matter; and (b) what is the itemized breakdown of the expenditures?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 272—Mr. Tony Baldinelli:

With regard to the \$196,010,248 loan that was written off from Export Development Canada's Canada Account: (a) who received the loan; (b) what was the purpose of the loan; and (c) why was it written off?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 273—Mr. Tony Baldinelli:

With regard to the 16 CC-295 fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft purchased by the government: (a) what are the operational limitations of the aircraft; (b) what operational limitations were discovered during any phase of the pre-acceptance testing; (c) what specific content in the aircraft's manual is under dispute; (d) what specific Canadian requirements do the aircraft manuals suggest the aircraft does not meet; and (e) what are the critical safety aspects of the technical manuals currently under discussion between Canada and Airbus?

(Return tabled)

*Business of the House***Question No. 274—Mr. Gord Johns:**

With regard to the report of the Standing Committee of Fisheries and Oceans entitled “West Coast Fisheries: Sharing Risks and Benefits”: (a) what directives has the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans given to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to fulfill recommendations Nos. 1 through 20, broken down by recommendation; (b) what funding streams have been allocated to fulfill recommendations Nos. 1 through 20, broken down by recommendation; and (c) what plans and timelines have been established by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to fulfill recommendations Nos. 1 through 20, broken down by recommendation?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 275—Mr. Tom Kmiec:

With regard to the decision by the Minister of Finance to reclassify expenditures made to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and other multilateral development banks from provisioned assets with no residual value to a full investment asset: (a) why was the change made; (b) when did this accounting change go into effect; (c) does the government have the ability to liquidate or recover this “full investment asset”, and if so, what is the manner or mechanism by which it has the ability; (d) what are the details of each payment made to a multilateral development bank or similar type of institution, going back as far as records are available, including (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) recipient, (iv) manner in which expenditure was recorded (non-budgetary statutory expense, fully expensed payment, full investment asset, etc.); (e) what are the revised deficit or surplus levels for each of the past 20 years based on the minister’s new way of classifying these expenditures; (f) which outside firms were hired by the Department of Finance to provide position papers on this matter; (g) what position did each firm listed in (f) provide to the government; and (h) what are the details of all contracts related to (f), including (i) name of firm, (ii) initial contract amount, (iii) final contract amount, (iv) goods or services delivered, (v) start and end date of contract, (vi) date position paper was delivered to the government?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 276—Mr. Mel Arnold:

With regard to the June 22, 2018, government news release titled “The Government of Canada Announces Repairs to Graham’s Pond Harbour”: (a) what specific repairs to the Graham’s Pond Harbour have been completed since the announcement; (b) what are the total expenditures related to the repairs since June 22, 2018; (c) what are the details of all expenditures, including (i) amount, (ii) description of goods or services, (iii) vendor, (iv) program from which expenditure funding was provided; and (d) if any repairs associated with the announcement have not yet been completed, on what date is completion expected, broken down by repair?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 277—Mr. Mel Arnold:

With regard to the September 17, 2018, government news release titled “Minister Brison announces Government of Canada investment in Delhaven Harbour”: (a) what specific expenditures for the harbour infrastructure in Delhaven have been made since the announcement, including (i) date of expenditure, (ii) recipient, (iii) amount, (iv) project description, (v) program name under which funding was delivered; (b) what are the total expenditures since September 17, 2018, on improvements to Delhaven Harbour; and (c) if there are any projects or expenditures related to the announcement which have not yet been delivered, what are the details of each project or expenditure, and what is the reason for not yet delivering the project or expenditure?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 278—Mr. Mel Arnold:

With regard to funds paid by the government to finfish aquaculture producers in compensation for disposal of finfish at aquaculture facilities since January 1, 2016: (a) what is the total amount of compensation paid to finfish aquaculture producers; and (b) what are the details of all compensations paid, including (i) amount, (ii) date of payment, (iii) name of finfish aquaculture producer, (iv) location of finfish aquaculture production facility, (v) reason for disposal of finfish for which compensation was paid?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 279—Mr. Steven Blaney:

With regard to the comments by the Minister of Canadian Heritage on CTV’s Question Period on Sunday, February 2, 2020, that “if you’re a distributor of content in Canada [...] we would ask that they have a licence”: (a) are individuals who

post their opinions on social media considered to be distributors of content; (b) what is the government’s criteria for who is considered to be a distributor of content; (c) is there a threshold in terms of social media audience or followers which an individual must meet before being considered a distributor of content, and, if so, what is the threshold; (d) has the government received any legal opinions concerning whether or not its plan to require a licence would survive a charter challenge, and, if so, what are the details of any such legal opinions, including (i) who provided it, (ii) what the opinion is; (e) what are the planned consequences for distributors who do not acquire or maintain a licence; and (f) what is the projected number of distributors who would be required to obtain a licence under the plan?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 280—Mr. Peter Kent:

With regard to the impact of SNC-Lavalin’s guilty plea in December 2019 on fraud charges in relation to the company’s contract to support servicing of minor warships and auxiliary vessels: (a) what impact will the guilty plea have on the scheduled renewal of the contract; (b) what specific considerations will the government take into account when deciding the status of the renewal; (c) what is the projected timeline for either renewing this contract or awarding a new contract to another company; and (d) what changes has the government made to the way it conducts business with SNC-Lavalin following the December 2019 guilty plea?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 281—Mr. Peter Kent:

With regard to the government’s contracting and integrity regime framework: (a) which corporations have been formally investigated under the framework; (b) of the corporations in (a), which ones (i) received sanctions, (ii) were found in violation of the framework but received an exemption or waiver from sanctions, (iii) were found not to be in violation; (c) what are the details of each exemption or waiver from sanctions, including (i) the name of the corporation, (ii) the date the waiver or exemption was granted, (iii) the rationale or justification for the waiver or exemption, (iv) the minister who provided the exemption or waiver?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 282—Ms. Jenny Kwan:

With regard to the National Housing Strategy, broken down by stream (i.e. new construction, housing repair and renewal), year of submission, province, number of units, and dollar amount for each finalized application: (a) how many applications have been received for the National Housing Co-Investment Fund since 2018; (b) how many applications have had funding agreements finalized since 2018; (c) how many applications have been declined since 2018; (d) how many applications are currently being assessed; and (e) for applications that resulted in finalized funding agreements, what was the average length of time in days between their initial submission and the finalization of their funding agreement?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 283—Mr. Pat Kelly:

With regard to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity’s title: how does the minister define and measure prosperity?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 284—Mr. Pat Kelly:

With regard to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s First-Time Home Buyer Incentive, since the program was launched: (a) how many loans have been approved; (b) how many loans have been funded; and (c) how many loan applications have been withdrawn after approval but before funding?

(Return tabled)

*Business of the House***Question No. 285—Mr. Pat Kelly:**

With regard to the instruction in the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity's mandate letter to "[...] better incorporate quality of life measurements into government decision-making and budgeting": (a) which quality of life indicators will the minister consider; (b) how will the indicators in (a) be measured; (c) without a definition of the middle class, as noted in the minister's answer to question Q-89, dated December 6, 2019, how will the minister determine whether the indicators in (a) apply to Canadians in given income ranges; (d) how many of the indicators in (a) must a Canadian demonstrate to qualify as middle class; and (e) to what degree or intensity must a Canadian demonstrate the indicators in (d) to qualify as part of the middle class?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 286—Mr. Pat Kelly:

With regard to the instruction in the mandate letter of the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance to "[...] ensure that the Department of Finance has the analytical and advisory capabilities that it needs to support and measure the impact of an economic agenda focused on growing the middle class and those people working hard to join it": (a) which income, expense and lifestyle choice factors will the minister consider in measuring the effect of measures to grow the middle class and those working to join it; (b) without a definition of the middle class, as noted in the minister's answer to question Q-89, dated December 6, 2019, how will the minister determine whether measures to grow the middle class and those working to join it are affecting the target demographics; (c) how does the minister define "those people working hard to join [the middle class]"; (d) how will the Department of Finance support measures to grow the demographic in (c); and (e) relative to what will the minister measure growth of the respective demographics in (b)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 287—Mr. James Cumming:

With regard to government advertising expenditures, broken down by department or agency: (a) what was the total amount spent on advertising with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation—Société Radio-Canada during the (i) 2017, (ii) 2018, (iii) 2019 calendar years; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by platform (i.e. English television, French television, online, etc.), if known?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 288—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to the government's Connect to Innovate program: (a) how much of the \$500 million committed investment has been distributed; (b) how much of the remaining funds are expected to be distributed by the end of the commitment in 2021; (c) how many applications have been made to the program; (d) how many applications have been assessed and responded to; (e) how many applicants are currently awaiting responses; (f) for each instances in (e) what are the details of all applications received to date, including (i) name of the applicant, (ii) name of the project, (iii) location, (iv) date the application was received, (v) total funding requested, (vi) description of the project; (g) how many applications have been rejected; and (h) of the 900 communities intended to be reached by the Connect to Innovate Program how many have been successfully reached?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 289—Mr. Philip Lawrence:

With regard to the \$120,000 sole-source contract being given to Security Council Report in relation to the bid for a UN Security Council Seat: (a) did the fact that the company is chaired by former Liberal cabinet minister Allan Rock factor into the decision to award the contract to the firm; (b) were other firms considered for the contract, and, if not, why not; (c) what led to the government to decide that Security Council Report was the best qualified firm for the contract; (d) which minister made or approved the decision to award this contract to this firm; (e) on what date was the decision made or approved; and (f) what specific goods or services are expected to be provided by the firm?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 290—Mr. Greg McLean:

With regard to government departments and agencies which accept credit card payments: what was the total amount paid to (i) Visa, (ii) Mastercard, (iii) American Express, (iv) other credit card companies, in relation to credit card processing fees in each of the last three years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 291—Mr. Kevin Waugh:

With regard to the requirement for media organization to receive a Qualified Canadian Journalism Organization (QCJO) status from the government in order to receive certain tax credits: (a) how many applications for QCJO status were received; (b) how many applications were successful; (c) what are the names of the organizations which the government approved for a QCJO status; and (d) what are the names of the organizations which applied for QCJO status, but were denied by the government?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 292—Mr. Tom Kmiec:

With regard to the First-Time home buyer incentive (FTHBI) announced by the government in 2019, between September 1, 2019, and February 1, 2020: (a) how many applicants have applied for mortgages through the FTHBI, broken down by province and municipality; (b) of those applicants, how many have been approved and accepted mortgages through the FTHBI, broken down by province and municipality; (c) of those applicants listed in (b), how many approved applicants have been issued the incentive in the form of a shared equity mortgage; (d) what is the total value of incentives (shared equity mortgages) under the FTHBI that have been issued, in dollars; (e) for those applicants who have been issued mortgages through the FTHBI, what is that value of each of the mortgage loans; (f) for those applicants who have been issued mortgages through the FTHBI, what is the mean value of the mortgage loan; (g) what is the total aggregate amount of money lent to homebuyers through the FTHBI to date; (h) for mortgages approved through the FTHBI, what is the breakdown of the percentage of loans originated with each lender comprising more than 5% of total loans issued; (i) for mortgages approved through the FTHBI, what is the breakdown of the value of outstanding loans insured by each Canadian mortgage insurance company as a percentage of total loans in force; and (j) what is the government's position on expanding the FTHBI to make eligible Canadians with incomes above \$120,000 a year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 293—Mr. Dean Allison:

With regard to videos produced by the government for usage on government websites or for internal usage, since January 1, 2019: (a) what are the details of all such videos, including (i) date, (ii) duration, (iii) title, (iv) purpose, (v) intended audience, (vi) government website on which the video was displayed, if on a public website; and (b) for each video in (a), what were the total expenditures, broken down by type of expense?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 294—Mr. Dean Allison:

With regard to videos produced by the government for public distribution, since January 1, 2019: (a) what are the details of all such videos, including (i) date, (ii) duration, (iii) title, (iv) purpose, (v) intended audience; (b) for each video, what were the total expenditures, broken down by type of expense; and (c) through which internet sites, social media platforms, television stations, or streaming sites was each video distributed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 295—Mr. Jamie Schmale:

With regard to classified or protected documents at Global Affairs Canada, since January 1, 2019: (a) how many instances have occurred where it was discovered that classified or protected documents were left or stored in a manner which did not meet the requirements of the security level of the documents (i) in the National Capital Region, (ii) within Canada, (iii) outside of Canada, including at missions abroad, broken down by mission; (b) how many of these instances occurred in the offices of ministerial exempt staff; and (c) how many employees have lost their security clearance as a result of such infractions?

(Return tabled)

*Business of the House***Question No. 296—Mr. Gary Vidal:**

With regard to the commitments made in Budget 2019, Chapter 3: Advancing Reconciliation of the Budget Plan: (a) what are the total expenditures to date in relation to the commitments in Chapter 3; (b) what is the breakdown of expenditures to date by each of the six parts outlined in Chapter 3; and (c) what is the breakdown of expenditures to date, by each of the programs or commitments made in Chapter 3?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 297—Ms. Niki Ashton:

With regard to Canada Child Benefit (CCB), since its creation: (a) what percentage of Manitoba on reserve First Nation families are eligible for CCB payments, broken down by reserve; (b) what percentage of Manitoba on reserve First Nation families are receiving CCB payments, broken down by reserve; and (c) what steps the government has taken to ensure that all eligible First Nation families on reserve are receiving these payments?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 298—Mr. Kenny Chiu:

With regard to government action specifically aimed at stopping money laundering in British Columbia: (a) what specific measures, if any, has the government taken since 2018; (b) for each measure in (a), what are the total expenditures or government contribution to date; (c) does the government have any statistics in relation to how large the money laundering problem is (i) in British Columbia, (ii) across Canada, and, if so, what are the details of statistics; and (d) does the Canada Revenue Agency have any statistics or projections in relation to the impact of money laundering on taxation revenue, and, if so, what are the details of the statistics or projections?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 299—Mr. Scot Davidson:

With regard to the export of plastic waste to foreign countries since 2016, broken down by year: (a) how much plastic waste has been exported to foreign countries; (b) what amount of plastic waste was exported for recycling purposes; (c) what amount of plastic waste was exported for final disposal; (d) how many permits to export plastic waste were issued in accordance with the Canadian Environmental Protection Act; and (e) what is the breakdown of (a) through (d) by destination country, if known?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 300—Mr. Peter Julian:

With regard to the Minister of Finance's trip to Davos for the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in January 2020: (a) who travelled with the minister, excluding security personnel and journalists, broken down by (i) name, (ii) title; (b) what was the total cost of the trip to taxpayers, and, if the final cost is not available, what is the best estimate of the cost of the trip to taxpayers; (c) what were the costs for (i) accommodation, (ii) food, (iii) anything else, including a description of each expense; (d) what are the details of all the meetings attended by the minister and those on the trip, including (i) the date, (ii) the summary or description, (iii) the participants, (iv) the topics discussed; and (e) did any advocates, consultant lobbyists or business representatives accompany the minister, and, if so, what are their names, and on behalf of which firms did they accompany the minister?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 301—Mr. Peter Julian:

With regard to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade's trip to Davos for the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in January 2020: (a) who travelled with the minister, excluding security personnel and journalists, broken down by (i) name, (ii) title; (b) what was the total cost of the trip to taxpayers, and, if the final cost is not available, what is the best estimate of the cost of the trip to taxpayers; (c) what were the costs for (i) accommodation, (ii) food, (iii) anything else, including a description of each expense; (d) what are the details of all the meetings attended by the minister and those on the trip, including (i) the date, (ii) the summary or description, (iii) the participants, (iv) the topics discussed; and (e) did any advocates, consultant lobbyists or business representatives accompany the minister, and, if so, what are their names, and on behalf of which firms did they accompany the minister?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 302—Mr. Peter Julian:

With regard to advertising paid for by the government for each fiscal year from April 1, 2011, to the present date: (a) how much did the government spend on advertising; (b) what was the subject of each advertisement and how much was spent on each subject; (c) which department purchased the advertising and what are the detailed expenditures of each department in this regard; (d) for each subject and department mentioned in (b), how much was spent on each type of advertising, including but not limited to (i) television, specifying the stations, (ii) radio, specifying the stations, (iii) print, i.e. newspapers and magazines, specifying the names of the publications, (iv) the Internet, specifying the names of the websites, (v) billboards, specifying their locations, (vi) bus shelters, specifying their location, (vii) advertising in all other publicly accessible places; (e) for each type of advertising in (d), was it in Canada or abroad; (f) for the answers in (b), (c) and (d), how long did the advertisements run for; (g) for each advertising purchase, who signed the contracts; (h) for each advertisement, who was involved in the production; (i) for each advertisement, was a third party involved in its publication or did a third party coordinate other advertisements based on the government advertisements; and (j) for each advertisement, did the purchase and publication coincide with a specific event, such as a sporting event?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 303—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

With regards to Detention Benefits in the New Veterans Charter: (a) how was the minimum of 30 days of detention to qualify for benefits decided upon; (b) was any consideration ever given to a time limit lower than 30 days, and what was the rationale for not choosing a lower minimum; (c) what are the details of all briefing notes prepared on the subject since November 4, 2015, including the (i) title, (ii) author, (iii) recipient, (iv) date prepared, (v) internal tracking number; and (d) what are the details of all responses to the briefing notes in (c), including the (i) title, (ii) author, (iii) recipient, (iv) date prepared, (v) internal tracking number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 304—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

With regard to the closing of the Ottawa River to marine traffic during the flooding of spring 2019: (a) what are the details of any briefing notes prepared for the Minister of Transport on the subject, including (i) title, (ii) author, (iii) date prepared, (iv) internal tracking number; and (b) what are the details of any responses to the briefing notes in (a) including (i) title, (ii) author, (iii) recipient, (iv) date prepared, and (iv) internal tracking number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 305—Ms. Rachel Blaney:

With regard to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, for fiscal years 2017-18 and 2018-19: (a) what was the number of applications received; (b) what was the number of applications for which a hearing was not granted; (c) what was the number of successful appeals; (d) what was the average time between the submission of application and the appeal; (e) what was the median time between the submission of application and the appeal; (f) what was the shortest time between the submission of application and the appeal; and (g) what was the longest time between the submission of application and the appeal?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 306—Ms. Laurel Collins:

With regard to the handling of investigations and prosecutions pursuant to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act: (a) how much money was spent by Environment and Climate Change Canada on investigating violations of the act since 2015, broken down by year; and (b) how much money was spent on litigation and other proceedings against Volkswagen Canada since 2015, broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

*Business of the House***Question No. 307—Ms. Laurel Collins:**

With regard to Canadian Environmental Protection Act investigations and prosecutions since 2015, broken down by year and by category of offence: (a) how many investigations were conducted; (b) how many investigations have resulted in prosecutions; (c) how many prosecutions have resulted in convictions; (d) what was the average length in days of an investigation that resulted in a conviction, from initiation to either laying of charges or discontinuation for (i) small and medium enterprises, (ii) large enterprises; (e) how much money was spent investigating violations by small and medium enterprises, broken down by industry; (f) how much money was spent on investigating violations by large businesses, broken down by industry; (g) how much money was spent prosecuting violations by small and medium enterprises, broken down by type of business; and (h) how much money was spent prosecuting violations by large enterprises, broken down by type of business?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 308—Ms. Laurel Collins:

With regard to Environment and Climate Change Canada, carbon emissions reduction measures undertaken by the government, and carbon emissions projections: (a) what measures did the government identify to reduce emissions; (b) what measures identified in (a) are considered to have been fully implemented; (c) for each measure identified in (b), what are the (i) anticipated emissions reductions expressed in metric tonnes (Mt) of carbon dioxide for each year from 2015 to 2030, (ii) emissions reductions reached expressed in Mt of carbon dioxide for each year from January 2015 to January 2020, (iii) total anticipated emissions reductions by the year 2030; (d) what measures to reduce emissions identified in (a) are considered to be in the process of being implemented; (e) for each measure identified in (d), what are the (i) anticipated emissions reductions expressed in Mt of carbon dioxide for each year from 2015 to 2030, (ii) emissions reductions reached expressed in Mt of carbon dioxide for each year from January 2015 to January 2020, (iii) what are the total anticipated emissions reductions by the year 2030; and (f) what are the projected emissions for the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion project (i) upstream, (ii) downstream?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 310—Mr. Alistair MacGregor:

With regard to the Phoenix pay system and the problems experienced by constituents in the riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford in the municipalities of Langford, North Cowichan, Cowichan Valley B, Cowichan Valley C, Duncan, Cowichan Valley A, Cowichan Valley E, Cowichan Valley D, and Lake Cowichan: (a) how many cases are currently open, and was a case officer assigned to each; (b) for how long was each case open; (c) how many cases were resolved within the current prescribed service standards, dating back to the introduction of the Phoenix pay system; and (d) how many cases were not resolved within the current prescribed service standards, dating back to the introduction of the Phoenix pay system?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 311—Mr. Alistair MacGregor:

With regard to federal funding investments in infrastructure, programs, and services in the Cowichan—Malahat—Langford riding: what is the total of the monetary investments for the riding across all government departments for the fiscal years (i) 2017-18, (ii) 2018-19, (iii) 2019-20, thus far?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 312—Mr. Alistair MacGregor:

With regard to Public Services and Procurement Canada bid solicitation No. F7017-160056/C, emergency towing vessels (ETV) for the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG), specifically with respect to the reference on page 175, DID I-005 Live Exercise Plan, “The Live Exercise Plan must define and describe in detail all aspects of how the Contractor intends to provide CCG crew with large vessel towing best practices, procedures, familiarization and education using the ETV and an additional ship in live exercises. The Live exercises, must be developed by the contractor and accepted by CCG and must provide an exercise plan utilizing the ETV and an additional ship as a ‘casualty’ vessel for demonstration of towing procedures and program exercises”, and on page 117, “The ETVs may be called upon to support other CCG programs and OPP initiatives such as Aids to Navigation (AtoN)”: (a) what information has been submitted to the CCG, demonstrating a Live Exercise Plan; (b) what actions has the contractor taken to demonstrate large vessel towing best practices and procedures; (c) how are the ETVs equipped to facilitate the handling of AtoN; and (d) what actions have the ETVs performed thus far to support AtoN?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 313—Ms. Jenny Kwan:

With regard to all federal programs, services, grants, transfers, contributions, and all other initiatives related to the construction, upgrading, renovation, and maintenance of all public and private housing: (a) broken down by fiscal year, province and municipality, what are all the projects that received funding; (b) through which specific fund or program was each funded; (c) what is the number of new housing units or dwellings created by each project; and (d) what was the total federal contribution to each, by fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 314—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to federal funding through Fisheries and Oceans Canada from 2005-06 to present, broken down by year: (a) how much funding was allocated for the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program (RFCPP); (b) how much of the allocated funding was spent through the RFCPP; (c) how much funding was allocated for the Salmonid Enhancement Program (SEP); (d) how much of the allocated funding was spent through the SEP; (e) how much funding was allocated for the Coastal Restoration Fund; (f) how much of the allocated funding was spent through the Coastal Restoration Fund; (g) how much funding was allocated for the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund; and (h) how much of the allocated funding was spent through the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 315—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to the mandate letter of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the establishment of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages: (a) broken down by date and organization or individual, did the minister or departmental staff meet with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governments and governing bodies with regard to the appointment of a Commissioner of Indigenous Languages; (b) broken down by date and organization or individual, did the minister plan consultation meetings with regard to the appointment of a Commissioner of Indigenous Languages; and (c) when will a Commissioner of Indigenous Languages be appointed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 316—Ms. Rachel Blaney:

With regard to the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) administered by Service Canada on behalf Employment and Social Development Canada since January 2017, broken down by year and month: (a) How many Canadians received the GIS; (b) how many eligible seniors did not receive the GIS; (c) how many GIS recipients were deemed no longer entitled to receive the GIS; (d) of those in (c), how many had their GIS reinstated that same calendar year; (e) for (a) through (d), what was the year over year percentage difference; (f) what was the average time for the reinstatement of benefits mentioned in (d); (g) were there any regulatory and/or policy changes to the process by which eligibility for the GIS is determined, and, if so, what are the details of these changes; and (h) were there any regulatory and/or policy changes to the process by which those in (c) are re-evaluated for eligibility for the GIS, and, if so, what are the details of these changes?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 317—Ms. Rachel Blaney:

With regard to Veterans Affairs Canada, broken down by year for the most recent 10 fiscal years for which data is available: (a) what was the number of disability benefit applications received; (b) of the applications in (a), how many were (i) rejected, (ii) approved, (iii) appealed, (iv) rejected upon appeal, (v) approved upon appeal; (c) what was the average wait time for a decision; (d) what was the median wait time for a decision; (e) what was the ratio of veteran to Case Manager at the end of each fiscal year; (f) what was the number of applications awaiting a decision at the end of each fiscal year; and (g) what was the number of veterans awaiting a decision at the end of each fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

*Business of the House***Question No. 318—Mr. Brian Masse:**

With regard to the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) since January 23, 2018: (a) for each fiscal year, funding stream and province, as well as the sum total across Canada, (i) how many statements of interest have been received, (ii) how many statements of interest were from companies with 499 employees or fewer, headquartered in Canada and not subsidiaries of a corporation headquartered abroad, (iii) how many applications have been received in total, (iv) how many applications were received from companies with 499 employees or fewer, headquartered in Canada and not subsidiaries of a corporation headquartered abroad, (v) how many successful applicants were companies with 499 employees or fewer, headquartered in Canada and not subsidiaries of a corporation headquartered abroad; (b) what was the total amount of money disbursed by the SIF for each fiscal year, funding stream and province; (c) have any SIF recipient companies failed to complete one or more reporting requirements; (d) if the answer to (c) is affirmative, (i) which recipients failed to do so, (ii) when did the failure occur, (iii) what has the department done to enforce its reporting policy; (e) did any recipients indicate on their statements of interest that any of the activities of their proposed project were expected to occur outside of Canada; and (f) if the answer to (e) is affirmative, what percentage of total project cost did they expect to incur outside of Canada?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 319—Mr. Brian Masse:

With regard to the Department of Canadian Heritage, broken down by quarter for each fiscal year since 2011-12 to date: (a) for data collected in the Grants and Contributions Information Management System (GCIMS), broken down by program component for all departmental programs, what is the processing time for grants and contribution applications between the time the program acknowledges receipt of the application and the time the department makes a decision on the application for funding; (b) for the departmental executive committee responsible for reviewing the results of the processing time data collected in GCIMS, (i) who are the members of this executive committee, (ii) how often do they meet, (iii) what is the budget allocated for its operation, (iv) what were its recommendations to the Office of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, (v) what were its recommendations to deputy ministers, (vi) what were its recommendations to assistant deputy ministers, (vii) what were its recommendations to directors general, (viii) what were its recommendations to program managers?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 320—Ms. Rachel Blaney:

With regard to Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC): (a) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC office, including nationally, what was the total number of overtime hours worked, further broken down by job title, including national first level appeals officer, national second level appeals officer, case manager, veterans service agent and disability adjudicator; (b) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC office, including nationally, what was the average number of overtime hours worked, further broken down by (i) job title, including national first level appeals officer, national second level appeals officer, case manager, veterans service agent and disability adjudicator, (ii) directorate; (c) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC office, including nationally, what was the total cost of overtime, further broken down by (i) job title, including national first level appeals officer, national second level appeals officer, case manager, veterans service agent and disability adjudicator, (ii) directorate; (d) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC office, including nationally, what was the total number of disability benefit claims, further broken down by (i) new claims, (ii) claims awaiting a decision, (iii) approved claims, (iv) denied claims, (v) appealed claims; (e) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC office, including nationally, how many new disability benefit claims were transferred to a different VAC than that which conducted the intake; (f) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC office, including nationally, what was the number of (i) case managers, (ii) veterans service agents;

(g) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC office, including nationally, excluding standard vacation and paid sick leave, how many case managers took a leave of absence, and what was the average length of the leave of absence; (h) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC office, including nationally, accounting for all leaves of absence, excluding standard vacation and paid sick leave, how many full-time equivalent case managers were present and working, and what was the case manager to veteran ratio; (i) during the most recent fis-

cal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC office, including nationally, how many veterans were disengaged from their case manager; (j) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC office, including nationally, what was the highest number of cases assigned to an individual case manager; (k) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC office, including nationally, how many veterans were on a waitlist for a case manager; (l) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month and by VAC office, including nationally, for work usually done by regularly employed case managers and veteran service agents, (i) how many contracts were awarded, (ii) what was the duration of each contract, (iii) what was the value of each contract; (m) during the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by VAC office, what were the service standard results; (n) what is the mechanism for tracking the transfer of cases between case managers when a case manager takes a leave of absence, excluding standard vacation and paid sick leave; (o) what is the department's current method for calculating the case manager to veteran ratio;

(p) what are the department's quality assurance measures for case managers and how do they change based on the number of cases a case manager has at that time; (q) during the last five fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month, how many individuals were hired by the department; (r) how many of the individuals in (q) remained employed after their 12-month probation period came to an end; (s) of the individuals in (q) who did not remain employed beyond the probation period, how many did not have their contracts extended by the department; (t) does the department track the reasons for which employees are not kept beyond the probation period, and, if so, respecting the privacy of individual employees, what are the reasons for which employees were not kept beyond the probation period; (u) for the individuals in (q) who chose not to remain at any time throughout the 12 months, were exit interviews conducted, and, if so, respecting the privacy of individual employees, what were the reasons, broken down by VAC office; (v) during the last five fiscal years for which data is available, broken down by month, how many Canadian Armed Forces service veterans were hired by the department; (w) of the veterans in (v), how many remained employed after their 12-month probation period came to an end; (x) of the veterans in (v) who are no longer employed by the department, (i) how many did not have their employment contracts extended by the department, (ii) how many were rejected on probation; (y) if the department tracks the reasons why employees are not kept beyond the probation period, respecting the privacy of individual veteran employees, what are the reasons why veteran employees are not kept beyond the probation period; (z) for the veterans in (v) who chose not to remain at any time throughout the 12 months, were exit interviews conducted, and, if so, respecting the privacy of individual veteran employees, what were the reasons for their departure, broken down by VAC office; (aa) during the last five fiscal year for which data is available, broken down by month, how many employees have quit their job at VAC; and (bb) for the employees in (aa) who quit their job, were exit interviews conducted, and, if so, respecting the privacy of individual employees, what were the reasons, broken down by VAC office?

(Return tabled)

*Business of the House***Question No. 321—Mr. Kelly McCauley:**

With regard to the transport of the CCGS McIntyre Bay and CCGS Pachena Bay from the east coast to the west coast: (a) who paid for the transport of the ships; (b) which company provided the transport; (c) was the company reimbursed to bring the ships out; (d) did the government go to public tender to provide the transport; (e) was transport included in the Request for Proposal for the tugboats (Emergency Towing Vessels RFP – F7017-160056/c), and, if so, were points awarded to the winning bid given to the company that provided the transport; (f) did Atlantic Towing produce certification confirming output after all required engine driven consumers (shaft generators, etc.) were taken into account; (g) were there competing bids to bring the two ships out by truck or another method, and, if so, what were they and the associated bid costs; (h) what was the cost to load the McIntyre Bay and Pachena onto the Atlantic Raven; and (i) what was the cost to unload them once reaching their final pacific destination?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 322—Mr. Dan Albas:

With regard to the Employment Insurance (EI) adjudication process and the current status of EI applications: (a) what is the current backlog of adjudications waiting in the queue; (b) what is the current average time between the beginning of an adjudication process and its completion; (c) what percentage of the applications are removed from the automated process after 28 days and sent to manual adjudication; (d) what percentage of EI applications are handled automatically (i.e. without manual intervention); (e) what percentage of applications are handled by the automated system and is that close to the original estimate of 85%; and (f) what action is the government taking to address the delays and backlog in the adjudication system?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 323—Mr. Marty Morantz:

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency and its research report entitled “Tax Gap: A Brief Overview”, which estimated that the tax gap for the 2014 tax year was between \$21.8 billion and \$26 billion: (a) what is the estimated tax gap, broken down by each of the last five years; and (b) for each of the last five years, what is the (i) federal tax gap estimate before audit, (ii) percentage of corresponding revenues, broken down by tax gap component?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 324—Mr. Eric Melillo:

With regard to the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway 17 between Kenora and the Manitoba border: (a) what is the total amount of money the government has allocated to date for the project; (b) when was each amount in (a) allocated, and under what program; (c) if no money has been allocated to date, will the government be allocating funding for the project, and, if so, how much money; and (d) will the government commit to the formula that was used in the past, whereby the federal government provides 50% of the funding, while the provincial government of Ontario provides the other 50%, and, if not, what funding formula will the government commit to in relation to this project?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 325—Mr. Michael Cooper:

With regard to the government’s administration of section 42.1 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act: (a) how many applications have been received under this section, since 2013, broken down by year; and (b) what is the status of each application in (a), including (i) date the application was received, (ii) date a decision was made, (iii) decision, (iv) number of days between the date the application was received and the date a decision was made?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 326—Mr. John Barlow:

With regard to the comments of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to the media at CropConnect in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in February 2020, stating “I already had data from the department last fall or earlier this winter”, in reference to the impact of the carbon tax on farmers: (a) what data did the minister receive from the department; and (b) on what date was the data received?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 327—Mr. John Barlow:

With regard to the government’s AgriStability Program: (a) what was the actual or estimated cost to administer the program, for each of the last five years, broken

down by year; and (b) how many employees or full-time equivalents at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada have been assigned to administer the program, broken down by each of the last five years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 328—Mr. John Barlow:

With regard to the Efficient Grain Dryer Program announced by the government on February 10, 2020: (a) what is the projected cost to administer the program, broken down by type of cost; and (b) how many employees or full-time equivalents at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada have been assigned to administer the program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 329—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to the Prime Minister’s trip to Germany in February 2020: (a) with the exception of security personnel and journalists who accompanied the Prime Minister, broken down by (i) name, (ii) title, in total, how much did this trip cost taxpayers, and if the final cost is not yet known, what is the best estimate of the cost of this trip to taxpayers; (b) what were the costs related to (i) accommodation, (ii) food, (iii) anything else, including a description of each of these expenses; (c) what are the details of all meetings attended by the Prime Minister and others who took part in the trip, including (i) the date, (ii) the summary or description, (iii) the participants, (iv) the topics discussed; and (d) did any spokespeople, consultant lobbyists or corporate representatives accompany the Prime Minister and, if so, what are their names and on behalf of which corporations did they accompany the Prime Minister?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 330—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to data, information or privacy breaches in ministers’ offices and the Office of the Prime Minister (PMO), since November 2015: (a) how many breaches have occurred in total, broken down by (i) minister’s office, including the PMO, (ii) number of individuals affected by the breach, (iii) year; (b) of those breaches identified in (a), how many have been reported to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, broken down by (i) minister’s office, including the PMO, (ii) number of individuals affected by the breach, (iii) year; and (c) how many breaches are known to have led to criminal activity such as fraud or identity theft, broken down by (i) minister’s office, including the PMO, (ii) year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 331—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to the Minister of Finance’s trip to Calgary to speak to members of the Economic Club of Canada on February 10, 2020: (a) who travelled with the minister, excluding security personnel and journalists, broken down by (i) name, (ii) title; (b) what was the total cost of the trip to taxpayers, and if the final cost is not available, what is the best estimate of the cost of the trip to taxpayers; (c) what were the costs for (i) accommodation, (ii) food, (iii) anything else, including a description of each expense; (d) what are the details of all the meetings attended by the minister and those on the trip, including (i) the date, (ii) the summary or description, (iii) the participants, (iv) the topics discussed; and (e) did any advocates, consultant lobbyists or business representatives accompany the minister, and, if so, what are their names, and on behalf of which firms did they accompany the minister?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 332—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to expenses on photographs or photography services by Canadian Heritage, or any other department, for visits of members of the British royal family from the month of November 2015 until now: (a) what is the total of these expenses; (b) what is the name of each supplier; (c) what were the date and duration of each photography contract; (d) what were the initial and final values of each contract; (e) what is the file number of each contract; and (f) what were the costs of each photography session?

(Return tabled)

*Business of the House***Question No. 333—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:**

With regard to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages' trip to Edmonton to participate in a funding announcement to help western Canadian companies, in February 2020: (a) who travelled with the minister, excluding security personnel and journalists, broken down by (i) name, (ii) title; (b) what was the total cost of the trip to taxpayers, and if the final cost is not available, what is the best estimate of the cost of the trip to taxpayers; (c) what were the costs for (i) accommodation, (ii) food, (iii) anything else, including a description of each expense; (d) what are the details of all meetings attended by the minister and those on the trip, including (i) the date, (ii) the summary or description, (iii) the participants, (iv) the topics discussed; and (e) did any advocates, consultant lobbyists or business representatives accompany the minister, and, if so, what are their names, and on behalf of which firms did they accompany the minister?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 334—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to government advertising between fiscal years 2011-12 and 2018-19, broken down by fiscal year: (a) how much has each department, agency and Crown corporation spent on advertising (i) on Facebook, (ii) on Xbox, Xbox 360 or Xbox One, (iii) on YouTube, (iv) in sponsored tweets on Twitter, (v) on Instagram; (b) for each advertisement, what was its (i) nature, (ii) purpose, (iii) target audience or demographic profile, (iv) cost; (c) what was the media authorization number of each advertisement; and (d) what are the reference numbers of the documents, reports and memoranda concerning each advertisement or its after-the-fact evaluation?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 335—Mr. Brad Vis:

With regard to the Department of Canadian Heritage's Local Journalism Initiative: (a) how many stories were distributed to media organizations through the initiative's Creative Commons license; and (b) what were the details of all stories in (a), including (i) date written, (ii) title, (iii) author?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 336—Mr. Bob Saroya:

With regard to online advertising and digital spending by the government: (a) how does each department or agency currently track and verify the placement of its online advertising or digital spending; (b) what was the total amount spent on online advertising or digital spending last year; (c) of the amount in (b), how much was (i) trackable, (ii) non-trackable or non-verifiable; and (d) for each non-trackable or non-verifiable advertisement placed last year, (i) what was the title or description of the advertisement, (ii) how did the government confirm that the supplier had successfully placed the advertisement?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 337—Mr. Bob Saroya:

With regard to the government's purchase of subscription packages for SiriusXM Satellite and Internet radio since January 1, 2016, broken down by department or agency and by year: (a) what are the total expenditures; (b) how many subscriptions were purchased, broken down by length and type; and (c) what was the price of each type of subscription in (b)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 338—Ms. Leah Gazan:

With regard to Employment and Social Development Canada and the Social Security Tribunal: (a) how many appeals are currently waiting to be heard by the Income Security Section (ISS), in total and broken down by (i) Canada Pension Plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (ii) Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, (iii) Old Age Security; (b) how many appeals have been heard by the ISS in 2018-19, in total and broken down by (i) Canada Pension Plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (ii) Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, (iii) Old Age Security; (c) how many appeals heard by the ISS were allowed in 2018-19, in total and broken down by (i) Canada Pension Plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (ii) Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, (iii) Old Age Security; (d) how many appeals heard by the ISS were dismissed in 2018-19, in total and broken down by (i) Canada Pension Plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (ii) Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, (iii) Old Age Security; (e) how many appeals to the ISS were summarily dismissed in 2018-19, in total and broken down by (i) Canada Pension Plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (ii) Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, (iii) Old Age Security; (f) how many appeals to the

ISS have been heard in person in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (g) how many appeals to the ISS have been heard by teleconference in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (h) how many appeals at the ISS have been heard by videoconference in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (i) how many appeals at the ISS have been heard in writing in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (j) how many members hired in the Employment Insurance Section (EIS) are currently assigned to the ISS; (k) how many income security appeals are currently waiting to be heard by the Appeal Division (AD), in total and broken down by (i) Canada Pension Plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (ii) Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, (iii) Old Age Security; (l) how many income security appeals have been heard by the AD in 2018-19, in total and broken down by (i) Canada Pension Plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (ii) Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, (iii) Old Age Security; (m) how many income security appeals heard by the AD were allowed in 2018-19, in total and broken down by (i) Canada Pension Plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (ii) Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, (iii) Old Age Security; (n) how many income security appeals heard by the AD were dismissed in 2018-19, in total and broken down by (i) Canada Pension Plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (ii) Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, (iii) Old Age Security; (o) how many income security appeals to the AD were summarily dismissed in 2018-19, in total and broken down by (i) Canada Pension Plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (ii) Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, (iii) Old Age Security; (p) how many income security appeals at the AD have been heard in person in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (q) how many income security appeals at the AD have been heard by videoconference in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (r) how many income security appeals at the AD have been heard by teleconference in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (s) how many income security appeals at the AD have been heard in writing in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed;

(t) how many appeals are currently waiting to be heard at the Employment Insurance Section (EIS); (u) how many appeals have been heard by the EIS in 2018-19, in total and broken down by month; (v) how many appeals heard by the EIS were allowed in 2018-19; (w) how many appeals heard by the EIS were dismissed in 2018-19; (x) how many appeals to the EIS were summarily dismissed in 2018-19; (y) how many appeals at the EIS have been heard in person 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (z) how many appeals at the EIS have been heard by videoconference in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (aa) how many appeals at the EIS have been heard by teleconference in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (bb) how many appeals at the EIS have been heard in writing in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (cc) how many EI appeals are currently waiting to be heard by the AD; (dd) how many EI appeals have been heard by the AD in 2018-19; (ee) how many EI appeals heard by the AD were allowed in 2018-19; (ff) how many EI appeals heard by the AD were dismissed in 2018-19; (gg) how many EI appeals to the AD were summarily dismissed in 2018-19; (hh) how many EI appeals at the AD have been heard in person in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (ii) how many EI appeals at the AD have been heard by videoconference in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (jj) how many EI appeals at the AD have been heard by teleconference in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (kk) how many EI appeals at the AD have been heard in writing in 2018-19, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (ll) how many legacy appeals are currently waiting to be heard at the ISS; (mm) how many legacy appeals are currently waiting to be heard at the EIS; (nn) how many legacy income security appeals are currently waiting to be heard at the AD; (oo) how many legacy Employment Insurance appeals are currently waiting to be heard at the AD; (pp) how many requests has the Tribunal received for an expedited hearing due to terminal illness in 2018-19, broken down by (i) month, (ii) requests granted, (iii) requests not granted; (qq) how many requests has the Tribunal received for an expedited hearing due to financial hardship in 2018-19, broken down by (i) month, (ii) section, (iii) requests granted, (iv) requests not granted;

Business of the House

(*rr*) when will performance standards for the Tribunal be put in place; (*ss*) how many casefiles have been reviewed by the special unit created within the department to review backlogged social security appeals; (*tt*) how many settlements have been offered; (*uu*) how many settlements have been accepted; (*vv*) how much has been spent on the special unit within the department; (*ww*) what is the expected end date for the special unit within the department; (*xx*) for 2018 and 2019, what is the average amount of time for the department to reach a decision on an application for Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, broken down by month; and (*yy*) for 2018 and 2019, what is the average amount of time for the department to reach a decision on the reconsideration of an application for Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, broken down by month?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 339—Ms. Leah Gazan:

With regard to the government's objective of reducing poverty by 50% by 2030 compared to the poverty rate in 2015: (*a*) how many annual projection scenarios have been established by Employment and Social Development Canada; (*b*) for each of the scenarios in (*a*), what are the annual projections of the evolution of this objective, for the years (i) 2020, (ii) 2021, (iii) 2022, (iv) 2023, (v) 2024, (vi) 2025, (vii) 2026, (viii) 2027, (ix) 2028, (x) 2029, (xi) 2030; (*c*) how many annual projection scenarios have been established by Employment and Social Development Canada for the evolution of the poverty rate; and (*d*) for each of the scenarios in (*c*), what are the targets and the results of the scenarios of annual projections of the rate of poverty, for the years (i) 2020, (ii) 2021, (iii) 2022, (iv) 2023, (v) 2024, (vi) 2025, (vii) 2026, (viii) 2027, (ix) 2028, (x) 2029, (xi) 2030?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 340—Ms. Leah Gazan:

With regard to the Employment Insurance, Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security program call centers, broken down by fiscal year and by call center for each fiscal year between 2011-12 and 2018-19: (*a*) what is the annual allocated funding; (*b*) how many full-time call agents have been allocated; (*c*) how many calls could not be routed to a call agent; (*d*) what is the speed target set by the department; (*e*) what is the actual performance against the speed target; (*f*) what is the average waiting time before speaking to an agent; (*g*) what is the call volume threshold established by the department beyond which callers are diverted to the automated system; (*h*) what is the error rate of the information transmitted by the call agents to the callers; and (*i*) what is the method used by the department to assess the error rate of the information transmitted by the call agents to the callers?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 341—Mr. Bob Zimmer:

With regard to the status of projects funded by the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) since November 4, 2015: (*a*) what are the details of all projects funded to date, including (i) recipient, (ii) project description, (iii) location, (iv) program under which funding was delivered, (v) total federal commitment, (vi) total federal funding actually delivered to date, (vii) current status of project; (*b*) for each project in (*a*), is the project ahead of schedule, on schedule, or behind schedule; (*c*) for each project in (*a*), what was the (i) original projected completion date, (ii) current projected completion date; and (*d*) for each project that is behind schedule, what is the reason for the delay, broken down by project?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 342—Mr. Bob Zimmer:

With regard to the report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs entitled "A Path to Growth: Investing in the North", tabled in the House in April 2019: (*a*) what directives has the (i) Minister of Northern Affairs, (ii) Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, (iii) Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, given to the departments for which they are responsible to fulfill each of the six recommendations, broken down by recommendation; (*b*) what funding streams have been allocated to fulfill each of the six recommendations, broken down by recommendation; and (*c*) what plans and timelines have been established by the (i) Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, (ii) Department of Infrastructure Canada, (iii) Department of Innovation and Economic Development Canada, to fulfill each of the six recommendations, broken down by recommendation?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 343—Mr. Bob Zimmer:

With regard to the government's response to the report of the Special Senate Committee on the Arctic entitled "Northern Lights: A Wake-Up Call for the Future of Canada" tabled in June 2019, and broken down by each of the 30 recommendations: (*a*) what directives has the government given to fulfill each of the 30 recommendations; (*b*) what funding streams have been allocated to fulfill each of the 30 recommendations; and (*c*) what plans and timelines have been established by the government to fulfill recommendations each of the 30 recommendations?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 344—Mr. Bob Zimmer:

With regards to the Budget 2019 commitment to build or expand northern infrastructure projects "through a doubling of the federal municipal infrastructure commitment in 2018-19": (*a*) what is the breakdown of this funding by project; (*b*) what are the details of all projects in (*a*), including the (i) name, (ii) description, (iii) amount of federal contribution, (iv) projected completion date; and (*c*) how much of this funding has been delivered to date, broken down by individual project?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 345—Ms. Lianne Rood:

With regard to the CCGS McIntyre Bay and CCGS Pachena Bay: (*a*) what is the bollard pull of each ship; (*b*) does the bollard pull for each ship meet the stated minimum requirements as listed in the Public Services and Procurement Canada Request for Proposal; (*c*) what is the certified bollard pull of each ship after all required engine driven consumers (i.e. shaft generators, cranes, etc.) are taken into account; and (*d*) did Atlantic Towing produce certification confirming output after all required engine driven consumers were taken into account?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 346—Ms. Lianne Rood:

With regard to government-owned disabled ships since January 1, 2016: (*a*) how many ships have been disabled; and (*b*) of the ships in (*a*), how many required an emergency tow vessel off of the Pacific Coast, broken down by year and by shepherd displacement?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 347—Mr. Scott Duval:

With respect to harassment complaints, workplace violence complaints, and disclosures of wrongdoing related to harassment and discrimination in federal organizations (departments, agencies, Crown corporations, etc.), between fiscal years 2011-2012 and 2018-2019, broken down by federal organization, by fiscal year, and for each type of complaint mentioned: (*a*) how many decisions were made by the organization without conducting an initial assessment; (*b*) how many complaints were dismissed; and (*c*) how many complaints were accepted?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 348—Mr. Dave Epp:

With regard to the Canadian Experiences Fund: (*a*) what is the total amount of approved funding; (*b*) what is the complete list of approved projects; and (*c*) for each project in (*b*), what are the details, including the (i) value of the approved project, (ii) total amount of federal financing, (iii) location of the project, (iv) project description, (v) status of the project?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 349—Mr. Gary Vidal:

With regard to government travel, from November 4, 2015, to February 20, 2020: (*a*) how many visits to First Nations reserves were made by (i) the Prime Minister, (ii) the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, (iii) the Minister of Justice, (iv) the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, (v) the Minister of Finance, (vi) the Minister of Canadian Heritage, (vii) the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, (viii) the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, (ix) the Minister of Natural Resources, (x) the Minister of Health, (xi) the Minister of Indigenous Services, (xii) the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, (xiii) the Deputy Prime Minister; and (*b*) what are the details of each visit in (*a*), including the (i) date of visit, (ii) reserve?

(Return tabled)

*Business of the House***Question No. 350—Mr. Warren Steinley:**

With regard to the planned February 2020 trip to the Caribbean by the Prime Minister which was cancelled: (a) what is the total of all costs incurred in relation to the planned trip, including any cancellation fees or lost deposits; and (b) what are the details of all such expenditures, including (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) amount, (iv) location, (v) description of goods or reason for expenditure (e.g. lost deposit, goods purchased but not used, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 351—Mr. Warren Steinley:

With regard to the February 2020 trip to Ethiopia, Senegal, and Germany taken by the Prime Minister and other ministers: (a) what is the total of all costs incurred to date related to the trip; and (b) what are the details of all contracts and invoices related to the trip, including (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) amount, (iv) description of goods or services provided, (v) file number, (vi) location?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 352—Mr. Tom Lukiwski:

With regard to all expenditures on hospitality (Treasury Board Object Code 0822), since November 1, 2019, broken down by department or agency: what are the details of all expenditures, including (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date of expenditure, (iv) start and end date of contract, (v) description of goods or services provided, (vi) file number, (vii) number of government employees in attendance, (viii) number of other attendees, (ix) description of related hospitality event, (x) location?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 353—Mr. Corey Tochor:

With regard to counterfeit goods discovered and seized by the Canada Border Services Agency, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or other relevant government entity, during the 2019 calendar year: (a) what is the total value of the goods discovered, broken down by month; (b) for each seizure, what is the breakdown of goods by (i) type, (ii) brand, (iii) quantity, (iv) estimated value, (v) location or port of entry where the goods were discovered, (vi) product description; (c) what percentage of the estimated total value of counterfeit imported goods are intercepted by the government; and (d) what is the government's estimate for the value of counterfeit goods that enter Canada annually and avoid seizure by the government?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 354—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to ministers' regional offices (MRO), as of February 2020: (a) broken down by location, what is the number of employees or full-time equivalents working in each MRO; (b) broken down by location, what is the number of exempt departmental staff working in each MRO; (c) how many government employees, excluding exempt departmental staff, currently work in each office; (d) what is the annual budget for each office; (e) what is the purpose of these offices; (f) what criteria are used to determine the location of these offices; (g) what sections or programs are administered from these offices; and (h) what are the projected annual operating costs for each office over the next year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 355—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to the approximately 20,000 Atlantic salmon that escaped from the Robertson Island pen fire on December 20, 2019: (a) how many of the fish were reported recaptured to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) by Mowi ASA as of February 20, 2020; (b) how many independent reports of caught Atlantic salmon were reported to the DFO, broken down by date and location of catch; (c) how many of the escaped fish were infected with Piscine orthoreovirus; (d) how much funding has the government provided to assist with recapture; and (e) how much compensation has the government provided to Mowi ASA?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 356—Ms. Heather McPherson:

With regard to ministers' office expenses in the National Capital Region: (a) what was the total amount spent on taxis by each minister's office for each fiscal year since 2015-16, including the current fiscal year; (b) how many employees at each minister's office have access to taxi vouchers; (c) what is the overtime cost for each minister's driver for each fiscal year since 2015-16, including the current fiscal year; (d) what was the total amount spent on Uber for each minister's office for

each fiscal year since 2015-16, including the current fiscal year; and (e) how many employees at each minister's office have access to Uber vouchers?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 357—Mr. Robert Kitchen:

With regard to the government's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak: (a) what is the estimated amount the government has spent to date in response to the outbreak; (b) what is the total amount spent to date on (i) flights, (ii) other mode of transportation, (iii) quarantine facilities, (iv) other expenditures, broken down by type; (c) what are the details of all expenditures over \$5,000 related to the response, including (i) amount, (ii) vendor, (iii) location, (iv) date, (v) description of goods or services, including volume, if applicable; (d) what is the government's policy regarding reimbursement to the Crown for Canadians who utilized the government's evacuation flights or services; and (e) how many individuals to date has the government placed under quarantine in (i) government facilities, broken down by facility, (ii) the individual's own residence, (iii) other facilities, broken down by facility?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 358—Mr. Kerry Diotte:

With regard to the government's approach to the proposed Frontier mine project by Teck Resources Ltd.: (a) what specific steps, if any, did the government take in order to save the project; (b) why did the government delay its decision on approval for the project for over six months; and (c) did anyone in the government propose intentionally delaying the decision until the application was withdrawn, and, if so, what are the details of the proposal, including who made the proposal?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 359—Mr. Todd Doherty:

With regard to the government's subsidy to VIA Rail Canada: will the government be increasing its subsidy as a result of rail blockades and the subsequent shutdown of VIA Rail service, and, if so, what are the details, including (i) original projected subsidy amount, (ii) amount of increase, (iii) increased subsidy amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 360—Ms. Niki Ashton:

With regard to monitoring and policing of as well as litigation against Indigenous peoples, broken down by fiscal year since 2010-11: (a) how much has been spent on litigation involving First Nations; (b) how much has been spent on policing operations targeting Indigenous land defence movements; and (c) how much has been spent on surveillance, monitoring or intelligence-gathering operations targeted at Indigenous peoples by any government department or agency?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 361—Mr. Rob Moore:

With regard to the commitment on page 30 of the 2019 Liberal election platform to plant two billion trees: (a) what is the projected breakdown of how many trees will be planted in each of the next 10 years; (b) what is the projected breakdown of how many trees will be planted in each province or territory; (c) how many of the trees will be planted in the riding of Fundy Royal; and (d) of the trees in (c), what is the breakdown by community or geographical area?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 362—Mr. Gerald Soroka:

With regard to the economic impact of the blockades and rail service disruption in 2020: what is the government's estimate of the economic impact of the disruption, including a breakdown of the estimate?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 363—Mr. Gerald Soroka:**

With regard to communication, directives or advice received so far in 2020 by the RCMP from the government in relation to rail blockades: what are the details of all such communication, directives or advice, including (i) sender, (ii) recipient, (iii) form of communication (phone, email, memorandum, etc.), (iv) date, (v) subject matter, (vi) summary of contents?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 364—Mr. Dan Mazier:

With regard to government contracts valued between \$24,000.00 and \$24,999.99, signed since January 1, 2016, and broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity: (a) what is the total value of all such contracts; and (b) what are the details of all such contracts, including (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date, (iv) description of goods or services, (v) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 365—Mr. James Bezan:

With regard to the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF): (a) how many filled fighter pilot positions were there in each year from 2011 to 2020; (b) how many fighter pilot positions in total were available to fill in each year from 2011 to 2020; (c) how many combat ready CF-18 flying positions were available to fill in each year from 2011 to 2020; (d) how many flying positions were available that were not combat ready (i.e. Squadron 410 OTU, Squadron 419, wings, Aerospace Engineering Test Establishment, etc.) in each year from 2011 to 2020; (e) how many combat ready flying positions were available on each operational squadron and wing in each year from 2011 to 2020; (f) how many fighter pilot positions were available to fill in each year from 1997 to 2001; (g) how many combat ready fighter pilots were released each year from 2011 to 2020; (h) how many fighter pilots in total were released annually from 2011 to 2020; (i) what are the estimated projections for 2020 to 2034 for (i) filled fighter pilot positions, (ii) fighter pilot positions, (iii) combat ready CF-18 flying positions, (iv) flying positions that are not combat ready, (v) combat ready flying positions available on each operational squadron and wing; (j) what is the estimated production rate of CR fighter pilots for each year from 2020 to 2034; (k) what is the estimated attrition rate for fighter pilots for each year from 2020 to 2034; (l) how many fighter pilot positions and personnel in the RCAF are pre-FPC (students); (m) what is the Trained Effective Strength or operational functional point for fighter pilots; (n) what is the combat ready point for fighter pilots; (o) where and when does the combat ready point for fighter pilots take place; (p) what is the minimum, maximum and mean time, in months, between recruitment and combat ready status for fighter pilots; (q) how many fighter pilots are greater than TIP 2 in CF-18 flying positions; (r) how many fighter pilots are two-ship leads in the CF-18 flying positions; (s) how many fighter pilots are four-ship leads in the CF-18 flying positions; (t) as of February 25, 2020, how many fighter pilots are (i) combat ready, (ii) non-combat ready, (iii) wingman, (iv) fighter electronic warfare instructors, (v) fighter weapons instructors; and (u) are fighter pilot students (e.g. at Squadrons 419 and 410) included in fighter pilot positions PML or TES?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 366—Mr. Peter Julian:

With regard to the Chief Executive Officer of Invest in Canada and his performance agreement with the Invest in Canada Board of Directors, broken down by performance cycle since the inception of Invest in Canada: (a) what are the objectives based on the corporate business plan and related performance measures; (b) what are the objectives that reflect the government's priority areas of focus and related performance measures; (c) what are the objectives based on financial management priorities and related performance measures; (d) which objectives are based on risk management priorities and any other management objectives set by the board of directors (infrastructure, marketing, governance, public affairs, etc.); (e) which objectives are based on the government's priorities for financial management and related performance measures (infrastructure, marketing, governance, public affairs, etc.), and related performance measures; (f) what are the detailed results of the performance measures for each of the objectives in (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e); (g) what were the details of the CEO's compensation, including salary and performance-based variable compensation; (h) how many times was the performance agreement amended during each performance cycle and what was the rationale for each amendment; (i) what was the CEO's performance rating recommended to the responsible minister by the Board of Directors; (j) what performance objectives were met; (k) what performance objectives could not be assessed and why; (l) what performance objectives were not met; (m) did the CEO receive an economic increase, and, if so, why; (n) did the CEO receive a salary range progression, and, if so, what

was the rationale; and (p) did the CEO receive a lump sum payment, and, if so, what was the rationale?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 367—Mr. Blaine Calkins:

With regard to the government's fire management program around the Municipality of Jasper in Jasper National Park: (a) what specific measures have been identified as necessary to prevent wildfires; (b) of the measures in (a), which (i) are currently being implemented, (ii) are planned for implementation; (c) of the projects which have yet to be implemented, when is implementation expected; and (d) what are the details of all contracts issued since January 1, 2018, in relation to the program, including, (i) date and duration of contract, (ii) vendor, (iii) amount, (iv) description of goods or services provided?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 368—Mr. Blaine Calkins:

With regard to the government's commitment to combat gang violence, since January 1, 2016: (a) how much federal funding has been committed, broken down by program or project; (b) for each commitment in (a), how much funding has actually been delivered, as opposed to simply announced; and (c) what are the details of all funding which has been delivered, including (i) recipient, (ii) amount, (iii) date funding was actually transferred, (iv) purpose of funding or project description, including location?

(Return tabled)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

STATEMENTS REGARDING COVID-19

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise here in this moment, in this House, as our generation faces its greatest challenge yet.

We all stand on the shoulders of those who came before us, of all those Canadians who saw our nation through difficult, tumultuous times in our history.

[*Translation*]

One hundred and three years ago today, young Canadian soldiers found themselves in the trenches in France, thousands of kilometres from home. The next day, they would storm Hill 145 and fight in the final Battle of Vimy Ridge. Today, on the eve of that sombre anniversary, we remember their courage and their sacrifices. We remember the soldiers who shaped the country we know today.

[*English*]

Twenty years later, many would be sent to the front again. On the evening of November 14, 1940, my grandfather, the young MP for Vancouver North, rose in his seat to speak to the war effort, but first thanked all those senior members who allowed him to speak before them, because his leave from the RCAF had expired that night and he was to ship out soon.

Routine Proceedings

Jimmy Sinclair would spend the next three and a half years in Europe and North Africa, far from his young family, far from his work in the House of Commons and far from his constituents in British Columbia, serving his country in the best way he knew how. He would return to the chamber in early 1944, a mere few months before D-Day, to exhort Canadians to continue with the sacrifices and efforts required to win. He said, "This is the year which will decide a rapid victory or a long and protracted war; a year when our fighting men must be given every conceivable aid and support and encouragement by every man, woman, and child in Canada, no matter the personal cost." These were trials that shaped our country, and more, our citizens, and now, once again, we are being tried.

However, this is not a war. That does not make this fight any less destructive or any less dangerous. There is no front line marked with barbed wire, no soldiers to be deployed across the ocean and no enemy combatants to defeat. Instead, the front line is everywhere: in our homes, in our hospitals and care centres, in our grocery stores and pharmacies, at our truck stops and gas stations. The people who work in these places are our modern-day heroes. Separated from their families, risking their own health, they head to work every day so that we can eat, so that we can heal, so that we can do our part, because every one of us has a role to play in helping shield our country from the threat it now faces. In hard times, courage and strength are not defined by what we say or do loudly in public, but by the actions we take quietly in private, like staying home.

Even as we stand apart, we stand united in our resolve to do what we must until COVID-19 is defeated.

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

We are here today to pass the Canada emergency wage subsidy, this country's most significant economic policy since the Second World War. This subsidy will enable Canadians to keep their jobs and their paycheques during the crisis. That is what we will be voting on this afternoon.

This subsidy builds on other measures already in place to help Canadians, such as making guaranteed loans available to small businesses and providing the Canada emergency response benefit to those who have lost their jobs.

Once again, members of Parliament are called upon to help those in need, and I know we will not let them down.

[*English*]

As Canada confronts this crisis, we are all called to serve, to fight for and alongside each of our fellow citizens, to fight for someone's mother, for someone's grandfather, for someone's neighbour. Our job as Canadians is to uphold the dignity and sanctity of every single human life, whether that person be rich or poor, young or old, ailing or healthy. That is our duty. Without reservation, without pause, we must fight for every inch of ground against this disease. We must be there for one another as we spare no effort to safeguard our collective future.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

Over the coming weeks and months, we will confront many obstacles and face more uncertainty. For most of us here, fear and concern will continue to be part of our daily lives and, sadly, we will mourn together the loss of our loved ones.

Even if we take all the necessary precautions, the situation could get worse before it gets better. That is the sad reality our country is facing.

Our determination to be done with this virus and our commitment to look out for one another will be put to the test, but I know we are up to the challenge.

[*English*]

Canadians are among the most fortunate people on earth. Despite the challenges we have yet to overcome, despite the wrongs we have yet to right, ours is a country where we look out for one another, where we take care of each other. The generosity of spirit and compassion were alive long before this virus reached our shores and they will survive long after it is gone, because that is who we are.

[*Translation*]

Our country is in mourning. Far too many families have lost a loved one to this pandemic. This disease is crueler still in that it prevents us from gathering to mourn the loss of those who have passed away and celebrate their life among friends and family.

On behalf of all Canadians, I offer my deepest condolences to those who have lost a loved one.

[*English*]

However, this holiday weekend also marks the coming of rebirth and new life. Easter is a time when Christians honour the passion, sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and his teachings of compassion, forgiveness and love.

Passover is a time when Jews recall the covenant made by God with the people of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, and the heroism of Moses, who led his people from bondage to freedom.

Vaisakhi is a time when Sikhs and Hindus celebrate the new year and the spring harvest.

Even for those who are not celebrating, spring is always a time for renewal. These moments remind us that love, courage and fortitude are the antidote to despair, that there is no challenge we cannot overcome together.

Let us make a solemn promise to each other this weekend to do just that.

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[*Translation*]

During this long weekend, let us make a commitment to do what it takes for as long as we need to. In the House, let us contribute to meeting that commitment. Let us take our responsibilities and help those who need it.

[*English*]

As I stand here today, I think of the young men who died taking Vimy Ridge. I think of the greatest generation who grew up during the Depression and fought through World War II. They showed us how to fight for what we believe in and how to sacrifice for what we hold dear.

Today, across this country, the last members of that great generation live in nursing homes and long-term care facilities. They are in their small apartments and the homes they built so long ago with their own hands. They are the ones most threatened by this disease. They fought for us all those years ago, and today we fight for them. We will show ourselves to be worthy of this magnificent country they built. For them, and for their grandchildren, we will endure, we will persevere and we will prevail.

• (1245)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is perhaps very fitting that we are meeting here on this day, Holy Saturday, the day between the sadness of Good Friday, the day Christ suffered and died for our sins, and Easter Sunday, the day he rose and conquered death, for we are clearly in the middle of great hardship and suffering, but we have every reason to look ahead with hope and toward the end of the health crisis we are currently facing. Our hope is founded on the ingenuity and resilience of humanity and strengthened by the examples of previous threats that we have all overcome.

The past month has tested Canadians. We have been told to stay at home, away from family and friends. Birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, religious gatherings have looked different this year. We have relied on Skype or FaceTime to stay connected instead of family dinners, church services or weekend gatherings.

Stores and restaurants have been told to close their doors. As a result, almost six million Canadians have lost their jobs, and the businesses that are still open are worried about how they are going to hang on.

[*Translation*]

Despite all our efforts, more than 22,000 Canadians have fallen ill and, unfortunately, more than 600 have died. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have lost loved ones.

Over the coming days and weeks, our actions will be more important than ever. Now that the government has presented its projections, we know what to expect. We must continue to follow public health guidelines and we must work together as a country.

[*English*]

On behalf of the official opposition, I want to acknowledge all of the Canadians who are going above and beyond during these unprecedented times.

To the nurses, doctors, truck drivers, grocery store workers, cleaners, pharmacists, farmers and other essential workers, we give our thanks.

To the parents juggling school work and their own jobs, we give our thanks. I have always had respect for the teachers who have influenced my life, but after spending the last few weeks trying to keep my children up to date with their studies, I have a new-found respect and admiration for what they do each and every day of the school year.

To the churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, gurdwaras, food banks, shelters and other organizations helping Canadians during these difficult times, we also give our thanks.

To the public servants working hard each and every day to make sure that Canadians get the help they urgently need, we give our thanks.

[*Translation*]

Canadians have big questions about what is going on. Our economy is at a standstill, and although the government has announced some programs, Canadians still do not have the money in hand. We have a \$184-billion deficit. It will take years of discipline to get Canada's economy back on its feet.

The government presented some new documents to the Standing Committee on Health that also paint a worrisome picture.

[*English*]

As one reporter put it, “[t]he documents...show a government persistently downplaying the threat of coronavirus until it was too late.”

Other countries, such as South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan, ramped up testing and secured medical equipment early on, which allowed them to flatten the curve quickly, preventing their economies from being completely shut down. We were told for weeks that the risk of COVID-19 to Canadians was low. We now ask why that risk assessment seemed to change overnight. Why did the government wait so long to impose travel restrictions? Why were travellers not originally screened? Why do we have a critical shortage of medical supplies? Why is it taking the government so long to sign contracts with companies that are offering to retool their facilities to provide much-needed medical equipment? Why are other countries further ahead of us when it comes to testing and tracing? These are some of the questions that Canadians have, and they deserve answers.

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While we know that mistakes have been made in the past, Conservatives are focused on looking to the future, on how best to get Canada through this crisis, keep our citizens healthy and get our economy back on track.

The Prime Minister has said that we need to prepare for a second and perhaps a third wave. Canadians want to know how this government is preparing to get ahead of those waves.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

This is why the Conservatives are calling for the opportunity to regularly ask questions of the Prime Minister and ministers in the House of Commons on all aspects of the government's response to COVID-19. We also want to hold weekly parliamentary committee meetings, during which members will be able to move motions, call witnesses and question ministers and senior government officials.

We cannot wait for this pandemic to be over to hold the government to account. Parliament has a vital role right now. We will get better results for Canadians through debate, discussion and regular questions from the opposition.

[*English*]

Today's emergency legislation is a good example of this.

When the government first announced a 10% wage subsidy, Conservatives and small business owners across this country raised concerns. Other countries were offering far more. It was clear that 10% was just not going to cut it, so we pushed for a significant increase. A few days later, the wage subsidy was raised to 75%.

Credit unions were not originally allowed to deliver the \$40,000 emergency interest-free loans. This left many business owners who use credit unions, especially those in rural locations, in the lurch, making it harder for them to get the support they needed. We called on the government to make changes, and now credit unions can deliver these loans as well.

The need to show a 30% revenue decrease to qualify for the wage subsidy meant that too many new and seasonal businesses did not qualify. We raised this concern, and now there is more flexibility. This week, we rolled up our sleeves and worked with the government to ensure that businesses have the certainty they need to keep their employees on the payroll.

[*Translation*]

The Conservatives have been part of team Canada since day one, offering constructive solutions to improve the government's response to this pandemic.

[*English*]

However, we know that there is still more work to do.

Conservatives have proposed meaningful solutions, such as rebating the GST to small businesses that have collected it in the last year, to provide a much-needed cash injection. We have also suggested using loss of earnings, subscriptions or orders as a way to ensure that more businesses qualify for this wage subsidy, and we have put forward ideas to help our energy and charitable sectors, such as increasing the charitable donation tax credit.

[*Translation*]

We want the government to start implementing a solution to ensure that no Canadian is left behind. That is what team Canada is about.

[*English*]

We are optimistic that the government will listen to the ideas we are putting forward for the benefit of all Canadians. That will be truly a team Canada approach.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by extending a respectful greeting to all my colleagues in the House and, above all, my most compassionate regards to seniors.

I cannot imagine the day-to-day life of elderly people living in one of the many types of residences in Quebec and Canada. They cannot be with their loved ones, and they are exposed to a disease that could very well claim their lives before they have a chance to see their children and grandchildren one last time. That is indescribably sad.

I am also thinking of other seniors, those who are not directly exposed or not frequently exposed, but whose retirement accounts are declining in value, who are feeling isolated, who live in remote areas, and whose family members live far away and cannot visit them. I am thinking of those people.

This is a little off-topic, but I have also sent the Prime Minister some recommendations and suggestions to help those people as much as possible.

I am thinking of workers who cannot work. Helping them is the reason we are gathered here today.

This may seem odd, but I am thinking of our young people. Youth is the most sociable time of life. We are locking our young people in the basement, making them feel like they cannot see their friends except on their phones, with limited exceptions. I am also thinking of the parents who have to deal with kids expressing their impatience as only kids can.

I am thinking of the health care workers who could theoretically choose not to go to work, but who are showing up day after day, answering the call of duty. Health care workers are exposed beyond all reasonable bounds. I have the greatest respect for them. Unlike us, they cannot work two or three metres apart.

Routine Proceedings

I am thinking of workers in the transportation sector, who are working insane hours under uncertain conditions. Many of them are being denied access to basic facilities along the way, like showers and food, and their determination warrants more respect than they are getting. I also salute agricultural workers, who are dealing with unique challenges. In addition, I salute my colleagues for working together, even though I may seem like an awkward fit on team Canada.

The past few weeks have proven that collaboration can fuel success. This is really important to me. From the beginning of this crisis, we have overcome the temptation to score points and instead offered our fullest and most sincere collaboration.

Today we are going to pass legislation. Of course, there are some people in this House who would say that, when summer comes, it will be thanks to them. I think that we need to set all that aside today. We need to say that it will be thanks to “us”, an “us” made up of 338 people chosen by 36 million Canadians, including 78 people chosen by 8.5 million Quebecers.

Our SMEs, which are the backbone of Quebec's economy, will find a crucial tool in this bill. However, I am looking at it through the eyes of the workers, primarily because this bill will protect purchasing power to benefit workers beyond what EI would do.

• (1255)

That is, in itself, a way to support the economy. In essence, the billions of dollars the Canadian government is investing in people and businesses will serve to protect its own future revenues, its tax revenues.

It is wise and necessary to do so and I would point out, and everyone can make of this what they will, that this is a demonstration that history will not soon forget of the government's crucial and essential role in the economy, of the legitimacy of government intervention in the economy and the fact that less government is far from the best solution.

The families of these workers will have a sense of security. The parents of these workers will have a sense of security. Research and science will find a remedy for the virus, but a sense of security is the remedy for anxiety, anguish, concern and fear for the future. It is one of the fundamental roles of this legislation.

There have been some collaborative efforts that we are pleased to have participated in. I will not go so far as to say that we want credit for any measure in particular, but I will say that it might not have existed without our contribution. We want to retain a little modesty.

With respect to start-ups, the Minister of Finance was willing to take them into consideration. Several people raised this issue. High-growth businesses were facing a particular risk; that was addressed. Social economy enterprises, which I am especially fond of, have been recognized within some of the programs. A lot has been done—and I am glad this aspect was included in the motion—to ensure that small and medium-sized businesses would not have to replace the entirety of their lost income, which they will not get back, with debt. Such debt would add to the burden of those businesses when they are trying to get up and running again.

It was especially important to me that the government bring in a measure to provide small and medium-sized businesses across Canada and Quebec with non-repayable support. I truly do appreciate that the government was willing to consider such measures. I think that is how we will make progress.

I have been calling this “vigilant collaboration”. I think Quebecers and Canadians expect us to work in their best interests. Of course, we live in a democracy where, particularly since the last election, Canadians and Quebecers are keeping an eye on us. That is entirely appropriate. We must have the tools to do so, and I know that has been part of the thinking. I therefore see some good points in this.

There is one aspect that has been lacking. I want to come back to it now, so we can begin thinking about it right away. We will defeat this virus, as others before us have and perhaps more after us will, by paying attention to science and research. Some research centres do not qualify for the various measures at this time, so their staff are being recruited elsewhere because the centres cannot offer the same appeal in order to hang on to their employees.

We need to work on research. Every time we read a great newspaper article, we need to have the intellectual honesty to read a scientific article, to learn about how it works, what is going on and what has been done elsewhere. I spoke to some Quebec scientists this week, and we need to make sure that scientists and researchers are well supported.

I would like to say a few words about the Canada emergency response benefit. This initiative is somewhat a victim of its own popularity, although less so than we had feared. We are very happy that the proverbial shortcomings were addressed for volunteer firefighters, artist copyrights and small business owners who pay themselves dividends.

These improvements were made after calls, not from a political party or from the best or nicest member, but from real Quebecers and Canadians who contacted us on social media and at our riding offices to ask what we were doing for them. Good discussions resulted in solutions.

• (1300)

We are also discussing the notion of a virtual Parliament, but a virtual one will not be any less real. We are not required to be physically seated on green velvet to engage in debate. Everyone can do so from their own home. We will come up with a process or something, but it can be done.

I understand that votes need to happen here. I understand that we will have to come up with a procedure, because our sacrosanct rules cannot just be changed so easily. However, we are in favour of this, since a long time ago we spoke about creating a virtual Parliament.

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Unfortunately, it is not too late, and I am speaking in the spirit of openness.

Some time ago, we raised the issue of how to deal with people arriving at the borders of Canada and Quebec through various routes. I must say that I am deeply troubled about this issue. After everything we have said and done, and despite knowing what percentage of coronavirus cases have entered from abroad, I cannot understand how this is possible. Let me say that I have the utmost respect, affection and openness in my heart for these people. However, I am extremely worried about the fact that 159 Mexican workers got on a plane and landed in Dorval this morning without having been either tested for COVID-19 in Mexico or quarantined on arrival. They were not ordered to be tested for COVID-19 by Canadian customs, nor were they quarantined in any of the thousands of hotel rooms around the airport. They were handed over to an organization that took them deeper into Quebec, in this case to the regions north and south of Montreal.

Knowing the characteristics of this virus, knowing that statistics say that between one-quarter and half of carriers are asymptomatic, and knowing that testing someone who is not showing symptoms could be pointless, are we not running a risk that could easily have been contained?

We have contacted the government privately about this a number of times, and now I am doing it again. With all due respect for institutions and people, I would urge everyone to be open-minded. As I have said, if the government can invest tens of billions of dollars, as we have just seen, then it can invest a few tens of millions more in restoring a sense of safety for rural communities in Quebec and Canada by making sure that foreign workers coming in are quarantined and tested for COVID-19.

That is the best way to help those workers, their home countries and farmers, who do not have that expertise and cannot just bring foreign workers into their homes and put them in quarantine in the basement. That will not work. This is the state's solemn duty. It is the responsibility of Canada customs, which does not answer to Quebec and the other provinces.

Other than the 159 people who are already gone but who could be tested somehow or other, I would encourage the government to make an announcement very soon about measures to isolate people upon arrival and test them for COVID-19 so they can receive a proper welcome to Quebec and Canada and make a positive contribution to our economy.

As I said, our approach is one of vigilant collaboration. In this case, our collaboration is a given. I am not criticizing the government, but I am making this request because it is our duty to keep a close eye on each other and because we are constantly coming up with solutions to the new problems that arise on a daily basis.

● (1305)

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the last month, our world has changed dramatically. On Thursday, we learned that a million Canadians have lost their jobs. This is not just a statistic; these are families that are now struggling to put food

on the table, to pay rent and to make ends meet. The government has moved to respond to this crisis, but in many cases too slowly.

In early March, we had two suggestions: one, that the government should send direct financial assistance to all Canadians, and two, that we need a 75% wage subsidy, at a minimum, to ensure that people can keep their jobs and to support businesses in keeping workers on the payroll.

We have already supported the unanimous consent motion, and later today we will be supporting the legislation to make this wage subsidy a reality. However, I want to urge the government that, while we are here in Ottawa, we should not leave here without knowing and without guaranteeing that all Canadians who need help get that help.

● (1310)

[Translation]

The Canada emergency response benefit simply does not cover all Canadians who need this assistance. Too many people are at risk of falling through the cracks.

[English]

I think of some of the stories that I have heard over the past weeks about the people who desperately need help but are unable to access that help because they do not meet all the criteria.

I think about people working multiple jobs to make ends meet who have lost most of their hours of work and do not know how they are going to pay for groceries. They should be applying for help.

I think about the freelance and contract workers who have lost most of their income and are maxing out their credit cards to pay their bills. They should be applying for help.

I think about students who depend upon summer jobs to pay their rent, and some work to support their families. Now they have no jobs to apply for. They should be applying for help.

I think about the artists, the self-employed and people who are just on the margins. In fact, there are so many examples, and that's the problem.

For the last several days, New Democrats have been working with the government to fix the gaps, and that work is reflected in the motion that we have heard and in the work that will be done.

I want to thank the Prime Minister and other members of the government for the constructive way they have worked with us. However, we are not done yet. The current system discourages people who need help from applying, because they still have some income or they do not meet all the criteria.

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Yesterday, the minister confirmed that everyone who applies for the CERB will get it, so I asked the Prime Minister today to announce that all the criteria will be dropped and to simply tell people, “If you need help, apply for it and you will get it.” Let us keep it simple. Let us make sure that all who need help know that they can apply for that help and that they will receive it.

The only way we can get through this crisis is if we take care of each other. We are all connected. We will not stop fighting until every Canadian gets the help he or she needs, period.

There have been heroes in this crisis in fighting COVID-19, and I also want to acknowledge those front-line workers who are keeping us fed, those who are keeping us healthy. It is saddening that they do not have the equipment they need to protect themselves and prevent the risk of infecting their families. I specifically want to mention health care workers, who are often sleeping in their cars or sleeping in tents to prevent the spread of infection or the risk of infection to their families. We have to do better. We have to ensure that all workers have the protective equipment they need to stay safe.

During this crisis, I also believe it is important to make it very clear that there is no room for companies profiting from the desperation of people. Credit card companies and others charging double-digit interest rates need to be stopped, and we need to use all of our powers at the federal level to make sure that happens. Banks are continuing to charge interest, leaving people worse off with the mortgage deferral. In effect, they are profiting from this crisis.

I know the Minister of Finance has spoken with the banks, but, clearly, speaking nicely has not worked. Banks are regulated expressly by the federal government. The Liberal government has to be prepared to use the powers we have to enforce pausing interest, putting a brake on that. In fact, we also need to put a pause on mortgages, so that we can work with provinces to put a pause on rent. This should also apply to commercial rent, which would significantly help out small and medium-sized businesses.

I know that in the coming weeks we are going to start talking about what a recovery would look like, how people will get back to work. As we designed this stimulus, I urged the Liberal government not to make the same mistakes as in the past. Every public dollar that we spend must go to workers, not to CEOs. Executive bonuses, share buybacks and protecting shareholder profits do not sustain or create jobs.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

We can stimulate the economy and do the things that can transform our nation and fight climate change, such as building housing, investing in public transit, making it easier for Canadians to choose renewable energy sources, making our homes and buildings as energy-efficient as possible, and investing in child care services that all families can afford and that give our children the high-quality education they deserve.

[*English*]

I also want to talk about indigenous communities specifically.

Over the last month, I have spoken with leaders across the country. Indigenous community leaders have expressed grave concerns around the lack of capacity for their communities to deal with a COVID-19 outbreak. These are communities that, as a result of historical and ongoing injustice, are without basic infrastructure, where washing one's hands with clean water is not often possible, where overcrowding and the lack of quality housing means physically distancing is also not a reality, and where access to health care is severely limited, to the point where the nearest ventilator for many communities is a flight away.

I know the government has put some money on the table, but I have heard two specific concerns: that money is insufficient, and many indigenous communities are finding it difficult to access that money.

Historical neglect and racism have put indigenous lives at greater risk of this virus. We have to do better, particularly due to the fact that in the coming weeks many of these communities will face flooding and in the summer they will face forest fires, so we need a clear plan for the safe evacuation of these communities and a clear strategy to ensure that these communities have the resources they need to respond to COVID-19. Indigenous lives matter, and we need to make sure we are prepared.

I believe the decisions we make in the next weeks and months will be some of the most important of our lives, some of the most important that any Canadian government has been faced with.

[*Translation*]

We believe in solidarity. We believe in helping one another.

[*English*]

We hear a lot of people talking about when things will return to normal, but I believe we need to do far better than normal. Normal is workers not having paid sick leave. Normal is families struggling on a minimum wage. Normal is people who are essential to our health and safety not getting paid enough to live. Normal is a public health care system that has been starved of funding. Normal is a society that is neither fair nor resilient. We cannot ever go back to normal.

Canadians are showing their compassion. They are showing their desire to care for one another. We should demand that of our government as well. We should demand that the Liberal government embrace those same values.

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Let us not return to the old normal; let us build a new normal, where we take better care of each other, where we have a strong social safety net that lifts us all up together. Let us build a Canada that is fair and resilient. Canadians are counting on us. They are counting on us to learn from this crisis to build a better Canada for all of us.

● (1320)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by acknowledging that we are gathered on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin people.

[*English*]

I thank them again for their hospitality and generosity. *Meegwetch.*

[*Translation*]

I want to thank all my colleagues for unanimously agreeing to give me a chance to speak on this momentous day. A thousand thanks to them.

[*English*]

It really means a lot to me that the Green Party is recognized in this place and allowed to speak as we gather in these entirely unprecedented times.

I was moved by the Prime Minister's remarks in reminding us of Vimy. I had not planned to speak about Vimy, but on April 9 this year, I noticed that my husband was very depressed and wandering about, and he said he was thinking of his grandfather, who was machine-gunned on Vimy on April 9, 1917. His grandfather survived; otherwise I would not be married to my husband, I suppose. His grandfather, John Owen Wilson, survived, got back to British Columbia and ended up as chief justice of the British Columbia Supreme Court, but the sacrifices of Vimy are not forgotten. The courage and solidarity of previous generations are not forgotten.

I have thought in recent times that, being a boomer, a 1954 baby, I'm one of the last of a generation that remembers that time of solidarity and sacrifice. Not that I lived through the war or the depression, but my parents did. The family stories become part of who we are; they are in our bones, the notion that government steps up and that government is on our side. I think that through years of neoliberalism, we have gotten this idea that government is kind of in our way, picking our pockets. I am really relieved that in some ways this social solidarity that we will have coming out of this pandemic will allow us to see that individuals are a part of their government, that their democracy works for them. I hope that can be a lasting lesson.

We are here together in a way that I want to acknowledge with deep gratitude. Parliament is working well, even when we are at a distance. I want to thank the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and so many different ministers for their openness to hearing opposition ideas and concerns.

I will share with Canadians what the last couple of weeks have felt like, working from home non-stop, 24-7. A lot of Canadians would not imagine that every single day at 1:30 B.C. time, 4:30 in

Ottawa, every day, including Saturdays and Sundays, we have an opportunity to ask anything. In my mind, this is how the ideas have been working. It is quite true that a lot of the things we wanted were not in the first bill, Bill C-13. It is quite true that Greens, like others, said that it should not be a 10% wage subsidy; it should be 75%. We made that case, and individual examples came forward.

We have those daily question and answer sessions. I know that not all of us get our questions in every single day. Some of us do well. The member for Carleton does well, and I do pretty well. We push *1 and go for it. We do our best to get our questions out there, but in my head this is how it has been working. We raise a question and we ask something like, "What happens right now, when Bishop McMenamie has just contacted me and the Anglican Church on Vancouver Island has separate churches and they all have their own CRA number but there is only one employer, so the 30% reduction in revenue compared to some other reference period does not work at all in this circumstance?" Then today I looked at the most recent version of the bill. "Entity" is redefined, and it now covers that specific weird example of the Anglican diocese and an issue raised to me by Bishop McMenamie. There may have been many other MPs who asked a question that stumped the Finance Canada senior officials who were on the telephone with us every single day, but when I see that in the bill, I see that my question was not only a question, but it flagged an issue.

This is what I hear from ministers: to keep sending them the specific concerns that we see and to keep telling them where the gaps are, because the MPs on the ground, right across Canada, are the eyes and ears on the front line who are able to say that nothing that is in place right now, with all due respect, is working for small businesses.

● (1325)

I am terrified that a lot of very small businesses, seasonal businesses, restaurants and so on, are going to go under, even with the wage subsidy. However, in today's unanimous consent motion, which I saw before coming here, I was very relieved to see that it calls for the government to implement short-term support measures for small and medium-sized enterprises, "which will be partially non-refundable, with the primary objective of maintaining jobs and reducing debt related to fixed costs". That is what I keep hearing from small businesses: that they cannot afford to pay their rent and that the wage subsidy does not help them.

Without being just a Pollyanna about our circumstances, I want to say that it means a lot to me that we have come forward as individual MPs, opposition and Liberals, to say, "What is happening does not work. There are too many people, such as students and people in the gig economy, who are not covered by CERB. What are we going to do?"

Routine Proceedings

Today's unanimous consent motion says that we will implement measures without delay. I think "without delay" would actually meet what the member for Burnaby South said, and right now, today, we say that everybody can apply. That language suggests that the government is not saying, "We've gotten this perfect. Go away." What I hear from minister after minister is, "We're learning. We're working as hard as we can."

I want to say that the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his parliamentary secretary have been available to me pretty much 24-7 for the 50 or so constituents I have helped to get home so far. I still have about a dozen I am working on, and the parliamentary secretary knows well that I have someone stranded in Vanuatu.

There is a real sense of all hands on deck, and I want Canadians to know that. I want them to know that there is a spirit of non-partisanship, of "We are team Canada and we are all in it together." Nothing exemplifies that for me more than the new-found best-friend relationship between the Premier of Ontario and the Deputy Prime Minister. I think this shows stepping up to a circumstance where we are all at risk. We are thinking about being surrounded by death. We are thinking about wearing our masks. I have Lysol wipes here, below my desk. We are constantly vigilant, but we are also working together because we are Canadians. This must not be a moment that divides us. We must remember this and work differently in the future.

Yes, I want to press for guaranteed livable income. We will keep doing that. Yes, I want to press that we will, in this place and before too long, see new climate targets that meet the imperative of a looming disaster far greater than COVID-19, which threatens to kill more people and wipe out civilization. It cannot be postponed.

However, right now I want to give my thanks for the spirit of collaboration. The Prime Minister spoke of the fact that this time, of course, is a season of many religious observances. It is Passover. I wish happy Passover to my Jewish friends and family. Vaisakhi is also coming up soon. In a few weeks, it will be Ramadan for my Islamic friends, a period of fasting and reflection. I am just finishing Lent, a period of fasting and reflection.

It speaks to the unprecedented nature of the crisis we are in that, as far as I have been able to determine through research from home and looking through every bit of constitutional and parliamentary history I can find, the Parliament of Canada has never before sat on Easter Saturday. Good Friday, particularly in previous generations, was held sacred. The idea of meeting on Easter weekend would have been impossible to imagine, but here we are and this is why.

Looking at the clock, I think that in about 10 hours it will be dawn in Jerusalem, and the first morning light of that sunrise will strike the walls of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is built on the spot where we are told the original cave was in which the body of Jesus Christ was wrapped and placed in the tomb, with a rock rolled in front of it. Approximately 10 hours from now, at dawn, will be the remembrance of our stories, tradition and faith, the most significant day, the most profound and important day of the Christian calendar, the resurrection of Christ: that the stone was rolled back and that those who loved him, Mary and others, came and thought the body had been stolen, but the angels came to them, and

then Jesus disguised as a gardener came to them and said, "No, He has risen."

● (1330)

In this time, when we are surrounded by death and we are worried about our mortality and that of the people we love, we can think of the things that are most important. After this is over, we will recognize that we can survive, that we can break the bonds of death, that we can have faith in each other, that we can invest ourselves in love for each other and our communities, and that we can remember what really matters. Right now, as I watch my grandkids on Zoom family chats, what would I not give for a hug?

I would love to think about our lives as transformed by this in ways that are profound, as we recognize that, for the first time in our lives, governments all around the world have decided, without hesitation, that life is more important than money. We have deliberately and voluntarily shut down our economies to save lives. We have deliberately and voluntarily created for ourselves as lawmakers, as policy-makers, the challenge of economic recovery, because we did not hesitate to know that saving lives is more important than money.

When this is all over, I hope to God it is over with a minimum loss of life in Canada and around the world. I am particularly worried for those countries that lack basic health care. We must not forget our obligations to the poorest of the poor, just as we do not forget indigenous peoples in Canada, just as we do not forget those who are most marginalized and homeless. When we get through this together, let us remember that in this pandemic we discovered what really matters.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier today, the House will now resolve itself into a committee of the whole to consider matters related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before we begin debate, I would like to remind hon. members of how the proceedings will unfold over the next two hours.

[*English*]

Pursuant to an order made earlier today, during the proceedings of the committee no member will be recognized for more than five minutes, which may be used for posing questions to a minister of the Crown or a parliamentary secretary acting on behalf of the minister. Members are permitted to split their time with one or more members by so indicating to the Chair. The debate will end in two hours or when no members rise to speak.

Government Orders

[Translation]

I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

(House in committee of the whole to consider matters related to the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Chair, on March 12, I asked if the government had secured a supplier to provide additional ventilators. The Deputy Prime Minister told the House, “We are already leading a bulk national procurement effort to ensure Canadians have the necessary medical equipment.”

Can the Prime Minister please update the House as to how many ventilators he has secured and on what date they will reach Canadian hospitals?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Chair, as we know, worldwide demand for personal protective equipment and ventilators is through the roof. Therefore, we have both reached out to suppliers of medical products that Canada has long worked with around the world, as well as seen unprecedented efforts by Canadian industry to deliver ventilators that will be made in Canada. I can assure people that the approach is working. We are seeing production of ventilators in Canada begin. It will be still a few weeks before they are able to arrive. In the meantime, we continue to work to procure them from around the world.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Chair, on March 25, the finance minister told the Senate that help for the energy sector was coming within hours or days, not weeks. It has now been two and a half weeks since that date, with no announcement. Reports are circulating that a proposal did in fact go to cabinet but that it was rejected.

Is it the Prime Minister's position that there will, in fact, be no help for Canada's energy sector and the tens of thousands of Canadians it employs?

• (1335)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Chair, we recognize the triple challenge faced by workers in the energy sector right now, which has been extraordinarily difficult for people in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador. The low oil prices have long been a challenge. On top of that, the COVID crisis in economic terms has led to a lowering of demand for oil, as people do not travel nearly as much as normally, and at the same time, the health crisis has led people into isolation and remaining home. Families across the country are suffering from this, particularly those in Alberta in the oil sector.

That is why we moved quickly on two measures to help as many people as we could across the country: the Canada emergency response benefit and the wage subsidy at 75%. There will be more coming for the oil sector as we develop sectoral solutions.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Chair, he left out the quadruple challenge, and that was his government's cancelling of projects. We remember that it was his finance minister who promised help was coming in days, not weeks. People who are suffering because of this crisis are suffering in real time and cannot afford to wait longer.

Documents now reveal that in early January military intelligence began producing detailed technical reports about the outbreak of the deadly coronavirus in Wuhan, China. This is a yes-or-no question. Did the Prime Minister see these reports, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Chair, as a member of the Five Eyes, we were privy to significant military and intelligence reports on the status of things happening around the world. There were enough flags for us to convene an incident response group at the end of January. We also began increasing screening at major airports and limiting flights from Wuhan.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Chair, these are very simple yes-or-no questions.

Was this information from the military intelligence report shared with the Public Health Agency of Canada, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Chair, from the beginning, we worked with all agencies to ensure that the relevant information was shared across departments. We needed to make the best possible decisions based on recommendations from scientists, health researchers and international allies. That is what we did.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister's wage subsidy, which we will be debating throughout the day today, is a lifeline to those companies that can still afford to pay any wages at all. There remain a significant number of businesses across the country that are receiving no revenue and are not able to pay any wages at all because they have had their doors closed for almost a month now.

The Conservatives have put forward the idea of rebating the GST to allow those small businesses that have no revenue at all to pay some of their bills and to pay their rent so they can reopen when this crisis is over. Will the Prime Minister consider this proposal to ensure that there are jobs for Canadians to go back to at the end of this pandemic?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Chair, as has been highlighted by a number of people in the House, we are extremely pleased with the level of collaboration and input from all parliamentarians and all parties as we look to ensure that we are helping Canadians as much as possible in this situation. We have moved forward on a wage subsidy; we have moved forward on the Canada emergency response benefit, and we have moved forward on low-interest loans, of which 25%, \$10,000, will be forgivable for small businesses.

We recognize there is more to do, and we look forward to continuing to work with all parliamentarians to make sure we are helping Canadians in the right way.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Chair, as I was saying earlier, we have concerns about the health, security and safety of people who are very welcome in Quebec, the temporary foreign workers. I think we owe the public, those workers and farm owners proper security.

In the next few hours and before the next contingent of workers arrives at Dorval airport, can we start bringing in measures to ensure that people who are sent to our territory by Canada border services officers are quarantined and tested for COVID-19, for everyone's sake?

• (1340)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we recognize that our primary obligation is to ensure the health and safety of all Canadians. Screening people who arrive in our country is essential.

We know how important it is to ensure food security and our food supply chains across the country. Temporary foreign workers have an important role to play in this regard. That is why we have introduced strict rules on quarantining. Foreign workers who arrive in Canada have to be properly isolated for 14 days to ensure that they are not carriers of COVID-19. We will continue to work with all parliamentarians and the various authorities to ensure that these rules are followed to the letter.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Chair, it is possible that the rules are inadequate. Farming operations might not be able to ensure the kind of quarantine that is required, since that is really not their job. It is possible that symptoms might not be identified as effectively by farming operations as they could be if that duty were entrusted to public health experts. It is possible that the task of monitoring people released by Canadian border services is the responsibility of the Canadian government, not the Quebec government.

Given the full costs, I think we need to address this subject, and I propose that we do so proactively over the next few hours.

Can we have that conversation with the Prime Minister, and anyone else who wants to participate, in the next few hours?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Chair, I share many of the concerns expressed by the member for Beloeil—Chambly. We will work together to ensure that while we are meeting the needs of farmers and our supply chain, we have the capacity and assurance that we are keeping Canadians safe and limiting the potential spread of COVID-19.

I look forward to continuing to work with the provinces and the agricultural sector, and with other parliamentarians and opposition parties.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Chair, on another note, some may be surprised to hear that I believe the Canadian government must play a part in restoring the oil sector jobs in Alberta and west-

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ern Canada to what they once were. I do not think we should ask these people to sacrifice their entire economic model.

I do, however, think that any future projects or expansions in the energy sector should involve transitioning the financial resources that would have been allocated to these projects—Trans Mountain in particular—to renewable energy, especially in western Canada, which will have unique needs.

In the current context, can we restore the status quo ante for oil workers but refocus our efforts on renewable energy?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his perspective, which is important, as I well know.

We must support the workers and families that are struggling in all sectors across the country, including the oil and gas sector. We also recognize that we are committed to climate action and that we must find ways to create good jobs for these people in Alberta and elsewhere that will last for years and for generations to come.

That is why we continue to discuss this issue with the Government of Alberta and with experts around the world to ensure that Canada and Alberta are part of this transition to a better future for everyone.

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Chair, I just want to raise a concern again. We have heard stories that represent some of the millions of Canadians who are right now falling through the cracks and who cannot access the CERB. We have heard from people who have multiple jobs, who have lost a lot of work but still get some income: freelance and contract workers, artists and the self-employed.

While the government has committed to fixing those gaps, and I am encouraged by that, will the Prime Minister stand up today and say that people who need help should just apply right now, while the government is fixing the gaps in the system?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the immediate urgency in this situation was making sure that people across the country who were reliant on paycheques to be able to pay for their groceries and rent, paycheques that suddenly disappeared because of COVID-19, get money quickly. That is what we did with the Canada emergency response benefit.

I want to take a moment to thank the extraordinary public servants at the Canada Revenue Agency, but also across ministries and departments, who worked incredibly hard to create a model that would get money out quickly to millions of Canadians.

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Of course, we recognize there are gaps, and we are working with all parliamentarians to fill those gaps, because people who need help should be getting it.

• (1345)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Chair, will the Prime Minister just say today really clearly that if people need help, they can apply right now for the CERB, while the government is fixing the gaps? Will the Prime Minister just say very clearly to all Canadians, “If you need help, apply now”, while the government is fixing the problems?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Chair, we created a program that is helping millions upon millions of Canadians who have lost their paycheques because of COVID-19. We have moved forward with another program, which we are debating here today, on wage subsidies for people so they can keep their jobs and keep their paycheques at 75% subsidy from the government. That will keep people linked to their employment.

However, we recognize there are other people in different situations who also need help, such as students, seniors, part-time workers and essential workers who need extra help keeping their jobs. That is what we are focused on right now, with tremendous collaboration from all parliamentarians.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Chair, some credit unions have recently waived interest rates entirely, so a 0% interest rate is what they are charging on their credit cards, while banks are still charging astronomical interest rates. The six big banks in Canada, BMO, CIBC, National Bank, RBC, Scotiabank and TD, reported more than \$46.5 billion in profits last year.

Will the Prime Minister use the federal government's powers to force those banks to waive interest rates entirely during this crisis?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Chair, the Minister of Finance has been closely engaged with the banks over these past weeks. We have seen strong movement by the banks with respect to helping people who are particularly hard hit financially because of COVID-19. They have agreed to help us administer the small business loan.

We know there is more the banks can do and we have been working with banks and credit unions to make sure they do more to recognize that the way we support Canadians through this situation will ensure we come out of this situation in the best possible shape, all of us.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Chair, during the 2008 financial crisis we saw bailouts that effectively bailed out corporations that then took the money, left Canada and left workers high and dry. The workers lost their jobs while those companies and corporations took billions of dollars from Canada.

Will the government ensure we are going to prohibit any CEO bonuses and stock buybacks for the companies that receive government subsidies or bailouts and ensure that the money goes directly toward workers with strings attached to keep people employed, not to enrich the corporation, its shareholders or its executives?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Chair, we recognize that challenges and crises past had some of the impacts the member opposite talked about. That is why we made sure the big measures we

have put forward are entirely focused on Canadians, on workers. The Canada emergency response benefit helps people who have lost their jobs because of COVID-19. The wage subsidy makes sure that people are staying connected to their jobs even though they cannot be paid by their employer anymore. The government will pay them up to 75% of their salary so that when this is through, Canadians will still have a connection to those jobs and our economy can get going again.

Everything we have done has been focused, first and foremost, on Canadians and not on corporations as a nebulous entity.

• (1350)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have a yes or no question. Military intelligence warned of the deadly coronavirus in a briefing to the government in early January. Did the Prime Minister, his office or any member of the cabinet see these briefings, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, Canada, as a member of the Five Eyes, as a member of NATO, as a member of NORAD, is a close intelligence partner with all of those allies, very much including the United States, and is privy to a great deal of intelligence. Of course, the global pandemic is an issue that has concerned our intelligence agencies and those of our partners, so we have been in close communication with them.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, did any member of the cabinet see that intelligence from our military, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: As I have said, Mr. Chair, our intelligence sharing is very important. Our intelligence sharing with our allies during this global pandemic, which poses particular security challenges, has been very energetic, and we continue to work with them.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the question was and is this: Did any member of the cabinet see that military intelligence, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, part of the basis on which we are able to work closely with our partners, including when it comes to sharing intelligence, is sharing with Canadians only what we are able to.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, we know that the intelligence exists and we know that the military warned the government of the dangers of the coronavirus in early January. After January 22, how many people did the government allow into Canada from the Hubei province, the province from which the virus originated? How many were there?

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Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, when it comes to border control, our government is very aware of the importance of ensuring that people coming into the country today are subject to mandatory quarantine. That quarantine is being enforced. That includes Canadians and non-Canadians. As Canadians know as well, there are strict limits today on anyone who is not Canadian entering the country.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, how many people were allowed into Canada from Hubei province after the government received intelligence from our military showing the danger of the coronavirus?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, we became aware that the coronavirus was indeed a threat and that there were a number of places around the world from which we were receiving people who could have the contagion of the coronavirus. That is why at the border we were very clear about giving clear instructions about the need for self-isolation.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, after the government received intelligence from our military about the dangers of the coronavirus in China, it allowed 2,000 people from the Hubei province, the most affected province, to come into Canada.

Were these 2,000 people quarantined, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I hope the member opposite knows, “quarantine” is a very specific legal term, and the measures of quarantine are currently in place. Prior to that obligatory quarantine being in place, incoming travellers, whether they were Canadian or not, were very clearly told to self-isolate.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, they were told to self-isolate but not required to self-isolate. Therefore, the government allowed thousands of people into this country who came from the affected regions, even though the government had briefings explaining the danger of doing just that.

On which date will the first wage subsidy be in the hands of a small business employer?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we are obviously working as hard as we can to make sure that the wage subsidy gets into people's hands as rapidly as possible. With the passing of this legislation, organizations will be able to go to their banks to make it even faster. My expectation is that, within two to four weeks or so, we will see that get into companies' hands.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the United States has delivered 220,000 loans and wage subsidies to small businesses. The money has already been in the hands of small business employers for weeks now south of the border.

In Canada, the applications just opened for the \$40,000 emergency business loans. How many small businesses have received cash in hand from those loans to date?

• (1355)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, the program and the approach we have taken are focused on people and ensuring that we get funds into their hands as rapidly as possible. We saw millions of Canadians, in excess of three million people, come onto the Canada emergency response benefit this past week. We saw the opening of a special loan opportunity with banks, which started this past week as

well, for more than a million small businesses. We are working as hard as we can to make sure we are supporting individuals and small businesses.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Chair, this is for the Minister of Employment. Will expectant parents who will no longer meet their necessary hours to access full parental leave benefits due to COVID-19 layoffs be granted any assistance to ensure they can access those benefits?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we know, as the Prime Minister and others have mentioned, that the number one goal of getting out the CERB was to get it into the hands of as many Canadians as possible. We are working now to make sure that in the long run there are not consequences in terms of EI eligibility, whether that be hours worked or number of weeks accumulated, that would negatively impact certain already vulnerable populations.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister announced earlier that the CERB would be changed to allow people to work and be eligible. This motion today calls on the government to make those changes. It is being stated both here in the House and in the media that the program is now open to those who work.

Can the minister please confirm that the CERB still requires no employment income and that these changes still have yet to be made? When will they be made?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, it is extremely simple and straightforward. The eligibility criteria for the CERB is, in fact, legislated. Someone has to have earned more than \$5,000 in income, be a resident of Canada and has to have stopped working for COVID reasons.

We know that there are people earning very low amounts of money and we have committed to creating a threshold under which Canadians can continue to earn income and access the CERB. We are working on that and decisions will be made on that shortly.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, can the minister explain whether legislative changes would be required to the CERB for this to come into effect?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, in order to change the criteria to include groups of individuals who are not working but who have not stopped working for CERB, legislative changes would be required. In order to create a threshold of income under which individuals would remain eligible for the CERB, regulatory changes would be required.

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Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, the legislation that created the Canadian emergency response benefit has that someone must cease working due to COVID-19 to access the benefit. However, the Liberal MP for Malpeque has instructed seasonal workers and students who have lost their jobs to apply anyway. Also, the finance minister's own communications and issues manager has given contradictory direction to those who have not lost their jobs to consider applying anyway.

Is this just confusion or is the government instructing people to violate the law and apply when they are not eligible?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, a key cornerstone of this benefit is the quick way in which we can get it out and we are relying very heavily on the honesty of Canadians to do that. There are integrity measures built into the front, namely the requirement for a social insurance number, and there are integrity measures built into the back.

We are asking Canadians to honestly attest that they meet the eligibility criteria as I laid them out and I would hope that no one is suggesting that Canadians do not honestly reply to those questions.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I also hope that the government is suggesting that people follow the law.

Can the minister confirm whether she has sought clarification as to when Parliament would have to be recalled for any legislation? We have members of Parliament who would like to know.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, we do not know at this point if legislative amendments would be required, so it would be premature to even speculate when the House would have to resume, if at all.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, the minister mentions speculation. I asked the minister earlier about whether she would need to have legislative changes in order to be able to deliver what the Prime Minister said. She said there would have to be.

When we were last here, I asked the Minister of Employment if seasonal workers were included under the CERB. She said that they were. We now know that they are not. Was she mistaken when she spoke or was there a policy change to exclude the seasonal workers?

• (1400)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I will first clarify my last answer. If we want to change the law so that somebody who is not working because of CERB, then we need a legislative change. If we want to create a threshold of income under which somebody can still qualify for CERB, we need a regulatory change. It is not apparent given the unanimous consent motion today that we will have to make legislative changes.

With respect to seasonal workers, I apologize for any confusion I may have created in the past, but we are looking at and we have committed in this House today to ensure that seasonal workers will indeed be covered.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, we now know that anyone who applies for the CERB, regardless of eligibility, will get it.

Is it the government's plan to conduct audits on millions of people to determine who got it and who should not have? What will be the consequences of defrauding the taxpayer?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I am very hopeful and confident in the integrity and truthfulness of Canadians in this time of crisis. As I mentioned, we have built in integrity measures at the front and the back end. Based on social insurance numbers, we can track if someone receives a benefit and also receives a T4. We can track if someone receives the benefit and gets a second payment accidentally. There will be a certain amount of integrity measures in the weeks, months and year to come.

Quite frankly, I do not think that there are Canadians out there, in this time of need, spending a lot of time trying to defraud the government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is an immense privilege for me to be here today to stand up for the people of my region, Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, but also for all business owners in Quebec. As a business owner myself, I understand their reality and their concerns.

Many people across Canada have questions about the issues that job creators are grappling with during this crisis, as well as the new reality that they will face after the crisis. After speaking with many business owners, I am now prepared to question the government about the effectiveness of the measures put in place.

I want to thank all the MPs' staff for doing such an incredible job over the past few weeks to help Canadians deal with all of this. I also want to thank the front-line workers serving the public in my own riding and across Canada.

Many of my constituents do not qualify for the CERB because they have a part-time job. There are volunteer firefighters and municipal elected officials who could miss out on \$2,000 a month because they are earning \$150 or \$200.

On Monday, April 6, the Prime Minister promised he would fix this problem, floating the idea of expanding the CERB to include people working 10 hours a week.

Is that happening, yes or no?

Government Orders

[English]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I can assure the House that we are committed to finding a threshold under which Canadians can continue to work and receive the CERB. We are working out those details now, and I am grateful for the input of all parliamentarians to this effort. I can assure the member as well that honoraria, such as that received by an emergency responder or a firefighter, will indeed be either exempt or not counted as employment income to a certain threshold, but again, we are working out those details.

Once again, as was mentioned before, I appreciate how much feedback we have received on these measures.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I am thinking of seasonal workers.

Many seasonal workers are close to exhausting their EI benefits. Even if they wanted to work, they will not have jobs waiting for them in the spring, because of COVID-19. They were not able to work, but they were not forced to stop working because of COVID-19.

Can my colleague tell me how these people are supposed to get through the next few weeks?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I can assure my colleague that we are working very hard to ensure that seasonal workers have access to the CERB.

We have yet to confirm the details, but we have made that decision. We will include seasonal workers very soon.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the minister when seasonal workers will be eligible and when that will be announced.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, we need to make a change.

[English]

There is a regulatory change that needs to happen, and that would, under the first emergency response act, have to be signed off by three of us. We are working hard to make sure that happens quickly.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, in the agricultural sector, dairy producers are having to dump their milk down the drain because restaurants and institutions, most of which are closed, are not ordering it. Pork producers may have to have some of their pigs put down because COVID-19 means meat packers are working with reduced staff and cannot receive and process all those carcasses.

What is the government's plan to help the agricultural sector?

• (1405)

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the measures we have put forward are to help exactly that entrepreneur, that business, that farmer. Making sure they have the adequate funding

through the small business loan is one way they could get that bridge funding to help them through this very difficult period. We are going to continue to make sure we are working with those farmers and indeed with all enterprises in this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, how is the government going to help very small businesses whose payroll is less than \$50,000?

I am thinking of chiropractors, hairdressers, barbers, massage therapists and so on. I am a business person too, so I feel qualified to talk about this. Businesses with a million-dollar payroll qualify, but I know of others that will not qualify but need the \$40,000 loan.

How will the government be answering questions from those businesses?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, small businesses, as we all know in this chamber, really do make up the backbone of the Canadian economy. Small and medium-sized businesses make up 99% of all of our businesses in the country. Making sure that we are listening to and helping these businesses through this very difficult period is what we are here in this chamber to do and what we have been doing, such as making sure that they are able to access the \$40,000 small business loan interest-free so that they can weather through this difficult period.

Also, helping them keep their costs low during this period, like deferring the GST, the HST and customs duties, is going to help those very businesses weather this very difficult period. We know that helping to keep employees together with their employers is going to help them weather this period so that we can get on that road to recovery when it is safe to do so.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Chair, the government has been promising a review of business risk management programs since 2015. Farmers need immediate assistance as they are facing a cash flow crisis while trying to buy their inputs for this year's crops. Measures offered thus far have only put them further into debt.

We know the government has recommendations and solutions in front of it. When are we going to see BRM reform to support this industry?

Government Orders

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we know how important the farm sector, the agricultural sector, broadly, is not only to our economy but especially to Canadians at a time like this. It is for that reason we have done a number of things. Most importantly, we have taken off the previous limit on Farm Credit Canada to give access to credit to those organizations, to those farmers, and we will continue to think about measures that we can take to support farmers during this particularly challenging time.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Mr. Chair, agriculture and food need to be deemed an essential service to protect our food supply chain. Last week, Public Safety Canada made an announcement on essential services but stated, “These essential services and functions are advisory in nature. This guidance is not, nor should it be considered to be a federal directive or standard.”

Why is it not mandatory to ensure federally regulated employees, like CFIA inspectors, continue working and our food supply is protected?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, guaranteeing our food supply is absolutely essential, particularly at a time of a global pandemic. In terms of designating what are and are not essential services, it is incredibly important for the federal government to work collaboratively with the provinces, and that is what we are doing.

We have issued federal guidelines, which is important, and the provinces are issuing their own guidelines based on provincial realities. That is the way to work co-operatively.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Mr. Chair, the pork industry needs immediate assistance. In Ontario and Quebec, there is a bottleneck in processing plants. Some of these plants are closed due to COVID-19 and workers do not feel safe going to work. If these processing plants do not reopen soon, farmers will be forced to euthanize thousands of hogs.

Can the government provide an update on how it plans to help producers from this sector?

• (1410)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we recognize that businesses across the country are impacted in many ways as a result of COVID-19. Specifically, producers in the agricultural sector have real challenges. That is the reason we are providing credit support to them, and that is the reason we continue to work with those sectors to try to ensure we anticipate some of the challenges, to make sure that we help them through these challenging times.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Mr. Chair, ornamental horticulture greenhouse growers are facing a crisis across Canada as nurseries and garden centres are not opening, leaving more than \$2 billion in plant inventories.

What initiatives is the government discussing to address this sector, which does not qualify for existing assistance?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, what the member points out very correctly is that we are seeing businesses in many different sectors with significant challenges. That is why we have put in place credit opportunities for the very smallest of businesses, as well as credit

opportunities for businesses that are larger, through the Business Development Bank and through Export Development Canada. Those businesses will be able to access credit during this time to help them get over what we recognize is a particular challenge, especially as they also have support for their employees through today's wage subsidy legislation.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Mr. Chair, last week the government insinuated China's ban on Canadian canola seed had been resolved. However, according to the Canola Council of Canada, only current levels of imports would continue. Imports are down 70%, \$1 billion less than historical levels.

Has China agreed to increase imports of Canadian canola seed?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, we are very aware of the importance of canola exports to the Canadian economy and I think all of us are more aware than ever of the importance of farmers to Canada.

We continue to work on getting Canadian canola accepted around the world. That includes working with China.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Mr. Chair, Canadians are losing their jobs. Small businesses are struggling more than ever right now, yet the government increased the carbon tax on April 1.

Will the government reverse this increase?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, it is very important that we focus on the urgent and important things that we need to do for Canadians. That's why with the emergency response benefit it was so important to get money out to Canadians immediately. That's why this wage subsidy is so important, as it will help not only employees but will help employers and employees stay connected.

Of course, with respect to pricing carbon, we know that money actually goes right back to Canadians so it is not a distortion and, in fact, will help them during this challenging time.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Chair, when we last met here on March 24, the employment minister left the House with the distinct impression and belief that workers who are currently on unemployment insurance, whose claims will soon expire, would qualify for the emergency benefit program, yet over the last two weeks the Q and A on regulations that is sent to members of Parliament changed. I know that members of Parliament across this country have been telling workers that they would qualify. It now appears they do not.

Government Orders

Do these workers qualify for the emergency benefit program when their claims expire in the coming weeks?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I apologize if I have created any confusion. We are in the process of ensuring that seasonal workers on EI will, in fact, have access to the CERB. Those regulations are not yet in place. Therefore, at this moment they do not, but we are making sure that they will.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Chair, will that change require a legislative change, or a regulatory change that the minister is able to make from her desk or with cabinet?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, that would be a regulatory change that could be enacted through me, the Minister of Finance and/or the President of the Treasury Board.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Chair, could the minister tell us when this will happen?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, we are working very hard to ensure that this happens in the upcoming days.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Chair, this question is for the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance. Small businesses with payrolls of \$50,000 or more have access to zero- or low-interest loans, but for small businesses below that threshold or sole proprietorships, these businesses are wondering if low-interest or zero-interest loans may be made available to them as well.

• (1415)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we are working to make sure that we support Canadians through this challenging time. Of course we are trying to do that in a way that is appropriate to each situation.

We chose the Canada emergency business account to be available, \$40,000 in credit for small businesses with \$50,000 of payroll up to a million dollars' worth of payroll, recognizing that was critically important. We also have the Canada emergency response benefit, which is for people who do not qualify for that, and the wage subsidy as applicable.

We will continue to look for ways we can support businesses of all sizes and will have more to announce in that regard.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Chair, we do look forward to hearing more about that.

Turning to the emergency relief benefit program, the challenge, of course, is around precarious workers. The government policy today is one of lights on, lights off. Small businesses that have seen a collapse in income yet are still struggling to keep their business lights on have a choice to make: keep going with no income, no revenue and no help from the emergency relief benefit, or turn the lights off and receive help. This is not the way we are going to recover. This needs to be changed.

Will the minister commit today to changing it?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, maybe I can explain where I see this right now.

If the business does in fact have a 30% revenue drop or more, it will be able to, with the legislation that we are passing today, have a wage subsidy for up to 75% of its workers' earnings. That is criti-

cally important. If, in fact, it is a small business, it will be able to additionally get a credit of up to \$40,000, which, if paid back before December 31, 2022, will be forgiven at the rate of 25%. That is really critically important as well.

Those things we see as very important and for those organizations that do not use those benefits, they will be able to put themselves or their employees on the Canada emergency relief benefit.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Chair, I ask that the minister lower his sights. I am talking about what I will call the "micro" small businesses, the coffee shops that have laid off the employees but are serving meals to try to keep some income coming in. I am talking about the businesses that do not have employees anymore because they have no revenue but still have a choice to make as to whether to keep operating as a sole proprietorship, effectively. A team of one, or perhaps a couple, does not qualify for any of these programs but it has a choice to make: lights on or lights off.

How are they going to keep those lights on in these businesses?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, this is a dynamic challenge, one in which we are trying to make sure that we are supporting Canadians who are going through very difficult times. We recognize there are people whom we still need to consider how we can support. We believe that the supports we have put in place for small businesses, the supports we have put in place for people who are not working and the supports through wage subsidies would have a very important impact. However, we do know that we still need to consider whether there are additional things we can do and we are, in turn, considering those things today.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Chair, during the last emergency sitting, the Minister of Finance stated that help was coming very quickly to the energy sector, stating that he was not talking about weeks but talking about hours. However, two and a half weeks later, no help has been announced. Since the beginning of this pandemic, Canadian oil and gas companies have cancelled \$8.5 billion in planned spending and capital investments, just trying to survive.

Is it true that the finance minister failed to get cabinet approval for any help for Canada's energy sector, yes or no?

Government Orders

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the answer to that is unequivocally no. What we are seeing today, first of all, is that there is enormous support right now, today in this legislation, that would go to all sectors of the economy, including the energy sector. It is a \$73-billion package that would provide wage subsidies to employees across the country, including those companies that are actually in the energy sector.

Of course, as all of us know, there are also many small businesses in the energy sector as well and those businesses have access to \$40,000 of credit, 25% of which can be forgiven under certain terms. Additionally, we are looking at other things we can do for the energy sector and we are looking forward to talking about that in the future.

Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Chair, why, then, the delay in helping the energy sector? This answer simply is not good enough.

The Prime Minister said at the end of last month that the Liberals recognize there are certain industries that have been hit both by the drop in oil prices and by COVID-19, that there are significant areas where they are going to have to do more and will be doing more, yet the Nova Gas Transmission expansion, a \$1.5-billion project, is awaiting cabinet approval.

Will the Prime Minister commit to doing more and approve this project to help the oil and gas sector get back on its feet right away when all this is over?

• (1420)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am sure the member knows that the wage subsidy we are putting forward today, and looking for unanimous consent, is critically important for the energy sector. In many energy sector projects, there is no ability to take people off jobs, which means those businesses were actually continuing to pay people. Allowing us to help them through this wage subsidy would be so important to those businesses.

Additionally we know that other forms of support, like credit, are critical for that sector and other sectors across the country, and that is something we have been working on. We are looking forward to talking more about that as those details are finalized.

Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Chair, I agree the wage subsidy is very important, but we have a project that is waiting for cabinet approval.

Will the government approve the Nova Gas expansion project?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we continue to go through the appropriate processes to consider projects. As we go through those, we will be providing transparency to the House and to Canadians.

Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister has stated that we will have to remain vigilant for at least a year when it comes to battling COVID-19. Let us contrast that with the Premier of Alberta's proactive relaunch approach, where he is looking to follow the leads of countries like Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea, to keep most of the economy functioning with a low level of viral spread.

When will the Prime Minister tell Canadians about Canada's relaunch plan?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is absolutely

essential that, first and foremost, we do everything we can to protect the health and lives of Canadians as we fight this first wave of the coronavirus. What that means is that we must practise physical distancing and we have to stay at home. We are well aware, of course, of the economic impact. That is why we are here in the House bringing in today's economic measures. Of course, we need to work on an exit plan, but we can only do that once we know that we have hit and moved past our peak.

Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Chair, we need smart, focused measures that will allow us to relaunch our economy once the worst is over. We have already seen the government change its position on stronger border screenings and for masks in public spaces. We need our economy functioning while protecting ourselves from further outbreaks.

Does the Prime Minister have a plan to relaunch the economy as soon as it is feasible to do so?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, we are definitely working on such a plan, as would any prudent government. I will mention some of the things that are going to be necessary as Canada thinks about how we move past the current stage.

We are going to have to work on serological testing. We are going to need to know who has antibodies against this virus and who does not. We are going to need to be aware and realize, as the Prime Minister and our public health officials said in their presentation this week, that it is quite likely there will be one, two or even three additional waves. We are going to need to have a very sophisticated approach.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Chair, my questions for this round will relate to the wage subsidy program and will be for the Minister of Finance.

My first question is this. Many businesses have cyclical revenues. Consider, for example, many businesses in the tourism industry. Obviously, the details conveyed in this bill will compare off-season months for many of those businesses. Will the government think about possibly changing the criteria to include businesses that will be affected by the COVID-19 crisis but for whom it would not be appropriate to use those months for comparison purposes?

I also have a follow-up question. If such changes were made, could it be done through regulations or would we have to recall the House to amend the criteria?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to begin by thanking the member for his contribution to our consultations. He has been a great help.

Government Orders

We changed our approach to ensure that companies that operate on a seasonal basis could look at their income for this year after two months, to see whether it has dropped.

We will always consider other approaches if changes need to be made. For now, when it comes to companies that find themselves in a different situation, we think we have found a way to provide them with the assurance that they can compare their situation to last year or to previous months.

If other approaches need to be considered, we will be open to them.

• (1425)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for his answer and open mind.

My question was about whether such changes could be made through regulations or whether we would have to recall the House to make these changes.

I will take the opportunity to ask my second question, which is more technical.

With respect to the wage subsidy, do the wages paid by the employer include the amounts paid on behalf of employees? I am thinking about the pension plan, insurance, and so on. Furthermore, are tips considered wages?

I would also like to know whether the tips a worker earns count towards qualifying for the CERB. Are tips included in the \$50,000 to \$1 million income criterion for the emergency loan?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, that is a good question.

We took income into account, not stock options or vehicle allowances, for example. Tips are difficult to account for, since it is not easy for the employer to determine what tips an employee received a week ago, a month ago, or two months ago.

We will look into how we can deal with this situation. For the time being, only the income for which there is data is taken into consideration.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for his answer.

I want to come back to the first question on the possibility of proceeding to make any changes to the wage subsidy through regulations.

I have an example of a case that applies to what was said earlier. Many professionals, in the health sector for example, have questions, and they believe they could fall through the cracks of the three programs. As far as the wage subsidy is concerned, these professionals are often self-employed workers who pay themselves dividends. It seems that they might not benefit from the wage subsidy.

The same goes for the emergency loans. These businesses pay salaries only to employees who do office administration work. An office that employs just one person will not have a \$50,000 payroll. To get the Canada emergency response benefit, the business must stop all activity and no longer treat urgent cases. I am thinking of chiropractors, for example.

Would it be possible to change the criteria for these people through a regulatory change?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, these are important questions.

We are looking at the best way to consider dividends for the purposes of the Canada emergency response benefit. We have not reached a conclusion, but that is very important.

As far as the wage subsidy is concerned, that is a bit harder because the months just before March, in other words January and February, are considered for remuneration. That will make it tough to deal with dividends, since only two months are being taken into account.

Finally, the other question is a matter of legislation and regulations. We will consider using a regulatory change in every case, because we know that is the most efficient option. However, if we have to use legislation, then we will look into doing that.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to start by taking a moment to thank my team in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for their amazing work. I am certain that all of the MPs' teams are busy trying to help the public by providing services and answering questions. On behalf of all of them, I want to say that we need clear answers as fast as possible so that we can help Canadians and answer their questions properly. Some people are really struggling, and impatience seems to be on the rise right now. I am sure everyone is going through this.

Right now, some Liberal MPs are telling people who are not sure if they meet the criteria for the Canada emergency response benefit to apply anyway in case they are eligible. Other MPs and even some ministers are saying that people who do not meet the criteria should not apply. Those are two contradictory messages.

I would like to get a clear message from the Department of Finance. If Canadians need help and are struggling to pay for rent and groceries, they should be told that they can apply. This program is an emergency program, and the government is supposed to be here to help them.

• (1430)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I realize people want to know exactly what the eligibility criteria are. That is important.

Our first consideration is people who are in a difficult position because of COVID-19. That was our approach, and I think it is very important to keep going in that direction. We need to establish criteria that work. This situation is certainly very dynamic.

Government Orders

If we run into problems with this approach, we will have to make changes as quickly as possible. That is the situation right now. We will look at the challenges and keep making the right support available to people. If we need to make changes, we will.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, I realize the government has good intentions and wants to do the right thing, but the criteria are unclear and a moving target. The information is contradictory.

Would it not have been simpler to implement a universal measure and then get money back from people who did not need it through taxes?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, that would not have been simpler.

We looked at every option for getting money to people as quickly as possible. That is why we opted for the Canada emergency response benefit. We believe that is important because it enables us to get money to people when they need it. That is our approach for people going through tough times because of COVID-19. Our approach is working. Just a few days ago, over three million Canadians received the Canada emergency response benefit. We are going to maintain this approach.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, can a group of artists or a group of musicians who get their income from performing at festivals or selling recordings, for example, but whose members are not officially wage earners, apply for the 75% wage subsidy?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, an artist who earned more than \$5,000 last year and who is no longer earning that money is of course eligible for the Canada emergency response benefit.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, the government recently announced a bailout for the oil and gas sector. During the 2008 crisis, some of the bailout money was used to enhance CEO bonuses or to pay out dividends. Our concern is that the workers are the ones who need to benefit from the bailout in the current situation.

Are there any conditions attached to ensure that the money will go in the workers' pockets and not the CEOs'?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, with the wage subsidy, we need to know that the money will be paid to the employees. That is a very important condition. We will always look at the best way to help the employees, help the people and ensure that the money is not being used to boost the income of CEOs or others.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Chair, a constituent of mine owns a popular deli that sells groceries. Almost all of his employees have now gone on the emergency benefit. The good news is that his sales are starting to come back and he wants to offer them some work, about 15 hours a week. If they take that 15 hours a week, will they be able to keep their emergency benefit?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I suspect in the case that the member for Carleton is talking about, there may be an opportunity for the employer to consider the wage subsidy, which in many cases will help them significantly. For those who decide to take the CERB, we are looking at how we can make sure that people who work a small number of hours might be

able to continue to be part of that. That work is ongoing and when we have more to say we will say so.

● (1435)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, if they are already on the emergency benefit, they cannot qualify for the wage subsidy. They are now on the benefit. I understand they will be allowed to work up to 10 hours. Why would the government punish those workers for doing more than 10 hours' work? Should we not always reward working, rather than punish it?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, even if the employees are currently on the emergency response benefit, if the employer chooses to put them on the wage subsidy, the employer can do that. People just need to make sure that employees are not going on the response benefit and the wage subsidy at the same time. In that situation, we are hoping the employer will bring people back on staff. That will be very helpful for the employees and will give them a greater sense of confidence. It will help, as we move into the transition, to have that connection with their employer.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the problem is that workers cannot go off the benefit on Monday and go on to the wage subsidy on Tuesday. They are separated by months. In other words, there will be full months during which workers are effectively banned from doing three-quarters of the work they would normally do, because they would lose the wage subsidy if they did.

We would ask the government to consider gently phasing out the emergency benefit to, say, 30¢ on the dollar, so that people are always better off working than they otherwise would be.

Does anything in today's bill ban businesses receiving the wage subsidy from paying executive bonuses, share buybacks or to boost dividends during the period for which they received that subsidy?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, to be clear, the condition around the wage subsidy is that employers will need to show us, before they actually get the money, that they have actually paid the employees. The up to \$847 per week will have already gone to the employees by the time the money actually goes to the company.

There is no way for the business to actually take that money and give it to senior executives or use it for something else. That is very clear. That was one of the things we wanted to ensure was the case, which is why it is designed exactly that way.

Government Orders

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, a large corporation receiving the wage subsidy could basically displace money that it would normally give its front-line workers and use that same money for executive bonuses, dividends and share buybacks, which is completely unacceptable. Taxpayers should not be shovelling hundreds of millions of dollars into a large corporation, some of which will then flow into the hands of wealthy executives and shareholders. That is what happened when the government and the Minister of Industry gave Bombardier \$372 million. The executives and the owners got huge bonuses, and the workers lost their jobs.

I take the minister's non-answer to mean there is nothing to prevent share buybacks or dividend payouts from this bill.

Also, Sunny and Randy own a Markham business. They have a payroll of just over \$1 million. Do they qualify for the emergency business loan, yes or no?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I want to be very clear. It does not matter how we communicate it; in no way are we trying to use trickery to make Canadians think something is happening that is not. The fact is the money that is going for the wage subsidy will go to employees. There is only one thing employers must do. They must show that the money has already gone to the employees. Therefore, it cannot be used for something else; it must be used for that purpose.

For credit around businesses, we are trying to create credit opportunities for businesses of all different sizes. The Canada emergency business account is meant for the smallest of businesses. We have come forward with larger opportunities for credit for businesses that are larger, up to \$12.5 million, half of it through BDC and half of it through EDC. We are looking at further credit support that we continue to work on, which we hope to announce in the not too distant future.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Chair, what do N95 masks, endotracheal tubes, dressing trays, face shields and catheters have in common? They are all critical in our fight to save Canadian lives from COVID-19. However, they are also single-use plastics that are going to be labelled as toxic under schedule 1 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

Canadians are shocked to see how ill-equipped we are to manufacture needed medical supplies. Instead, we rely on Chinese, American and European suppliers to meet our demands. This puts Canadian lives at risk, and it is time to promote plastics manufacturing in Canada.

Would the government agree that banning single-use plastics, including medical equipment, and declaring plastic to be toxic is not a good idea?

• (1440)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Chair, my hon. colleague has highlighted the importance of our efforts to mobilize industry to look at made-in-Canada solutions. I would like to highlight and underscore some of the efforts we have made in terms of securing important personal protective equipment.

We have sourced more than 230 million surgical masks, and over 17 million have already been delivered. We have roughly 75 mil-

lion N95 masks on order. In the coming days, we expect to have over two million more masks in Canada's possession. We have received nearly 10 million pairs of medical gloves.

We have taken appropriate steps to make sure that we protect front-line health care workers.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Chair, we know that many Canadians are isolated at home, but some Canadians suffered isolation long before COVID-19. I am speaking, of course, about our veterans who have no one else to turn to and who may be home alone during this crisis without assistance.

What actions is Veterans Affairs Canada taking to reach out to all veterans to make sure that they are okay and getting the help they need during this time?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we are very aware that there are communities of particularly vulnerable Canadians who need particular support during this crisis. That, of course, includes our veterans, many of whom are also older people and so fall into a category doubly at risk. We are very much focused on them.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the individual Canadians who are making such efforts to reach out to fellow Canadians who are suffering from the necessary isolation.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Chair, we need to be sure that the government is taking action, particularly on this.

Is the government tracking a significant increase in mental health issues and suicides? What actions is it taking to protect Canadians from taking their lives at this particularly stressful time?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, that, I am sad to say, is an excellent question.

One of the prices we are all seeing right now through this period of physical distancing is that more Canadians are suffering from mental health problems. We are very much focused on it. Health Canada is definitely putting forward some measures to be sure to help people at this time.

I also want to encourage individual Canadians to keep doing what they have been doing, which is to help their neighbours, friends and family.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Chair, we have learned recently in a Global news report that there are no public health officials at Canada's land borders. Is this the case, and if so, why is this still the case?

Government Orders

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, when it comes to our land borders, we have taken unprecedented action to restrict travel between Canada and the United States. We have done this with great care. It has been important to restrict non-essential travel even as we have taken steps to ensure that essential travel, the travel which is necessary for trade, the travel which is necessary to keep food in our grocery stores, the travel which is essential to get medical devices across the borders, continues to happen. That is work that is being done in close collaboration with the United States. It is being done by CBSA, and CBSA works closely with the provinces and with Health Canada.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Chair, the Canadian energy industry, particularly in my province of Alberta but also in Newfoundland and Labrador, is under attack by predatory dumping from the Saudi Arabian kingdom and from the Russian government. This is a short- and medium-term oil crisis that threatens 10% of Canada's GDP and significant tax revenue.

What actions is the government going to take beyond the wage subsidy to ensure that our industry survives in the face of this unrelenting attack from foreign governments?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our government, working closely with the Province of Alberta, has been very engaged in efforts at the G20, in efforts led by the NAFTA energy ministers to ensure that this unacceptable international manipulation of the price of oil comes to an end. The G20 energy ministers meeting yesterday did bring some positive results, and we will continue to be very engaged in this important issue.

• (1445)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Chair, I asked earlier about parental benefits, and the minister answered that the CERB will not affect them, which is good, but we already knew that. What we do not know is, if expectant parents have not met their hourly thresholds due to layoffs, whether the government will adjust the program to allow them the benefits.

Can the minister please tell these concerned parents what to expect?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we are currently looking at consequences for a number of groups of their ability to meet the eligibility criteria for EI moving forward. I think also of substitute teachers who are not able to get the hours they need now because they are not in schools teaching. We know that while this may seem a little ways off, this is a very pressing issue for Canadians, and we are digging in on it right now.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, the minister earlier said that changing the worker eligibility to add seasonal workers who are currently not working would require a legislative change. Presumably, this would be to section 6(1)(a), to remove the criteria, "ceasing working for reasons related to COVID-19".

Earlier she said to the member for New Brunswick Southwest that it would take a regulatory change.

How would people who did not cease working due to COVID-19 be covered without changing the section of the act? I really need to

know and Parliament needs to know if we are going to have to come back to fix this section of the act so that we can meet what the government has agreed to today with the motion, under point r).

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, if it is the intent of this Parliament to change the overall criteria of the CERB, that is a legislative requirement. Under the first emergency response legislation there is regulatory power, for lack of a better word, given to me as minister, to make certain classes of workers or types of income exempt from the requirements of the act. That is the provision under which we would be able to, through regulation, exempt seasonal workers.

The other thing is that we have a complementary act through the EI Act, where we could make regulatory changes because seasonal workers are covered under employment insurance.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the minister's contribution here, but I again do not want to see mistaken or flat out wrong information going out. Parliamentarians are struggling to deal with the many questions Canadians have and we do not want to further muddy the waters.

Over the past few days, I have heard from many people who applied for EI after March 15 and have not been paid, despite the fact the government said that applicants were processed. Why is it fair that someone who applies for CERB today will get paid in two days, but others have been waiting for weeks?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, the numbers we are dealing with in this crisis, with respect to EI applications between March 15 and April 6, and CERB combined applications since, are extraordinary. Let me give you some numbers.

Yesterday, April 10, 231,000 people applied for CERB. That includes EI and non-EI eligible. This week alone, it was 3.32 million. Since March 15, 5.85 million Canadians have applied and we have processed 5.26 million of these. Understanding there are still 600,000 applications in the queue, we are working around the clock.

I also offer a shout-out to public servants for their incredible work on this.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I believe in supporting our public servants as they support Canadians, but that was not an answer to the people who are sending me emails and asking specifically about this.

Government Orders

The Canada summer jobs program has been altered and we have sent multiple letters with questions, with no formal response. We expected the government would have removed those applicants who are no longer operating due to COVID, but now it expects the overworked offices of MPs to do that for them. Why is the government putting all responsibility on managing program applicants on MP offices and giving them only a week to do so?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I am sure the member opposite would agree that members of Parliament are uniquely positioned to know the needs and what is going on in their community. They are not alone in this. We also have Service Canada public servants working around the clock, contacting employers to determine if they want to keep offering these jobs or if they would like to amend the job descriptions that they want to offer young people.

We thought it was very important to give members of Parliament, who again are on the ground, the opportunity to work with us to ensure that maybe organizations that historically had not even existed until this crisis had the opportunity to get a 100% wage subsidy for young people for this summer.

• (1450)

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, MPs work every year with Service Canada in order to be able to have this program go forward, but why make all MPs' offices responsible for removing unsuccessful applicants, finding new ones and managing the operations of this instead of simply having a second intake for essential organizations to apply?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, we are having a second intake that will be a combined effort of MP offices and Service Canada. In order to get this out as quickly as possible, we felt the best way forward would be to take an all-hands-on-deck approach so that it did not take weeks and months, but in fact days. We know this is a lot to ask of MPs, but we are there and Service Canada is there to support them.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Chair, even before COVID-19 hit, the processing capacity for the agriculture sector was already in dire straits, especially in Ontario. I would like to know from the government what efforts it is making to ensure there are adequate CFIA inspectors to ensure that pork, beef and poultry can be processed.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, our agricultural sector has never been more important for Canada and Canadians than it is today. It is quite appropriate for us, at a time of a global pandemic and at a time when borders are facing greater questions and restrictions than ever before, to really be concerned about food security here at home. That is why we are very focused on supporting agricultural workers, supporting farmers and definitely supporting the food processing sector.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Chair, for regions of this country where tourism is a major industry, including the Niagara region and my riding of Perth—Wellington, events like the Stratford Festival, the Stratford Summer Music and Drayton Entertainment are all going to be significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Stratford Festival alone has \$135 million of economic activity.

In the past, during the SARS crisis and during the 2008-09 economic downturn, the government brought forward plans to deal with the tourism sector, the arts and culture sector and the hospitality sector. They are all affected.

What plans will the government bring forward specifically for these sectors?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we very much recognize that the sectors the member identified, the hospitality sector, the arts and culture sector and the tourism sector, have been impacted in a very damaging way. There are other sectors as well like the airline sector and the energy sector that are significantly impacted.

What we are looking to do is make sure that we have credit support for businesses of all sizes, from small to large, and we are looking at whether there need to be some specific measures for specific industries as well. As we have more information, we will certainly come forward.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Chair, the government's modelling has shown different scenarios depending on whether it is a 2.5% or 5% infection rate across the country, showing anywhere from 11,000 to 22,000 deaths. As we all know, these models change as different actions are taken by the government.

As these models change, would the government commit to providing updated models to this House and to Canadians on a weekly basis?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our government absolutely believes in science. We believe that information and knowledge is power and we believe that sharing what we know with Canadians helps all of us respond effectively to the threat posed by the coronavirus. We have a daily press conference by the Prime Minister and daily briefings by health authorities and ministers. In all of those formats, we share information and we will continue to do so.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Chair, every day I hear from seniors in my riding who are affected by the COVID-19 crisis, particularly some who are very concerned about their RRSPs, their retirement savings, that have taken a major hit.

Will the government consider lessening the RRIF requirements beyond what has been already proposed?

Government Orders

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we recognize that seniors, like all Canadians, are feeling extremely challenged. Seniors maybe more so because of the additional health anxiety that they have. Not only have we lowered the amount that they are required to take out of their registered retirement income fund, but we also know that what we did with the GST low-income tax credit has a very significant, positive impact on seniors, helping far more than the majority, over 80%, of those who are in a single situation and almost 50% in a couple situation. These are important measures. We will be considering other things we can do to support the health sector to support seniors.

• (1455)

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Chair, this House has asked the Auditor General to undertake important work on its behalf. Currently, the Auditor General of Canada is an interim appointment.

Would the government make his appointment permanent, effectively immediately?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we did give an interim extension to the Auditor General because we thought that was appropriate at this moment in time. We will consider what the appropriate next steps are, as we have the time to do so, but we do think that the current status allows him to continue to do his important work for all of us in Parliament.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Chair, my office and my exceptional staff, both in my riding and here in Ottawa, are doing work and hearing from constituents every day about not being eligible for these different programs, whether they are students, seasonal employers or people who work part-time, but not beyond 10 hours.

The government has stated that they will be making some charges to the CERB. On what date will those changes come into effect?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, quite frankly, as quickly as possible, we are trying to address the systemic gaps in the CERB. At this time, I cannot tell members exactly when each specific change will go into effect, but I can make a commitment on behalf of myself and the government to do it as quickly as possible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Chair, my next questions relate to the emergency response benefit.

We are very pleased that the government plans to implement a measure to make exceptions to the zero income rule. We cited examples such as volunteer firefighters and municipal politicians. We appreciate that plans have been announced to address that.

I would like the Minister of Employment to confirm that details on that will be announced this coming week. A threshold of 10 hours was discussed, and I want to make sure that is the case.

Before I give her a chance to answer my question, I also want to applaud the government for announcing that workers in seasonal industries will also be covered. This is not only about those who have lost their income because of COVID-19, but also those who will not be able to go back to work.

I would also like to know when this measure will officially come into effect for workers in seasonal industries.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, before I answer my colleague's questions, I would like to thank all members for their collaboration and their hard work.

When we created the Canada emergency response benefit, we knew there was still work to be done. That is what we are doing right now. In the coming days, we will continue to look for groups that may not have been included. This will be done on a daily basis. As I said earlier, we are absolutely committed to meeting the needs as quickly as possible.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Chair, I want to respectfully ask the minister about a teacher who works on call as a supply, but who would not have been called the previous month, since early March, say.

Could this person apply for the Canada emergency response benefit, or CERB?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, of course, we will have to look at individual cases.

In this case, if that individual is not working because of COVID-19, he or she may qualify for the CERB.

[*English*]

We can look at this particular case on the member's behalf.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Chair, before the minister's last sentence, I would have interpreted her answer as an unconditional "yes". I would obviously like to be kept informed.

To qualify for the CERB, someone has to have earned \$5,000 in income. I have some questions about what is considered income.

For example, a university scholarship is income for a student, but it is not taxable. Does that amount count in an application for the CERB?

Another question has to do with benefits for people who are not currently working. Quebec has the CSST for people who are injured at work and the SAAQ for people who have been in a car accident. There are also people who are cashing in their RRSPs. This is taxable income.

Does all of that count towards the \$5,000?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his question.

Government Orders

The parameters are very clearly defined. I will be able to get back to him with a more specific answer after today.

Income earned at work counts towards the \$5,000. This is a little more flexible than the tax system, but we are talking about income earned at work over the past 12 months.

● (1500)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for her response.

We are hearing many reports about people who are off work and would like to go back to work. For instance, they may have been on sick leave with a broken leg or something like that, but they cannot go back to work because of the COVID-19 crisis.

Will those people be eligible for the emergency benefit?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for that great question.

We are aware of such cases. We are working together as a team to resolve that problem.

I have no answer to offer him at this time, but it is certainly a top priority for me and my team.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Chair, indigenous leaders across the country have told me that health care resources in their communities were already stretched to the limit and that they would need access to additional personnel.

The existing nurse shortage is leaving many indigenous communities incredibly vulnerable to COVID-19.

What is the government doing to ensure that indigenous communities have enough health care workers to deal with this pandemic?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for that very important question.

Last week, the Minister of Indigenous Services and I had a conversation with leaders from across the country and from first nations.

Our government recognizes that people in first nations, Inuit and Métis communities are among the most vulnerable Canadians. We have provided immediate support through the community support fund to address public health issues, which includes providing PPE, testing and health care personnel. That is just a first step. We know that further support is absolutely required.

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Chair, for a long time it has been clear that federal governments have left indigenous communities behind. The state of infrastructure in many communities, as members know, means that indigenous communities are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19. Self-isolation and physical distancing are not practices that many indigenous communities are able to take part in, as a result of overcrowding and unsafe housing. Handwashing is difficult when people do not have access to clean drinking water.

Indigenous communities around the country have been clear that the response has not been adequate and, in particular, that the funding announced has not been enough. This week, National Chief Bellegarde called on the federal government to immediately release about 10% of all its future funding dedicated to its response to the COVID-19 pandemic directly to the first nations communities. Why is the government waiting to scale up to respond to the need and the scale of the need in indigenous communities?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, that is a very important question. Our government absolutely recognizes that indigenous people in first nations, Inuit and Métis communities are among the most vulnerable Canadians and need particular support when it comes to the challenges posed by COVID-19.

Last week, together with the Minister of Indigenous Services, we had a call with Chief Bellegarde and all the regional chiefs from the Assembly of First Nations. We are providing immediate support through the community support fund to address public health issues. This includes providing PPE, testing and health care personnel.

We know this is just the beginning, and we are prepared to provide, and are working on providing, further support.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Chair, I want to now turn my attention to flooding and the way that flooding is going to impact indigenous communities across the country. I will give one example of such a community: Kashechewan. It represents a lot of what happens across Canada. The specific concern is that the solution to indigenous communities faced with flooding cannot simply be camping out on the land. This solution is fraught with serious issues. The situation in Kashechewan and in many other indigenous communities is particularly difficult, given the impacts of COVID-19 and barriers to previous plans, which were evacuations.

Does the minister have an update on clear plans? What is the department planning on doing to ensure the safety of indigenous communities beyond encouraging them to camp on the land, particularly given the additional impact of COVID-19?

● (1505)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, that is another important question. Certainly for indigenous communities, and indeed for all Canadians, the combination of flood season and forest-fire season with COVID-19 is going to pose a particular set of challenges. The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is very seized with this issue and has been working on it in close collaboration with provincial partners, indigenous partners and communities, the Minister of Indigenous Services and the Minister of Northern Affairs. We know we will have to pay particular attention to how we work on these issues.

Government Orders

As for the on-the-land program, if that is a way that indigenous communities wish to address the issue, of course they will have our support, but that cannot be the only answer.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister visited my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound just before last fall's election to discuss broadband rural Internet. I will add that he was received with a passionate welcome, to say the least.

Small businesses, people working from home and rural schools are all suffering due to a lack of reliable Internet. COVID-19 has exasperated the existing situation dramatically. I am sure that all rural MPs could easily identify dozens of constituents who are having a heck of a time getting up-to-date information on any of the current government COVID-19 benefits or programs, or even applying, due to a lack of reliable Internet access or the ability to get through to the 1-800 numbers.

What is the government doing to rectify rural Internet issues right now?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member opposite for his very thoughtful question on the very important subject of high-speed Internet connectivity in rural communities.

Prior to COVID-19, we made significant investments through the connect to innovate program. We also put forward significant funding under the universal broadband initiative to assist communities like this because we recognized that we are dealing with a significant digital divide.

Going forward we will work very closely with the telecommunications sector. This is a top-of-mind issue. I have spoken to many companies, which have raised this issue with me, about providing better services and high-speed Internet connectivity at more affordable prices.

We will continue to work with the member opposite and the communities that have been impacted.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Chair, the gross revenue reduction test for the Canadian emergency wage subsidy does not work well for farmers, as their revenue patterns and income amounts are subject to timing, volume and pricing changes over the year or years, vice what is currently outlined in the wage subsidy legislation.

Will changes be made to include farmers and ranchers who have been left out of the wage subsidy, as the government has deemed food and agriculture as critical and essential during this time of crisis?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we have worked hard to come up with an approach for the wage subsidy that will deal with the sectors of our economy and individual organizations that are most impacted by COVID-19. The revenue tests we have put in place show us that they have actually seen significant changes in their situations, and they are therefore getting a wage subsidy.

We also know that there are other things we need to do to support sectors that are experiencing challenges, like the agricultural sector.

It is one of the reasons we changed Farm Credit Canada's ability to give loans, because we know that sector is going to be a challenge.

We will continue to think about ways to support our food supply, knowing how critical that is at a time like this.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Chair, small and micro-businesses, especially those that are family-owned or sole proprietorships, are not eligible for many if any of the current COVID-19 benefits and are slipping through the cracks.

Will the government remove the minimum \$50,000 wage ceiling for businesses to qualify for the Canadian emergency business account? If yes, when?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Chair, those micro-businesses and family-owned businesses are really important to the communities, as they make communities so dynamic. The various supports we have put in place are intended to help those very businesses.

In this very difficult time we are going to continue to work and listen to our businesses and micro-businesses to ensure they are supported through this period.

• (1510)

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Chair, I did not hear an answer. Yes or no, will the ceiling be changed?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, we will continue to listen to those businesses, as they are so dynamic in our communities. We are going to ensure that we work hard so that our businesses are supported through this very difficult time.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Chair, could the Minister of Finance answer that question? Will the ceiling be changed?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, businesses across the country have been listened to and we are going to continue to listen to those businesses. We have done a number of things to help our Canadian businesses.

We have helped businesses keep their costs low. For businesses like the one the hon. member just talked about, we are helping by deferring the GST, the HST and customs duties payments so that our businesses can weather this difficult time.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Chair, Service Canada offices have been closed across the country. Canadians without Internet access or phone access depend on Service Canada offices.

Will the government consider reopening Service Canada offices, and when?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, Service Canada offices were closed both in the public health interest of our public servants, but also in the public health interest of Canadians who access services through these offices.

Government Orders

I can appreciate the frustration of individuals who do not have phone or Internet access, and I will take that back as a personal challenge. We have doubled our efforts to make sure that we are answering questions online, that we are answering questions on the telephone, but right now we do not think it is in the public health interest of either our citizens or our public servants to have our Service Canada offices open.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am going to read a quote from the Financial Post:

“In a few months, we would normally see a lot of fresh Canadian produce coming onto the market, I believe that’s in jeopardy right now,” said Canadian Federation of Agriculture president Mary Robinson. “I am so nervous to say that because we don’t want to create any sense of panic.”

Farmers in Bradford West Gwillimbury reached out to me. They are very concerned about the planting right now. They are concerned about their accounts receivables and being paid. How will the government support farmers who are facing uncertainty right now about their yields and in the months to come and offer some protection for fresh produce farmers on their receivables?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I just have to say that we all are concerned with the impacts on multiple sectors that are happening because of COVID-19. This means we need to think about how we can support different sectors.

Most importantly, we have put in place approaches for credit for organizations of all different sizes, and we are continuing to work on that. In the agricultural sector, we have specifically changed the rules around Farm Credit Canada to allow for agricultural sectors to get access to credit to find their way through this. We are going to continue to consider other approaches to ensure the support is there.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Mr. Chair, what follows comes from the physically and mentally challenged adult homes in my riding: “We need your help now.” “Time is of the essence.” “If there is an outbreak in our homes, it will be deadly.” “Our most pressing needs are PPE and off-site isolation beds.”

York—Simcoe is home to over 28 of these homes. They are pleading with the federal government for more financial help. The government has said that no Canadian will be left behind. We expect no Canadian will be left behind. This is a vulnerable group in homes that need more support.

What is the government willing to do for these people?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I can assure every member in this House that vulnerable Canadians, in particular those with disabilities, are top of mind for this government. Yesterday we issued a statement affirming our commitment to leave no one behind and to ensure quality of access to health care and medical treatment, and that is exactly what we are doing.

I am working very closely with the disability community. Yesterday I announced the creation of a COVID-19 disability advisory group to get on-the-ground, lived experience and real-time advice, and that is the exact kind of situation we are tackling. Working with my colleague, the Minister of Seniors, we want to make sure that any kind of more residential-type care facility has the most protection possible in this time of crisis.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Mr. Chair, we are looking for an exact answer. When will money and help be available for these homes? We all know time is of the essence. If we have an outbreak in one of these homes, it could be disastrous. The question is when.

● (1515)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, as part of our global response to ensuring that each province has the health care capacity it needs to respond in this time of crisis, the Minister of Health and I are working with our colleagues in the area of health and disability to ensure provincial needs are identified and that we can, through collaboration, address them.

I can assure the member that this is a top priority for us, and we are doing everything we possibly can.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Mr. Chair, the medical intelligence cell within the Canadian Forces intelligence command warned the government about the emergence of COVID-19 in January. Specifically, did the government take heed of this report when it had the ability to prepare our country for the COVID-19 outbreak?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, our government was focused on the threat posed by the novel coronavirus from the end of last year. We have been very aware of it and have been following it closely, both through our own officials and in close collaboration with our friends and allies around the world.

When it comes to specific intelligence to which I or other ministers have been privy, of course we cannot share that.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Mr. Chair, the economic repercussions of this period will be deeply felt by Canadians across the country. People need to get back to work and have jobs to go back to. Action needs to be taken to get our economy back on track once COVID-19 is contained.

Does the Liberal government have a plan for economic recovery once the pandemic is over?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, absolutely, but I do want to clarify one assumption embedded in the hon. member’s question, and that is this notion that there will be an immediate and visible end to the pandemic.

We will be fully safe and fully past this only once either a vaccine has been developed or we have a very high level of herd immunity within Canada. Prior to that, what experts are saying is likely to happen, and as was shown in our data forecast on Friday, is that there will be a peak, and we will get past that peak, and then we need to prepare for some wavelets coming after. We need to have a calibration of social distancing efforts that go on and off, allowing our economy to restart to some extent.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Chair, yesterday, the Government of Quebec announced that all sports and cultural events are cancelled until the end of August. That will be catastrophic for the tourism sector across Quebec and Canada, and especially in the Lower St. Lawrence.

Does the government have measures in mind to mitigate the impact on the tourism sector?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, that is a very good question.

We know there are sectors that are really hurting because of COVID-19. That is why we have negotiated credit opportunities for the largest of them. We will keep making more credit support available to them.

There are also other approaches to consider, and that is what we are doing.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable came up with an idea I would like to share with my government colleagues. When we send documents and other things through the mail, whether it is to Whitehorse or across the street, Canada Post charges the same.

Could the government take a look at that with Canada Post and see what might be done? We are going to be seeing more and more online sales in the future, and we want to stimulate economic activity in our regions, so is there something concrete Canada Post can do to help businesses that sell online both close to home and internationally?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to thank the hon. member for that suggestion.

In fact, just last week I had the opportunity to listen to a number of businesses that are looking at online sales as a new opportunity to grow their business or do business in the time of COVID-19. As I said earlier, we have been listening to businesses and we will continue to listen to businesses.

I want to thank the hon. member for that very good suggestion. We are going to continue to keep listening to him and businesses across this country to see what we can do.

• (1520)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, some businesses are finding themselves excluded from the wage subsidies in Bill C-14 because they are subsidiaries of a larger entity. They are put in the same basket as several other small businesses, and the revenues of each one come from the parent company. This is also true in the case of management companies.

I would also like to know whether these companies should be or could eventually be eligible under this legislation.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we looked at the situation of companies with subsidiaries and concluded that a solution was needed for that group.

In the case of companies that are in good shape overall but have one branch that is struggling, what matters is the group. That way, we can make sure that money gets to the businesses and individuals who are really struggling because of COVID-19.

I am confident that companies will be able to keep and protect their employees, if they have sufficient revenues.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, assistance provided through the BDC or Investissement Québec, for example, comes with an interest rate of 3% or 3.3%. These are loan guarantees for the most part. They are direct loans, but they are loan guarantees. This is in addition to the current debt load of businesses, such as mine for example. However, only 75% of the \$40,000 is repayable, because the interest is at the government's expense.

Is there any chance of offering businesses with smaller revenues the possibility of accessing this? Very small businesses, as I said earlier, also have expenses like rent, municipal taxes and so on. They will need income to get through this situation. It could be many months before they can get going again. They will not have enough money to get through this situation.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we are trying to find a solution for businesses of all sizes.

Smaller businesses can use the CERB for themselves and their employees. Larger businesses with a payroll between \$50,000 and \$1 million have access to the CERB and a \$40,000 interest-free loan. Even larger businesses have access to a government-guaranteed loan from the Business Development Bank of Canada of up to \$12.5 million.

We have a solution for businesses of all sizes, and we will continue to do what we can do to make things better for them.

[English]

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Chair, the problem is that Service Canada is not there for us. It is not there for Canadians if they do not have high-speed Internet and if they cannot get through on a phone line, which most Canadians cannot.

With millions of Canadians out of work, why did the government think it was acceptable to close down Service Canada offices while grocery stores across the country have refitted themselves to serve Canadians? Why could those measures not have been taken in Service Canada offices so they could continue to serve the public?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am trying not to take exception to the fact that somehow our public servants at Service Canada are not working really hard to serve Canadians in alternate ways, whether through phone or through the Internet.

Government Orders

I appreciate the particular challenge faced by Canadians who do not have high-speed Internet access. We have redeployed thousands of former public servants and volunteers to answer phones. Unfortunately, the reality of the millions of Canadians who need help right now is that patience is the word of the day. Canadians understand that. They are frustrated, but they understand that their fellow citizens are doing their very best.

We made a public health decision in the best interest of public servants and the public to shut down these offices and we stand by that decision.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Chair, this question is for the Minister of Finance.

Regarding what we are debating and will debate for the rest of the afternoon, can a company that qualifies for the wage subsidy just pay that 75% subsidy? In other words, can an employer cut an employee's salary by 25% and just pay what the federal government is offering or is there a requirement to pay 100%, so employers do pay 25% and the feds pay 75%?

• (1525)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, that is an important question. We came to the conclusion that, for those employers who have a reduction in revenue, we did not want to force them to pay the additional 25% in every situation because in many situations they would just not be able to do that and therefore the wage subsidy would not work for them.

What we have done is to say that we urge employers to pay that additional 25%. We think that should be done where they can do it, but we are not forcing them to do so as otherwise the wage subsidy would not have the desired impact of allowing employers to bring people back after being laid off, and employees stay with the company. We hope that employers who have the capability to pay their employees in full do so and for others, that it will maintain that important bond between employee and employer.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the clarity.

Canada's international seafood trade markets have been decimated. Throughout Atlantic Canada, there are numerous small and medium-sized lobster buyers who have faced serious and significant financial losses. They purchased lobster in the fall for \$10 a pound and they have been unloading it for \$2 to \$4. They are taking huge losses. This is not stock they can keep in tanks. It has to be sold.

What kind of help will the government be able to provide these lobster buyers throughout Atlantic Canada? My question is for the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I hope the member can tolerate an answer from the Deputy Prime Minister.

It is a very important question. It is an issue that we are very focused on. The Minister of Fisheries is very aware of this. This is an area where the global economic slowdown caused by the response to the coronavirus has had a particularly sharp and striking effect. The Minister of Fisheries is very seized with the issue and is working on it.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Chair, my question is for the government House leader. Why does he say Parliament cannot meet daily when it is acceptable for ministers to do so?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Chair, as I said earlier today, the role of Parliament is fundamental. The role of parliamentarians is also fundamental. We recognize that. At the same time, we all understand that we are in the middle of this huge pandemic, this huge crisis. I want to thank all the people who are here working today. I see technicians, those translating what we are saying at this moment, the people at the table and the security agents. All those people would have to come here on a daily basis if that were the case.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Chair, small businesses and the people who run them are key to our communities and they need help paying their bills right now. They need more help than just the loans the government is offering. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, even with the help already being provided, 42% of small businesses are worried that they will have to permanently close. Only six in 10 businesses were in a position to pay their commercial rent in full for April. Nearly 70% of over 25,000 businesses surveyed expected to default on their leases by May 1.

Will the government follow the example of other countries such as France, the U.K., Denmark and Australia, which have all taken action to provide relief and subsidies to help small businesses with their commercial rents so they can survive these unprecedented times?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the supports we have put in place, supports like helping businesses keep their costs low, helping them defer the GST, HST and customs duties, and deferring when they will pay their income taxes, along with what we are debating today, which is the wage subsidy that would help businesses with that very significant expense of paying their employees, are going to help businesses keep their costs low. Doing so will give them the flexibility to be able to manage the other costs that they have.

However, I want to reiterate that we will continue to listen to businesses so that they are supported through this very difficult period.

• (1530)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Mr. Chair, I have heard from so many of my constituents that they are terrified about what is to come and how they are going to keep their families fed and a roof over their heads. A lot of them are really scared and they are now dealing with the problems of being paid double payments, overpayments. They need to know that the money they receive is not going to be clawed back unfairly if they do not fit the specific criteria of the emergency response benefits.

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Will the minister reassure people today and commit that those who have applied in good faith for and received benefits through CERB or other programs to support them through this crisis will not be unjustly penalized?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I can so confirm. If Canadians truthfully apply, honestly believe they are eligible, and it is determined they may not have been or perhaps have received two payments for applying twice, we will absolutely ensure, through our back end, that we will respectfully work with them. I can assure the House nobody is going to be made to have more duress because of these efforts.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Mr. Chair, there is no doubt that seniors right across the country are feeling the impacts of the increased costs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many are suffering a great deal of anxiety because of the declining value of their retirement savings, which they depend upon greatly. Canadian seniors need our help and they need it now.

Will the government use the existing OAS-GIS benefit structure or the CERB to provide additional benefits to seniors in most need, and will it temporarily suspend 100% of the mandatory RRIF withdrawals for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we very much recognize that seniors are facing in many ways more anxiety than any other Canadians because they are concerned about the health risks. We know they are also facing financial challenges, as the member pointed out, around their savings. That is the reason we changed the amount of money they were to bring out of their RRIFs, which is actually the same size measure done in the 2008-09 crisis.

However, we have done something more. The GST low-income tax credit hits a very large number of seniors. It is going to provide instant help for them, which we recognize is important. We will continue to work with the provinces to make sure our health care systems have the capability to meet this challenge at a challenging time.

[Translation]

The Speaker: It being 3:35 p.m., pursuant to order adopted earlier today, the committee shall rise.

* * *

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACT, NO. 2

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.) moved that Bill C-14, A second Act respecting certain measures in response to COVID-19, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Pursuant to order adopted earlier today, a member of each recognized party and a member of the Green Party may speak to the motion for not more than 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments. Members may split their time with another member.

[English]

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade.

We are living in a strange time. On Wednesday, Passover Seders were moved online. This Easter weekend, churches normally filled with people are standing empty. Towns and cities across this country have strangely empty streets. The public health measures required to stop the spread of COVID-19, such as social distancing and the closing of public and private spaces, are having a profound impact on Canadians and on our economy. All sectors of the economy are being affected by COVID-19 as civil society has mobilized to stop the spread of this disease.

• (1535)

[Translation]

Whether times are good or bad, businesses provide the jobs, products and services that Canadians rely on to keep their communities going.

[English]

Small businesses in particular are vulnerable. They are the heart of our communities and they need to be supported. We know non-profits and charities are facing challenges too. Canadians' needs for their services are going up, but their donations are going down.

[Translation]

These employers need our help to protect the jobs of Canadians who work hard and to maintain the resilience of our economy.

[English]

As leaders, we need to confront the very real needs of Canadian business owners and workers, and take action to give them the support they urgently need in the face of this pandemic. This is where the Canada emergency wage subsidy comes in. To help Canadians and businesses get through these tough economic times, the government is proposing through this legislation a wage subsidy of 75% for qualifying employers for up to three months, retroactive to March 15, 2020. The Canada emergency wage subsidy is a key measure to ensure that Canadian families can count on a source of income through this difficult time.

[Translation]

The Canada wage subsidy would allow businesses to retain their employees and rehire workers who were laid off to ensure that the Canadian economy can recover from this crisis from a position of strength. It is important to note that by retaining their employees, Canadian businesses will rebound better after the crisis.

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[English]

The Canada emergency wage subsidy is proposed to apply at a rate of 75% of the first \$58,700 earned by employees, representing a benefit of \$847 per week, per employee. The program would be in place for a 12-week period from March 15 to June 6 of 2020. Eligible employers would be those who suffer a drop in gross revenues of at least 15% in March, or 30% in April or May, when compared to the same month in 2019 or to an average of January and February 2020 revenues.

[Translation]

This subsidy is being offered to employers of all sizes and in every sector, with the exception of public sector entities. Our government wants employers and employees across the entire country to get the help they need.

[English]

Non-profits and registered charities will be able to benefit from all of the additional flexibilities for the revenue drop test that I have just described.

We also know that different types of organizations in this vitally important sector are facing different types of funding pressures. Non-profit organizations and charities will, therefore, be able to choose between including government revenues and excluding them when calculating their drop in revenue. Eligible employers would be able to access the Canada emergency wage subsidy by applying through a Canada Revenue Agency online portal.

[Translation]

The amount of the wage subsidy will be determined on the basis of the actual wages or compensation paid to the employees. We expect every employer to do everything they can to cover the difference to get the wages to 100% of the maximum amount covered.

[English]

We have designed the subsidy to provide generous and timely financial support to employers and we expect that employers will use this subsidy to support the health and well-being of their employees. The legislation includes a provision to protect the integrity of the program and to ensure it is not misused. An officer of any organization that applies would have to attest to the accuracy of the claims. Any company that receives the benefit and is then discovered to be ineligible would have to repay the amount of subsidy received, and there would be serious consequences for anyone who tried to take advantage of the subsidy.

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing disruption across our economy in ways big and small. The Canada emergency wage subsidy is only one of a myriad of measures introduced by the government recently to support Canadians through the outbreak of COVID-19. Over the last three weeks, our government has announced a series of broad economy-wide supports as a part of Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan. This plan will help to ensure Canadians can weather this storm.

[Translation]

Our government is offering the Canada emergency response benefit to anyone who loses all their income because of COVID-19.

The application period opened on Monday and millions of Canadians filed their application.

Our government is also allowing businesses, including self-employed workers, to put off their GST/HST payments and import duties owing until June. This measure is akin to giving Canadian businesses interest-free loans worth as much as \$30 billion. What is more, our government has extended the deadline for filing income tax returns and remitting income tax owing, which leaves \$55 billion circulating in our economy. These measures will help businesses continue to pay their employees and their bills and contribute to controlling the liquidity problems companies are experiencing across the country.

Our government has also introduced the new Canada emergency business account. This program will provide \$25 billion to eligible financial institutions to provide interest-free loans that include a partial write-off with conditions to small businesses, including not-for-profit organizations.

● (1540)

[English]

These loans of up to \$40,000, guaranteed and funded by the Government of Canada, will ensure that small businesses have access to the capital they need at a 0% interest rate so they can pay for rent and other important costs over the next number of months. Additionally, if they pay the loan back before December 31, 2022, 25% of it, up to \$10,000, will be forgivable.

For small and medium-sized companies that require greater help to meet their operational cash flow requirements, our government created the new small and medium-sized enterprise loan and guarantee program, which will provide \$40 billion in lending support, through the EDC and BDC, for small businesses, to help them weather the impacts of COVID-19.

These are uncertain times. We understand that Canadians urgently need support. We are using all the tools available to make sure we protect Canadians' health and keep our economy strong. Now is the time for us to come together and to work together. Across the country we are seeing civic action on a level not seen in generations. We know Canadians are staying home to help stop the spread of this disease. By doing this, they are saving lives and protecting our front-line workers.

I am calling on all parliamentarians to swiftly pass this bill. Canadian workers and businesses deserve the certainty. We know that when this crisis passes, and it will pass, Canada's workers and businesses will be ready to bounce back, building an even stronger and better Canada.

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Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech and for the openness with which his office has received our suggestions.

I want to talk about a number of these suggestions that I think he and his office have received favourably.

One, our early concern with the wage subsidy was that an employer would not find out until the end of a pay period whether he or she was eligible to receive a subsidy. In other words, employers would have to make a decision to hire people without knowing, for 30 days, whether their wages would be subsidized. We suggested that they have the ability to get an answer at the beginning of the pay period, as opposed to just at the end.

Two, we raised the concern of owner-operator businesses that do not have \$5,000 of wages and therefore earlier did not qualify for the CERB because they paid themselves previously with dividends. This group was not eligible for either a subsidized wage or the CERB under the original iteration. I want to know if the minister can update us on any adjustments he has made to solve that problem. I believe there is some good news for that group.

Third, there is a concern about businesses that are not arm's length from one another; in other words, there is a parent company and a division. The division might have experienced massive revenue drop, but the parent company has not, and therefore the division was not, under the original proposal, eligible for any wage subsidy. I believe the ministry has taken that concern seriously as well.

I wonder if the minister can update us on those three concerns and how he has addressed them.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, we have been pleased to work with all parties in the House and to work with businesses across the country as we think about putting in place measures that are dealing with a very dynamic challenge. What we have come up with are some ways to ensure that businesses can know that they will be able to continue to have access to the wage subsidy based on having access to it in the month previous. We see that as critically important.

We are continuing to look at how we can make sure that the emergency response benefit supports people who have had \$5,000 in income over the past year. Of course, one of the things that people have brought up is how we can deal with dividends in that regard, and that is something we are indeed considering. There will necessarily be some things that we will need to consider as we bring out these measures.

These measures, of course, are intended to support the broadest possible cross-section of Canadians as rapidly as possible. We are really pleased that we are able to help so many Canadians. We have seen it this week with the number of people who have applied to and have been accepted into the Canada emergency response benefit. Similarly, we want to see that happen with the wage subsidy. We are seeing businesses already coming out saying that they are going to re-employ the employees they have laid off because of this.

We think that the measures we have taken, again in collaboration with Canadians and with members of the House, are going to have an important impact on allowing us to deal with this crisis.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we all know that this is a huge crisis and that it is having a lasting impact on the economy.

The government responded with some fairly strong measures, which is appreciated, and that is good. All the parties called for such measures, and we joined together to try to give our businesses some breathing room and ensure that workers are not left behind.

The assistance measures are fairly significant and broad. They could be described as wall-to-wall measures. However, we know that some sectors will be more affected than others. Travel agents are one example. We all know that, at the end of the crisis, people will not immediately start travelling again. Travel agents are extremely concerned.

I was wondering, and I would like to take this opportunity to ask the Minister of Finance, whether something will be done in the short term for travel agents or for the sectors that are experiencing greater financial difficulty that will put them at risk after the crisis.

Will there be sector-specific assistance for those people?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question.

I know that some sectors are struggling right now. That is why we moved fairly quickly and introduced the Canada emergency response benefit for employees, the wage subsidy and the interest-free loans.

We will look into other measures and other levels of credit, as well as other ways to improve their situation. We are looking at other approaches and, when we come up with other measures, we will be transparent and make them known as soon as possible.

[*English*]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has said, Canada's small businesses are places that make our communities feel like home. Restaurants and cafes have had to close their doors; tech companies are impacted, and bookshops and clothing stores have had to lay off their staff. Small businesses truly are the heart of our communities, employing 8.3 million hard-working Canadians and accounting for nearly seven out of 10 private sector jobs in the country.

I start with this statistic because Canadians have been hearing a lot about small businesses recently, and although a lot of people can think of a small business owner, or they themselves are small business owners, we do not often think that small businesses are the driver of our national economy. However, they are, and I know that Canadians across the country want to see their favourite business reopen and thrive after all of this is over.

Our economy needs small businesses to remain resilient and to rebuild in the weeks and months to come, so I want Canadians to know that, in the face of COVID-19, we are listening to our business owners and our employers and responding to them. Right now, our goal is to save jobs and save businesses. We know that the single most important asset that businesses have in that recovery are their employees.

Growing up helping my own parents run their small business, I know it can often be a family affair. With 75% of Canadian small businesses having fewer than 10 employees, I have heard from many employers that their teams are so closely knit that they feel like family. If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we are all in this together. Whether they are small businesses that have had to temporarily close or lay off employees to reduce hours, or are struggling to pay rent, we know that they have been facing some seemingly impossible decisions recently, and we want them to know that their government is with them every step of the way.

For those business owners who have agonized over how to make their payroll, we have introduced the Canada emergency wage subsidy to support the payment of up to 75% of wages for the first \$58,700 of an employee's earnings. This means up to \$847 a week for workers who stay on the payroll. This would not only give workers certainty, but it would help keep our businesses in fighting form, ready to bounce back when we are through this. Let me reiterate: The whole point of this is to keep businesses intact because we know that when it is safe to do so, businesses that remain connected to their employees will be in a better position to lead our economic recovery.

Therefore, I am pleased that organizations like the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters all agree that the Canada emergency wage subsidy would help employers keep paying hundreds of thousands of their most valued employees during this difficult situation.

The government's support for small businesses certainly does not end there. We have doubled the maximum length of the work-sharing program, for example. This would provide income support to employees eligible for EI who agree to reduce their normal working hours because of developments beyond the control of their employers. We are doing all of this because we know that people are really the heart and soul of our businesses. We want employers to feel able to keep their families together. I know from my own experience how personal a small business really is.

At the same time, we know that there are plenty of expenses beyond payroll that still need to be covered. That is why we established the business credit availability program, which would help to finance small businesses that are struggling because of COVID-19. As part of this program, we have introduced the Canada emergency business account, which would provide up to \$40,000 in loans, interest-free, to help with those short-term costs.

To further help businesses with cash flow, we have worked with the financial sector to open up billions of dollars more in lending capacity through financial institutions such as banks and credit

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unions, as well as through the Business Development Bank of Canada, Export Development Canada and Farm Credit Canada.

● (1550)

The program will help companies in all regions and in all sectors, all of our small businesses. Whether it is oil and gas, air transportation, or exports and tourism, we are going to help all of these businesses.

Speaking of tourism, Parks Canada is working with tourism entrepreneurs in national parks, historical sites and marine conservation areas to help minimize the impacts of COVID-19 on those industries. The decision has already been made to defer payments on commercial leases and licences of occupation without interest until September 2020. To help the people who feed us, Farm Credit Canada has received an additional \$5 billion of support so it can help our farmers and our agri-food businesses. This assistance is both in the liquidity and to help keep people on the payroll.

We have also been introducing ways to defer other kinds of expenses that come up for businesses, to help keep their costs low. We are allowing businesses to defer income tax payments incurred between March and September 2020 until August 31, and we will defer GST and HST remittances and customs duty payments until June 30, 2020. To help small business owners and entrepreneurs who have lost their income, we are helping with the Canada emergency response benefit, giving them \$2,000 a month. This will help those sole proprietors struggling with cash flow right now to bridge to better times.

Through these measures, we are offering new flexibility to different types of businesses dealing with the impact of COVID-19. Let me share a couple of examples. We are working with the owners of a wholesale fibre mill at the moment, one that has been operating for 15 years, providing good jobs for its six full-time employees: that is, until two weeks ago, when the mill had to temporarily close its doors due to lack of demand. It plans to gradually restart its operations within a week, and it will conduct the required maintenance during this partial shutdown. We are working with those mill owners so that they can bridge through with the Canada emergency business account to cover the overhead and carry out the required maintenance. We are going to work with the owners to bring back those six employees through the emergency wage subsidy. Given that both of the owners, who were on payroll, have not been taking a wage since the closing, we are helping them so they can access support through the CERB to help them bridge through this difficult period.

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Another example I can give is a younger company: a two-year-old bakery with five employees plus the owner. This small business was on an upward trajectory before COVID-19, but now its retail sales have plummeted 50%. With the demand for bread remaining strong, however, the bakery has decided to work through its challenges. Through the emergency wage subsidy, it is going to keep the bakers employed just to make the bread. The bakery has applied for a loan through the business emergency account to bridge the payroll expenses, but also to set up an online ordering system. Like the mill owners, the bakery owner is going to choose to leave cash in the business and draw on the CERB to support it through this time.

There are thousands upon thousands of small businesses just like this bakery and this fibre mill that need help. Through all of these actions, we are trying to give businesses the breathing room so that they can keep their employees on payroll, pay the bills, cover the rent, and know that they will still be on their feet once this crisis has passed.

These decisions and changes will come as a result of direct consultations with businesses from coast to coast to coast. Through conference calls and Skype sessions over the last couple of weeks, our government has been listening and speaking with businesses all across the country, in every sector and in every region. Through these conversations, it has been heartening to hear from small business owners and entrepreneurs and from so many hard-working Canadians about the real difference that the emergency wage subsidy and all the other measures will make to their businesses and to their families: like the restaurant owners in Halifax who wrote in to say that they are going to be able to put their staff back on payroll and they will be ready to open when it is safe to do so, or the dentist here in Ottawa who turned his passion into a successful practice; now he is not seeing patients and is sending his staff home, but he will be able to keep paying the bills and keep paying his employees.

● (1555)

We will continue to listen to the very needs of small business owners and entrepreneurs. We will continue to explore ways to bring more relief, not only for our businesses but also for the hard-working critical workers across this country because we are going to get through this together.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to drill down on a question asked by the hon. member for Carleton. There is a lumber mill in my riding that is a division of a larger parent company. The larger parent company also deals in pulp, which has been very successful and going strong during this time, but the particular division located in my riding that provides lumber for decking and construction has seen a 60% to 80% drop in revenue. However, because it is a division of a parent company and cannot demonstrate a 30% drop in revenue, it has had to lay off 60 people and does not qualify for the wage subsidy.

What actions are the government going to take to ensure that divisions of larger companies that may not now qualify for these wage subsidies will qualify?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Speaker, the whole point of the wage subsidy program is to save our businesses and keep their employees

employed. We know that businesses are stronger when their employees are together with them and when that team is together. This wage subsidy is going to help these businesses prime for recovery, and we are going to continue to work with all businesses in Canada so they can support their employees through this very difficult period and can be primed for recovery at that time.

● (1600)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in times of crisis, not-for-profit organizations and charitable organizations are more vital. In my community of London, I have been participating in some of the local city-run phone calls that have taken place to try to bring forward a lot of the issues and struggles of people, and so I am hearing from them directly.

We certainly welcome the adjustment to the eligibility criterion that the Minister of Finance announced earlier this week, but we hope that the government will continue to work with these organizations to ensure that they can continue to pay their employees and provide the services so desperately needed by a growing number of the public.

Does the minister agree and support the idea that the wage subsidy should apply to charities like food banks that are seeing demands skyrocket while resources are decreasing?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Speaker, those very charities and not-for-profit organizations do such important work for our communities all across the country, and I am very pleased that the wage subsidy will indeed apply to both charities and not-for-profit organizations.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to bring to the attention of the government a group of Canadians who are falling through the cracks.

Recently, Bell, Rogers and Telus announced the lifting of Internet data caps. This is a welcome announcement and will greatly help Canadians living in cities, but millions of Canadians who live in rural areas are not eligible for the lifting of these data caps. Many of these customers rely on products like Rogers' Rocket Hub or Bell's Turbo Hub, and their data caps have not been lifted. For a typical family of mom and dad who have to work from home, with two kids at home who have to do online learning through video, they could easily go through 250 gigabytes of data a month, incurring a \$1,000-Internet bill.

Could the government comment on this situation and what steps it is taking to address it?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Speaker, during this very important time when all of us are doing extraordinary things to plank the curve and to ensure that those very businesses and Canadians are supported through this period, we are working to make sure that these measures and many of our measures are helping those very Canadians in all our communities.

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Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once upon a time, an angry dog chased a cat. The cat ran up to the top of a tree, and so the cat lived happily thereafter. Right? Well, wrong, because, of course, the cat had to come down the tree at some point, and the dog was still waiting there. We are kind of in the same situation, as Dr. Fisman explained, an epidemiologist from whom I borrowed the analogy. We are all safely in our homes away from the COVID dog, but at some point, we will have to come out into the world if we are going to earn a living and pay our bills. That is ultimately the problem we will be faced with in the medium term.

Today we are debating measures, for example, that are at once both too exorbitant and too inadequate. How is that possible? Well, they are too exorbitant because they will drive our deficit to at least \$186 billion this year, almost four times the previous record. That is only to pay for measures that take us to the end of the summer, barely a fiscal quarter into the year. That total does not include provincial deficits or the reduction in the book value of the Canada pension plan investments, which surely will drop given that markets are down by a third since the crisis began. That is why I will be sharing my time with the member for Kelowna who will comment on some solutions to that problem. He will also bring forward concerns from Central Okanagan.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, and I thank members of the House for their help, the reality is that we cannot as a nation, and no nation in fact, can go on borrowing this much this fast. We know this for a fact, because we already cannot borrow enough in international markets. The Bank of Canada has announced that it is going to print \$5 billion a week, a quarter of a trillion dollars a year for almost the exclusive purpose of lending to governments. In other words, we are beginning to pay our bills with money that the Bank of Canada is literally fashioning out of thin air. This can only go on for so long as necessary, which these very legitimate measures in fact are.

At the same time, as big as these measures are, they are still not solving all of the problems. For example, there are businesses that will benefit from none of these proposals. For example, if one has a payroll of over \$1 million, one cannot get the \$40,000 emergency loan. If one's business is shut down by the government, it does not matter if one has access to a wage subsidy, because there is no work and, therefore, no wages to pay. In other words, one would still be paying a mortgage, property taxes and utilities, etc., but none of the \$76 billion in measures for businesses will be effective whatsoever. I know of one such businessman who came here penniless as an immigrant from Italy 50 years ago and built a great business. At the beginning of March, he dropped off \$800,000 worth of food that he distributes to restaurants. At the end of March, guess what happened? Those restaurants could not pay for any of the food because they were closed. In fact, much of it went bad. Well, he is not eligible for any of the benefits so far. His life savings are now gone.

No matter how much government spends, it cannot replace that. I am not saying this to disparage the measures before the House, but there is nothing that can replace the extraordinary power of our 20 million Canadian workers. There is no government program that can rain down enough money to compensate for their demobilization. There is nothing that can replace the entrepreneur that goes

with heart and soul into their business every single day to employ their workers and serve their customers. No government program will ever replace any of that, and so we are still the cat on top of the tree. That is true, and we have to hide there, because there is this dog at the bottom of the tree waiting for us when we get down, but we do need a plan to get down.

Health experts tell us that the only way to get rid of the COVID dog is to have a vaccination or a cure, but that might not happen for as long as a year and a half. I have already explained that we are going to go \$186 billion into deficit simply to respond in one quarter of one year. We can do the math. This cannot go on, at least in its current state, for that length of time, and so we need an interim plan to get out of the tree safely and back to life so we can resupply our economy and produce the wealth that we continue to consume.

• (1605)

What is that interim plan? We can only study those places that have found ways to make it work. The exemplary cases are South Korea and Taiwan. What have they done? In South Korea they began very well-targeted testing to find out who has actually contracted the disease and, therefore, has been spreading it. Once those people are identified, they are quickly isolated and treated.

Here in Canada we have tested about 1% of the Canadian population. In six weeks that is far too slow. The good news is that an Ottawa company, Spartan Bioscience, is now signing agreements with governments at all levels, including the federal government, to the government's credit, to provide a coffee-cup-sized box that can conduct a test every half-hour. Dr. Paul Lem, the genius CEO of this company, has now signed an agreement to sell over \$800,000 of these devices to the Government of Ontario. Each device can do 15 tests a day. That means that almost every single Ontarian could be tested once a day with this technology. Some employers in Taiwan, for example, are testing people as they come in every couple of days so they can quickly take people out of the work force if they are identified as having COVID-19. This kind of technology could provide us with the same nimble ability to identify the sick and take them out of circulation so they do not transmit the virus.

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We can also prioritize the workers in hospitals and seniors homes, so that not just the workers, but anybody who goes into these facilities is instantly tested and given a result within 30 minutes. I know how important that is. I was tested for COVID-19. It took 12 days for the results to get back. When they did, I had a false positive. I had to call and speak to five different people at the hospital to find out whether I had contracted it. That is clearly too slow and clumsy.

There is no way we can broadly test our population unless the system speeds up. Spartan Bioscience has the technology and is deploying it rapidly with companies right across the country to help with its manufacturing. That will be absolutely necessary.

We need to slowly ramp up industries where human interaction is less frequent and where surfaces are less likely to be infected, and where anybody who comes into regular contact with others around them is regularly tested so that they do not become a host transmitter to another person.

These plans need to be in the developmental stage right now.

We also need to signal to Health Canada the need to approve treatments, testing and potentially vaccines and cures much more quickly than normal. There are far too many stories of treatments for children's cancer, for example, that are available south of the border but not here in Canada because Health Canada has been too slow. That kind of bureaucratic delay is, most times, tragic and now intolerable. We must clear the way for innovations and new solutions to hit the marketplace and deliver benefits to people so that we can tackle this urgent and unprecedented problem.

Finally, we will need a new and more competitive approach to finding a vaccine. Senior U.S. authorities testified before Congress that finding and deploying such a vaccine might take 18 months. There is no way we can wait that long; our economies would collapse and too many people would die in the meantime.

We need to break free from our traditional models of R and D and unleash the power of competition to put all of the best minds in pharmaceutical industry and science to work on solving this urgent problem. Then, and only then, can we stop this disease and free ourselves from the captivity that has ground our economies to a halt and led to so much human tragedy. That is the approach that will allow us to overcome the situation that we now find ourselves in and I, along with all members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, under the leadership of our capable leader, offer ourselves to the government and to the nation in helping to bring about that solution.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member for Carleton.

At a press conference earlier, his leader said it was possible for Parliament to sit four days a week in person while adhering to public health directives.

However, one of the directives forbids travel between regions, to avoid spreading the virus. For instance, there are police checkpoints

set up on roads between regions, including the bridges between Ottawa and Gatineau.

In the member from Carleton's opinion, does that mean a Parliament composed exclusively of people from the Ottawa area, including himself? Can he elaborate on that?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I see some members here who are not from Ottawa. This concern about only having members from Ottawa in Parliament is not valid. We can see that for ourselves.

I think it is a little strange for politicians to say that no, they cannot work in the House. They expect other people, working-class people, to work in stores and sell groceries. There are also truckers and other people who are still working. Their lives are as valuable as ours. I think we need to recognize that we are demanding that other people work.

The sacrifices we are making here are small sacrifices. We are lucky. We need to show our appreciation for the people we are asking to go to work in other parts of the country.

• (1615)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking all the front-line workers in Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine who are working at Charles-Le Moine Hospital, the police, all my constituents and also the staff of the MPs' offices in the greater Longueuil area. For the past four weeks, we have all been working together to help the people of Longueuil.

[*English*]

I would like to thank the member opposite for his speech. I am very happy to hear that he did, in fact, test negative. I am happy to hear that and I hope he and his family are staying safe.

With that, we were here four weeks ago. In four short weeks, we went from sitting right in this chamber to dealing with a pandemic that has killed many across Canada and many in my home province of Quebec.

I ask the member what his view is in terms of our working collaboratively with our provincial and territorial counterparts, as well as municipal counterparts, because it is going to take all of us to beat this pandemic. I would like to ask the member's opinion in that regard.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her good wishes. I would also like to add my thanks to my constituents who have risen up heroically to help one another, in particular, my case worker J-P Mitton and my other staff members, Jeremy Liedtke, Lucille Pakalnis, Craig Hilimoniuk and Manjit Athwal, who are all working to serve our constituents in the beautiful Carleton riding on an urgent basis, with much goodwill, I should say, from the senior public servants. This includes the public servants at large and the many staff members in the minister's office. I thank them for that. There is much goodwill back and forth.

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I think the member is absolutely right. Now is a time when we, as opposition, will continue to fulfill our role to hold the government to account, not because we bid them any ill will but because we want to drive them to the maximum possible excellence. That is the role of Her Majesty's opposition, to point out every flaw so that the government will strive every day to be flawless. Now is a time when we must be flawless and we must expect even more from our leaders.

We know that any leader capable of confronting a crisis like this will not be so fragile as to be incapable of receiving criticism and, therefore, that criticism is done in the spirit of Her Majesty's loyal opposition. Our opposition, by its nature, is loyal. That is how our system is designed and we will fulfill our role in that regard in every day and every way.

[Translation]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my remarks, I would like to take a moment to thank all my colleagues for being here to take part in this important debate. I can think of many places we would rather be spending this Easter weekend. However, what we are doing here is extremely important, and I want to thank all my colleagues for being here.

[English]

When I gave the response to the original COVID-19 fiscal response by the government on behalf of my caucus, I indicated that the largest gap in the government's response was supports for small and medium-sized businesses. I also commented that whatever the government did, it must be fast, responsive to the need and must act as a temporary bridge until we can get back to normal. As we do not know what time normal will occur, I will focus today on the necessity for the government to be both fast and responsive.

It may seem like a formality to pass this bill to enable the wage subsidy program, but we must never forget this place solely exists to serve those who elect us. Ottawa, our country's capital, exists to serve as the home to provide critically needed federal services to Canadians, but the one thing we must bear in mind is that every single one of these services delivered by faithful servants of our public service is 100% paid for by the private sector. Without a thriving private sector, there can be no viable and effective public one.

Many British Columbian municipalities right now, which, by law, must balance their budgets, are having to lay off significant numbers of city staff and are curtailing services because revenues are drying up.

• (1620)

[Translation]

That is why our efforts here today are so critical. Our private sector, our entrepreneurs, especially our small and medium-size business owners, are depending on us to get this right. Canadians who depend on those employers for their paycheques are depending on us to get this right. We must not forget the critical importance of this.

[English]

Is this bill part of the solution? Yes it is, but we cannot overlook that when this government first announced a wage subsidy, it was at 10%, which was entirely insufficient to address a crisis of this magnitude. We are here today to fix that mistake. I know some will say that was the past and we are focused on the future, but keep in mind that many employers were waiting for that program. When they heard 10%, they knew that would not work, and they made decisions accordingly. People were laid off. Some business owners made the decision right then and there to pull the pin. Fortunately, the Liberal government, and I will credit them for this part, went from saying it thought 10% was enough to changing its messaging to an admission that it knew it needed to do more.

[Translation]

This brings us to today. When the government announced that it would make further changes for business owners who could afford to wait, they waited. Then they heard the revised announcement, this time with a 75% wage subsidy.

[English]

However, there were problems. One was having to demonstrate a loss from this time one year ago. Some of you will ask if I read the bill, because that is what we are here to change. I raise this point because when people heard they would not meet the former threshold, they, once again, made decisions. More staff were let go, leases abandoned and doors were closed, probably many permanently.

This is what this government has to understand. Every time they get this wrong, decisions are made by the Canadian public. By the time this government goes from saying it thinks this is enough, to yes, it knows it must do more, that delay results in small businesses shutting down and people being laid off.

[Translation]

That is the reality, and this brings me to what is perhaps the most important thing missing from this bill. There are no provisions to ensure that this assistance, which is so urgently needed, can get out faster. That is the government's biggest failure. Time is running out, and there is nothing in the bill about that.

[English]

As one small business owner recently shared with me, one does not throw out the life jackets six weeks after the ship has sunk, yet that is precisely what we are told this bill will do.

For five hours on Thursday morning, the Prime Minister blamed the official opposition for the delay. The Prime Minister was worried about that five-hour delay when he felt he could blame it on the official opposition. What about the six weeks or more delay in getting benefits? Who carries responsibility for that? Over those six weeks, how many more businesses will fold? How many more Canadians will be laid off? How many landlords will have a tenant default? Let us not forget landlords are also part of this.

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I really do not want to be partisan here, but as the official opposition, we have suggested ideas that will put assistance payments out to businesses faster. However, as is always the case from the finance minister and the Prime Minister, they say that they think they have done enough, until they admit that they know they must do more.

That is really where we are today. In this case, we cannot afford to have any more Canadian business fail, because we all know the CERB is a temporary program financed by borrowed money. Yes, the wage subsidy program is designed to combat that, but because it will take six weeks or more to deliver, we may as well have Jeff Probst as finance minister, because businesses are caught in a real-world version of *Survivor*. Those who least need the assistance because they have the resources to wait those six weeks or more will survive to get the assistance.

Some will say that there is a guaranteed business loan program to bridge the gap. For the small business across the street from my Summerland constituency office that deals with the Summerland & District Credit Union, the Summerland & District Credit Union, like many small credit unions, is not on the finance minister's list of approved lenders for this program.

Some might say to switch to the big bank. Aside from the blatant unfairness to small credit unions, there are those who have tried, and they were told that only business accounts that existed prior to March 1 were eligible for the program. This also excludes many sole proprietors who often do not use business banking accounts because they use a personal one, and those accounts, much like many small credit unions, are not eligible.

• (1625)

[Translation]

Let us come back to small businesses in Summerland. Many of these small businesses employ people and pay taxes to Ottawa. Today, Ottawa is bringing in a program that excludes them. It is not designed to help them. What I mean by that is that the government is aware that the Summerland Credit Union, like many other credit unions, is not on the approved list.

Are credit unions like the ones in Summerland and elsewhere in the country not important? I would say they are.

[English]

This brings me back to the six-week waiting period for the business subsidy program. We know that those six weeks will leave many businesses behind that cannot afford to wait and they will close. I do not believe there is a member of Parliament in this room who doubts that. In fact, I know they are all working incredibly hard right now and I am certain they have probably heard from business owners who have shared with them that they need the government's assistance right now.

[Translation]

Even if the bill is a necessary step forward, we must remember that it was just as necessary two weeks ago and it was rolled out last week. We cannot allow our private sector to fail.

[English]

Our future depends upon it.

Before I close, I would like to add one final comment. There will come a day when we look back at the days that are now before us. People will ask if we did everything we could as quickly as we possibly could have done it. I will leave that comment for this place to ponder.

While I support the legislation, I must again add that if we cannot find a way to provide support in a more timely way, as the official opposition has suggested various ways of doing, we will be failing many Canadian small business owners who are now most in need. We must not forget them. We must not fail them.

[Translation]

In closing, I want to thank all hon. members for listening to my comments today. I want to say a special thanks to all the staff who made this day possible. Canadian democracy is stronger today because of all their efforts. I thank them.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his speech.

I would like to start by taking this opportunity to thank everyone on the front lines in Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation. They are working hard to serve the public.

My colleague opposite is well aware that the COVID-19 crisis did not come with an instruction manual. Our government implemented measures as quickly as possible.

My colleague opposite also knows that we have been collaborating fully with all members of Parliament via electronic means, Internet communications and mail.

My colleague opposite also knows that the measures we are taking today are important and that we are implementing them as quickly as possible. Talking to our small businesses and taking care of them was important two weeks ago, it is important today, and it will be important next month.

Can my colleague opposite tell me if he thinks we all worked collaboratively to make the decision before us today?

• (1630)

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate many of the things the member has said.

I want to start by thanking all of those in essential services in my riding who are on the front lines facing this fight against COVID-19. We appreciate them, as all leaders have said, and I want to add my voice to the member opposite's on that.

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The member mentioned that there is no instruction booklet for this. However, in 2006, we did in fact have a report that outlined many of the issues that Canada would face as a country. We can argue about whether we should have prepared more, and I think we are going to have a lot of those debates moving forward, but I bet the Canadian public will want us to examine these questions more closely.

There is no instruction manual for the businesses that are having to make tough decisions, and they are making them regardless. I want to impress upon the government that many of the ministers here today are key decision-makers and must take action. We must realize that the support that Canadians needed three weeks ago will not suffice if we deliver it to them six months after. As I said, why throw out the life preservers when the ship has already sunk six weeks late? That is what I am concerned about, and I ask the government to move as quickly as possible.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people certainly care about their municipal services. I am so grateful for the people who are working for the municipality in the city of London. They are doing an incredible job to make sure that necessary services continue to function, and I really want to thank them.

Unfortunately, the government is still not allowing municipalities to benefit from the wage subsidy. I would like to hear if the member supports extending the wage subsidy to municipalities.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I will point out that the original legislation, Bill C-13, did not allow for that. Municipalities have it in their laws that they may not run a deficit, so it is unfortunate to see that in many cases they are making tough decisions. Those same tough decisions are being made by many small and medium-sized businesses right now, and not because of a law made by their provincial government but because of the law of economics.

There is zero cash flow coming in. Landlords are knocking on tenants' doors constantly asking when they are going to pay their rent. Employees are asking questions about whether or not they will have a job. Many small and medium-sized enterprises have said they will not be able to benefit from the Canada emergency bank account because they are below that threshold. It is extremely difficult for me as a member of Parliament to say, "I am sorry, but you have not been captured in this legislation."

There are many who by design will not be captured in this legislation, and there will be many who will not be captured by accident. That is why it is so important that all members of Parliament convey their concerns, whether it be in this place, online or through written letters. I hope the Prime Minister and his cabinet are listening.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I should say that I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague from La Prairie, or else I will end up with more time.

I am a little concerned that the subject we are discussing this morning has not been treated with the seriousness it deserves. I am also a little concerned that the Liberals think it is really nice of the

Bloc to collaborate but may not really be listening to us. I have seen totally unsatisfactory statements in the media about foreign workers, statements that are not even close to satisfactory.

When I was younger, I worked on a farm for years. That is how I paid my tuition. It was a different time, of course, and things have changed a lot. One thing has not changed, though. If I put myself in quarantine, as a colleague has done, I would have my own room in my house, my own bathroom, kitchen, stove and refrigerator. I would find the two weeks long, but I would have all the facilities I need. If there are 2, 3, 5 or 12 foreign workers at a farm in Quebec, there will not be 12 bathrooms, 12 kitchens, 12 fridges and 12 closed rooms. It is not true that if people stay six feet away from each other, they will be fine. It is not that simple. We are going to have to take this much more seriously.

Before community spread started, officials had been saying for a long time that travel abroad was the highest risk factor. Again, we want to bring in these workers. They are very important to the economy of Quebec and Canada and to our regions. We want them to come.

It has already been confirmed that some 2,500 people, mainly from Guatemala and Mexico, will be coming to work in Quebec. I want to reiterate for the benefit of the media and my colleagues, and it could not be clearer: These individuals will not have been tested for COVID-19 before boarding the plane, and they will not be quarantined for 14 days.

When they disembark, they will not be tested for COVID-19, and they will not be quarantined for 14 days. An organization that is not under the direction of public health or the government will put them on a bus and take them to drop-off locations that are not likely to be equipped to do it properly. This is no small matter.

Saying that everything will be okay is fine when it comes to putting pictures of rainbows in windows, but we cannot just say that everything will be okay when bringing thousands of people to the province who should be better monitored, in their own best interests. I want to emphasize that.

Imagine the risk. According to various scenarios, 30% to 70% of people in a given area will contract COVID-19. Being a foreign worker or being in Quebec or Canada does not make one immune. There is a risk that there will be cases of the virus.

We have a duty to minimize the risk of having cases of infection. The science has shown that quarantining and screening will not ensure that there are no cases, but it will reduce the likelihood. Even quarantining and screening combined is not a guarantee, but it does provide an acceptable probability. At the very least, I am sure that nice slogans are no remedy and will not prevent the spread of COVID-19. It will take concrete measures and action.

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Imagine if there were a case on a farm somewhere. A foreign worker tests positive and has been in relatively close contact with others. Then two or three cases appear. The media will seize on that, of course, and fear and concern will spread faster than the disease. Public opinion will not be kind to these workers because of the general concern. Farms will end up paying the price and will be adversely affected. If the Canadian government does not take action in the meantime, it will be told that it did not do its job.

● (1635)

In light of all the resources that are being deployed, is it not our duty to ask what resources are necessary to prevent a proverbial flaw in the system from destroying some of the results being obtained by public health efforts? More needs to be done. Fine words will not do. We remain available to attend a video conference meeting in the very short term and work out the measures.

I want to go back to another topic briefly. This morning, I said in good faith and in all sincerity that I believe the government can easily, and should, support jobs in the oil industry to get them back to the level they were at before the crisis. This oil is being sold. People are using it. For those who think we get our oil from the moon or from Saudi Arabia, let me point out that Quebec gets its oil from western Canada and the western United States. Furthermore, we pay for it. We are not getting it for free or even getting a deal. We believe that jobs should be restored to the same level as before, but that any new project or expansion of energy production should be based on renewable energy. We believe that a lot of money would eventually have had to be invested in the renewable energy sector. However, that money has gone out much faster, for other reasons. We should take advantage of this time to invest in renewable energy. I would fully understand if the bulk of this money was used to mitigate the economic situation in Alberta, western Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador, which I realize are much harder hit than others.

Moving forward, we will have to plan to undertake an energy transition, particularly by supporting the regions of Canada that are hardest hit by this crisis, namely the oil-producing regions. I also think we should consider special programs to stimulate businesses across Quebec and Canada that are developing environmental technologies to offer alternatives to the existing system. There will be a huge global market for this, and it is the responsible thing to do. I could name 25. These are topics that we should continue to consider and debate, preferably in a virtual forum, in my opinion, only coming back here to vote.

There is something else we need to do, and it has not been talked about enough. I have not talked about it enough and I want to. Now is the time. We proposed a series of measures to help seniors, who are most vulnerable in this crisis, who suffer the most from the isolation and who may end up worst off financially at the end of this. We have already asked for increases to old age security and the guaranteed income supplement; improved access to high-speed Internet to combat isolation; lower drug prices; protections for pension plans at companies that are on the verge of crisis and risk being bought out by other companies that will not want to take on the pension plans; and full elimination of restrictions on individual retirement accounts. Right now, these plans are getting negative returns. I would ask that this series of measures be considered as soon

as possible. Furthermore, these measures were developed in collaboration with the FADOQ and seniors' associations. Once again, we are making these suggestions in good faith. We hope that they will yield results, but there are still limits to our patience. We want quick, measurable and tangible results. That is what foreign workers, farms and seniors need right now.

● (1640)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my question by teasing the leader of the Bloc Québécois a little. Since he blocked all of my colleagues on Twitter, I am going to ask him a question here in the House. He cannot block me. I do not really use Twitter.

Just two days ago, he gave the government a blank cheque to do its work. Today, he is complaining that the government is not doing everything it should. Why did he so quickly announce on Twitter that the Liberal Party could move forward and that there were no problems when there were in fact still problems?

I agree with him. How is it that the government is still unable to test people who are entering Canada?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, when I was young, children used to do the same thing in the school yard. It is rather uncouth.

I certainly did not block his colleague, Mr. Paul-Hus, because he just said on Twitter that he agrees with what I said about foreign workers. If the Conservatives get their act together and work together, everything will be fine. Obviously, there are a few Conservative members that I did not block, but give me time and I might block them too. They often deserve it.

That being said, I will say again that we are here for reasons other than trying to anticipate the date and results of the next election.

The Speaker: I want to remind members that they must refer to other members by their riding name or title and not by their name. I think the member was referring to the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

The hon. member for Outremont.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking all the health care workers at the CHU Sainte-Justine, the Jewish General Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital in my riding. I thank them for their incredible work.

I also want to thank all my constituents. There are many people back home who are volunteering for charities. Two in particular come to mind, Astrid Arumae and Vanessa Reid in Outremont and Mile-End, who are organizing teams of volunteers on the ground.

I would also like to thank my colleague from Beloeil—Chambly and all my Bloc Québécois colleagues for their work and their very constructive suggestions these past few weeks. I have a very simple question for my colleague from Beloeil—Chambly.

Do you think the billions of dollars we are investing to support Canadians and Quebeckers through the Canada emergency response benefit and the wage subsidy is a good investment?

• (1645)

The Speaker: Once again, before we hear the response, I would like to remind hon. members to direct their questions through the Speaker and to not address one another.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, I had no idea what my esteemed colleague's riding is called.

In answer to the question, there will always be a way to do a little more, to do a little better. There will always be room for improvement.

This situation reveals a number of things. One of the first is that those who think the government is an unnecessary nuisance and that it has no business intervening in the economy will have to think again. Without a powerful response by the governments of industrialized nations, the global economy would have collapsed by now.

The government makes decisions about how to do things. Wage subsidies were already being implemented around the world. We talked about it with the Minister of Finance, and it was implemented here. There is always room for improvement, but I think we have come up with something excellent that just needs a little tweaking.

I have seen other proposals related to the Canada emergency response benefit. I saw the NDP's proposal to make it universal. That might be a good policy someday, but I think we need to take more urgent measures in a crisis. In many cases, we have to lower our expectations and focus less on perfection so we can get a consensus that works in the short term.

For right now, this is clearly a very good solution.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the situation is critical. Everyone here knows it. We are facing an unprecedented crisis. We are literally making history. People will be talking about this for years to come, 10, 20, 30 years down the road. Maybe I will not do it myself, but when this crisis is talked about in 30 years and explained to future generations, they will have a hard time believing that the streets of Montreal were deserted, that the movie theatres and restaurants were empty because everything was closed, and that we all stayed home, self-isolating. Everyone made their own daily sacrifice.

Quebec has 12,292 cases of COVID-19, that silent, invisible killer. So far, there have been 289 deaths in Quebec. That number is

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not just a statistic. It represents 289 people whose families are grieving. That is important.

The situation is critical, and I am going to prove it in a simple way. Back when I was elected on October 21, if someone had told me that in six months, the House of Commons would be voting on a bill providing for a one-time expenditure of \$73 billion and that the House would support it unanimously, I would never have believed them. Even the Conservatives are supporting it. It is unbelievable. No one would ever have believed it could happen. This goes to show just how unusual the situation is.

This situation is critical. This is no time to be partisan. That would be easy. The government makes decisions, reconsiders, adjusts. It is constantly looking for solutions. We can criticize, we can be partisan, and we can play the political game, but this is not the time for that. This is a time for vigilant collaboration, as my leader would say.

We have collaborated from the start, but that does not mean we went along with whatever they said. We put ideas forward and defended them. We discovered that, when facing an extreme emergency, the government listened. Had anyone told me on October 21 that the Liberals would listen to me, I would have said no way, but sometimes, when we come up with a good idea, the Liberals themselves acknowledge it.

This is a time for teamwork. We all have constituents to serve in our ridings. We need to think of their well-being. I want to thank the amazing team at my riding office, who are there to help when people call. We all have amazing teams on the ground. I am pleased to say that, yes, we have solutions and we have worked together.

Is the Bloc Québécois responsible for coming up with certain ideas? Obviously, yes, sometimes that is the case. However, the most important thing is ensuring the well-being of the population. That is where we are at. Now is not the time for the one-track neoliberal thinking that we often hear and that claims that less government is better. That is not where we are at. As my leader said, the government is not necessarily a hindrance to the economy. If there were no government, we would have even bigger problems than we have today. The government has its uses.

I heard my colleague, the opposition leader, talking about the deficit, which will total approximately \$180 billion. When faced with such a deficit, we need to work hard to find some good news, but at least we can say that this is not chronic or ongoing spending. At least there is that. It is not as bad as a \$30-billion deficit with ongoing spending.

This is therefore not the time to reject everything the government is doing. Now is the time to say that the government has an important role to play and that it can resolve many problems. Now is not the time to look for a scapegoat. We could say that the government did not manage our borders properly in the beginning. We could have gotten into all that and brought that up. We are past that point.

• (1650)

Now is the time for solidarity, and when I talk about solidarity, I always think of our seniors. They are in a difficult situation. They are the ones who are suffering the most from our current situation.

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That is why when I say we need to keep working, I mean we must not stop with this bill; further improvements can be made. The Bloc Québécois has already made some very clear suggestions to help seniors specifically.

When we talk about collaboration, that is what we mean. We make suggestions and hope they will be picked up. We must help our seniors; we must support them.

It is rare for me to quote the Prime Minister, but I want to take this opportunity because he said something that I thought was pretty good. He said we all stand on the shoulders of those who came before us.

Well done, Prime Minister. That is great, so now it is time to think of them and take care of them.

In addition, some might consider the issue of seasonal workers to be of secondary importance, but I certainly do not, and many of my colleagues share my concerns. Indeed, there are foreign workers in my riding.

Imagine: we are working hard, remaining isolated, making sacrifices to forgo certain activities and to stay away from each other. We are putting our everyday lives on hold. If, by some misfortune, some of these people who come here in good faith end up carrying the disease because their health was not checked and they infect people here, lives could be lost. More people will be in mourning. Think about it. It is serious. Some people might die because of some flaws in the government's response that we could correct immediately.

We are not looking for political gains. We are looking to act in solidarity, in furtherance of the common good and in service to the public. That is what we have to stand up for. In every one of our actions we have to think of the repercussions that could be catastrophic for some people and some families.

That is why the leader of the Bloc Québécois mentioned earlier that it is important that we sit down together and find solutions quickly so that the people coming to our region are coming because we need them to and without jeopardizing the health and safety of our own. Once again, we are appealing to the government.

In conclusion, yes, the Bloc Québécois will collaborate, but we will be vigilant. Much like I told my children that I was watching them, we are watching the government because it has a job to do. The government has a huge job ahead of it, and we are here to help, because the Bloc Québécois cares about the whole. The Bloc Québécois cares about public service, in addition to social conscience. What is good for Quebec in these tough times is certainly good for the Bloc Québécois.

• (1655)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from the Bloc Québécois, who, I must admit, is a formidable negotiator. He passionately defends his point of view, but he is also able to listen. I commend him for that. We were able to discuss, debate and come to a consensus for the good of all Quebecers and Canadians.

If you had told me five months ago that I would be talking to my colleague on Saturday evening, Sunday morning, Sunday afternoon, Sunday evening, and so on, I never would have believed you. Nevertheless, that is what we did, and we managed to agree on solutions together.

In the spirit of collaboration, I would like to ask my colleague if he is prepared to work with us and the other members of the House to explore whether a virtual Parliament or virtual sittings are possible.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I return the compliment.

Back home, when negotiations are going poorly, we like to say that negotiating is like trying to eat an apple through a tennis racket. Negotiating is hard, but we end up reaching an agreement because we are reasonable people living in exceptional circumstances.

As for the virtual Parliament, our leader had already suggested that idea, and you reacted very swiftly. We agree on that idea for the safety of the people around us. Rest assured that the Bloc Québécois will be your ally in implementing this measure.

The Speaker: I am glad to have an ally, but I would remind the member from La Prairie that he must address the Chair, not other members directly.

[*English*]

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be here today representing my constituents in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex as we all work together here to help Canadians who need support right now.

I have many farmers in my riding who grow fresh produce. I know farmers do grow a lot in Quebec as well. The government has said that \$5 billion has been put aside through FCC, but we all know that the \$5 billion was a campaign promise made as part of the Liberals' election platform.

Would the member agree that the money should be restructured to provide direct support in response to this COVID-19 crisis? Also, does the member agree that our food safety and security is critical and that agriculture and food should be deemed an essential service, including making sure that CFIA inspectors, who are federally regulated, should continue working so that our food supply is protected?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, my area is known as the garden of Quebec, because it is probably one of the most beautiful places in the world. At the very least, it is home to the best black soil in Quebec.

When we talk about agriculture, an essential need and an economic activity that is often overlooked and neglected, we are obviously talking about an essential service. This is an asset that we need to protect. That much is obvious.

Government Orders

I am not the only person who lives in an agricultural area. We can all agree that agriculture is essential.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for La Prairie for his speech.

I would like to thank all Bloc Québécois members for their positive contribution today. We are in this together, and that moves me.

What does the member think of the current level of support for small businesses? That is one of my concerns. I would like his point of view on that problem.

• (1700)

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her comment and her question.

While negotiating this bill, we wanted to make things better for small businesses. Many of them are in a very precarious position, which is why we asked the federal government to subsidize some of their fixed costs. With help, these businesses will not be forced to take out loans that would compromise their future and their ability to survive the crisis. If they were to take out such loans, growth and economic prosperity would be out of the question. For all these reasons, we asked the government for help, and we got subsidies to cover a portion of small businesses' fixed costs.

Quebec has always spent money on small businesses because they are economic engines for our communities and our country.

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I get started, I would just like to inform the House that I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Like many members here in the House today, I am also hearing concerns and fears from constituents. Constituents are seeing businesses closing, they are being laid off and they are at home taking care of their families. They are also asking the government some serious questions. They need to know that we will quickly provide them with the help they so desperately need.

New Democrats support an increase in the wage subsidy. In fact, we have been calling for this for several weeks, but we think that it would be a wasted opportunity today to reconvene the House to deal with this issue without also dealing with the very serious gaps in the Canada emergency response benefit. I am happy that the unanimous consent motion starts to address our concerns.

I want my constituents in London to know that today, together, we can make sure that the programs and supports they need are provided. My staff and I have spoken with so many folks worried about how the government will keep them safe, housed, fed and employed. It is my responsibility to voice their concerns here in this place. My team has been working tirelessly to update our social media and connect with people via email and phone, getting them the information that we can. I am so grateful to my staff for that. My constituency office is normally busy at the best of times.

Many people are struggling to get the supports they need now and too many vulnerable people will not even qualify. There are holes in the system, and that is why New Democrats continue to ad-

vocate that the emergency benefits be made universal. Every week my office receives thousands of phone calls, emails and messages from people who need support, but the programs announced thus far, sadly, fall short of their needs.

I consistently hear from seniors and people with disabilities who are feeling the financial impact of COVID-19 through increased food cost, increased costs for the delivery of goods such as groceries and from being limited to 30 days of medications when they would normally receive 90 days. This means they need to spend three times the amount on dispensing fees, a cost that is unsustainable for those on a fixed income.

Many veterans organizations are scrambling, including London's Royal Canadian Air Force Association 427 Wing. This institution in London—Fanshawe is very dear to me. It not only serve veterans and provides a place for them to gather, but also is home to the Secrets of Radar and the Spirit of Flight museums. Even just the building it resides in is worth preserving as a major historical site in London. With the temporary closure due to COVID-19, it has seen a large drop in revenue. I fear that this temporary closure will not just be temporary and that we will lose this valuable place that supports so much history and so many veterans. These institutions need our help.

When it comes to COVID-19, the impact is felt by everyone, including students. While the 75% wage subsidy will keep more Canadians employed, many young Canadians are just trying to start their careers or are looking for summer jobs. With more than one million jobs lost since COVID-19 hit, many job prospects look grim. Students typically do not have savings stored away for a rainy day and many are graduating with crippling debt. With this pandemic, they have fewer opportunities to earn money to support themselves and pay back their loans. This is wrong and we need to do better. New Democrats are also calling on the federal government to permanently extend the waiver of interest charges on student loans. The government should not profit off the backs and the futures of our students. Not now and not ever.

Government Orders

This is a situation that no one could have predicted and prepared for, and I am sure that all members would agree with me that no one should lose their housing, which is a basic human right during this time. From a public health perspective, if Canadians are to follow directives from the health authorities to practise social distancing and self-isolation, they must have a home to quarantine in. Workers who are sick cannot feel pressured to continue working and risk infecting others for fear of losing their income and the roofs over their heads. Given the homelessness crisis that already exists in Canada, not only do we need to have measures in place to properly house everyone, we also must do everything we can to prevent an increase in the homeless population.

To protect renters, it is essential to put a nationwide moratorium on all evictions during the pandemic. As well, a temporary rent freeze period must also be imposed to protect renters from price gouging during this precarious time. My NDP colleagues and I are hearing from constituents who have just received a rent increase notice and are extremely distressed by the prospect of having to find alternative housing at this time.

Whether it is seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, students, workers or small-business owners, we see people who are looking for support but finding none. As it stands, it is estimated that 862,000 Canadians who need help will get nothing through employment insurance or the government's emergency response benefit. Every day last week, the Prime Minister and the government highlighted gaps in supports, but due to the work done here today, hopefully more Canadians will not fall through these cracks. However, the government needs to provide direct assistance to all Canadians immediately. The NDP is asking for the government to send a cheque of \$2,000, with an additional \$250 per child, to every Canadian immediately.

• (1705)

As many of my colleagues and I have mentioned in the House numerous times, 46% of Canadians are \$200 or less away from financial insolvency. Many of those people live in my riding of London—Fanshawe. By providing direct assistance to them, we can make sure this crisis does not turn into a catastrophe.

For those who rely on the government programs and benefits offered, like the child care benefit, they first have to file their taxes to access this help. If they do not, they could face being cut off. This is what happens when programs are means tested, and not universal. It often results in more bureaucracy, delays and people going without help. I am happy that the government announced it is moving the tax-filing deadline.

As I run a volunteer tax clinic from my constituency office, we see hundreds of people who need help to file their taxes. In my community, these tax clinics, sadly, have been closed, but we need to provide this vital service. I ask the government, on behalf of my constituents, to consider extending that deadline once again so that we can help as many people as possible to file their taxes. Simply put, a one-month extension is not enough.

Not only are people struggling, but many small businesses are facing their own crisis. I cannot imagine their heartbreak now when they have put everything into their business, the countless hours, time with family and their life savings into building their dream,

and now see it in danger of disappearing. They are closing their doors but trying their hardest to keep paying their employees. With income declining and bills piling up, this situation is becoming impossible to maintain.

That is why we are happy the government listened to New Democrats, labour and business groups to strengthen this wage subsidy. We called for this before the House sat the last time, and I am grateful that some of the changes passed today would help get the supports flowing to small and medium-sized enterprises, charities, not-for-profits and non-profits. However, we need to address shortfalls in this legislation, such as removing the 30%-drop-in-revenue requirement for SMEs with fewer than 50 employees so that more of them could apply for the wage subsidy. We must also remove payroll limits on the \$40,000 loan through the Canada emergency benefit account and offer \$10,000 grants immediately to help a diverse group of enterprises and ensure a faster response time for businesses to receive supports.

I must say I am relieved to see the change that New Democrats pushed for, to ensure that when some local organizations pay meagre stipends to their volunteers, those people will still qualify for emergency benefit programs even if they lose their jobs.

New Democrats are ready to improve all benefits for all people and will keep working to make sure that companies cannot turn the money meant for workers into big CEO bonuses. That needs to be reflected in this legislation. There is always a worry that large corporations will use this crisis to their benefit, and that is why there is so much concern about the government's partnering with Amazon for the distribution of personal protective equipment and supplies purchased by the Canadian government. The announcement was made without consultation with postal workers, and the government's decision will put further strain on workers who are already poorly protected. Amazon uses numerous subcontractors throughout its delivery operations. Warehouse workers are also being put at risk. They are being pressured to continue working even when they get sick.

Government Orders

As the COVID-19 crisis continues, we owe our thanks to many front-line workers. Truck drivers, food production and grocery workers, pharmacy workers, EMS workers and the health care providers who are working in our hospitals and long-term facilities are heroes. These workers must have access to personal protective equipment and their worker's rights must be respected.

Also on the front lines are social workers who are working with their clients, those struggling with a lack of social and mental health supports and who now are facing increased anxieties. Social workers are also dealing with the reality of trying to maintain social distancing at work and in shelters. Many shelters in Canada are at over capacity at the best of times. How do people maintain social distancing when they do not have their own home? How do they maintain services at friendship and drop-in centres when they are supposed to be limiting contact? This crisis has further exposed many of the gaps in our system, especially for our most vulnerable. Food banks are also in desperate need of help. We are prepared to work with the government to make sure that those supports are in place to assist people in need.

In conclusion, we must find a way to make sure that everyone in Canada can get through these unprecedented times with enough money to pay the bills, a job to go back to and a safe place to live. We need to do it as quickly as possible. Let us join together to pass this bill to put the supports in place to lift each other up. Let us commit to helping one another to see us through this and move forward to strengthen our public services and social programs for everyone.

● (1710)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would particularly like to thank my colleague opposite for her remarks and concern about homelessness. That is exactly why the government doubled the amount of funding for the reaching home initiative. It is also why we have announced additional funding for women's shelters in order to support the most vulnerable in our country.

I would also like to thank the NDP for its support for the wage subsidy, which would help small and medium-sized enterprises from coast to coast. It would also help not-for-profits and charities.

Does my colleague agree that the government's proposal to extend the wage subsidy to not-for-profits and charities is a good idea?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, yes, we have supported that. It is something we were pushing for as well. There is a reality on the ground. I have heard it constantly from people who are doing that amazing work on the ground, the food banks, people who are helping people with disabilities, seniors, all of those organizations. I am so glad they will be able to take advantage of some of these supports.

However, I do not want to lose the opportunity for us to also help their clients, the most vulnerable among us in Canada, who are so reliant on those services, social programs, charities and not-for-profit organizations. I would like us to remember that as we move forward with changes to the CERB.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, someone in my riding reached out to me this morning. Her husband drives a bus for the TTC in Toronto. He is an essential worker. She is a PSW at a nursing home in Bradford West Gwillimbury. There has been an outbreak in that nursing home and she has had to take her kids to her parents to be watched for the day, which is a big ask of her parents. She makes \$550 a week. She called me and said that at the end of the day, she is putting the lives of her kids and her parents at risk for \$550 a week.

I wonder if the member has some comment on the CERB with respect to that.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I have a cousin who is a PSW. I have certainly heard from a lot of them in my riding as well, and from local bus drivers with the London Transit Commission. They are really concerned that for some of their clients, those in wheelchairs and with disabilities, they have to get really close to them in order to strap them in. Last week one of our LTC drivers tested positive for COVID-19, so my thoughts are with him and his family.

I have had a lot of conversations with those front-line workers. Again, I am optimistic, after having heard from the Minister of Employment today, that those people who are applying for more of the services they need, more of these emergency benefits, as long as they are doing it in good faith, will not be penalized in any way and will receive the supports they need.

The New Democrats will always be pushing for a lot more to ensure that people are protected and receive the supports they need.

● (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I believe my colleague spoke earlier about the difficulties being experienced by small and medium-sized businesses in his riding and across the country.

What can the federal government do to help them pay their rent since about 70% of them will likely be unable to pay their commercial rent on May 1?

Government Orders

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I have heard from so many businesses that are really concerned. They do not want to take out a loan or be behind the eight ball more than they already are, so looking at rent freezes is absolutely vital to helping those small and medium-sized enterprises. In my riding and across the country these businesses provide, I think, 95% or at least over 90% of the jobs in our community. We have to support them. We have to go further.

I am very hopeful the government will continue to go forward with those propositions that the NDP is putting forward.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to emphasize the severity of the crisis that we are all experiencing. Neither we nor our parents have ever seen its like. The only comparable situation seems to be the Spanish flu, which hit just over a century ago.

Tens of thousands of people are getting sick, thousands of people are being hospitalized and many people are dying. Scientists are saying that we are relatively fortunate that the mortality rate of COVID-19 is not higher or it would be truly catastrophic. However, we are all going through this situation together and we have no idea when we will see the end of it.

Canada's Parliament has been suspended. When it is recalled, only 10% of members are in attendance. There is a lot of uncertainty about the future. People are struggling in all of our communities. They are suffering and having trouble paying their rent and buying groceries, as I just said. Some experience anxiety and a great deal of stress. Community groups are telling us that there has been a resurgence in mental health problems that may have been resolved in the past but that are coming back because of a lack of resources.

Given that everyone is being asked to stay home, there are also terrible situations of domestic violence, and women are the primary victims. Home is not always the safest place. On the contrary, it is sometimes the most dangerous.

This situation is forcing us to do things differently, to be creative, to think outside the box, as they say, and to work together in a way that we have never managed to do in the past.

This reminds me of something our former leader, the late Jack Layton, said. He used to always tell us we had to work together. Now it is becoming clear that we are capable of working together as parliamentarians.

I want to take 15 seconds to thank a number of government ministers for their availability, their quick responses, their willingness to listen and their openness to suggestions from the NDP, the Bloc Québécois, the Green Party and the Conservatives. Some of our proposals were accepted. Everyone wants to be constructive and come up with solutions to help people. Of course, we will always suggest doing more, but I have seen more open-mindedness and willingness to listen than ever before, and I wanted to emphasize that.

We have heard this a lot in the media over the past few weeks, but I too want to thank all our workers in the health care system:

the doctors, nurses, orderlies, paramedics. They are doing tremendous work on the front lines. They are taking risks to save lives and take care of people. I tip my hat to them.

I also want to thank all the municipal employees, bus drivers, the people who keep our cities in operation. Thank you very much for a job well done. We need you in order to keep going.

Obviously, I want to thank the agricultural sector, the entire supply chain for our grocery stores and convenience stores. They are vital to allowing us to get through this crisis together.

I would like to take a step back and look at the crisis. We can already learn some lessons. Some observations can be made after just a few weeks, while our economy is in turmoil and many people are going through a tough time. I think the crisis reveals two things. First, inequality kills. Second, we need social programs and public services. We see it. After years of financial capitalism and neo-liberalism and austerity measures, people have become more vulnerable. In times of crisis such as this, the most vulnerable are more likely to fall ill, and they are also more likely to die.

Not so long ago, my colleague from London—Fanshawe noted that the inequalities in our society are such that half of all families are \$200 away from insolvency. That means that our wealth redistribution mechanism is completely inadequate. Canada's big six banks made \$46 billion in profits last year and there are still people who keep their money in tax havens.

People become vulnerable when we are not able to provide good care for people who have mental health or addiction problems. These people then end up homeless and on the street. When a crisis like this happens, they are the first to suffer. They are not on the streets because of chance or fate.

● (1720)

These people end up in these situations because of political and economic choices. This morning, an article in *La Presse* reported that COVID-19 had a higher than average mortality rate among African-American communities in the U.S. because these communities have long lived in poverty and in unsafe conditions that are associated with an increase in respiratory problems, heart problems and diabetes. People with these conditions who contract the virus are at higher risk of death. That is another example that poverty kills during a pandemic.

Government Orders

There is another example people will understand, and this is something the NDP tries to talk about as often as possible, because it is a major concern for some of our colleagues. I am talking about first nations, whose members are extremely vulnerable under these circumstances. They lack health and social services at the best of times. As the NDP leader said a little earlier today, when the nearest ventilator is a plane ride away, that puts people in a vulnerable position. When people do not have clean water, they cannot follow handwashing guidelines. When housing is a problem because homes in many indigenous communities are overcrowded, physical distancing guidelines just do not work. If the virus ever reaches those communities, the death toll could be staggering.

The reason things are so bad is that we have left them to fester for decades. We have a history of colonial treatment of first nations, and we need to recognize that. We must seize the opportunity afforded by this crisis to own that history and not make the same mistakes again.

I was talking earlier about the second thing that this crisis has made clear, and that is the importance of having a social safety net, universal social programs, a system that ensures that no one is left behind or falls through the cracks. I think we can get started on that. Of course we have to get through this crisis. We need to take care of people and find masks, gloves and everything else, but we have to come to the conclusion that a guaranteed income supplement might not be such a bad idea. It might help us absorb the costs collectively when a crisis occurs, whether it is a social, health or economic crisis or even all three at once, as is currently the case.

We need to have a robust social safety net and universal social programs, and there must be oversight of the care provided, especially to seniors. In Quebec and Canada we are very proud to have a public and universal health care system. Imagine the situation for Americans. People without any insurance cannot go to the hospital because they are afraid of getting an exorbitant bill. We would be in a much tougher situation today.

Nevertheless, the private sector has been left to carve out its own leeway and space with regard to delivering certain services. Another example is very revealing. It is a shocking story that came out this morning about a private long-term care home in Dorval. Because of low wages and poor working conditions, the employees simply stopped going to work. Dozens of elderly residents were totally abandoned. The public health directorate of Montreal had to take over running the care home after residents suffered agonizing ordeals. That is the consequence of the political decision to let the private sector take over certain health care services. Maybe that should not even be the case, and that is something we should think about. Now is the perfect time to think about it, in fact. Residents who died were left in their beds, while others lay on the floor where they had fallen, dehydrated and starving. They had not received care or services in days. We need to collectively ensure that this never happens again.

People are saying that they cannot wait until things get back to normal. As progressives, we say that going back to normal is not the solution, because normality was part of the problem. We need to seize this opportunity to fundamentally change things in order to avoid repeating the mistakes of neo-liberal austerity and public service cutbacks. We need to ensure that the people providing services

get good working conditions. Forget about going back to normal. We can do better. Everything will be okay, and we are going to do better.

• (1725)

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his speech. I think he delivered an historic speech.

From the very beginning, we have committed to full collaboration. We have talked about the before, during and after.

Would my colleague opposite agree that when it comes time for the “after”, we will need to continue this strong collaboration among all parties in the House of Commons?

We will need it to get through this crisis, to be better and to prepare properly for the future.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

I was wondering whether what he was really asking was that I turn down the volume during question period from now on.

Individually and collectively, we need to learn from this crisis in order to make better decisions for what happens next. There are good ideas coming from all political parties. We have to be able to recognize that.

What matters most is that we can take care of Canadians and ensure prosperity. We need to do things differently to avoid repeating past mistakes.

I very much appreciated my colleague's comments.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his fine, heartfelt speech.

He talked about inequality. He also referred to something that I see as a problem and that is the huge profits that banks are making and the use of tax havens. In order to reduce inequality during this crisis, the government is going to inject huge amounts of cash into the banking system. It might even buy troubled assets to help the banks.

Does my colleague believe that, in return, the big banks should contribute by putting an end to their lawful use of tax havens to avoid paying taxes in Canada?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent suggestion.

Sometimes there is a completely indecent accrual of profit and capital, while there are people living in poverty who do not have the bare minimum they need to survive.

Government Orders

It is a give and take. If the government helps banks to prevent too much bankruptcy and job loss, then I think that the banks should stop coming up with ways to send their profits and their CEOs' money to tax havens so that they do not have to pay taxes in Canada. We need that money to pay for the social safety net that we were talking about earlier.

I think that any assistance, particularly for large industries like that one and the oil and gas industry, should come with conditions so that we all come out on top in the end.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. I completely agree with him.

Perhaps he will agree with me that neo-liberalism's time has passed.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, that statement carries a lot of historic weight.

I hope that we will have the wisdom to come to the same conclusion. Taking an exclusively neo-liberal approach erodes a society, a community.

* * *

● (1730)

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, following consultations with all of the parties, I would like to seek unanimous consent for the following motion:

I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, paragraph r) of the order adopted earlier today be replaced with the following:

the government implement measures without delay to address gaps in the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, or other programs, existing or proposed, to address the needs of seasonal workers, those who have exhausted their EI benefits, students, owner/operators, those who continue to receive a modest income from part-time work, royalties, and honoraria, and that, in addition, the government work to ensure essential workers who receive low wages will receive additional income support during this time of crisis, and commit that those who have applied in good faith for and received benefits through CERB or other programs to support them through this crisis will not be unjustly penalized;

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACT, NO. 2

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, A second Act respecting certain measures in response to

COVID-19, be read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, what a wonderful note on which to rise to speak today, to see the paragraph that I was initially so pleased to see in the unanimous consent motion, and the government will implement measures without delay. It is much improved through our work unanimously. I want to thank the NDP for taking the lead in making sure that benefits are going to people where there had been gaps. Clearly the Minister of Employment and the Minister of Finance have been working hard to try to address gaps.

Before I get too far into discussing what we have done here today and what we have been doing as parliamentarians, I do want to pause and on behalf of the Green Party of Canada thank all of the essential workers: the front-line workers, particularly those in the health care professions, including our doctors, our nurses, our first responders and our personal care workers who go into senior homes. There are so many people right now without whom we could not self-isolate in safety. We could not practise our social distancing without truck drivers who make sure there is food on the shelves, and the workers in our grocery stores who make sure that the shelves are stocked. There are efforts to stop hoarding and make sure that we look out for each other.

Essential workers in this context include some people that we often do not stop to celebrate. They tend to be the lower-paid workers. In this moment, I just want to express on behalf of all of us again our deep gratitude. It is particularly concerning that we are not ensuring that these people are protected. PPE, personal protective equipment, which is now on the tip of our tongues, was not something we talked about.

We should have learned lessons from SARS. I worked with Sheela Basrur and I love her. The work on SARS, and the commissions at the time warned us that we would need to be ready for another pandemic and that we should not let these supplies run low. I am not going to play a blame game. It is human nature. The farther we got away from the SARS pandemic, the less we went to check how much was stored on our shelves. Do we have enough N95 masks? Do we have enough gowns and gloves? Are we protecting our front-line workers enough?

We still have a crisis. There are still places, people, hospitals and senior care homes that are crying out for this protective equipment. They are crying out as we gather here. I thank them for what they are doing. We do it every day at home. I go out on my balcony on Second Street in Sidney. I know my neighbours are at home because all around me I can hear them banging on pots and pans. The streets of my community, Sidney by the Sea, are empty, but at 7 p.m., there are people in the marina blowing their boat horns and banging their pots and pans. I just want to thank all the health care workers across Canada.

Government Orders

I also want to thank my caucus members. I would split my time if I could, but the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith is in Nanaimo—Ladysmith and the hon. member for Fredericton is in Fredericton. She is still self-isolating from her last trip to Ottawa and New Brunswick rules require that she stay put. The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith was not able to make the trip. I am enormously grateful to be here.

While I am expressing gratitude, I want to thank the hon. Minister of Employment for giving me a lift. I also have to thank the leader of the official opposition, because I think it was more or less his plane. It is a new term for me: We “plane-pooled”. We went from Fredericton to Victoria to Regina, which is not a regularly scheduled thing.

I was glad that Jill and the kids could come along too. It was a family event as we made our way here. I am so grateful. I booked all my commercial flights and I have to say I feel so privileged and so grateful. It was a special feeling to know a government plane was going to pick me up. I did not expect it, but I have to say I was semi-terrified about the transits I was going to have to make through four airports. I have a lot of reasons for being grateful.

With that, I want to turn to the legislation. We are working hard as MPs. I know every single member of government is working hard, and I include in that the civil servants.

• (1735)

I am used to working seven days a week, but I am not used to getting an email back from staff at the civil servant level from the western diversification office when I write about a routine grant that has a 30-day window. It is because people are working at home, civil servants too, and I thank them. I know they are working Saturdays and Sundays, because they answer my emails on Saturdays and Sundays. This is an extraordinary time.

I am not sure how others in this place will feel about it, but I want to say publicly that I think we are eventually going to need the Emergencies Act. I know that the premiers said no, but I think we are eventually going to wish we had had it in place.

The public welfare portion of the Emergencies Act is not the War Measures Act of old. I read it for the first time a couple of weeks ago and thought that it is what legislation to deal with an emergency looks like when it is not written by people in the middle of an emergency. It is thoughtful: It does not suspend our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, it does not send the army in anywhere and it respects provincial jurisdiction and the use of provincial police forces.

I will give members one example that is in my heart right now.

In the community I represent, Saanich—Gulf Islands, the Gulf Islands are being inundated with visitors who are coming in by ferry, even though BC Ferries has told people not to come unless their trip is essential. These small communities are really feeling it. The grocery store shelves empty out with people from urban areas coming to visit. I know it is happening in cottage country. I am sure the Muskokas are experiencing the same thing, with people getting out of the city and going to their cottage. However, the health care sys-

tems and services in these more remote rural communities cannot handle the kind of inundation of people that is happening now.

I want to flag for my colleagues here the way the Emergencies Act works. It can be invoked; it does not need new legislation. It can be invoked by the Governor in Council, but when Parliament is in recess, it must be recalled within seven days to discuss and debate it.

In an ideal world, just as a precaution, I would have liked us to discuss and debate it today while we are here so that we have it in our back pocket if we need it. I am not certain that at some point in the coming weeks we will not wish we had it to make sure that we had a national priority system for the distribution of ventilators and N95 masks, or that we did not have the capacity to say that we need to stop people from going into these smaller communities that cannot handle an influx of population right now.

This brings me to the bill we have in front of us. I think it is time to think about transformational change. The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie was pointing this out a moment ago. We are doing things now in real time so fast that those of us who have been parliamentarians for a while would not have been able to imagine that government could roll out these programs so fast. It is an extraordinary tribute to hard work, thinking outside the box and being liberated from some constraints, because the pandemic of COVID-19 is a bigger threat than anything we have faced in the short term.

I make the parenthetical comment that the climate crisis is still a larger threat to human civilization than this pandemic, but this has caused civil servants, ministers and opposition members to think in different ways. This has caused our Conservative friends, like the member for Carleton on conference calls we have had, to be the voice that asks, “What about the small credit unions? What about helping the small credit unions, not just the big ones?” I thought to myself that we should not ever make assumptions about people. I did not think that was something the member for Carleton would say, but sure enough, he did. There is concern for all of us, and the basic needs of all have risen to the top. As I said earlier today, this experience has shown us that life is more important than money.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

That is a truly fundamental lesson in a culture that normally protects the economy above all else.

[*English*]

Now we know that we have to protect our economy and rebuild it, but not at the cost of human lives. We know what is important.

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In looking at this, I hope that we can agree at some point that a guaranteed livable income is what the country needs. As other members have mentioned, in normal times not everybody can pay their bills. In normal times, kids who should be able to go to university cannot afford it. In normal times, too many people fall between the cracks. We can fix those cracks. We can fix those gaps.

The Green Party of Canada has, way before I was involved with it, stood for a guaranteed living income.

[*Translation*]

We need a guaranteed minimum income to allow everyone to live sustainably.

[*English*]

I hope we will come back to this. For now we have Bill C-13. It went quite far toward looking at gaps, but we recognize that they remained. That is why we are back for Bill C-14.

I am pleased to see the wage subsidy increased to 75%. I am pleased to see the tweaking around definitions of what is an eligible employee to make sure that we do not accidentally create a one-day mistake. I am pleased to see the changes around eligible entities and, of course, around the qualifying periods. This makes the whole program much more accessible to more companies and employers that are able to give that wage subsidy.

However, it does not deal with every situation, not even still. If one thing is shown by trying to come up with legislation to meet every circumstance and fill every gap the way we are doing it, it is that one size will not fit all.

This is true even when talking about senior homes. I received an email today from Meadowlane, a seniors home on Salt Spring Island. It is run as an independent living facility, so it is not within the health authorities. It has additional costs but is a not-for-profit society, so how does it handle these additional costs? It does not have deep pockets. Obviously costs are going up. The workers are stretched. The home needs to buy more masks and more gowns, and it does not have a revenue deduction because people are still in the home. Not every circumstance fits yet to our best efforts in this place.

Similarly, I have talked to venture capital businesses. They have the venture capital and are on the verge of a breakthrough, but the BDC venture capital model is not working for them because their venture capital comes from firms that are not in the recognized group within the BDC plan. We need some flexibility there too. We need to be able to say to businesses that if they are on the verge of really taking off, we should not be restricting where they get their money.

Speaking of money, I want to pick up on a point made by the hon. member for Burnaby South earlier today, which is about the banks. The Minister of Finance has clearly been exerting maximum diplomacy on the banks, getting them to say that they will let people have a longer time to pay their mortgages, but the six big banks are misusing his good faith. I will put it that way. They are not so profitable for nothing. Last year's profit of the six big banks in Canada came to \$46 billion. It is 10 years in a row now that they have made more money year over year, and we can see why. They

are saying to people that they do not have to pay their mortgage for a while, but when they pay it the banks are going to get them.

This is not team Canada. This is not the spirit we want to see. I think it is about time that the large banks were taxed at a higher level. We tax our big banks less than other countries in the G7 do. Why? I guess we like them. I am not sure they like us.

I would love to see the Minister of Finance convene by conference call all of the country's credit unions and ask them what they are capable of doing. What would they be able to do to help the small businesses in this country avoid bankruptcy? What would they be able to do to get them money up front that was not a loan so they could pay their rent and not go under due to the fixed costs of business?

I grew up in my family business as a kid. Through my twenties I waitressed and cooked in my family restaurant on the Cabot Trail, which was a seasonal business. I think about my parents, and if this had hit us then, I do not know what we would have done. We would have had 35 seasonal employees that we could not hire. We would have been wondering if we should open or not and what the heck to do with all the things we had to pay for no matter what. That is what I am hearing from businesses in my riding now.

• (1745)

Someone emailed me the other day, and the email just about broke my heart. I will not give any biographical details, but the writer described himself as a 250-pound man covered in tattoos. He said that morning he went to the bathroom and shut the door so his kids would not hear him crying. He has businesses that cannot open right now and he has no way to pay the rent on them. Despite all of his life savings, he is already indebted. Small businesses are going to need more than what we have here.

I am encouraged because the unanimous consent motion does speak to short-term support measures for Canadian small and medium-sized enterprises that will be partially non-refundable. We have to work on how much is "partially". We have to do way more. If we want to get out of this, which we do, as a country with businesses that run in the black, we cannot let them go into deeper debt. They will not go into deeper debt; I know they will not. They are already telling me that if they take out a \$40,000 loan without interest, they will not be able to pay it back and will then go bankrupt later. This is a real concern and is coming from the heart.

There are other issues that matter to us across this country. We know one size does not fit all in any category.

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Before my time is elapsed, I want to thank everyone in the government and the provincial governments and particularly our public health officers, from Dr. Theresa Tam to Dr. Bonnie Henry in B.C. to, back again across this country, Dr. Strang in Nova Scotia. These guys are now our daily friends on TV. We see them more than we see those we used to watch on TV. We now know who we can look to for advice. We can look to those public civil servants whose job is public health. I am enormously grateful to all of them, because as every Canadian has witnessed, they are also working around the clock.

[*Translation*]

It is now clear that these are extraordinary circumstances. We must find solutions together. We must continue to work together. As members of Parliament, we must find ways to work virtually. I do not know how that will be possible, but I know that things that once seemed impossible are possible.

[*English*]

I mentioned earlier that Doug Ford says the Deputy Prime Minister is his therapist. This kind of thing would not have been considered possible a short time ago. We need to work together.

On behalf of the Green Party caucus, I give my word that we will do whatever we can. We have been forwarding advice, complaints, ideas and worries to a listening ear, and for that we are grateful. In this crisis, which does not at this point have a clear end in sight, we need to be able to say to every one of our constituents and to every Canadian, permanent resident and foreign student, for whom I am very worried, that if they are living in Canada we have their backs. If they feel that no one is there for them right now, they should not worry. I want them to reach out to us and tell us what they need. We will fight for them.

• (1750)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member, my fellow British Columbian, for her presentation.

She mentioned at the front end of her speech that she supports having the Emergencies Act activated. Again, that has never been done. Usually it was only done when a province or territory was unable or unwilling to deal with a crisis.

From speaking to most of my constituents, I think they would all say that in British Columbia things are happening well. In fact, maybe some people would say that the gaps right now are being addressed by the federal government in the way it has handled our borders, particularly at the airports. Both Premier Kenney and Premier Horgan have sent their officials because they do not trust that the federal government has done its job. In fact, maybe they would like a reverse Emergencies Act: Rather than the federal government taking over a provincial situation, the provincial government could take over a federal situation.

Could the member please tell us where these gaps are that she sees in British Columbia?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the example I just gave, and it is top of the news around the clock at home in B.C. right now, is the influx of people on B.C. ferries. Is that a provincial issue? Should

John Horgan have sent the RCMP to stop people from boarding ferries? It seems to us that there are still gaps. The Emergencies Act, if nothing else, is about making sure that gaps are dealt with, and that there is a national set of directives. Right now, we have different provincial directives, depending on where one lives, of when to self-isolate or whether to wear a mask. I do not want to make too much of it, because I think we are pulling together quite well, but in this instance the Salt Spring Island Harbour Authority reached out to me and said that they want to be able to say that they are not taking any tourist vessels in Ganges Harbour this weekend, and asked where they can get the authorities to do that. Those should be federal, because it is Transport Canada, but it is hard to find the rules and the regulations.

In British Columbia right now, I also do not think the work camps should be open for Site C or for Coastal natural gas. There are COVID-19 cases coming out of those work camps, and that exemption has been allowed by the provincial government.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has spoken about the really unprecedented collaboration among all members of this House in addressing the challenge that all Canadians face. I want to take this opportunity to thank her colleague, the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, for his support in our work with the United States. He pointed out directly to me the essential role that a pulp mill in his riding plays in supplying the U.S. medical equipment supply chain. Thanks to him, I got in touch with the CEO of that pulp mill, Levi Sampson, and that conversation proved to be very helpful in our conversations with our American neighbours.

I thank the Greens, and particularly the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for being so involved and so helpful.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I have to say what a distinct it honour it is, and I was going to mention it, but I thought it was a private conversation I had with the Deputy Prime Minister, and I was not sure I should mention the role of the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith. My favourite thing about his alert to the government that the Harmac mill in Nanaimo makes essential parts of the 3M masks that were, at that time, creating a conflict between the United States and Canada, was the subject line, which I loved.

Forgive me for sharing that the memo that the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith sent the Deputy Prime Minister was titled “fun fact”.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

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

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I have a specific question for her. If a business wants to receive the emergency wage subsidy, it will have to prove a drop in revenue. Community groups, non-profit organizations and food banks may have a hard time proving a drop in revenue. Food banks may even have an increase in revenue, since more people want to donate and contribute.

Does my colleague think that the government should make exceptions for community groups, in particular food banks, with respect to the drop in revenue?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, once again, I completely agree with my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Our country is wealthy and industrialized. We must eliminate poverty once and for all, and this truly is possible.

[*English*]

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to my colleague, from one end of the country to another, let me perhaps provide some help. I too have ferries in New Brunswick Southwest. Last Sunday the federal government extended the Quarantine Act. It is now actually a federal regulation that gives ferry owner-operators the ability to restrict people who take the ferries to get across this country; that power is already there.

On that note, a concern I have about the Emergencies Act is that already municipal workers, ferry workers and provincial workers have power that the federal government has granted. I do not believe we should rush to enact the Emergencies Act when powers already exist and they just are not being utilized, perhaps because they are not known. There is the ability to restrict people travelling on ferries today, thanks to the work the federal government has done.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that this discussion we have just had will make it to the news in British Columbia. The question will then go to officials at B.C. Ferries as to why they are not referencing the Quarantine Act to ensure that people who are not on essential business are not travelling to the Gulf Islands or elsewhere throughout B.C. I know that Haida Gwaii has been very clear that it does not want visitors coming to its territories.

We need to make sure that the tools that are available are well known to all.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her fine speech.

We are experiencing an unprecedented public health crisis accompanied by a terrible economic crisis. We are working hard to overcome it as fast as possible.

The economist Schumpeter spoke of “creative destruction”, and his idea has filtered through in economic circles. It is the idea that whenever a crisis occurs, the end of the crisis can provide an opportunity to shape the economy of the future.

Does my colleague believe that on the day we exit this crisis, we will have the opportunity to accelerate the shift to a green economy?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Joliette. I fully agree with him.

Making a real start on a fundamental shift to a green economy is not only possible, but essential. It is possible because after this pandemic and the current public health crisis end, there will still be a climate crisis.

We need to take action to save our economy and invest in renewable energy and green technologies in order to develop a forward-looking economy.

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was so happy to hear the member across the way talk about a universal basic income. I am hoping as we move forward that is something we can work for together. Those front-line workers we talk about, the people working in the grocery stores stocking shelves and the people working at the pharmacies are often paid minimum wage.

Does the member agree that in the future something we could work on as well is that the federal government implement a livable federal minimum wage?

• (1800)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, it is an easy answer. Yes, of course. It was in our platform as Greens. Our belief in that goes way back. We do not like to use the term “universal basic income” because we want to make sure that when we go to a guaranteed livable income, it is actually at a level where people can live on it but know that they can earn more and then the taxation rate will kick in.

Canada as a whole will be stronger and more resilient when we actually have a society where nobody falls through the cracks.

The Speaker: It being 6 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and to put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

[*English*]

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage on division, deemed read a third time and passed on division)

The Speaker: Thank you everyone.

Today has been an exceptional day in the midst of exceptional times. A few weeks ago, the Deputy Speaker, the hon. member for Simcoe North and the Assistant Deputy Speaker, the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, presided over the chamber as a small group of members gathered to pass emergency legislation that would help Canadians cope with some of the devastating effects of the global pandemic that has hit this country.

[*Translation*]

Today I have had the privilege of being here with you, hon. members and employees. I want to thank you, personally and on behalf of our parliamentary colleagues, for being here and for your efforts to serve Canadians.

[*English*]

We were able to carry out our work today because of the support of all these essential employees of the House administration, the Li-

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brary of Parliament and the Parliamentary Protective Service. We are grateful for your help under these challenging circumstances.

[*Translation*]

On behalf of my colleagues, I would also like to express my gratitude to health care workers and everyone who works to keep our essential structures running smoothly.

[*English*]

Hon. colleagues, keep safe, keep well, and we will get through this together.

I want to wish all of you a happy Easter and a happy Passover. Have a great weekend.

[*Translation*]

Thank you all very much.

[*English*]

Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until Monday, April 20, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:04 p.m.)

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