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Chair: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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• (1200)

[*English*]

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

Welcome to meeting number 22 of the House of Commons Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

As usual, please direct your remarks through the chair.

[*English*]

I understand we don't have any ministerial announcements today, so we'll proceed to presenting petitions.

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

[*Translation*]

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

The first petition will be presented by Ms. May.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, it's an honour to rise in meeting number 22 of the COVID-19 committee, otherwise known as something like the House of Commons.

I'm here to present two petitions containing hundreds of signatures on the issue of the treatment of Falun Gong practitioners by the People's Republic of China, particularly the practice that's alleged of involuntary organ harvesting. The petitioners ask the Government of Canada to condemn this practice and to publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in the People's Republic of China.

The second petition is from residents throughout Saanich—Gulf Islands concerned about what was, at the time this petition was submitted, a future problem. It remains an issue, and I present it on behalf of petitioners who wish the Government of Canada not to put public funds into purchasing or maintaining the Trans Mountain pipeline or towards any expansion of the pipeline.

The Chair: Next we'll go to Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Chair, I rise to table two petitions.

The first petition deals with the COVID-19 situation. The petitioners note the pandemic is having a devastating impact on many Canadians nationwide, especially those who have low to modest income, small business gig workers, freelancers, artists, film industry workers, non-salaried workers and individuals on fixed incomes such as seniors and those on disability.

It further notes that rent, mortgage and utility payments are due at the end of each month, putting countless Canadians at risk of losing their housing. It is paramount there be safe self-isolation opportunities for all individuals in this country. To that end, the petitioners are calling for the government to immediately enact a nationwide rent freeze, eviction freeze, mortgage freeze and utility freeze, enforce mortgage deferrals for homeowners without penalty or interest charges from financial institutions and provide direct assistance in the form of a monthly, universal, direct payment of \$2,000 per month for all, with an additional \$250 per child immediately.

The second petition deals with the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. These petitioners join the hundreds of thousands of people who are opposed to the expansion. Trans Mountain, in building the pipeline, brings massive environmental and economic risk with no substantial benefit to British Columbia or to local residents. Approximately 40,000 barrels of oil have already leaked from existing Kinder Morgan pipelines, including two major spills in Burnaby since 2007.

I might note, Mr. Chair, that just this past weekend there was yet another spill to the tune of 1,195 barrels here in British Columbia.

There is no known scientific technology to clean up the bitumen when there is a spill, and the number of tankers would go from eight to 34 per month into the Burrard Inlet. It puts at risk many residential neighbourhoods and the traditional territories of at least 15 first nations.

• (1205)

The Chair: May I interrupt for a moment, Ms. Kwan.

I want to remind all members in the House that when presenting a petition, the idea is to be as concise as possible.

Ms. Kwan, I'll let you wrap up, please.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The petitioners are calling for the government to immediately act to prevent this new oil pipeline from proceeding through British Columbia.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have four petitions to present today.

The first petition reflects the outrage of my constituents at the ever-expanding order in council from the government banning more and more firearms. In particular, the petitioners highlight the failure of the government to act on the issue of illegal guns. The petitioners note that virtually all violent crimes committed in Canada, including the recent shooting in Nova Scotia, involve illegal firearms in the hands of those who are already not permitted to possess them. The petition has two asks. First of all, it asks that we reverse the order in council banning certain firearms, but also that we propose measures that will effectively address the illegal use of firearms by criminals while respecting the rights of law-abiding citizens. It also asks that we ensure that substantial changes to firearms laws in future actually be made by Parliament, not by the government acting in an unaccountable manner.

The second petition deals with Bill C-8, which is the government's bill around conversion therapy. The petitioners support efforts to ban conversion therapy. They express concern about problems in the wording of the definition used in the legislation. They're asking the government to support amendments to fix the definition to address the issue of conversion therapy and ensure that the definition is correct and doesn't criminalize certain forms of counselling that individuals may voluntarily enter into.

The third petition is regarding Bill S-204, a bill in the Senate that seeks to make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad to receive an organ without consent, dealing especially with the horrific practice of forced organ harvesting and trafficking in China. The petitioners are supportive of Bill S-204 and want to see it move forward.

The final petition is with respect to Bill C-7. There's been much discussion in this House about the need to do better in terms of long-term care. Rather than working to do better in long-term care, unfortunately we've seen the government removing vital safeguards in the area of euthanasia. I think our focus should be on assisting life rather than removing safeguards that are required in association with the euthanasia regime. The petitioners are particularly concerned about the government's plan to remove a 10-day reflection period that normally takes place. That period can already be waived under certain circumstances, but Bill C-7 proposes to remove it entirely as well as reduce the number of witnesses involved. The peti-

tioners are quite concerned about what's going on in Bill C-7 and call for it to be stopped or amended.

The Chair: Presenting petitions.

We'll proceed to statements by members.

We'll start off with Mr. Manly.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Chair, we are in the midst of a global pandemic and an economic shock. Recent events have ripped open the wound of systemic racism in our country. Racialized and marginalized communities have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Thousands of seniors in long-term care facilities have died.

It is clear that we need system change. In the past, governments have bailed out banks and corporations because they were too big to fail. It is time to bail out humanity and the planet. No one will be immune from the threat of climate change and mass extinction. Both are the result of the exploitation of the natural world in the name of the economy. Humans created the economy. We can choose to change it. We must protect our environment or perish.

COVID-19 has demonstrated that together we can take courageous action for the common good. We need to do the same for the climate crisis, because humanity and our planet are too big to fail.

• (1210)

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

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Underestimated and under-reported, elder abuse exists across the world.

At risk of neglect and assault, many of the most vulnerable older persons reside in our long-term care facilities. They are the seniors who have built our country and shaped our communities, who have shown us resilience, courage and selflessness, who have made us stronger, and whose work and teachings continue to inspire us. They are parents and grandparents, brothers and sisters, friends and mentors. We have not been there for them in the same way they've been there for us throughout their lives.

The Canadian Forces report, alongside the climbing disproportionate death toll in our long-term care facilities, has reconfirmed the ugly, indefensible reality of elder abuse and neglect in Canada. In my community, we mourn the deaths of 68 seniors from one long-term care facility alone, Camilla Care.

We must make the same unwavering commitment to older persons as they have shown to us. We must protect and uphold their human rights. We must do better.

The Chair: Before proceeding, I just want to bring up to the members in the background that we want to keep it as simple and as parliamentary as possible in keeping it neutral.

We'll now move to Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): During these trying times, the residents of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes have risen to the challenge. They've made sacrifices and gone above and beyond to make the lives of their neighbours better and to keep our communities safe.

It would be impossible to list everyone who has emerged as a community hero, but I'd like to highlight a few, like Lily, an eight-year-old from Elgin who raised funds for her local food bank by building and selling squirrel picnic tables, and Louise Boardman from Spencerville who's making masks for long-term care facilities and selling others in support of the Breast Cancer Action centre. The Knights of Columbus in Prescott raised funds and are distributing some \$27,000 in support of charitable groups throughout the region. The Knights of Columbus in Kemptville are working overtime operating the local food bank. Who can forget our top-notch health care workers like Hannah and Mary at the Brockville COVID-19 testing centre?

It is the people of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes that make it so great. To everyone working to make a difference and to all of our essential workers, thank you.

The Chair: Next is Mr. Anandasangaree.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the Indian Act enshrined racism into Canadian law in 1876, and, through residential schools, the child welfare system, our legal system and our police, we criminalized and tore apart indigenous peoples. The deaths of Chantel Moore and Rodney Levi and the assault on Chief Allan Adam are recent examples of systemic racism within the RCMP. Sadly, the RCMP leadership has failed to acknowledge this reality and its root causes.

These same systems negatively impact black Canadians. Anti-black racism has resulted in more young black men being jailed, children being streamed or excluded from schools and negative police interaction due to profiling. Black lives matter. No single Canadian is responsible for the prevalence of systemic racism; we all are.

Collectively we build institutions that discriminate based on race. It is now time to reimagine and rework our institutions, starting with our police, to ensure that all Canadians can achieve their truest potential.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Larouche, you have the floor.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. I want to remind members of the link between abuse and the problems of economic

dependency among seniors. Improving their purchasing power means reducing the risk of them falling victim to abusive people. That's why the increase in the old age security benefit and the guaranteed income supplement must be extended beyond the pandemic. In three weeks, our seniors will receive their first cheque, when they should be receiving their second.

A date must also be announced for the new horizons for seniors program, which helps several groups develop projects to break the isolation of seniors.

In closing, I would like to mention the organization *Justice alternative et m diation* that during the pandemic, along with other organizations in Shefford, has set up the project *Une histoire pour la tienne*, which also serves to mark this day. It's a virtual meeting between young people and seniors, allowing them to exchange some inspiring life experiences. Since age prejudice is very much present, I applaud this project, which aims to make us understand each other better and judge each other less.

• (1215)

[English]

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

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chair, in the time of this terrible crisis affecting all Canadians, when we are all thinking about how best to deal with it, let's all think about the people around us. Let's show our representation not only to those in the sector of sanctioned workers, but also to all those Canadians who day by day stand up and make a difference.

Every day I am proud of the reactions of Canadians to this crisis. I want to acknowledge and celebrate all the contributions made by the people of Brampton Centre, all religious institutions, civil society and community organizations like Knights Table in my riding. We are all standing together to fight COVID-19. Let's continue working hard with that same spirit to get positive results out.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: I will proceed to Mr. Ruff.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Chair, whether graduating from elementary school, high school, Georgian College or graduating from colleges or universities across the country, I am proud of the accomplishments of all the graduates across Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

I would also like to congratulate and thank all the teachers and parents who have adapted to teaching online or from home and who have supported these graduates over the course of their academic careers.

I'd like to extend special congratulations to Cameron Lovell, who just graduated from grade eight, as well as to Neebeesh and Neebin Elliott, originally from the Nawash unceded first nation on the Bruce Peninsula, who will be headed to Michigan State University, and to Jared Lumley from Owen Sound, who just graduated from my alma mater, the Royal Military College of Canada. The college motto of "Truth, Duty, Valour" is something all Canadians should aspire to live by.

I wish all the best to these graduates on their next adventures. I and Canada cannot wait to see how their dreams and goals impact and change the world. I congratulate Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound graduates.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Today I pay tribute to Richard Losier, an entrepreneur, visionary and builder who died on June 9, 2020, surrounded by his family.

Mr. Losier is a giant in the Acadian Peninsula business community. In 1968, he co-founded St. Isidore Asphalte, a company that now has more than 200 employees. He also launched many other businesses over the years. He was unifying and generous, a philanthropist who cared about young people and never missed an opportunity to improve their lives.

I met Mr. Losier when I was 14 years old, and I can say that he has been a positive influence in my life. Every time I met him, he gave me a lot of advice and encouragement, which I've never forgotten. Mr. Losier's legacy to his community is invaluable. His commitment remains an example for all of us to follow.

Mr. Losier now joins his wife, Noëlla. I offer my most sincere condolences to his children, Richard Jr., Ronald, Nathalie, Caroline and Stéphane, and to his family and friends.

Rest in peace, Mr. Losier. You will be greatly missed. Thank you for everything you've done for our region.

[*English*]

The Chair: We will now go to Ms. Dabrusin.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Hello from my community in east end Toronto.

People talk about how a city the size of Toronto can be cold, but that's far from the truth in my community. I want to give a shout-out to our teachers, like Mr. Wong of Earl Grey Senior Public School, who delivered home-baked cookies and handwritten notes to all of his students, or Monsieur Steve, who's offering online French classes, or the teachers of Riverdale Collegiate, who paraded through our streets to celebrate our graduates.

Our local Michael Garron Hospital put out a call for community members to sew masks and received over 60,000 masks, including those made by Lisa Tancre of Chartwell Avondale Retirement Residence. Michelle Beaton organized a front window scavenger hunt to entertain children and their families. Restaurants, even while facing adversity, have been generously donating food, like the members of the Leslieville BIA or Mezes.

There are so many more stories of generosity that I could share, but I'm out of time.

I thank everyone who has stepped up. We all appreciate all of their hard work.

● (1220)

The Chair: We will now go to Ms. Sahota.

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Mr. Chair, on Saturday night, Calgaryans, particularly those in the northeast, in my riding of Calgary Skyview, witnessed a devastating storm, the likes of which I have not seen in my lifetime. Homes, vehicles, community buildings and structures suffered significant damage due to large hail, floods and high winds. People acted quickly to seek shelter. I'm so grateful that there have been no reports of personal injury or loss of life.

I went around the community yesterday to survey the damage. It is extensive. My heart aches for those who have been impacted by the storm in an already incredibly difficult time, but we are resilient. We know that in the coming weeks there will be a lot of cleanup required, both to personal property and in the community. I know my constituents, and we will help one another get through this together. I will work hard to do everything I can to help rebuild this community.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to the people of West Nipissing who organized Pride activities to celebrate the LGBTQ community in June.

This week, we are also celebrating National Public Service Week. I thank the public servants for their dedication to the Nickel Belt community and the Valley East and Rayside-Balfour areas.

[*English*]

The Chair: Next is Mr. Saroya.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Chair, when COVID-19 began spreading across Ontario, Markham, like many other communities, was unprepared. Our front-line health care workers did not have enough personal protective equipment to do their jobs safely.

When Markham residents heard about these shortages, my office was flooded with calls from people who had PPE and wanted to donate. Since then my office has been able to deliver tens of thousands of PPE supplies to front-line health care workers and five masks to each family in need.

This pandemic has shown that no matter what the challenge is, the Markham community will overcome it. Today, I would like to thank the front-line health care workers who are doing incredible work. I would also like to thank all those who have helped in Markham's hour of need.

The Chair: I understand we had a bit of a glitch there. I'm sorry. With the pause, we thought that was the end of it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serré, I would ask you to continue. I understand you started to switch languages.

Please continue. You have 30 seconds.

[*English*]

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you.

I'm switching to English now.

Thank you to our nurses, doctors, pharmacists, cashiers, janitors. Thank you to various retail workers and first responders dealing with COVID-19. You keep our communities safe and healthy, and you feed us. Your dedication and sacrifice are greatly appreciated.

As we start to see local businesses reopen, it is important for all of us to remember to follow best practices outlined by local public health. Our front-line workers deserve our respect. It is important for all of us to respect social distancing, to protect all workers and their families.

Together we can remain strong and united as we continue to face this challenge together.

The Chair: Again, my apologies for skipping over there, but now we'll to to Ms. McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Chair, in commemoration of Italian Heritage Month, I would like to pay tribute to the Colombo Lodge and Italian Cultural Centre in Kamloops, British Columbia.

The Colombo Lodge was founded in 1914 and is an integral part of our community. Recently they began Colombo Cares take-home dinners with proceeds distributed to different non-profit organizations throughout the region.

Last month they very generously gave away hundreds of dinners to Royal Inland Hospital staff and paramedics for their tireless work throughout the pandemic.

In their own words they say, "Colombo Lodge is very proud of the Italians that have made Kamloops their home. Community members of Italian ancestry—past and present—have helped and continue to help Kamloops prosper as a giving, welcoming and inclusive community."

Personally, I want to thank all members for their friendship and generosity over the years. Our community is forever grateful for their kindness.

The Chair: We'll now proceed to Mr. Harris.

• (1225)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Chair, many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are facing a serious financial crisis. Most people with disabilities are waiting to be included in the Liberals' promised program.

Fish plant workers will need support to avoid a disastrous year. Many small businesses don't qualify for programs. Municipalities need emergency help to meet the crisis.

People are worried about what will happen when the CERB runs out in two weeks' time, and the coming tourism season looks very grim.

The province itself is in serious financial crisis due to the pandemic and the decline in oil prices. The federal government must overhaul and enhance the fiscal stabilization program to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and other oil-producing provinces through this crisis.

Both the province and the oil and gas industry players have committed to net zero emissions by 2050. This is a challenge and an opportunity to transition to a sustainable energy future, but it will require significant investment and support by government to keep the industry strong and make this a just transition for workers.

Much has been done. Much more needs to be done.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Chair, all 44 elected municipal officials in the riding of Laurentides—Labelle and I have sent a letter to the government asking that cellular and high-speed Internet networks be made available to all.

The crisis has accelerated the demonstration of the need for these networks in daily life. The territorial complexity of the Laurentians means that there are areas where the signal is weak, unstable or non-existent. There is an urgent and essential need to change the infrastructure of the current networks. Also, because of the lockdown, Internet failures are being felt, and they prevent distance learning, telemedicine and teleworking, among other things.

How can our municipalities develop economically if they can't provide their community with adequate communication tools?

We are therefore calling on the government to put the interests of its people first by investing massively right now in the construction of high-speed Internet and cellular infrastructure.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Waugh.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): I rise today to pay tribute to Sir Winston Churchill, the former prime minister of Great Britain and one of the greatest leaders history has ever known.

In what can only be called a lifetime of service, Churchill's contributions to the Commonwealth and to the world are without equal. During the Second World War he led the allied forces in Europe against the tyranny and fascism of Adolph Hitler and his Nazi regime.

When our world was in its darkest hour, Churchill's leadership was a beacon of hope and freedom. I am reminded of something he once said, "All the greatest things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word: freedom, justice, honour, duty, mercy, hope."

Sir Winston Churchill himself embodied all of these great things and will forever be a symbol of freedom, democracy and hope.

The Chair: Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to add my voice to the recognition and celebration of Pride Month, which is celebrated annually during June. Pride Month is important for Canadians because we can be proud of who we are and celebrate our diversity.

This June is different from previous years as we cannot celebrate in person all together. However, I know the ongoing pandemic will not stop us from showing our love and support for the LGBTQ+ community.

To celebrate Pride Month this year, my office distributed 3,000 pride maple leaf pins across the country; whoever asked received one. Although the majority was sent to constituents in my riding, over 500 pins were sent to the neighbouring ridings of Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, and Hastings—Lennox and Addington. It warms my heart to see so many Canadians showing their support.

Happy Pride, everyone.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deltell.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am very pleased to take part in today's meeting of this parliamentary committee.

Canada has been dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic for three months now. The situation now seems to be improving, although we must remain vigilant.

Economically, business people and the entire Canadian economy depend on government decisions. My question is very simple: when will the economic update take place?

• (1230)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his question.

I agree with him that Canada and Canadians are doing an excellent and difficult job in the fight against coronavirus. As for the economy, our government is there for Canadians, for workers and for businesses, and it will continue to be.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Canadians, business people and businesses want to know where the government is headed. When will the economic update take place?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, Canadians know that the government is there to support them. Eight—

The Chair: We return to Mr. Deltell.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Canadians and Quebecers also know that the Government of Quebec will table its economic update this week. Why isn't the federal government doing the same?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to explain to hon. members and to Canadians what the government is doing for the economy—

The Chair: We return to Mr. Deltell.

[*English*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, it is a real pleasure for me to explain to the minister and everybody in the House of Commons that today the Saskatchewan government will table its economic update. Why can't Ottawa do that?

The Chair: The honourable Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I'm delighted to have the opportunity to share with Canadians what our government is doing to support workers, businesses and the economy.

Eight million Canadians have received the CERB, essential support for Canadian workers and their families.

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

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, 11 days ago the Newfoundland government tabled its own economic update. We see governments acting correctly for their people, except for the Liberal government, which cannot table an economic update.

When will the Liberal government table an economic update, which Canadians would like to see?

The Chair: The honourable Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am delighted to share with the member opposite and with Canadians what we are doing practically that has meaning for Canadians.

Let me talk about what we are doing for Canadian businesses. Nearly 670,000 Canadian businesses have received support—

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

Mr. Gérard Deltell: In Canada, the Quebec government will table its economic update this week. The Saskatchewan government tabled its economic update today. The Newfoundland government has tabled its economic update. Everybody is working hard in Canada, and the business community would like to know where the Liberal government is going.

The question is crystal clear. When will the Liberal government table an economic update?

The Chair: The honourable Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, Canadian workers and Canadian businesses want to know that our government is here to support them. I have shared with this House our support for Canadian workers through the CERB. I've spoken about the CEBA, and let me point out that more than \$26 billion of support has been given through that essential program.

Let me talk about the wage subsidy. More than 2.6 million—

The Chair: We'll return to Mr. Deltell.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, this is starting to get interesting; the minister is revealing some of these expenses.

Could the minister tell us how much the government has spent in the last three months?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I will continue in French by explaining what our government is doing for Canadians and workers—

The Chair: Mr. Deltell.

[*English*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, this is a little bit concerning for all Canadians, because this government cannot say when they will table the economic update, cannot identify how much money they have spent in the last three months and cannot say what is the deficit of Canada.

Is somebody in this government running this country correctly?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, absolutely we are running this country, and we are supporting our economy. In fact, we appreciate that Canada currently is experiencing its greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression. That is why we have devoted nearly 11% of GDP to support Canadian workers and Canadian businesses.

I want to assure Canadians—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: We'll now continue with Ms. Normandin.

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, there are times when Quebec and the provinces are not just two solitudes, but they get along and speak as one, such as when the time comes to tell the government to mind its own business.

On reading section 91 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, which sets out the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government, nowhere do I find that the federal government must meddle by attaching conditions to health transfers.

It is Quebec and the provinces that hire the medical personnel, doctors, nurses and caretakers. It is Quebec and the provinces that are responsible for purchasing the necessary equipment. It is Quebec and the provinces that know what is happening on the ground and what their needs are.

Will the government do the only thing within its authority, which is to take the cheque, sign it and put it in the mail?

• (1235)

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

We fully understand the importance of federal support for the provinces, especially in our national fight against the coronavirus.

I agree with the hon. member that we must give financial support to the provinces, including Quebec absolutely. I would also like to point out the importance of the support of the Canadian Armed Forces, who are doing an important and excellent job in Quebec and Ontario today, right now.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Chair, I am glad to see that there is recognition of the importance of transferring this money. My question is whether it can be transferred unconditionally; that's what I'm asking.

There's a state of emergency. In the past, we have seen that it takes a long time to negotiate conditions with the federal government. We saw it in the case of the Quebec City tramway, and we are still seeing it now in the case of transfers for housing in Quebec, for which there is no agreement and, therefore, no transfer of money.

Will the federal government send the money free of conditions?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the hon. member said in her first question that the only thing the federal government had to do on health care was to sign the cheques. I can't agree because, today, at this time, at the request of the Premier of Quebec, the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces are in Quebec today; they're there to save the lives of seniors—

The Chair: We now return to Ms. Normandin.

Ms. Christine Normandin: It was indeed at Quebec's request. What I'm saying is that, at present, the provinces are unanimously asking that there be no conditions. It's urgent that the money be transferred.

The federal government's job here is to sign the cheque and send it to the provinces. The government's job is also to make Parliament work. This is where there should be negotiations so that we can work, among other things, to send money to people living with disabilities, to make sure we fight CERB fraud and to make sure that court time limits are effective in the current crisis.

Can the government focus on the issue in order to respect the provinces and transfer money for health care?

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

I agree with the hon. member that the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces are in Quebec today at the request of the Province of Quebec. That said, I hope that the hon. member will agree with me that being there for Quebec's seniors, that saving the lives of Quebec's seniors, is much more than simply signing cheques.

I am very proud of the work the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces are doing. I think we all should thank these people who are working for Canada, for Quebec, and who are doing an important and excellent job.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Chair, I think the Deputy Prime Minister misunderstood me when I was talking about the importance of acting quickly.

Negotiations between the government and the provinces take an awfully long time because the federal government decides to place conditions where there shouldn't be any. Right now, the only important thing is to transfer the money quickly so that it can be used in our hospitals and our long-term care facilities, where the need is desperate. Quebec and the provinces know exactly what their needs are.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would like to point out the extent to which the federal government is there to support the provinces, including Quebec. We have increased funding to the provinces and territories by \$500 million to help them prepare for COVID-19 outbreaks. This funding is in addition to the \$40 billion that we already provide annually to the provinces and territories. That's a lot of money. It is strong endorsement—

• (1240)

[English]

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Chair, systemic racism is killing people. It's killing black people and it's killing indigenous people. Recently, Rodney Levi was another victim of systemic racism. He was killed in New Brunswick by the RCMP.

To deal with systemic racism, we need systemic change. Will the Liberal government commit to systemic change so that not another life is ever taken again?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I thank the member opposite for the extremely important question, and I'll take this opportunity to acknowledge the work that he has done for many years fighting racism in Canada.

Our government absolutely acknowledges that systemic racism exists in Canada. It exists in all of our institutions, including the police and the RCMP. I agree with the member opposite that now is the moment to fight this—

The Chair: Mr. Singh.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Chair, I thank the Deputy Prime Minister very much for the response, but there are some specific actions we need to take.

There are movements. Black Lives Matter, as a movement, is calling for the defunding of police. What they're saying is we need to make better choices with how money is being spent. When

someone is in need of a wellness check or a mental health check, money, financing and support should go to mental health workers and health care workers, not the police.

Is the government prepared to fund and prioritize health care workers over the police?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the member quite rightly began his questions by speaking about systemic racism against indigenous people in Canada, and I would like to speak about that for a moment.

I spoke to Perry Bellegarde this morning, because it is such a crucial issue. We can describe it as the original sin of our country. I absolutely agree that we need root and branch reform, including in how policing is done in Canada.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Chair, will the Liberal government commit to a review of the use of force as outlined for the RCMP? Will the Liberals commit to that change?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety had many conversations last week with the RCMP. We all accept that—

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Chair, will the government commit to ensuring that de-escalation receives priority?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Let me continue, Mr. Chair.

Systemic racism exists in all of our federal institutions, including the RCMP. It's time to put an end to it. Let me just say—

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Chair, I'm not getting an answer.

Will the Prime Minister or the Liberal government commit to something simple and ensure that at the federal level, racial profiling, street checks and carding are expressly prohibited?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, sadly, I can't agree that rooting out systemic racism is going to be simple, but I can agree that racial profiling is absolutely inappropriate. It is not something that we should—

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Well, I'm going to try to get another commitment from the government, because they don't seem able to commit to something as clear as ending racial profiling.

We know that millions of Canadians in a couple of weeks are going to be faced with the reality of their CERB ending. These families are worried about how they're going to put food on the table, because they can't return to a job.

Will the Liberal government commit today so that those families will have some concrete support, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me be clear, as I was in my previous answer, that our government clearly is opposed to racial profiling. This is a wrong practice and we're very clear about our position there.

Now when it comes to the CERB, I absolutely share the concern of the member opposite. The Canadian economy is in its direst state since the Great Depression. We know that all the jobs have not yet come back. We know that Canadian workers, Canadian families, continue to need—

• (1245)

The Chair: We'll now pause for a short time to allow staff to change within the safety parameters for the COVID-19 virus, and as we resume, we will go to Ms. Harder.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister has mandated his ministers, and I quote, “to govern in a positive, open and collaborative way.” Ironically, as it stands, Parliament is currently closed for business. Opposition parties have little opportunity to hold the ruling party to account, private members' bills cannot be tabled and legislation cannot be debated.

Can the Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau himself, help us understand how all of this fits into his definition of so-called “open government”?

The Honourable Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Well, Mr. Chair, we're here, right? We're here, and the opposition is asking questions. They have the equivalent of eight question periods instead of five to ask questions. They have more time than before, so I don't know why they're not happy about it.

Ms. Rachael Harder: That's like when I'm asking for a full meal and your handing me a few jellybeans and saying, “Why aren't you happy with that?”

Mr. Chair, here's the thing. It's like switching a light on and off when it's convenient for the Prime Minister and for the Liberal Party. That's what they want to do here. That's not Parliament. That's not democracy. When will Mr. Trudeau do the right thing, turn the lights on and get back to work for Canadians?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I'm really sorry to hear that my colleague's not working. I can assure you, Mr. Chair, on this side of the House, we're all actually working very hard and we're answering the questions from the opposition. Why? It's because it's extremely important.

I sat there for seven years asking questions. I understand important—

Ms. Rachael Harder: The member opposite knows very well that he is misleading the Canadian public. This is not true Parliament. This is simply a special committee. Here's the thing. On the Liberal Party website, under the platform commitment, it says that Parliament works best when its members are free “to do what they have been elected to do”, and that is be the voice for their communities and “hold the government to account.”

This is a Liberal document. Did the Prime Minister forget that strengthening Parliament was part of his 2019 platform commitment?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for quoting our excellent platform. That was a very very good document.

The thing is, I think we've reached a balance whereby MPs can come from different places, mostly around Ottawa, and ask questions; but also we can have colleagues from across the country asking questions. Why does my colleague think it is better to have only 35 MPs participating instead of 338?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Does the Prime Minister value democracy, or does he still look up to China's basic dictatorship?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, we're answering all the questions from the opposition, not only from the people in this room, but we're answering—

The Chair: It's back to Ms. Harder now.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I'll ask the question again. Does the Prime Minister still value the basic dictatorship of China over Canada's democracy?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I don't know where the colleague wants to go from here, Mr. Chair. I'd like to know from her why it is not important to her that her colleagues participate directly.

• (1250)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Trudeau wrote to his ministers and said to them that they continue “to raise the bar on openness, effectiveness and transparency.” He went on to explain that “This means...government that is open by default.”

We now have a parliament that is currently shut down. Mr. Trudeau has shut it down and has prevented us from being able to do to the good work that Canadians expect us to do. Is this Mr. Trudeau's idea of “open by default”?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, do they want to talk about shutting down Parliament? How about the time they prorogued Parliament twice—not only once, but twice? The Conservative government shut down Parliament twice. I was here. I was sitting on the other side of the aisle.

It's quite the opposite now. We're taking all the questions. This place is open, and we're answering questions.

The Chair: One moment, please. I haven't acknowledged you yet, Ms. Harder. We've stopped the time there.

I want to remind honourable members that questions and answers are being given, and we want to hear both sides. Please keep the heckling down.

Ms. Harder, please proceed.

Ms. Rachael Harder: In 2014, the leader of the Liberal Party developed a policy resolution entitled “Restoring Trust in Canada's Democracy”. That's ironic, because right now, again, Parliament is currently shut down. We are prevented from being able to do the good work that we are expected to do.

At the time, the Prime Minister said, “Canadians want their Members of Parliament to be effective voices for their communities in Ottawa, and not merely mouthpieces in their communities for an all-too-powerful Prime Minister.”

Sadly, Mr. Trudeau has become the all-too-powerful prime minister that he once believed should not exist. Why did he change his mind?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, I'd like to know why my colleague wants to shut down the voices of her colleagues who could not speak and could not participate in this room.

Mr. Chair, how would we vote on private members' bills, for example? As you know, it is not a government vote or a party vote; it's per row.

You want to come back? Are you going to accept—Mr. Chair, through you—that we have electronic voting, yes or no?

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

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, we know that the Minister of Foreign Affairs has champagne tastes and London flats, but it's his champagne mortgages that Canadians are concerned about.

Specifically, why did the minister only disclose the complete extent of his personal debt to the Chinese government on June 4 of this year?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, as you know, since the minister entered politics, his two mortgages and other liabilities and assets have been fully disclosed to the Ethics Commissioner and placed on the online public registry. It's public, Mr. Chair. It's public.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Now it's public and it's terrible. When will the foreign affairs minister be here to answer these questions himself?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, it's always been public. We're in the middle of a pandemic here, trying to help Canadians, and the best they can do is ask questions about—

The Chair: We will go back to Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: When the minister owes over a million dollars to the Chinese government, people have a right to ask him questions. When will the Minister of Foreign Affairs show up?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: The minister shows up every day, Mr. Chair. He shows up and works for Canadians. Once again, those are public documents. Everything the minister did is public. I still don't know why they ask—

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

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, he doesn't even have to come to the House. All he has to do is appear on the screen. Where is the minister? Why is he hiding? Why won't he answer questions about his personal debt to the Chinese government?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, if he goes online he's going to get the information.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, the minister is hiding.

Let's ask some specific questions about their China policy. What is the impact on the decision-making? Three-quarters of Canadians don't want Huawei involved in our 5G network. Will the minister

put the interests of Canadians ahead of the interests of his creditors and say no to Huawei?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry): Mr. Chair, when it comes to 5G deployment, we are right now currently undergoing a comprehensive review. We have been absolutely clear with allies and with Canadians that we never have and never will compromise Canadians' national interests.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, that is not an answer, and it is completely out of step with what our allies have already recognized.

Reports are emerging of multiple deadly viruses exported from Winnipeg's microbiology laboratory to the Wuhan Institute of Virology right before scientists were expelled for policy breaches.

In spite of that, scientific co-operation between Canadian institutions and the military-affiliated Wuhan Institute of Virology is continuing. Why hasn't the government put in place new guidelines to prevent the export of sensitive pathogens and information to China?

• (1255)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health): Mr. Chair, he's right that in 2019 the National Microbiology Laboratory shared lab samples with the Wuhan Institute of Virology. The National Microbiology Laboratory routinely shares samples with other labs to help advance the international community's understanding of viruses and the research that is ongoing around those viruses.

There are strict protocols in place for these transfers, and these samples were transported according to Canadian laws and regulations.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I think Canadians would be concerned to hear that it's routine to transport viruses to Chinese military-affiliated labs.

When Champagne was the parliamentary secretary for finance, the government decided to give hundreds of millions of dollars to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, bankrolling Chinese state-controlled development projects in Asia with weak standards in labour, human rights and environment.

Will the minister put Canadian taxpayers ahead of his personal creditors and support a pullout from the Communist Party-controlled development bank?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Once again, Mr. Chair, my colleague is trying to connect the dots, and I don't know exactly where he is going from here, but everything is public. There's a thing called Google. He can go on it and check the information.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, the public can listen to this. I'm sure this exchange will also be available on Google, and the public can draw their own conclusions.

We have failures on 5G, failures when it comes to the transport of deadly viruses and failures when it comes to giving over \$400 million to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. It's clear that the Bank of China's investment in Minister Champagne is paying off. It's time for the minister to settle his debt with the Communist government and not settle it on the backs of Canadians.

When will the minister be here in the House and answer questions about this mortgage?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: My colleague should be cautious with what he is saying in the House, Mr. Chair. This is serious stuff. He should be careful about what he says. The minister is actually working extremely hard for all Canadians and is doing his job correctly, Mr. Chair.

We're talking about public information. Once again, let him go to Google and google it. That's it.

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

Mr. Michael Barrett: Canada's ambassador to the United Nations sent a letter last week to all member states of the UN promising that Canada would consider providing more funding for UNRRA, the same UNRRA that is a front for Hamas, which allows weapons of terror to be stored in schools and provides textbooks that call for the destruction of Israel.

Do these Liberals have no shame when it comes to their quest for a seat on the UN Security Council?

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

We know that at this time Canada must show leadership in the face of global challenges. More than ever, Canada is playing a positive role by being a champion in diversity and inclusion, supporting the global fight against COVID-19, addressing climate change, leading peace and security efforts and helping the most vulnerable.

A seat on the Security Council will allow Canada to be a strong voice for a fairer, more inclusive and prosperous—

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

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Chair, I received a letter from Bob Anderson this week, who's advocating for his neighbours like Jean Grevelding, who owns a cottage at Butternut Bay. Like many people, Jean is an American who owns a property on our side of the border.

These people are taxpaying members of our communities. These folks have plans in place to follow all Canadian quarantine rules. They're concerned about leaving their properties uncare for over the summer. Will folks like Jean be allowed to cross the border to check on their properties this summer?

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

Of course, our priority is and always has been and always must be the protection of the health and safety of Canadians. That's why

we put in place these restrictions for non-essential travel and have required, through the Public Health Agency of Canada, a 14-day quarantine.

I don't know the specifics of the person for whom you advocate, but we want to make sure that if they come into Canada, it is for an essential purpose and that they do it safely and respect the quarantine that has been put in place.

Mr. Michael Barrett: With nine branches throughout my riding, the Royal Canadian Legion offers a great deal to veterans and rural communities alike. They have been experiencing hardship and a loss of revenue, to the point where they may be forced to shut their doors. The Zone G2 commander and local mayors such as Roger Haley have reached out to me expressing their dire need.

Will the government offer support to Legions across the country so they can continue to carry out their vital work for our veterans?

• (1300)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Yes, we have done a lot to help support groups like the Legions. There is a \$350-million emergency community support fund. If they're supplying any help to people regarding COVID, this fund is there. Indeed, we're doing everything we can to make sure that we help the Legions and other groups that do so much to help veterans right across the country.

Mr. Michael Barrett: On May 21, the minister stated that her team was working as quickly as it could to fill the gaps in CEBA. It has now been three weeks, and many business owners, such as mortgage broker Corinna Smith-Gatcke, are still left in the lurch amid the delays, which are pushing businesses closer to shutting their doors for good. Will these businesses have access to CEBA before it's too late for them?

Hon. Mary Ng: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the honourable member for that really important question on our Canadian small businesses.

Those businesses can absolutely have access to the loan at their financial institution this Friday, and I would encourage them to go and see their bank or credit union. I want businesses to know that nothing is more important for us than making sure they get the support they need during this difficult time.

Mr. Michael Barrett: The County Road 43 expansion project is critical for my riding and the region as a whole. This project will widen the road, increasing safety for the 18,000 motorists who travel the road every day.

It's been 334 days since the provincial and local governments announced funding, but there has been nothing from this Liberal government. It's been 181 days since Minister McKenna told me her staff were reviewing the project. Today, there is still nothing, and for the last month the minister's team has not even found the time to respond to my request for an update.

Will Minister McKenna finally stop with the delays and commit to funding this project today?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities): Mr. Chair, as the member opposite knows, we work with provinces and territories to advance our infrastructure investments. We're making investments across the country. They are making a real difference in people's lives. We're always happy to work with members of Parliament, but they must also work with provinces and territories so that projects are advanced by them to our office.

The Chair: We'll now continue with Mrs. Wagantall.

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

Through you, has Mr. MacAulay read ombudsman Dalton's May 2020 report, "Financial Compensation for Canadian Veterans: A comparative analysis of benefit regimes"?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Chair, I apologize, but I'll have to ask my honourable colleague to repeat the question.

The Chair: Mrs. Wagantall, we'll freeze the time so that there's no extra time taken.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Thank you, Chair.

My question was whether Mr. MacAulay has read ombudsman Dalton's May 2020 report, "Financial Compensation for Canadian Veterans: A comparative analysis of benefit regimes".

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate my honourable colleague's question.

Of course, I appreciate Mr. Dalton's input and all that he has done for veterans. We've discussed it many times. I've done everything and worked with him in order to make sure that we bring the proper compensation to veterans—

The Chair: We'll go back to Mrs. Wagantall.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: As a result of that study, are the financial outcomes Canada seeks to provide for ill and injured veterans now clearly defined within the Department of Veterans Affairs?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Chair, as the member would know, I am to bring a report to the veterans affairs committee, and there are a number of things done in order to make sure that report is—

The Chair: We'll go back to Mrs. Wagantall.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Then I would suggest that we get our committee up and going as it should be. Where are these financial directions published?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Well, of course, [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] lockdown, but just under \$90 million that the government put in supplementary estimates to make sure we address the backlog for Veterans Affairs. It's a major help—

The Chair: We'll go back to Mrs. Wagantall.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Minister, are Canadian Armed Forces members provided with a copy of this document?

• (1305)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Chair, my honourable colleague would have to ask the Canadian Armed Forces that question.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: There are three different [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] providing lifetime benefits for ill and injured veterans. In Ombudsman Dalton's recent report, did any one of these three provide the best compensation in all nine scenarios that were studied?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Of course, as she knows, there's been a lot of work done in order to make sure that we provide the proper compensation to veterans. We're working very hard, with a lot of help from Mr. Dalton, to make sure that the appropriate—

The Chair: We'll now continue with Mrs. Wagantall.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: In the undisclosed settlement of Sean Bruyea's legal case against Seamus O'Regan and the Liberal government, a joint statement says "...Canadians, especially all Veterans and their families, are encouraged to enter the public debate about policies and programs that affect our Veterans and their families."

Does Mr. MacAulay agree with this statement?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: I can assure you that anybody is welcome to enter any discussion on compensation of veterans. We're always open to what we can do in order to make sure that we provide appropriate compensation. I don't think the term would be "appropriate", but it would provide some compensation to veterans who truly deserve it. They defend our democracy—

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

Oh, I'm sorry—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The interpretation hasn't worked for a few interventions. It's difficult to follow the exchange between the hon. member and the minister.

The Chair: We're having a problem with the interpretation.

[English]

Minister and Ms. Wagantall, you are joining us virtually. I'm wondering if you have the right language on at the bottom of your screen.

We'll start with that for troubleshooting.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: I have English.

The Chair: Very good. Minister MacAulay, what do you have?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: I have English, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Very good. Then we'll check on our side.

[Translation]

Ms. Larouche, did I understand correctly that the interpretation didn't work for both speakers?

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: The sound didn't allow the interpreters to do their job. It seemed to be a problem with the sound.

[English]

The Chair: In that case, I would ask both members to maybe put their mike a little bit close to their mouth. We'll see how that works. I'm looking at the screen, and I notice the mike is a little bit far. Could we bend it in a little bit more? I appreciate that.

Thank you for your patience. We'll give it another try.

Ms. Wagantall, please go ahead.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: On a point of order, quite often while I'm trying to speak, there are lots of other voices in the background.

The Chair: I would ask everyone to please be on mute, as well as for anyone in the chamber to please refrain from speaking loudly. Just whisper among yourselves if you have something to say.

We'll take this one from the top. We have a minute and 45 seconds left.

Ms. Wagantall, please proceed with your next question.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: You said "next question", so we're not going backwards, Chair?

The Chair: Did we have an answer from Minister MacAulay? No?

We'll go to Minister MacAulay to finish up the answer. We'll start at 27 seconds, freeze the clock and hear his answer. Then, because of all of the confusion, we'll start at one minute and 45 seconds when we get going again.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Should I repeat the question, sir?

The Chair: Please do. The clock is frozen. After we go through the question and the answer, we'll start the clock again.

Mr. Wagantall, please repeat the question.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Thank you, Chair.

In the undisclosed settlement to Sean Bruy a's legal case against Seamus O'Regan and the Liberal government, a joint statement says, "Canadians, especially all Veterans and their families, are encouraged to enter the public debate about policies and programs that affect our Veterans and their families."

Does Mr. MacAulay agree with this statement?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Chair, I appreciate my honourable colleague's question and concern. Of course I agree. Anybody is quite open to indicate whatever they wish in order to make sure we provide as appropriate a compensation as possible. You can never totally compensate veterans truly for what they deserve, but we want to make sure we provide the best compensation possible. That's what we will do and want to do.

• (1310)

The Chair: Ms. Wagantall, we will start the clock again. You have one minute and 45 seconds remaining. Please proceed.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: If that's the case, is Minister MacAulay aware of the practice of red-flagging veterans' files?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Chair, I'm not aware.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Since the deputy minister has indicated that he runs the department, will the minister ask him for the names of veterans and the dates and the reasons that they are, or have been, red-flagged by VAC?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Chair, I would certainly ask any veteran or anybody who has a concern to contact my office. I will do anything I can to make sure that the veterans—

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

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Do the most ill and injured still receive from the pension up to \$300,000 less for life?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Chair, as you know and as the Prime Minister indicated when the pension for life was put in place, it was stated that if anybody receives less—the Prime Minister himself indicated it quite clearly—that must be adjusted.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: For veterans in similar circumstances, should the date of their application for compensation be a factor in determining whether they're treated equitably?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Yes, of course, the date is when the compensation would start. Of course, it's very important and very appropriate.

The Chair: Now we will proceed to Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Retired Major Mark Campbell in my riding of Sturgeon River—Parkland lost both legs in the line of duty in Afghanistan. He is an avid sport shooter, but understandably, due to his disability, he is very limited in the kinds of firearms he can use, and all of these firearms have now been banned under the Liberal OIC.

My question to the Minister of Public Safety is this: Did their department do a legal analysis and consider the section 15 charter rights of disabled Canadians not to be discriminated against when they passed their OIC?

Hon. Bill Blair: Yes, there was a very thorough analysis done by the justice department to ensure that the prohibitions we put in place were, in fact, charter compliant.

Let me also say, Mr. Chair, how important it was that we prohibited weapons that were not designed for sporting purposes at all. In fact, they were designed for soldiers to use in combat. They have no place in a civil society. We have prohibited them, and we believe—and this has been echoed by many people across the country—that this will make Canadians safer.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Chair, is the minister aware that the AR-15 is the most popular sporting rifle in Canada, and is he aware that disabled veterans like Major Mark Campbell are unable to participate in the sport of sport shooting because of his OIC?

Hon. Bill Blair: I can assure the member that what I am aware of is that the AR-15 and other weapons like them have been used in mass killings in Canada on many occasions, such as at École Polytechnique, at Dawson College, again at the Quebec mosque and in Moncton. The AR-15s in particular were also used at the terrible tragedy in places like Sandy Hook, where a bunch of kids were killed, so there is no place for—

The Chair: We will go to Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Chair, it has been months since the Liberals shut down this Parliament and months since the Minister of Finance should have presented a budget or at least an economic update to Canadians. Since then we have seen billions spent with little oversight and no plan.

The minister says that he needs certainty before he can table a budget. Well, that didn't stop Stephen Harper and the Conservatives from tabling a budget in the depth of the last great recession.

When are these Liberals finally going to take their job seriously and table an economic update?

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance): Mr. Chair, we're taking this very seriously. We're working for Canadians and bringing forward supports to make sure that businesses, workers and Canadians can put food on the table and pay their rent.

We will continue to support Canadians, and when we have a clear projection to present, we will do that.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Chair, the results are in, and businesses aren't happy with the so-called support programs from these Liberals. In fact, the oil and gas industry has been shut out of many of these economic programs.

When is the government going to recognize that their business support plans have been an absolute failure with only a fraction of the billions promised being accessible to businesses?

• (1315)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Chair, our government has taken swift and immediate action to support our sector throughout this challenging time. We had the BCAP, which is critically important to providing liquidity to support the SMEs that make up 85% of the jobs in our sector.

It has taken an enormous team effort. People are working around the clock to get money where it needs to be. We are helping hard-working Canadians, small businesses and large businesses right across the country, but in particular in our energy sector.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to see the Minister of Natural Resources online.

He tweeted recently to praise the Alberta Carbon Trunk Line and the North West Redwater Partnership refinery in my riding. Can the minister tell us what, if any, support they have given to the innovative carbon capture and sequestration technology in this country?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Mr. Chair, we see carbon capture and sequestration as an integral part of lowering emissions, making emissions more competitive and making our oil and gas industry more competitive.

We're seeing where the investment dollars are going. They are going to jurisdictions that are committed to lowering emissions. Obviously, this government is committing to net zero.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I note that the minister couldn't name a single example of government support for carbon capture, utilization and sequestration technology.

We have spent a lot of time talking about the COVID-19 pandemic, but Canadians are living with another horrific reality, that being the intensifying opioid overdose epidemic. Reports indicate that in the past four years, 14,000 Canadians have died, and the numbers during COVID-19 have been skyrocketing, with British Columbia seeing a 39% increase this year alone. I know this because I've lost a family member to a fentanyl overdose.

When is the government going to take this scourge seriously and take action to save the lives of Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I share the member's deep sadness about the number of lives we've lost to opioid overdose.

Our government has been steadily making it easier for people who live with substance use to access medications to treat substance use, such as prescription Suboxone and methadone. We have made it easier to rapidly establish safe injection sites in communities and have supported community-based projects that work with people who are using substances.

We need to understand that this is a complex issue, and we need to support people to get the help they need.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP)): The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Chair, I will come back to the bill introduced last week. As parliamentarians, we felt like we were watching a very bad play, as I imagine the public did. I say that it was theatre, even though it shouldn't be in this place. The government decided to stage a play and act alone and, unfortunately, there were several acts missing.

A very important part of this bill was about supporting people with disabilities in this time of crisis. However, the government did not see fit to negotiate with the opposition parties, even though it is in a minority position. Despite this arrogance, the Bloc Québécois proposed solutions. One of the things we proposed was to split the bill so that we could give this support to people with disabilities, but the Conservatives did not want to do that. We came back and asked for time to negotiate and give support to people with disabilities, but the government defeated the motion.

We asked that the House be recalled today so that we could pass this part of the bill concerning support for people with disabilities, but we are still in the dark.

Why are we abandoning people with disabilities?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development): I thank the hon. member for her question.

[*English*]

We know this pandemic has deeply affected the lives and health of all Canadians and has disproportionately affected Canadians with disabilities in particular.

From the very beginning, we've taken a disability-inclusive approach to our emergency response to ensure that Canadians with disabilities get the support they need. That is why we announced a one-time payment of \$600 for persons with disabilities to address these expenses. This will go a long way toward helping Canadians with disabilities.

We encourage and urge all parties in the opposition to support this measure. We're confident that this measure, along with other investments, will benefit Canadians with disabilities, and we hope to get the support of the other parties very soon.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Chair, I remind you that this measure wasn't passed because we weren't allowed to do so.

A measure to help people with disabilities has been put in an omnibus bill. We've tried here, in the House, to provide the means to give that support, so I ask again, can the government be counted on to give a response to people with disabilities?

● (1320)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Chair, it was absolutely not an omnibus bill. It contained assistance for the disabled, of course, but it also contained assistance for our seasonal workers, as well as a number of other measures that the Bloc Québécois opposed. They refused to debate and, when the question of splitting the bill came up, the Conservatives refused to do that. That is why there is no bill at the moment, and that is very unfortunate.

Ms. Louise Chabot: It was a Bloc Québécois proposal to split the bill. The government had not thought of it, but they found that it was a good idea.

Let me return to the attack. This bill proposed changes to the wage subsidy program, it was supposed to make the CERB more flexible, it proposed fines for fraudsters and, since there was a little section about a benefit for the disabled, the government took it for granted that we would support it without any negotiations with the parties.

However, we set one very important condition: that the Liberal Party must get its hands out of taxpayers' pockets in terms of the wage subsidy.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Chair, as we listen to the Bloc Québécois members, we might think that they invented peanut butter and apple pie.

This bill contained a number of measures that all Quebeckers and all Canadians needed, but the Bloc Québécois refused to debate it.

No, we did not follow the Bloc Québécois' example in splitting the bill; we had thought of it a long time previously. We have not been able to do that because of the Conservatives. Because of them, we cannot help those living with disabilities.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Ms. Chabot, you have 45 seconds left.

Ms. Louise Chabot: We asked on a number of occasions for the House to be able to sit starting today to pass the part of the bill dealing with those with disabilities.

What is the status of that, Madam Chair? We have not heard about it since.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Chair, my colleague knows very well that things are not as simple as that. There are procedural mechanisms unique to the House.

I hope that, one day, we will be able to pass this bill and be able to provide assistance for those living with disabilities. I hope that the Conservatives will change their minds and give us their support.

[English]

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will go now to the honourable member for Don Valley East, Ms. Ratansi.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be sharing my time with the member for Surrey Centre.

Since 2015 our government has been focused on ensuring its policies mitigate the effects of climate change. Several measures have been implemented for phasing out coal, making polluters pay, providing climate incentives, investing in green technologies and much more, which all together have created a climate plan that is doing more to cut pollution than any other in Canada's history.

In my riding of Don Valley East, many innovative businesses have benefited from these investments and initiatives. One area of particular interest is our government's work to protect 25% of Canada's land and 25% of its oceans by 2025. Our natural environment is something that Canadians and my constituents care about deeply.

Could the minister update this House on the new conservation projects announced on June 5, World Environment Day, and on how our government is protecting our environment?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Chair, protecting nature is an important part of how we will address climate change and the very real challenges it presents. That's why on June 5, World Environment Day, our government announced over 60 conservation projects under development across Canada.

These projects are funded through the Canada Nature Fund's target 1 challenge initiative. They'll conserve Canadian nature and biodiversity and protect species at risk, enhance ecological integrity and connectivity, and enhance the size of Canada's vast network of protected areas. Nearly half of these projects are indigenous-led, with the aim of creating indigenous-protected conserved areas.

Madam Chair, projects like these move us closer to our goal of protecting 25% of Canada's lands and oceans by 2025. By working together in partnership with the provinces, territories, municipalities, indigenous peoples and Canadians, together we can protect our natural environment for generations to come.

• (1325)

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Ms. Ratansi, since you have 25 seconds left, we will go to the honourable member for Surrey Centre.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Chair, there are many small and medium-sized businesses in my riding of Surrey Centre. Many have been impacted by COVID-19. They saw a decrease in business or needed to close their doors completely in order to adhere to public safety measures to manage the spread of COVID-19. These measures helped keep our most vulnerable citizens safe and ensured that our hospital and health care providers did not become overwhelmed with a sharp spike in cases.

Thanks to our government's COVID-19 emergency response, many of these businesses have been able to keep their employees and access important liquidity through the Canada emergency business account, which provides loans to small businesses and non-

profits, and the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which is helping businesses to keep and rehire their employees while their revenues are down by providing up to 75% of wages for up to 24 weeks.

As we begin to reopen the economy and Canadians across the country return to the job market, those benefits will be even more important to help businesses and industries rehire their staff and make important adjustments to align with public health guidelines to gradually increase their operations. Can the minister please update the committee on how many Canadian businesses have taken advantage of CEBA and CEWS since applications for each have been opened?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, I want to begin by thanking the member for Surrey Centre for all the work he does to support his constituents and small businesses.

Canadians across the country need to know our government has been working tirelessly and will continue to work tirelessly on their behalf. This is why we put in place the important programs to help them get through this crisis during this difficult time, programs such as the wage subsidy program. We know that in so many businesses the employees are often like extended family members. The wage subsidy has helped these businesses keep their employees on the payroll and are now helping in their rehiring as they slowly and safely restart. There are 348,000 businesses being helped with the wage subsidy program, and this means that 2.6 million workers are being helped.

Businesses are also being helped through the interest-free \$40,000 loan they can access through CEBA to help stay afloat and pay their expenses during this crisis. I'm pleased to inform this House that to date more than 669,000—

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will go to the honourable member for St. John's East.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for London—Fanshawe.

Madam Chair, with so many recent reports and videos of police using force, sometimes deadly force, and violence against indigenous and black people in Canada, I've called for the public safety committee to reconvene. If the members agree, will the minister come to the committee and provide concrete answers as to how the government intends to address racism inherent in Canada's law enforcement, and in particular the RCMP?

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

I thank my colleague for the question. It's perhaps the most important one facing Canada today.

Madam Chair, indigenous people, black Canadians and other racialized people are far too often experiencing systemic racism and disparate outcomes within the entire criminal justice system. In order to respond appropriately, I think it's necessary to begin by acknowledging the lived experience of people who've known bias and discrimination at the hands of the police and our courts and within our prisons. We remain committed to working with all racialized people and all of the members of this House to ensure that we work toward social justice for all Canadians, and I look forward to discussing the member's motion further with him.

Mr. Jack Harris: Will the minister and the government commit to facilitating such a meeting of this committee virtually?

Hon. Bill Blair: Madam Chair, the decisions of the committee are the committee's, so I'm sure that this will be a discussion within the committee, but if called, I will certainly be pleased to come with my officials to provide the committee with whatever support and information it needs to contribute to this very important discussion.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Mr. Harris, you have 40 seconds.

Mr. Jack Harris: In light of what we've seen with Chief Adam in Fort McMurray and the RCMP accepting that the actions were reasonable, will the minister commit to a full review of the use of force by the RCMP, in particular the philosophy, tactics and training that is given to RCMP officers in dealing with the public?

• (1330)

Hon. Bill Blair: I thank the member and I want to assure him, first of all, that this is work that is ongoing, not just in the RCMP but throughout the police community.

May I also take this opportunity, Madam Chair, to say that I think all police training has to begin with one very important principle, and that's the preservation of all life and the respect for all Canadians.

We also know the importance of de-escalation training. We're committed to continuing to work with indigenous communities, racialized communities and with police services and all participants in the criminal justice system to make sure that it is fair for all Canadians.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will go to the honourable member for London—Fanshawe, Ms. Mathyssen.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Chair, we need more justice for black, indigenous and racialized people in Canada. They can't be asked to keep waiting. This government recognizes that systemic racism exists but refuses to collect race-based data that would allow us to quantify and truly address this injustice. We need data to protect Canadians.

When will this government do the right thing and start collecting race-based data?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth): Madam Chair, our government agrees that it's important that we collect data, and that's exactly why, in the anti-racism secretariat and the anti-racism strategy, there is a commitment to have money go to Statistics Canada to collect race-based data. We look forward to working with all members to ensure it happens.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Chair, we know that Statistics Canada will start to collect job numbers based on race. This will allow us to identify systemic racism where it is and where we need to ensure a fair and more equal job market for black, indigenous and racialized people in Canada. Why is this government refusing to follow suit so we can tackle systemic racism everywhere, in every sector?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Chair, I'd like to thank my honourable colleague for her question. She's absolutely correct in her assessment that we need to collect more data, reliable data, data that will help us deal with some of the challenges we're seeing with systemic discrimination, but, more broadly, we want to make sure that we continue to engage with an anti-racism strategy that will allow us to collect that disaggregated data. That is why we allocated \$6.2 million to that initiative through Statistics Canada, but we know we must do more and we will do more.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: We know that all people are susceptible to catching COVID-19, but health authorities are clear that parts of cities like Montreal and Toronto have been more impacted than others. For black and racialized people living in these cities, this data is a matter of life and death.

Will the government collect and share disaggregated data so we can identify and erase systemic racism, yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Chair, making decisions based on science and evidence is essential for our government. We took that practice from day one. It is exactly the step we will take moving forward and that's why we are making those investments to ensure that data exists. We are working across all departments. My mandate letter is public. I look forward to continuing to work not only with all ministers, departments and agencies, but all allies and all parties to get this work done.

[Translation]

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Mr. Blaney, the honourable member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, has the floor.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Last week, my plumber told me that, each time Justin Trudeau comes down the steps to make announcements totalling several billion dollars, he feels like someone is rifling through his pockets.

My question is simple and goes to the Minister of Finance: where is this money coming from?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, I would like to thank my honourable colleague for his question.

Currently, the health and safety of Canadians are our top priorities. We have implemented an emergency economic plan to support Canadians, workers and companies.

We will continue to support them during this crisis.

Hon. Steven Blaney: The answer I would have liked is simple: we are borrowing the money and we are going to have to pay it back one day.

That is another Liberal craze: they borrow money, they make campaign promises, and off they go.

Under the Conservative government, the Chantier Davie in Lévis had 1,700 workers for the supply ship *Asterix*. In the election campaign, the Liberals promised icebreakers. When are the Liberals going to award the icebreaker contracts to the Chantier Davie?

• (1335)

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Madam Chair, we are very proud of the Chantier Davie and we completely understand its role in the system. We are currently assessing those requests.

We are going to establish the process for the polar ice-breaker, which is essential for the work of the Coast Guard in northern communities, and we are going to make sure that—

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

Hon. Steven Blaney: The workers do not need words; they need contracts and jobs.

The same is true for young people who want to work. There is money in the Canada summer jobs program: in my constituency alone, \$150,000 has been approved. Companies want young people to work and want to hire them.

What is the minister waiting for in order to confirm those positions? In my constituency, and everywhere else in the country, our young people want to work. What is the government waiting for in order to send some cash to the Canada summer jobs program?

[*English*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we are proud of the Canada summer jobs program. We are introducing flexibilities into the system to enable employers to be able to hire summer students. We recognize the importance of this program to provide both financial resources and necessary experience for young people. We believe in continuing to invest in the Canada summer jobs program.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: The workers, the young people and the employers have been waiting for weeks. The money is available; where is the announcement?

Madam Chair, our young people are not the only ones who want to work. There are also the temporary foreign workers. Let me use Jessie Gito as an example; he has been working at Plate 2000 in Saint-Anselme for years. When the time came to renew his work permit, he found out that he has to have some biometric tests. But he cannot get them because the offices are closed.

Is the minister going to allow Jessie Gito and the thousands of other temporary foreign workers who want to work to be able to do so until the government biometric testing centres reopen?

[*English*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, it is important for the honourable member to recognize that we are in the early recovery stage of the pandemic. Employers are slowly reopening businesses. We will ensure that we support both our students and our temporary foreign workers to make sure we get the recovery right. We will continue to invest in the Canada summer jobs program. We've introduced flexibilities into the program to ensure that employers are able to take advantage of the program and give opportunities to young people.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: It is very simple. Jessie Gito is a foreign worker, who is in a company that provides an essential service. He needs a decision that will let him go to work, rather than staying home and doing nothing. Then, when the government's biometric testing centres are open again, he will gladly go to one.

Young people want to work in agriculture as well, and the minister has told us that the government wants young people working and that their files will be processed as quickly as possible. She wants to create 700 positions and she knows that people can fill in an application on a first-come first-served basis. Of those 700 positions, how many have been confirmed to date? The good weather has arrived, the corn is starting to grow, and this is the time when farmers need the young workers.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food): Madam Chair, the program for young workers in agriculture is open. I also encourage agricultural producers to register for it. This is a program that is not only intended to provide summer jobs, but also to interest young people in making a career in agriculture.

As I have said before, the department is processing files as quickly as possible. Each employer will have an answer very shortly.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will now take a short break.

Okay, we are ready to start again.

• (1340)

[*English*]

We will go to the honourable member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Over the course of the pandemic, has the government been using all avenues possible to source much-needed PPE in Canada?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Chair, we have been very clear that we have a made-in-Canada initiative that has engaged companies across the country. Over 700 companies have retooled and scaled up their operations for personal protective equipment to help front-line health care workers.

Mr. Doug Shipley: Madam Chair, I need to ask very quickly which ministry and minister are responsible for the sourcing of PPE in Canada.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Chair, this is a collective effort. I work with the Minister of Health and the minister for procurement, and we coordinate with the provinces and territories to make sure there are appropriate levels of PPE to help front-line health care workers and essential workers across the country.

Mr. Doug Shipley: Thank you for that clarification. That will make this question all the more pertinent.

My riding of Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte is the home of Southmedic Inc. Southmedic is a renowned medical supply business. For over 37 years, it has provided front-line health care workers with an extensive line of PPE and other essential products required when dealing with respiratory illnesses. This company specializes in respiratory illness equipment. Southmedic currently employs over 700 people, and it has been recognized as one of Canada's best-managed companies by Deloitte on numerous occasions.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, both I and the member for Barrie—Innisfil have been attempting to obtain some assistance for Southmedic from the federal government. Calls and emails were falling on deaf ears.

In early May, I wrote a letter to Minister Anand outlining the situation. I received a letter back from the minister dated May 27 indicating that this issue of Southmedic falls under the mandate of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. I have heard nothing more.

When will the federal government reach out and help this great Canadian company and therefore ensure that all front-line workers will have the proper PPE they require?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Chair, I'd like to thank my honourable colleague for his question.

He knows full well that this is a very challenging time. That is why we had a call to action to engage Canadians right across the country. Since then, we've seen over 6,000 companies step up to offer solutions and ideas, and over 700 companies have retooled their efforts.

I acknowledge that some companies are still engaging with the government, and we'll continue to explore all possible options to make sure we continue to procure the necessary levels of personal protective equipment to protect Canadians and to protect front-line health care workers. That has always been our priority. I want to thank the outstanding Canadian companies that have come forward and have helped us in this endeavour. We continue to look forward to working with them.

Mr. Doug Shipley: Thank you for that answer.

Just to follow up, there's no retooling required at this company. They could have been up and going very quickly. They just needed a little assistance at the beginning.

Moving on to a different issue, while walking to my office this morning, I stopped at my local small family-run coffee shop and was discussing the current economic situation with the two owners

of the establishment. They indicated they are having a very tough time surviving this economic downturn. The only thing keeping them hopeful is that soon the public service will start returning to work, and therefore their business will begin to return.

Could the government please give us some indication as to what the plans are for returning the civil service back to work safely, and when?

• (1345)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm delighted to answer this question. This is a very important topic, but I'd like to take the opportunity first to thank our public servants, who have worked very hard in the last few weeks, both personally and professionally.

In fact, today is a wonderful day to say that, because today is the start of National Public Service Week. That's one more reason to thank them for their dedicated work. They are not going to go back to work. They've been at work for the last few months—in different circumstances, but they have been working very hard to deliver the services and the support Canadians need and deserve.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Next we'll go to the honourable member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My questions are for the Minister of National Defence.

First of all, I want to thank the great men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces for the fantastic job they're doing in Operation LASER, serving on the front lines battling COVID-19.

Can the Minister of National Defence give the House an update on exactly where we are at with the number of Canadian Armed Forces members who have been infected with COVID-19?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence): Madam Chair, I want to echo the member opposite's comments in thanking our Canadian Armed Forces members.

Currently, we have 13 active cases in the Canadian Armed Forces, but in the long-term care facilities we currently have 50 cases. No member has been currently hospitalized. We have also conducted very thorough reviews of our protection protocols as well.

Mr. James Bezan: Through you, Chair, Minister Sajjan, does that number of active cases include the active cases that are in long-term care facilities right now in Operation LASER?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, as I stated, the 50 cases are strictly from the long-term care facilities. The 13 cases I mentioned are not in the long-term care facilities. Just to give the actual clarification, no member has been currently hospitalized.

Mr. James Bezan: In those numbers, Madam Chair, can Mr. Sajjan say how many of those cases in long-term care facilities are active and how many are recovered?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I don't have the exact number. What I can say to break it down further is that in Quebec we currently have 36 and in Ontario we have 14. As well, 36 of the members have been out of isolation.

I'll get more details and pass them on directly to the member, Madam Chair.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chair, I have a quick question while we're still talking about Operation LASER.

The President of the Treasury Board has said, "The Canadian Armed Forces will be present as long as their presence is needed in Quebec". This contradicts what Prime Minister Trudeau is saying, which is that we have a hard deadline of June 26 for the withdrawal of our troops for Operation LASER. That means taking our troops out of our long-term care facilities.

Minister, is June 26 the hard date for the winding down of Operation LASER?

Hon. Bill Blair: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to clarify for the House.

We've been in very extensive discussions with the Province of Quebec, with my counterpart Minister Guilbault, and we are working very diligently to ensure we have a sustained, appropriate response to the request from Quebec for assistance. That response will result in a transition from the currently deployed Canadian Armed Forces to the deployment of paid volunteers, trained personnel who will take on the important role of providing services to those Canadians who need our help in Quebec.

Mr. James Bezan: I'll go back to the Minister of National Defence.

The Department of National Defence auditors have called out the Liberal government for mismanagement over the \$553-billion investment in our Canadian military through the defence policy. Only three people have been assigned to oversee the rollout of this money. This is a \$553-billion investment in our armed forces, and only three people are managing it.

Could the minister tell us how that is even possible? Is this the reason that over 100 projects are currently behind schedule?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, first of all, I want to highlight the unprecedented investment that we're making in defence.

We have conducted internal reviews of our procurement. The report the member opposite is talking about is from the previous year. This is the ongoing work we're doing to make sure that we make procurement better.

When it comes to the management of this, it's conducted by me and the minister of procurement. We are working toward making our procurement even better. We have already streamlined some aspects of our procurement and we'll continue to do more as well.

• (1350)

Mr. James Bezan: Minister Sajjan, you've had this report since November of 2019. You've been rolling out this plan since 2017. Only three people are overseeing an expenditure of \$553 billion. This is taxpayers' money.

Are we going to see more cuts because you have been unable to actually roll out these dollars?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I can assure you we're not going to be cutting. We'll be investing in our defence.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to the next speaker, I want to remind members that they are to address their questions and comments directly through the chair.

We will go now to the honourable member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, Mr. Yurdiga.

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Chair, the Canada summer jobs program has many challenges. I've seen many indigenous communities in my riding rejected for funding even though they had received funding in previous years.

Here are a few examples of communities that were rejected: Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement and the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 1. The list goes on.

Could the Prime Minister explain why so many indigenous communities have been denied funding from the Canada summer jobs program?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we recognize the important role that the Canada summer jobs program plays in supporting employers and young workers in our community across the country every year. We're working very hard to help employers adapt to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic and are supporting young Canadians as they begin to look for summer employment.

We are introducing increased flexibilities into the Canada summer jobs program to hire youth, while also providing more supports to employers that deliver essential services to Canadians.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Madam Chair, that didn't really answer my question.

Why are so many indigenous communities left out of the Canada summer jobs program? This is very important to my community and to communities throughout the province. Will the government investigate why these communities were rejected?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I want to assure the honourable member that we, of course, value the important role that the Canada summer jobs program plays in all communities, including indigenous communities in Canada.

I will certainly have an off-line conversation with the honourable member, if he so wishes, about a particular issue, but I can assure him that in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had to assist employers to introduce flexibilities—

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will go back to Mr. Yurdiga.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Madam Chair, in my riding, the City of Cold Lake has been in dispute with the federal government for many years over payment in lieu of taxes. My office has sent many letters over the years regarding the PILT dispute.

Could the Minister of Public Services and Procurement give me a rough estimate of when I will receive a response from the minister's office to my first letter, from 2017, and my letters from 2018, 2019 and 2020?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Chair, I can assure the honourable member that I will go to the minister, and we will come back with an answer to his question.

Mr. David Yurdiga: How much longer does the minister intend to perpetuate the ongoing PILT dispute, which is in excess of \$11 million, with the City of Cold Lake?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Chair, once again, I can assure the honourable member that I will speak with the minister and get an answer to his question.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Well, do you know what? I've been writing letters to the department for many years. When you say you're going to get back to me, I really have a hard time believing that.

Will the minister agree to follow the prior recommendations of the dispute advisory panel that were accepted by the minister?

• (1355)

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Chair, I can assure the honourable member that I will check with the minister and that she will return to the member in due course.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Madam Chair, the drug Trikafta has been proven to increase the quality of life for 90% of cystic fibrosis patients.

Two weeks ago, my office sent a letter to the Minister of Health about the boy in my riding named Cael, who through the special access program is able to get Trikafta in Canada. I requested that the minister use her powers to fast-track Trikafta for commercial use, but I have yet to receive a response back.

When will the minister make a decision on Trikafta?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I'm glad to hear that Cael was able to access Trikafta through the special access program. In fact,

that program is very helpful for people who are seeking access to medication that's not currently marketed in Canada.

As the member opposite knows, Vertex has not applied to market Trikafta in Canada, but we look forward to their application, and I encourage him to write a letter to the manufacturer to also encourage them.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will go now to the honourable member for Vancouver Granville, Ms. Wilson-Raybould.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Vancouver Granville, Ind.): Thank you, Chair.

I was very troubled to hear that a CBC radio host in the Yukon felt compelled to resign because, as an indigenous person, she could not speak her truth. While we know the Broadcasting Act states that the Canadian broadcasting system should reflect the linguistic duality and multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society and the special place of indigenous peoples, it would seem there are some challenges.

Therefore, does the Minister of Heritage share the concern of some journalists that problems of systemic racism in Canada are still existing within the institution of the CBC, and will the government now acknowledge the need to recognize the jurisdiction of indigenous governments?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Thank you, Madame Chair; and I thank the member for this important question.

As stated by the Prime Minister on numerous occasions, our government recognizes that systemic racism exists in Canada, and we have made a commitment to do everything we can to combat it in whichever organization of the Canadian government.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Thank you.

When I was in the government, and as a minister, I learned the term “red meat” issues. I understand these issues to be ones that challenge societal norms, that are not politically expedient to address because they can lose you votes, even though addressing them is morally right and a smart thing to do. Mostly these are issues addressing inequality and the most marginalized in our society.

In the justice system, examples include mandatory minimum penalties, defunding police, and even investing in restorative justice. Red-meat issues often become defining issues for society and for governments as the world changes. Surely now these issues are politically less of a consideration than the tragic reality of even more slain indigenous Canadians at the hands of police, or thousands of indigenous people still incarcerated or living in poverty.

Will this government please finally commit to the necessary work originally promised in 2015 and repeal in the justice system the vast majority of mandatory minimum penalties, assuring the necessary discretion for judges, and meaningfully invest in restorative justice measures?

Hon. David Lametti: Madame Chair, I thank the honourable member for her question, as well as for her work as Minister of Justice, and indeed my predecessor.

This is an important time. This is a time when we recognize systemic racism. This is a time when we recognize systemic over-incarceration of indigenous peoples, of black peoples, in our criminal justice system. This is a time when we need to look at all potential options to reduce what is a shameful overrepresentation in our criminal justice system. Too often racialized peoples and indigenous peoples have experienced prejudice and systemic discrimination in our justice system, and that has to change.

● (1400)

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: I'll go on to another red meat issue. In British Columbia we are in the fifth year of the opioid overdose public health emergency crisis. Sadly, May marks the deadliest month of overdose-related deaths. We are halfway into the year and have currently passed 500 deaths caused by overdose. Many of the deaths are related to COVID-19 measures that have prevented people from accessing supervised consumption sites, so they are overdosing alone. While the provinces welcomed the federal backing of safe supply exemption back in March, it is to expire in September of 2020.

Echoing the call of the chief coroner of B.C. and Dr. Henry, more is needed from the federal government, more action. Will the government provide the necessary supports to the province and help support safe supply initiatives in the provinces?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: It's been a pleasure to work with the Province of British Columbia on innovative ways to work on the tragic situation of opioid overdose. I remain committed to working with the province and in fact any province that wants to work towards solutions that treat people who use substances with the dignity they deserve.

Madam Chair, this is a complex issue. We're working closely with our partners to make sure that we can prevent more lives from being lost.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will go to the honourable member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Mr. Cannings.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be splitting my time with the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

In my riding, Theo's in Penticton is a beloved restaurant. They've been serving great food for 40 years, but now they're struggling, because they don't qualify for the emergency wage subsidy.

Why is that? The original owners retired last year and sold it to another operator. The new owner can't use a year-to-year comparison to apply for the wage subsidy because he didn't own the restaurant last spring. He is forced to use receipts from January and February, the darkest doldrums of the restaurant year, to compare

with the results from May, traditionally one of their best months. Now he has to compete with other local restaurants that can access the subsidy.

When will the government fix this inequity and let Theo's compete and survive?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, the Canada emergency wage subsidy is supporting over 2.5 million workers across the country. To help even more businesses support their workers and rehire people as they reopen, our government is extending the CEWS, and we will continue to extend the CEWS for an additional 12 weeks to August 29 to ensure that Canadian workers continue to have the support they need during these very difficult times.

By extending eligibility, our government is ensuring that more Canadian workers in more sectors have the support they need.

Mr. Richard Cannings: The owner just wants to be able to apply for the wage subsidy, and right now he cannot, and he will not be able to. Thousands of other businesses are hit that way as well.

I'd like to move on to forestry. Canada's forest sector has been declared essential during this pandemic, but it's been hit hard after a very difficult 2019. Despite soft markets and thousands out of work, government support programs have left many Canadian forest product companies behind.

In my riding, the pulp mill in Castlegar is closing for the month of July because local sawmills aren't producing enough wood chips.

What is the government going to do to finally support Canadian forestry workers and communities?

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The time is almost up, but I will allow for the answer from the honourable minister.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We have supported and we will continue to support the forestry sector, including through regional development programs.

In fact, in Quebec, partnering with Les Bois Francs DV Inc., we have widened market access to our products and updated technology systems. In North Bay we've partnered with the Canadian Wood Council to promote the sector. In Vancouver we're working with FPInnovations to create the indigenous forest sector technical support program.

We are supporting the forestry sector and its different needs region by region.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Now we go to the honourable member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to pick up where my colleague left off, with B.C.'s forest industry.

What we've seen in B.C. are multiple rounds of mill shutdowns and start-ups, and in some cases this has made it difficult for forestry workers to qualify for EI.

My question to the minister is this: Will the minister work to make the EI program more flexible for forestry workers, similar to what this government has done for oil and gas workers?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Chair, in the oil and gas sector we have focused on workers. That has been key in the inactive and orphan well program, which we are working on with the provincial governments of Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Alberta. The focus on workers has assured that success, and we will continue to focus on workers in all the industries, particularly our natural resource industry, as they go through this extraordinarily difficult time.

• (1405)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Chair, reforestation is a very important part of the forest industry in the riding I represent, and people were keenly interested to hear this government's plan to plant two billion trees in the next 10 years. That's a lot of trees. I'm wondering if the minister could tell us how many trees are going to be planted under this program by the end of this season.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Chair, this government is committed to two billion trees. We are working with forestry associations, the industry and with individual companies to ensure this tree-planting season will be one of the largest the country has ever seen.

[Translation]

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The floor goes to the honourable member for Rivière-du-Nord.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Chair, last week, the government introduced Bill C-17 and the Minister of Justice sent us briefing notes in which he said that it was important to suspend a number of time limits and to extend others, and that the failure to do so could have important repercussions on Canadians, their families, their situations, their finances and their ability to exercise their rights. We in the Bloc Québécois agree with that.

When are we going to talk about it?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Chair, the contents of Bill C-17 are clearly very important.

We have addressed the mandatory time limits in federal legislation as well as certain time limits that courts may not be able to handle. It is very important that we address this issue. That is why the law—

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Mr. Fortin, you have the floor.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Chair, we agree that it is important. I concur.

The minister's briefing notes say that, among other things, when it comes to divorce—which means children are involved—people are waiting on custody rights, child support and visitation rights. The minister pointed out that the national security review would require consultations if no decision is made in the prescribed time frame. It could pose a national security risk. It is really a big deal.

When are we going to debate it?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Chair, I completely agree with my honourable colleague. The issue needs to be addressed. That is why it is in the bill. That is another reason to debate the bill.

I beseech my colleagues opposite to debate it with us.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Chair, what a coincidence, because I beseech my colleague opposite to debate it with us. That is what we are asking.

Last week, the leader of the Bloc Québécois asked the Liberal government to debate Bill C-17 today. He did not get an answer. It does not seem to matter.

Richard Wagner, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who is hardly a dimwit or greenhorn, told us that the justice system needs to be modernized. As recently as this past Saturday in *La Presse*, Justice Wagner said that it is essential that the Criminal Code be amended to address the backlog of court proceedings.

When will the Liberal government opposite pull up its socks, do its job, govern the federation, sit down with the opposition and discuss the vital matters in Bill C-17?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Chair, if I were my colleague, I would be a little embarrassed, because the bill was sent to the Bloc Québécois several days in advance. They received a technical note several days in advance. We were all available to take questions. When we asked for the support of the Bloc Québécois and the other parties to debate it—we were not even asking them to vote in favour of the bill—they refused.

• (1410)

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Chair, we never refused to debate it. Actually, we were the ones who asked to debate it. What exactly does “debate it” mean?

We set some conditions. For example, we asked the Liberals to put the money back into the wage subsidy fund and to commit to dip into it no longer.

Are we asking too much of our colleagues opposite?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Can my colleague explain to me what the emergency wage subsidy has to do with a bill about justice? This is an absolutely fundamental piece of legislation.

We wanted to debate it, but they refused to do so.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Chair, I would like nothing better than to explain it to him, but I must remind him that he is the leader of the party in power, the party that is supposed to govern the country. So I do not know why he is asking me that.

My party proposed that we debate this today but we did not get an answer. Meanwhile, court time limits are running out and people are losing rights.

I am thinking of families, child support, child custody, labour law disputes in Federal Court, marine transportation, interprovincial transportation, aviation, banks, and those with grievances waiting for a Federal Court ruling.

The whole system, the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal, everything is on hold because nobody in the government wants to do their job.

We want to discuss Bill C-17. When can we talk about it?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Chair, we have done our job. We have introduced the bill. We informed them in advance. We told them they could ask us any questions they wanted. We asked for a debate in the House.

However, when we asked the Bloc Québécois if they wanted to debate the bill, they said no, instead of doing what they usually do and saying yes.

[*English*]

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will go to the honourable member for Essex, Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

When the CERB runs out, many workers in my riding of Essex will not have sufficient hours to collect their EI benefits. In early July, the midnight shift at Chrysler will be eliminated. Because of the shutdown, a mom-to-be who had just returned to work in January, and several hundred of her fellow employees, may not have the 600 hours required for regular or EI parental benefits.

Immediate action is needed. What is the government doing now to backstop these workers?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the Canada emergency response benefit has been providing much-needed help to Canadian workers across the country who have stopped working due to COVID-19. We know that there is still a lot of uncertainty for many Canadian workers, and we know that many will be exhausting their benefits in the weeks to come.

We will have more to share soon, as early as this week, on our continuing efforts to support Canadian workers and make sure that help is available during this—

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Go ahead, Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Thank you, Minister, for the answer.

The EI system needs to be fixed. Even before the shutdown, the system was deeply flawed. Will this government commit to a complete review and overhaul of the EI system?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we have been there for Canadian workers. We will continue to make sure that we make the necessary investments in the EI delivery system and modernize it to continue to meet—

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will go back to Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Small businesses have been hit extremely hard by the COVID-19 shutdown. Many have already been forced into bankruptcy. Much uncertainty lies ahead. As the economy reopens, what is the government doing to help small businesses recover?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, today we are seeing small businesses that have been helped, whether it is getting access to the small business loan, which some are also using in the restart as they are safely restarting, or getting help with their payroll, helping them keep their employees—

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will go back to Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Employees are key to a small business's success. How will the government incentivize workers to return to their jobs when recalled?

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The honourable minister can give a brief answer.

Hon. Mary Ng: The Canada emergency wage subsidy is an excellent program to help those employees stay employed and for those employers who are looking at rehiring them right now during this restart process.

● (1415)

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Chair, many of my constituents are in a committed cross-border relationship and have not been able to see their partners in quite some time. The current restrictions are arbitrary. Denmark has found a fair resolution. Will Canada adopt the Danish model, and if not, why not?

Hon. Bill Blair: Madam Chair, as we said from the outset, we've implemented restrictions at the U.S. border on non-essential travel with a single purpose in mind: to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

As the member is aware, just last week we introduced new measures that allow people in family relationships to stay together as long as they commit to the necessary 14-day period of quarantine. We'll continue to work with families. Our intention is to keep people together, but mostly to keep people safe.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Chair, with regard to child care, as our economy continues to open, parents are facing a stark choice: Who will care for their children? What's the plan to provide access to child care so parents can confidently return to work?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we are of course committed to continuing to make the record investments that we've been making in child care. Since 2015 we've created over 40,000 affordable child care spaces. We're committed to creating an additional 250,000 before-school and after-school child care spaces.

We will continue to invest in this sector because we understand that without investment—

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will go back to Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It sounds as though this government has a desire to force parents to choose between their job and care for their child. Can the government please respond to that quote?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, nothing could be further from the truth. We are committed to the child care sector. Our investments and our results prove the opposite of what the member is asserting.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Chair—

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I'm sorry. We're out of time.

The committee now stands adjourned until tomorrow at noon.

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