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• (1500)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.)): I call the meeting officially to order.

Welcome to meeting number 33 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, and the first panel of the day. Pursuant to an order of reference from the House, we are meeting to discuss the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members certainly know this, but for the information of witnesses, today's meeting is taking place by video conference and the proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website.

This is more or less a general panel, and we'll start with the Association des camps du Québec, with Mr. Grenier, the president.

I would ask witnesses to try to keep their remarks to approximately five minutes, as we have seven panellists on this panel. That will give us more time for questions.

Go ahead, Mr. Grenier.

[Translation]

Mr. Steven Grenier (President, Association des camps du Québec): Good afternoon.

My name is Steven Grenier, and I am the president of the Association des camps du Québec.

I'm delighted to be appearing before the committee this afternoon on behalf of our association.

Founded in 1961 by overnight camp administrators, the Association des camps du Québec, or ACQ, represents 346 non-profit organizations, municipal and private organizations, that operate 691 sites and welcome more than 300,000 campers every year. Our members generate combined annual revenues of over \$100 million.

Our association's mission is to “recognize and promote the quality and educational value of the camp experience in Quebec”, by bringing together organizations that provide programs for overnight camp, day camp, nature classes, family camping and group camping. The goal is to support, promote and ensure quality programming.

Thanks to ACQ accreditation, members are known for the quality and safety of the services they provide, a fact that is all the more important in the current circumstances.

The “accredited camp” designation is assurance that all of our members adhere to more than 70 standards, meeting safety, supervision, programming, environmental and dietary requirements. In other words, ACQ accreditation is synonymous with a commitment to the highest quality.

However, as you all know, since the COVID-19 pandemic began, our industry has been hit with major financial challenges, while having to navigate an environment of great uncertainty. Although we recognize that the current crisis is affecting every sector of the Canadian economy, there is no denying that some of the things that make our industry unique also make us more vulnerable to the challenges that COVID-19 poses.

Keep in mind that camps are seasonal businesses that, for the most part, operate only in July and August. Contrary to most sectors, camp operators have just eight weeks to generate revenues for the entire year.

For many camps, those eight crucial weeks of business are in jeopardy because of the pandemic. Even more importantly, the services camps provide help foster fulfilment and well-being among campers in a safe environment.

For obvious reasons, the ability of camps to offer those services in the current environment has been seriously undermined. To keep children safe this summer and adhere to public health guidelines, camps are going to have to put extraordinary measures in place. Those measures will inevitably mean significantly higher operating costs for camp managers, who need government assistance to get through the crisis.

That reality, combined with the reduction in day camp participants this summer, as required by public health authorities, will definitely lead to losses for camp operators in Quebec and the rest of Canada. As troubling as these issues are for day camp managers, they pale in comparison with the challenges overnight camps in Quebec are facing.

Not authorized by the Quebec government to open for the summer for safety reasons, overnight camps will lose almost all of their revenues for 2020. Clearly, despite being closed, they will still have to cover a host of fixed costs—rent, electricity, upkeep and insurance, just to name a few. That will put them in an untenable financial situation and call into question their ability to open in the summer of 2021. What's more, they will have to find a way to refund the deposits of parents who registered their children in camp, adding to the financial burden on overnight camps.

For all these reasons, without government support, there is no doubt that numerous overnight camps will have to close their doors permanently. We think that would be beyond tragic, given what an integral part of Canadian culture overnight camps are, and have been for over a century.

• (1505)

Much more than just places to sleep, overnight camps are truly places that foster fulfilment and growth, where children can have meaningful experiences they will remember for the rest of their lives. The importance of overnight camps in the lives of Canadian youth must not be underestimated. That has been confirmed over and over again by the hundreds of parents and children who have told us how disappointed they are at the announcement that overnight camps will not open this summer.

We want to reiterate that we are ready and willing to work closely with the government to find solutions tailored to the needs of overnight camps, so they don't disappear from the Canadian landscape forever, taking with them a piece of our cultural heritage.

With the Government of Canada's help, we remain optimistic that Canada's overnight camps will eventually go back to doing what they do best—providing Canadian youth with unique experiences—as they have for decades.

On behalf of the Association des camps du Québec, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee.

Thank you for listening to what we had to say.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Grenier.

Turning now to the Chicken Farmers of Canada, we have Benoît Fontaine, president, and Michael Laliberté, executive director.

Mr. Fontaine, please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Fontaine (President, Chicken Farmers of Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon everyone.

My name is Benoît Fontaine. I am a chicken farmer in Stanbridge Station, Quebec, and I am the chair of the Chicken Farmers of Canada. Our executive director, Michael Laliberté, is with me today.

Our sector contributes \$8 billion to Canada's GDP, supports 101,900 jobs and generates \$1.9 billion in tax revenue. The country's 2,877 chicken farmers are proud to be raising the number one

meat protein in Canada, in the good times and the more challenging ones.

Chicken Farmers of Canada was pleased with the government's announcement in support of the agriculture and agri-food sector, but we need to highlight that these measures do not go far enough in supporting chicken farmers. In order to continue to ensure food security, farmers need support as they navigate the unprecedented stress and pressures of the pandemic.

Currently, the Canadian chicken sector is seeing unprecedented market conditions. Food service, which usually represents approximately 40% of the market, has experienced a rapid decline in sales almost overnight. In retail, there was an initial surge in sales caused by consumer stockpiling, but that demand has now stabilized, resulting in a total demand that is below usual volumes.

The rapid decrease in food service led to surplus production for a short period of time. Thankfully, the flexibility provided by supply management allowed our board of directors to quickly react and adjust production, hoping to avoid a worst-case scenario of depopulation, or euthanasia.

The board of directors reduced allocation for May to July by 12.6% and readjusted allocation for July to August by 9.75%. While we have been able to adjust production, that does not entirely alleviate the stresses on farmers and processors during this time. Some processing plants may have to reduce their slaughter volumes owing to physical distancing requirements, absenteeism of plant employees and complete shutdown.

Processors are working closely with one another and with farmers to redirect birds if and when needed. This reduced throughput and risk of plant shutdowns significantly increases the risk of farmers having to depopulate flocks.

Farmers do not take depopulation lightly. In addition to impacting the food supply of Canadians, depopulation is a loss of the flocks farmers have spent time, money and energy raising, and it also means extensive losses. In the event that processors do not have the necessary capacity to process chickens, farmers will have to work quickly with their processors to determine next steps.

At this point in time, they do not have government assurance that the live price of the birds will be covered. Our understanding is that the AgriRecovery program will cover up to 90% of the costs of depopulation. This does not address the value of the flocks being depopulated, the administrative burden on the farmer or the lobbying of provincial governments to provide their portion of business risk management funding.

Throughout numerous conversations with government officials, they have been reminded that, under the Health of Animals Act, depopulation is supported in instances of disease. We are well aware the act was specifically designed to cope with animal disease, but we believe what the sector is experiencing now—with processing capacity, depopulation and the overall impact on operations—follows the intent of the act and results in the same impacts for the farmers.

We are disappointed that government has not looked to this model to support the chicken sector should depopulation be necessary. While the business risk management programs are designed to address fluctuations in income to support farmers in times of need, they do not work for chicken farmers in cases of depopulation.

The uncertainties resulting from COVID-19 are in addition to the financial stress farmers were already facing with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, or CPTPP.

• (1510)

As you know, Canada's chicken farmers lost a significant portion of their domestic market and have been waiting on government to announce programs to strengthen the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the sector for over a year. We certainly acknowledge that government has greater priorities right now; however, since the government has not communicated when the federal budget will be presented, Canadian chicken farmers continue to wait for the support that they were promised.

I hope this presentation helps members of the committee understand that the measures announced to date do not address the financial implications for chicken farmers if depopulation becomes necessary. In addition, we continue to patiently await the promised CPTPP support package that will help give us some certainty at a highly uncertain time.

Thank you for your continued support for our sector, and I hope you will raise these issues with your fellow members in government. Canadian chicken farmers are here for Canadians, and always will be.

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

• (1515)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Fontaine.

We're turning to Joe Belliveau, executive director of Doctors Without Borders, who is accompanied by Jason Nickerson, humanitarian affairs adviser.

The floor is yours, Mr. Belliveau.

Mr. Joe Belliveau (Executive Director, Doctors Without Borders): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to be here.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to present to you today.

I am the executive director of Doctors Without Borders, or Médecins Sans Frontières, and I am joined by my colleague, Dr. Jason Nickerson, our humanitarian affairs adviser.

Médecins Sans Frontières, or MSF as we are commonly known, is an international medical humanitarian organization that provides impartial medical assistance to people in more than 70 countries. We deliver hands-on, essential health services in some of the world's most complex environments, and we are no stranger to disease outbreaks.

Today we are facing an unprecedented crisis, created both directly and indirectly by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has reached all of the countries where MSF works. We are witnessing COVID-19 cases occurring alongside existing emergencies and creating a dangerous mix of public health risks. In the refugee camps of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, nearly one million Rohingya refugees live in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions that are perfect for spreading COVID-19 in a place where it is virtually impossible for people to physically distance and where access to clean water is a persistent challenge.

In Central African Republic, years of conflict have left millions of people displaced and dependent on humanitarian assistance. MSF's teams on the ground are among the only providers of direct health care in the country, and the budget we require to operate effectively there exceeds that of CAR's own ministry of health. That means there is little capacity to provide medical care for everyday health problems, and it is certainly not sufficient for a pandemic.

COVID-19 is straining our own response capacity. It is critical, especially in the midst of this pandemic, that the Canadian government continues supporting and funding humanitarian action. This funding ensures that humanitarian organizations can continue their existing operations while also responding to new pressures created by the pandemic. In Canada, we can rely on our strong, stable health system. In other places, health systems struggle to meet people's everyday needs. For example, just yesterday, the Democratic Republic of Congo confirmed a second Ebola outbreak, meaning that the country is currently responding to two Ebola outbreaks, the largest measles epidemic in the world and COVID-19, all in a country that has been affected by armed conflict for decades.

To respond to the COVID-19 crisis and to meet the needs it is creating in Bangladesh, Congo and around the world, MSF has identified a budgetary need of \$226 million through our COVID-19 crisis fund. Additionally, we are asking the Canadian government for a contribution of \$10 million for this fund so that we can keep our people on the ground responding to this unprecedented crisis. COVID-19 has already caused an immediate expansion of our global activities, including in places we do not normally work, such as Canada itself.

Our delivery of medical care depends not just on funding. We also rely on affordable access to and innovation for new medicines, vaccines and diagnostic tests. These advances are crucial for the health and well-being of countless people around the globe, just as they are in Canada. However, the global research and development system is not designed to prioritize affordable access, especially outside of wealthy countries. Access to life-saving medicines is not equitable, and this is not acceptable.

As Canada spends more than \$1 billion in public funding to develop and deliver COVID-19 technologies—a very welcome investment—it is essential that Canada demands a fair return on investment by including specific requirements in funding agreements with, for example, pharmaceutical companies or universities receiving Canadian public funds to ensure that any resulting health technologies are globally accessible and affordable, including for Canadians. Today, to our knowledge, no such requirements exist in Canadian funding agreements. It would be tragic and unethical if a vaccine to prevent COVID-19 or a medicine to treat it were developed with Canadian public funding and subsequently priced out of reach. We risk excluding billions of people from the life-saving benefits of these innovations if we don't act on this now.

As you consider Canada's essential funding contributions for COVID-19 R and D, I urge this committee to demand that such funding come with safeguards, so that the vaccines and treatments for COVID-19 developed with Canadian public funds are made affordable and accessible to everyone who needs them. Public funding must result in public goods.

● (1520)

The global pandemic will not end here until it ends everywhere. Now is the moment for global solidarity and smart public investment to ensure that everyone everywhere has access to the medical care they need.

We look forward to your questions. Our contact information is available from the committee clerk, and we would welcome any members follow up directly with me or Jason Nickerson.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Belliveau.

Now turning to the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, we have executive director Daniel Bernhard.

Mr. Daniel Bernhard (Executive Director, Friends of Canadian Broadcasting): Thank you very much for inviting the Friends to appear today. We have many worthy causes appealing for your support, and I'm here to talk about those that are related inasmuch as

the news is what brings the plight of these various industries to Canada's attention.

Last week, investors linked to Postmedia bought Torstar, once an extremely profitable journalism juggernaut, for a mere \$51 million. This acquisition sets the stage for a duopoly in Canadian print media.

Today I'd prefer to talk to you about another duopoly, Google and Facebook, that is systematically exterminating Canadian journalism. Because of Google and Facebook, our concern today is not whether there will be enough Canadian media outlets left, but whether there will be any at all.

In 2019 digital advertising was a \$7.7-billion business in Canada. Google and Facebook took almost 85% of that. As for the remainder, well, COVID-19 has cut Canada's share by more than a half. Since mid-March, more than 2,000 media jobs have been lost, bringing the 10-year total to close to 20,000. At least 300 outlets are gone for good, and hundreds more have cut staff and service.

This market dynamic, however, is not natural. It's the result of policy choices made over 15 years.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, go ahead, Peter. I think I'm hearing double-speaking as well, the same as you.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Exactly. I have an echo on my end. I'm not sure if it's the case for the others.

The Chair: Maybe, Daniel, if you just slowed down a bit, we'll see what happens.

Mr. Daniel Bernhard: Sure. Is that better?

The Chair: It's okay yet.

Mr. Daniel Bernhard: It's possible someone is not on mute.

In recent years, Parliament has debated how to support Canadian journalism. Many members are justifiably worried about government subsidies compromising newsrooms' perceived impartiality. However, there are other options, and today I would like to highlight one that won't cost a dime.

Facebook is Canada's number one news source, and news is actually the number one reason Canadians use Facebook, according to Abacus Data. Yet, Facebook itself produces no news. They don't employ a single journalist. Instead they take a free ride on the investment and talent of Canadian newsrooms by taking their content without permission or payment and selling it as their own at a steep discount. Some would call this theft. At the very least, it's a parasitic and unfair practice that fatally distorts the market.

I challenge you to think of one other industry in which one or two firms are permitted to raid their competitors' output without even asking, let alone paying, for it and then reselling it as their own for a fraction of the price. I, for one, can't think of any. Yet this is exactly what Facebook does millions and millions of times a day.

Today Friends is proud to be launching a national advertising campaign called "WANTED", featuring the poster that appears behind me, to alert Canadians to Facebook's unfair news appropriation practices and to rally support for urgent, reasonable regulations that would require these platforms to pay Canadian newsrooms a fair price for the content they publish, much as radio stations pay royalties for music they broadcast.

I refer you to newsthief.ca or ilnousvole.ca for more details.

In April, Australia became the most recent country to enact such measures, and Canada should do the same.

Let's be clear. Canadians value Canadian news and consume it in great quantities. Profits may have plummeted, but readership has remained strong and is now even stronger thanks to COVID-19. Canadians understand that "uncle Larry's" off-the-cuff opinions are no substitute for professional reporting, just as uncle Larry's hot takes are no substitute for thoughtful, professional parliamentary deliberation.

Our appetite for news has not changed. All that's changed is who gets paid. It used to be the people who create the value. Now it's the parasitic middleman who creates none. If you value free markets as I do, this situation should concern you greatly.

Recent events have shown that Facebook could not be a less-deserving company of such artificial competitive advantages. A recent Leger survey found that 53% of Canadians believe at least one COVID conspiracy theory that circulates widely on Facebook. This is not an accident. Facebook was recently exposed for proactively helping advertisers to target people interested in pseudoscience so that those most susceptible to COVID lies would be most likely to encounter them. This practice is not just immoral, but it undermines Canada's unprecedented and unprecedentedly expensive public health efforts. Recently, Facebook's response to police brutality and the protests against it have caused employees with \$300,000 salaries to walk out on Facebook because they just can't stomach working there anymore.

What happens in Canada matters. Your work matters. The work that happens in provinces matters. Local news matters. Media is the only way for us to maintain a common national identity across great distances, and news is the only way for us to participate together in a unified democracy.

Australia's approach befits a confident sovereign nation. It's time for Canada to prove that we belong in that league.

No single action will solve the news crisis, but requiring Google and Facebook to pay for the news they use is a very good first step. This is something you can do to drive extra revenue to Canadian media without spending a dime of public money. I strongly encourage you to take up this policy without delay and I look forward to answering any questions you might have about how best to do so.

Thank you very much.

• (1525)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bernhard.

Turning then to Precision Drilling Corporation, we have Kevin Neveu, president and CEO.

Mr. Kevin Neveu (President and Chief Executive Officer, Precision Drilling Corporation): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to address the finance committee today.

I represent Precision Drilling, a proud Canadian oil and gas drilling and well-servicing contractor.

I believe the Canadian conventional and in situ oil and gas drilling industry has been an unintended victim of an international anti-oil sands mining campaign. As a result, our industry has been weathering a deep and severely damaging multi-year downturn, and now we're facing a total collapse as the downturn is further compounded by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 shutdown and the recent oil price war.

The drilling industry is a labour-intensive service business that creates jobs for hundreds of thousands of Canadians from every province and territory of this country.

I was born and raised in Alberta, a third-generation oil and gas worker, and I am one of those several hundred thousand prospective oil and gas workers. There should be no doubt that the Canadian conventional oil and gas industry is perhaps the cleanest, the most efficient, and without a doubt, the most socially responsible hydrocarbon energy source globally.

Canada is viewed as a model for operational and environmental excellence. As a result, Canadian oil and gas workers are sought out globally for leadership, engineering, regulatory and operational roles.

During my 38-year career, I've worked in oil and gas fields around the world, from Saudi Arabia to Kuwait, Norway, Russia, Colombia and, of course, the United States.

This Canadian excellence is due in large part to a very unique combination of comprehensive federal and provincial regulatory frameworks, our harsh winter conditions, the Canadian entrepreneurial spirit, and most importantly, our deep Canadian social and environmental conscience.

Canadian oil and gas leads the world with innovations in drilling processes, reducing our environmental footprint, reducing GHGs, delivering exceptional operational efficiency while leading socially for workers' rights, and creating successful first nations partnerships, all while investing socially in the communities in which we operate.

While the macroeconomics of supply and demand drive the commodity prices and strongly influence the ability of our industry to function, several uniquely Canadian challenges have manifested over the past several years and threatened the sustainability of our industry.

As I mentioned at the start, the Canadian conventional oil and gas industry has been collateral damage to what amounts to a war against oil sands mining. The anti-pipeline and anti-oil sands rhetoric, all designed to constrain oil sands investment, has decimated the conventional oil and gas industry. Further, we have domestic and foreign NGOs, and even Canadian political leaders, demonizing the oil and gas industry as a whole. For example, natural gas, which has excellent lower emissions and a clean replacement for coal, has become a target. Gas pipelines and gas exports have also become a target, and this is incomprehensible.

The major impact has been a swift and severe reduction in foreign investment in the Canadian natural resources sector. In fact, many investors now view Canada as having a significantly higher political risk, resulting in investors moving their capital to other jurisdictions. An un-investable Canada is an economic problem for all Canadians.

For Precision, this means that today we employ less than 800 Canadians. In 2014, the comparable number was over 4,000. The majority of our 600 corporate staff positions have migrated to Houston, and our leadership team, including myself are now domiciled in Houston where the long-term prospects remain strong.

As a Canadian, I could not be more disappointed by the destruction of good and responsible energy opportunities here in Canada, and especially the jobs. Canadians have been endowed with excellent geology, a strong and noble social and environmental conscience, and most importantly, a dedicated and productive workforce. It is our obligation as leaders to continue to demonstrate to the world how Canada is the preeminent model for conventional oil and gas development.

Recently, the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors wrote to the Minister of Finance, calling on the federal government to support our beleaguered industry. The federally funded well reclamation program is a good start, but I am afraid the industry will need much more.

Also recently, the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors submitted to the Province of Alberta a construct for a financial grant package. The program is intended to encourage drillers to accelerate investments in the safety, recertification and maintenance

of our drilling equipment. These investments will provide immediate industry employment while positioning the drillers to respond safely and efficiently for an eventual rebound in activity. Like the well-abandonment program, this could be a joint provincial-federal program and I encourage you to look into this.

• (1530)

I firmly believe that the federal government must encourage all types of conventional oil and gas investments and must not tolerate the destruction of our conventional oil and gas industry as an unintended victim of the ill-informed anti-oil sands movement.

Canada needs its oil and gas industry, and for this industry to be healthy, as we embark on a resilient economic recovery from the COVID pandemic. We can balance both economic recovery and achievement of our environmental goals. Canada's oil and gas drillers are exceptionally well positioned to assist, through quality jobs, technical excellence and environmental stewardship. Our industry is a good news story.

Thank you for your time today. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Neveu.

We'll now turn to Ottawa Special Events, with Michael Wood, partner.

Mr. Wood, the floor is yours.

Mr. Michael Wood (Partner, Ottawa Special Events): Good afternoon, and thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As was said, my name is Michael Wood. I am a partner at Ottawa Special Events.

I want to thank the Standing Committee on Finance for the opportunity to hear my concerns and recommendations on behalf of small businesses across Canada. I would also like to thank Pierre Poilievre for putting my name forward to the committee and allowing me to address you today, and Sean Fraser for hosting a round table with Ottawa's small businesses about a month ago. Thank you, sir.

Furthermore, I thank the Government of Canada for the programs that have been developed so far to support small business. Unfortunately, there are gaps that have not been addressed.

Ottawa Special Events is a small business that rents equipment to festivals, conferences, individuals, all levels of government, and essentially anywhere there is a public gathering. Like many small businesses, mine has been devastated by the effects of the COVID-19 crisis. We became a zero-revenue business overnight. Our expenses continue to mount. We have tried to mitigate our cost exposure. We have laid off 20-plus employees—all of them. We have negotiated with suppliers to try to obtain relief and payment deferrals. Despite this, our exposure, both corporately and personally, is huge and continuing to grow.

Our company is just one example of thousands of companies facing financial ruin as a direct result of COVID-19. There are several crisis situations that will require urgent attention from the Government of Canada and the provinces.

Crisis number one is personal guarantees. Many businesses are facing closure and bankruptcy as a result of the impacts of COVID-19. These closures and bankruptcies are not the fault of small business operators, yet somehow we're expected to bear the brunt. Existing loans taken out prior to the pandemic will be called and personal guarantees will be pursued by the lenders. This will result not only in businesses going bankrupt, but also the owners who made those guarantees.

We need an action plan that will protect small business owners from losing their livelihoods and potentially their personal assets. We need regulations or legislation that will prevent lending institutions from pursuing personal guarantees.

Also, small business needs much more than the \$10,000 that's forgivable on the \$40,000 loan. We need new grants. We need subsidies. The federal government needs to help us through this crisis. Additional loans are not the answer. I know you have heard this. We just simply cannot take on more debt. It's impossible for those to operate under a one-size-fits-all program. Some businesses can survive for months on \$40,000, while others can't cover three weeks.

Here are my questions to you right now. Is there more financial support coming? What time frame did you think the \$40,000 intended to cover? Was it for one month, three months, six months? We just want to know.

The second crisis that you're well aware of right now is with the commercial rent program. The commercial rent program is not benefiting many small business owners. Landlords are not obligated to participate in this program. Prime Minister Trudeau has said this. Premier Ford has said this. In fact, if you speak to your constituents, you'll find it is the largest landlords in Canada who are the least likely to want to participate. Tenants who should benefit are not able to apply and are at the mercy of the landlord to do so.

The program has created deep animosity between some landlords and tenants, while their energy should have been put into trying to find a solution. Giving tenants the opportunity to apply directly for the relief is one. Alternatively, landlords with tenants in need of rent support should be obligated to make the application.

Measures to prevent evictions of commercial tenants who cannot pay their rent are also urgently required, although I do understand that this is a provincial jurisdiction.

In addition, the commercial rent relief program covers us until the end of June. The application process just opened and no money has started to flow. It's clear that this program needs to be extended for several more months until the restrictions imposed on businesses are completely lifted.

Crisis number three is this: What happens after we've applied for the fourth time for the CERB and our businesses are still shut down due to government regulations? We aren't allowed to contribute to employment insurance. How are we expected to cover our basic costs and look after our families?

My question is this: Does the government have a plan to extend CERB payments?

Lastly, the fourth crisis is big box dominance. As you know, small business has been the backbone of the Canadian economy for years. How is it possible that stores such as Walmart were allowed to remain completely open, selling the same products that small businesses that were forced to close had on their shelves? Outside of groceries and pharmacies, why were the other sections not roped off? This created a totally uneven playing field.

While some businesses with a storefront are now able to offer limited access, this divide is unacceptable and must not be repeated in the future.

• (1535)

I will close with this. While I understand that at some point all storms run out of rain, the question is this: Until it does, how are we expected to survive this flood?

Thank you very much for your time today.

The Chair: Thanks very much, Mr. Wood.

Before I turn to the last witness on the panel, I'll give members the speaking order for the first round of questions.

First up will be Mr. Morantz, then Mr. Fraser, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, I believe—and if I have that wrong, Gabriel, you'll correct me—and Mr. Julian.

We'll start with Mr. Morantz after the next witness.

Now we'll turn to Alan Shepard, president and vice-chancellor, Western University.

Mr. Shepard.

Mr. Alan Shepard (President and Vice-Chancellor, Western University): Thank you, Mr. Easter.

Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for this opportunity to comment on the effects of the pandemic at Western and across our sector.

I want to thank the Government of Canada for its leadership in responding to the pandemic, and I'd like to thank my local community for its extraordinary efforts.

The substantial allocation made in support of post-secondary students has been impressive on a world scale, and the new research allocations are helping Canadian researchers contribute to global efforts. At Western, that support has been augmented by our own \$2.6 million student relief fund, donated, in part, by our alumni, faculty and staff. We have assisted more than 3,400 Western students who were in immediate need—a surprising number.

In early March, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research invested new funds to fast-track a national response to COVID, and two of these pan-Canadian teams are led by Western faculty members. In late March, \$1 million in federal funding was awarded to vaccine researchers at Western's Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, where our new level 3 biohazards lab is being put to very good use.

In April, the government launched CanCOVID, a network of health care professionals, university researchers and policy-makers united against the pandemic. Western faculty members play a leading role there, and we added \$1 million of our own money to support COVID-related research and interdisciplinary projects on our campus.

Amidst all of these research projects, Western has also donated a significant amount of PPE to local hospitals. We've offered free accommodation to front-line health care workers and have designed, manufactured and given away for free thousands of face shields for hospital staff and more.

Looking ahead to September and beyond, we're working hard to ensure that our students are able to access the high-quality learning environment and transformative student experience they and their families expect of us. To achieve these goals, we're taking a number of steps. We're hiring a number of new Ph.D.-level instructional designers to help transition the courses. We're hiring 250 advanced Western students to help portage face-to-face courses into virtual online experiences. We're creating free online summer modules for first-year students to help them catch up academically and begin forming social networks and so forth. Importantly, we've also increased our undergraduate bursaries and scholarships by almost 45% to \$44 million, and our graduate student support will rise to \$60 million next year.

I would say that we've not been particularly surprised by the additional costs to the university's operating budget, but these additional costs are already in the multiple tens of millions of dollars and rising. Some of the new expenses are obvious—moving thousands of undergraduate courses online, for example—but other expenses are less obvious, such as the loss of meaningful amounts of

ancillary revenue or the anticipated decline in private-sector research partnerships as the private sector itself contracts. Of course, the most important cost, the human cost, for all of us can't actually be calculated.

For this fall term, assuming public health regulations make it possible, we intend to operate in-person academic experiences for roughly 25% to 30% of our courses. The rest will be delivered almost entirely online. Assuming that we have government approval, our campus will be open.

So far, enrolments are holding strong, but with the effects of the pandemic still unfolding, the impact on enrolment will not be noted until the fall—for us or for any university—and it hangs over all Canadian universities. There is, of course, even more uncertainty around international enrolment. At Western, that number is just under 15%. In a post-pandemic world, with all of the crazy things going on and the new geopolitics, it is plausible to imagine Canada as an even greater beacon of hope and opportunity for international talent.

As we emerge from the pandemic, Western looks forward to responding to other global challenges that will affect Canadians, and climate change comes to mind. Western would strongly support a national infrastructure program addressing key global challenges, knowing that such investments would also help stimulate the economy here in southwest Ontario. The SIF project, for example, was a great success. We saw two nationally recognized buildings, which strengthened our ability for research and innovation.

We greatly appreciate the substantial investments already made by the Government of Canada. We also recognize that our efforts to advance the academic missions of Canada's great universities will have substantial additional costs as well. Our missions are robust, and they're fundamental to the well-being of the students and the communities we serve, but our missions are also vital to the health and the future of Canada itself.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to appear.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you very much, and thank you to all the witnesses for their presentations.

We will go to the first round, which will be a six-minute round. I think we have time to go with regular rounds today.

Mr. Morantz, you're first up. The floor is yours.

• (1545)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Fontaine, from the Chicken Farmers of Canada, I want to chat with you about the situation your industry is currently facing. I had the opportunity to meet some of your Manitoba representatives before COVID, and the picture they painted at the time was quite alarming. They told me that the combined effect of the CPTPP, CUSMA and WTO obligations has resulted in basically a foreign market access of about 10.8%, translating into job losses of about 3,100 and \$240 million in GDP contributions out of roughly a \$6.8-billion overall contribution by your industry.

Given that this situation already existed pre-COVID, could you comment on in this new environment and what this means for the industry, given the earlier challenges the industry was already facing?

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Fontaine: In ratifying the CPTPP, Canada granted market access of 26.7 million kilograms of chicken. Under the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, or CUSMA, we gave 62.9 million kilograms of chicken in market access to the Americans alone. That means that, under NAFTA 2.0, Canada gave up 10.8% of all domestic production, which is unbelievable.

That's where things stood prior to the COVID-19 crisis. Unlike dairy farmers, we didn't receive a compensation package. We've been waiting for one since the two agreements were ratified, but especially since the CPTPP was ratified. The issue has been settled for one of the five supply-managed products.

We didn't ask for direct payments to farmers. Instead, we asked for tax credits to support investments on farms. Above all, we want funding to promote chicken production in Canada, to keep the 3,100 jobs that will otherwise disappear, just like the \$240 million in GDP contributions.

With the impact of COVID-19, things will become even more complicated for the sector, as I mentioned in my opening statement.

[English]

Mr. Marty Morantz: Yes, I understand that the industry, pre-COVID, contributed about \$2.2 billion in taxes and contributed a \$6.8-billion share to Canada's GDP, so it is really a massive industry that has already been hurt by these trade agreements, but it seems, to rub salt in the wound, that your organization has also been lobbying for relief from the carbon tax, for example, as was received by the commercial greenhouse operators. That plea fell on deaf ears, and in the meantime the government increased the carbon tax in the middle of a pandemic, on April 1. I'm wondering how you feel about that.

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Fontaine: The carbon tax definitely hurts chicken farming.

The Chicken Farmers of Canada does not understand why greenhouse operators, and flower, fruit and vegetable growers are receiving all kinds of relief when we aren't. We raise Canadians' favourite source of protein. It's a wholesome meat whose environmental footprint is improving year after year.

We produce the food Canadians eat, so in a way, the government is taxing the food our fellow Canadians are consuming. It doesn't make sense. Taxing goods and services is one thing, but taxing food is another. It will mean higher grocery bills for those with lower incomes and raise the cost of chicken.

You're right. Our message fell on deaf ears.

[English]

Mr. Marty Morantz: In terms of the supply chain and given all of these factors, the pre-COVID issues and the carbon tax that we discussed, what can Canadian consumers expect? Are there going to be shortages on the grocery shelves? Are prices going to go up? What will the market effects be on Canadian consumers of the impairment of your industry?

• (1550)

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Fontaine: Physical distancing, delays in the processing chain and the larger number of employees will impact the price consumers pay for chicken. Those additional costs, however, won't be due to production costs on the farm, which are subject to supply management.

The carbon tax will also have an impact. It will essentially be applied to chicken breasts, thighs and wings, unlike fruits, vegetables and flowers. We still don't understand why the government is taxing the food people across the country need.

[English]

Mr. Marty Morantz: I agree 100% with your comments on the carbon tax.

If I have time for one quick one, Mr. Chair, it just has to do with the supply—

The Chair: Okay. Go ahead, but be very quick.

Mr. Marty Morantz: In Manitoba, restaurants are opening up now to a 50% capacity limit. Is there going to be a time lag between producers needing to ramp up production to meet this new demand as restaurants reopen, or is the supply in place?

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Fontaine: That's an excellent question.

Given the rapid drop—of about 40%—in demand for food services, a large number of products are likely ready for the resumption of these services. I'm sure there will be no shortage of chicken anywhere in the country.

In addition, because of supply management, every eight weeks we establish the allocation of chicken products to market based on the figures for the 10 provinces, including Manitoba. Last month, we showed how quickly we could adjust our production based on the current situation. I want to reassure you that there will be no shortage of these products.

[English]

Mr. Marty Morantz: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you both very much.

Turning to Mr. Fraser, who will be followed by Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Sean.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Thank you so much.

I will begin with our guests from Doctors Without borders. Thank you for the work you do throughout this pandemic and generally speaking. I really do appreciate it.

I spent a very short amount of time working in the developing world and have quite a few friends who do now. I cannot claim to be an expert, but one of the things that experience brought to the fore for me when this pandemic first arrived is the graph, which I think you will recall, of the public health care system capacity like this, and the curve that we're all trying to flatten attempting to stay beneath that capacity line.

One of the problems I can't understand has been getting so little attention is that the capacity line through huge parts of the world is at a much lower level. I worry greatly because the systemic supports may not be in place to deal with even a mild spike throughout the developing world, such that if this pandemic is not brought under control globally, we will effectively be making a decision to have the public health care systems fail across the global south and the broader developing world.

Can you comment on what role you see Canada or our international institutions playing in supporting developing countries to ensure that they can manage an increase in cases that other countries with the capacity to deal with it seem to have managed to do.

Mr. Joe Belliveau: You have put your finger on the question that has basically been haunting us since COVID became a reality three months ago and really came onto our radar.

There is no good answer to that question. As you put it, we have been witnessing health systems across the world, particularly in the 70-plus countries where MSF is operating, that were not able to cope and meet the demands on them in the absence of a pandemic. Now you layer on top of that COVID-19, and it is potentially absolutely disastrous.

It is just now, in the last few weeks, that we have been starting to see cases in the Rohingya refugee camps, at Cox's Bazar, for example. We are seeing really an increase in cases in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in CAR, in South Sudan, in some of the contexts where the health systems are really at their weakest.

What we've been doing, as an organization and with other emergency responders, is to provide a kind of emergency set of supports and preparations to health systems. How do you do the IPC stuff, set up the infrastructure and do the PPE work? We are really trying to work very closely with health workers and systems to get that in place.

We don't know how bad this problem is going to get. We don't know what that curve you just described is going to look like or whether there's going to be a spike or a longer term challenge in coping.

Your question is what the government can do about that. In the most simplistic terms, there are two sides to this. One is to make sure there is funding and support for the emergency response right now. It's the gearing up. It's getting the PPE to the right places. It's the training and support for front-line workers right here and right now. Then that needs to be supplemented and supported by the sustainable and more development-oriented work that the Canadian government also does.

• (1555)

Mr. Sean Fraser: Excellent. Thank you.

I have limited time. I would love to ask two more questions of other witnesses, so thank you for the work you do. It is much appreciated.

To our guests from Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, one of the things I have been concerned about over the past number of years, as we see the move toward the digital consumption of news, is not just the ousting of Canadian content but also the fact that we don't have as many reporters in small town council meetings, in school board meetings, in some jurisdictions around the world covering elections of local judges or other positions along those lines.

In addition to the suggestions you made during your remarks, can you offer some guidance on what the government could do to help ensure that the quality of that local coverage continues to be supported and can survive this seeming takeover by digital giants?

Mr. Daniel Bernhard: We could talk about this for hours and hours. Given the time allotted, I would divide it into two segments, the public and the private.

On the private side, the government can take measures to ensure that the people who produce the content get paid for it. That's the nature of our "WANTED" campaign, which I announced earlier. We are launching it today. It talks about the fact that these very big platforms are making billions of dollars, and the people who produce the content get nothing.

If you don't get paid for long enough, you stop doing what you're doing, and as you pointed out, there will be no one in these places. By the way, it's not just in small towns and hamlets. We're talking about provincial legislatures in some cases, so this is a very serious problem where all kinds of chicanery can go on unnoticed.

The second option is public. We do have a public service broadcaster in Canada, a national one. As well, some provinces have public broadcasters and public service media in general. If the market has failed and the government doesn't want to take action to level the competitive playing field, they can't have a public intervention. Just as we think that people who cannot afford health care don't want to be sick, but the law of supply and demand says that if you break your leg and don't pay, you don't want to be healed. That's obviously not the case. The same is true with news. People want and need to be informed. It's a fundamental part of our democracy.

The previous gentleman was talking about Rohingya refugees now starting to get COVID-19. Many of them were displaced because of activity that was incited on Facebook. It was a genocide incited on Facebook. It's been well reported, and this is the downstream effect.

We need to step up for real information. We need to make sure that journalistic creators get paid. That's part of the market intervention, and failing that, a public supplement is necessary and valued.

The Chair: We'll give you a quick one, Sean, just like we did for Marty.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Excellent. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be quick.

Mr. Wood, it's good to see you again. Thank you for your kind comment during the introduction.

I found the session that we conducted with the group of Ottawa business owners immensely valuable. It was one of a series of meetings that I've been having, and that I continue to have, to help inform how the government can continue to tinker with or potentially come up with new policies.

You've pointed out that because the public health challenge may continue, you want some certainty that certain benefits would continue. I'm not curious about the specific policies—there's time for you to make a submission in writing afterwards on that, I would suggest—but in terms of the process of continuing to take in feedback, what is the right format to make sure that voices like yours and businesses are heard as we transition away from these emergency benefits toward a more permanent situation? How can we continue to engage the voices of business owners that have proven so valuable, that have allowed us to make changes like the \$1,000 income allowance for the CERB, like the expansion of eligibility for the CEBA, like the extension of the wage subsidy from 10% to 75% and then to August 29? All of these changes came from the

business community's telling us that these are the challenges they were facing. How can we continue that engagement to ensure that we can benefit from the real, lived experience of business owners?

• (1600)

The Chair: Mr. Wood, if you could take less time than the question, that would be great.

Mr. Michael Wood: No problem at all.

Thank you so much for asking the question, Mr. Fraser, and thank you for the kind words.

You know, I think, honestly, this is a team effort. This is a team effort between small business and the government, whether it's federal or provincial. We do need people in your position to continue to hear us out and hear our associations. We're going to continue putting forward different things because we are still in crisis. I do appreciate everything that you've done, but please know that we'll continue to submit letters and what needs to continue to be fixed.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll turn to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, followed by Mr. Julian.

Alexis.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, I want to thank all of the witnesses who are participating in the committee today. Their presentations are excellent.

My questions are for Mr. Grenier from the Association des camps du Québec.

Mr. Grenier, the federal government made several announcements, and we had to act quickly to free up as much money as possible to help as many people as possible. However, we're currently hearing from a number of businesses or groups that can't access these programs.

I'll be asking you some fairly specific questions.

Is the commercial rent assistance program currently a good way to help with fixed costs?

Mr. Steven Grenier: I'm sure that some of my members, who run private camps and who rent premises, can probably access this program. I don't have the exact information. However, a number of our organizations are non-profit organizations that operate in premises that they own or that are loaned to them from time to time. So I believe that a minority of my members can access this financial support.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Could more direct assistance for fixed costs or a refundable tax credit help the camps reopen in 2021?

Mr. Steven Grenier: I doubt that the tax credit for non-profit organizations is the best solution. However, a tax credit is most likely something that would work for private organizations.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Is the assistance provided through the emergency account, the \$40,000 interest-free loan, currently available to the camps?

Is the loan enough to help your members?

Mr. Steven Grenier: The \$40,000 loan is available to my members right now. However, it's not enough. The money is allocated in advance to our clients. We must reimburse our clients, and they won't be there this summer because our camps have been cancelled. We must refund all the deposits.

Our borrowing capacity is relatively limited, since we operate two months a year. We must pay back this money at some point. This currently puts us at risk of having to borrow money. This has repercussions.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: You can correct me if necessary, but I heard that there were many issues with Canada summer jobs regarding the camps.

Could you shed light on this?

Mr. Steven Grenier: The Canada summer jobs decision seems to have been more of a local decision made by the member of Parliament, I think, as is usually the case. Since the announcement was made much later than the date established for submitting Canada summer jobs applications, we hadn't received a response from the public health authority regarding whether we could proceed with our activities. Members of Parliament had to make their decision and submit it to the Canadian government. Since they hadn't received a response, in some instances, they had to avoid taking any risks and withdraw funding from several camp organizations in Quebec.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: What do you think is the occupancy rate of the camps this summer, taking into account the fact that some of them won't reopen because of public health guidelines?

• (1605)

Mr. Steven Grenier: According to the figures that I have on hand, the occupancy capacity will vary from 30% to 40% of the clients that we usually see. That's very little, considering that parents will certainly need this service in the summer. At this time, 100% of summer camps in Quebec are closed, except for some camps that are running for clients with special needs and that have obtained authorization. The camp that I represent, even though it

serves clients with special needs, decided to close because it's financially unviable.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Where do things stand in your efforts to access the Canada emergency wage subsidy?

Mr. Steven Grenier: We're still hoping for good news and confirmation. At this time, we're in contact with senior officials at the Canada Revenue Agency.

The government seems to have understood the issues and the specific realities of the camp sector. The government has offered its full support and it will apparently act quickly. We're looking forward to this news, which could really breathe new life into the day camps, or at least into the camps that will be running this summer.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Chair, do I have any time left?

[English]

The Chair: Yes, you have a minute.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Okay.

If the summer camp groups won't be there this summer, what are the possibilities for next year? What percentage of your members plan to reopen next year?

Mr. Steven Grenier: Currently, 100% of summer camps are closed for summer 2020. Who will be there in 2021? I can't tell you. It will depend on the financial support that we receive in the coming weeks. One or two camps have already announced that they'll be closing down permanently. We're extremely concerned. Financial support will help us with the fixed costs for the coming months, summer, fall and winter, until the hoped-for resumption of operations in 2021.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I have one last question. Operating costs must have increased substantially for the coming months because of physical distancing. I imagine that you need help with this.

Mr. Steven Grenier: Exactly. The ratios have doubled. We used to need one counsellor for 12 children. Now two counsellors are needed to take care of a dozen children. The human resources and operating costs of the camps have doubled. The purchase of health equipment is a new expense. We must deal with all these factors right now, and they're certainly a significant financial obstacle for our operations in summer 2020.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Grenier.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you both.

We're turning to Mr. Julian, followed by Mr. Cumming.

Peter.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all our witnesses for being here. We certainly hope that your families are safe and healthy. We appreciate all of the wisdom and direction you're providing today.

I'd like to start with Mr. Bernhard. Thank you very much for being here. Thank you for raising something that I think all MPs are aware of: the total devastation of small and medium-sized media across the country. We've just seen it in my community, which has gone from four newspapers to one and a half.

Right across the country we've seen this devastation for two reasons. As you pointed out, we have the big web giants that can steal content with impunity. Also, those big web giants are being subsidized by the taxpayer. Of course, advertising that goes to the web giants is subsidized and written off on income tax.

How do we need to change things, fundamentally, going far beyond the issue of just paying for the news they use, so that the web giants, foreign companies that often pay absolutely nothing to Canada, will stop this devastation of our local news sources across the country?

Mr. Daniel Bernhard: Thank you very much for the question.

Before I answer, I have a very quick clarification to make. It was bugging me that my last answer could be interpreted to mean that Friends only supports increased funding for the CBC in the event that the private marketplace is not regulated, and that's not true. We advocate for both.

To answer your question, Mr. Julian, you're entirely right that taxpayers are subsidizing these companies, both through writeoffs and other activities. What we have now, and your finance committee will be particularly sensitive to this, are thousands of industries asking for help because the government had to shut down the economy for health reasons and the subsequent devastation that has arisen.

Meanwhile, there are two companies that earn almost \$7 billion in Canada and pay zero taxes. They don't collect sales taxes. They put Canadian competitors out of business due to the artificial and unfair competitive advantages that are created simply by government inaction. More than that, we allow Canadian businesses to write these expenses off in contravention of section 19 of the Income Tax Act, which would suggest that foreign media expenditures not be tax deductible.

What we have here, without getting too far into the weeds, is a situation in which successive governments have decided not to act, and this has sort of crept up on them. Our first and foremost imperative is that the government sincerely declare its intention to do something about this. We have not seen that. This is not a problem that is technically challenging to solve; it requires will and courage.

When is the government going to say enough is enough? After that, we can talk about the details, and there are various options. Getting these companies to pay for the news they use is one such option Canada can pursue quickly and without direct public expense or direct public subsidy to the news industry. That's why, especially at this time, we are drawing attention to that.

• (1610)

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you.

You actually go further, and I think that's certainly where most Canadians are at, which is that the web giants should actually be paying taxes. They should be good citizens in this country. These

massive blank cheques they've received from successive federal governments not even requiring them to pay income taxes have undermined our local media in two ways. One is that we don't have the funding to provide the supports, and also because these companies are eliminating local media sources because of their competitive advantage. It's a beautiful situation for them. They don't have to pay taxes and people who advertise with them get to write things off their taxes. It's a perfect storm for destroying Canadians' abilities to speak to each other.

You made reference to the concentration in what's left of Canadian media. We're certainly seeing a profound right-wing bias. It's ironic that the National Post and the Toronto Sun, these right-wing sources of so-called information, are also heavily subsidized by Canadian taxpayers because advertisers can write off the kinds of advertising they do in those newspapers.

What do you think is the best path moving forward to stabilize and ensure in the long term that we have a diversity of voices in the Canadian media, not just right-wing voices, and also to stop this idea that it's always the taxpayer who has to pick up the tab for these right-wing sources and there isn't a journalistic obligation for them to show fair balance?

What is your vision of what Canadian media should look like coming out of this pandemic?

Mr. Daniel Bernhard: I try to take a pragmatic approach. You mentioned at the beginning that these companies should be good citizens. With respect, I—

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. David Gagnon): Sorry to interrupt, Mr. Chair. I hate doing this, but we're having a problem with the interpretation.

Mr. Bernhard, I don't know if it's your microphone, but the sound quality isn't good enough right now to interpret.

The Chair: Go fairly slowly, Mr. Bernhard, like we did at the beginning.

Try to speak right into your mike and make sure that it's not rubbing on your coat.

Mr. Daniel Bernhard: I'll try this. I hope that's better.

With respect, Mr. Julian, you mentioned that these companies, the platforms, Facebook and so on, should be better citizens. Respectfully, I think that's perhaps not the right frame. Their viewpoint is irrelevant. The Government of Canada should govern the way that business takes place in Canada. We should not be dependent on their goodwill for taxation or for compliance with hate speech law, libel, defamation and other circulation of illegal content that would land anyone else in jail.

What I would submit is that if the Government of Canada wishes to live up to its name, it should try to govern Canada, especially this majorly influential and politically impactful industry where one set of players is allowed to not just pay no taxes but also incur no costs to gather the news, to verify it, to edit it, to distribute it and so on.

We often hear that people are reluctant to interfere in this market, and I understand that there is fear that this is political manipulation. Ensuring that companies are paid a fair price for the product that they produce seems to be a very politically neutral, easily actionable and feasible first step, so I'd recommend starting there.

• (1615)

The Chair: We'll have to end it there. We are substantially over the time.

We will turn to Mr. Cumming, who will be followed by Mr. Fragiskatos.

James.

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, and thank you to all the witnesses for appearing today.

I want to direct my questions to Mr. Neveu from Precision Drilling Corporation.

I can't imagine what it's like for you and your management team to have to deal with the impact of both COVID and the price war that has taken place in oil and gas, and the layoffs you've had to do and the people who have been affected by that.

Have any of the programs that the Canadian government has introduced been impactful for you in the short term with your team here? By comparison, because you also have operations in the U.S., what has the reaction been like in the U.S. during this time of crisis?

Mr. Kevin Neveu: First, with respect to the Canadian programs, the Canadian wage subsidy program is helpful. It's a short-term fix. Unfortunately, we have likely in front of us not just several weeks or months of downturn, but likely quarters, or maybe even a couple more years. The wage subsidy program has been helpful in delaying some layoffs, but that might not solve the problem on a long-term structural basis.

The well reclamation program is getting moving right now and we think that's very helpful for the well-servicing segment of our business. Remember, the well-servicing segment is the part of the industry that comes in later in life in the wells, repairs wells and keeps them running, and then eventually abandons the wells. Therefore, the reclamation and abandonment program will be helpful for that segment.

However, the core drilling business is right now operating at, essentially, historic lows. People are leaving the industry. Rigs are moving to the U.S. and other markets. The damage is structural and it's long term. We are looking for help in that area. The plan that we submitted to the province to help stimulate some capital investment in the assets could be very useful. We'd really like the federal finance committee to look to Alberta and look to that, and we will see that the CAODC submits that plan to the federal government also.

Turning to the U.S., I think the wage subsidy programs in the U.S. are working in a similar fashion, but I'd comment that the capital markets in the U.S. are functioning, so the industry isn't as capital starved as we're seeing in Canada. While there is a temporary slowdown right now during this lockdown, we think things in the U.S. will likely return more quickly than in Canada.

Mr. James Cumming: Kevin, we saw an exodus of capital, particularly out of the resource sector, even prior to COVID. What is it in Canadian policy that's really hurting this industry and hurting its ability to grow and to create revenue, which frankly our country so desperately needs?

Mr. Kevin Neveu: It's complicated. Energy production is complicated. I don't think we're in a world of simply no hydrocarbons. We're in a long-term transition.

What really happened in Canada was that oil sands came on quickly, with several large projects coming on quickly and at the same time. At the same time, long-term pipeline projects slowed down and several were stopped. Therefore, we had this surge in oil sands production, combined with anticipated pipelines not going forward and pipelines being delayed. The combination of restricted takeaway capacity and oil sands surge has left the conventional oil and gas business in a real squeeze.

The differential is effectively that the price we receive in Canada for the oil, because of these limited pipelines, is so much lower than the price the U.S. receives in the Permian Basin that the capital is being attracted to the Permian Basin well before Canada, for gas and for oil.

• (1620)

Mr. James Cumming: If we could get that access to market solved, both on conventional oil and on natural gas, do you think the market would return here in Canada?

Mr. Kevin Neveu: I think it has a much higher likelihood of returning. I think that while the federal government's investment in Trans Mountain was important to keep the pipeline moving forward, it was a negative signal for investors. Investors are looking to find commercial reasons to invest in Canada. They are not looking for government intervention in investments. Don't get me wrong. I certainly appreciate the investment in Trans Mountain, but at the same time, we need to find ways to encourage private direct investment, not private direct exodus of investment.

Mr. James Cumming: Is there any one specific policy that you would see for the long term? It sounds to me like access to markets is probably where the restriction is for you to be able to start drilling again and to be able to increase production. Would that be fair? That seems to be the biggest single issue.

Mr. Kevin Neveu: I'd say it's that, but I'd say there's a second issue that is kind of haunting us. I know that there are a lot of environmental concerns about oil sands, and some of it spills into conventional oil and gas production, but I think we need to be viewed in Canada as a friendly place to invest in conventional oil and gas—particularly gas. Having more vision about Canada's role as a global gas supplier can be very helpful. With that will come pipelines, export capacity for gas and export capacity for our conventional oil also.

The Chair: We will have to end it there. Sorry, James, we're considerably over.

We now turn to Mr. Fragiskatos, followed by Mrs. Vecchio.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much, Chair.

To Mr. Shepard, Alan, thank you very much for the presentation today, and thanks for all of your leadership back in London at the university. It's a trying time, and I know a lot is being done right now on the health front. If there's time, I'm going to ask you about the COVID-19 work that's happening from a research end, but I did want to begin by asking you about infrastructure.

Infrastructure projects and spending, if not always, at least commonly have been used as a tool of response to economic crises. As we think about a restart in the economy in the months ahead, I wonder if you could comment on the utility of looking at infrastructure projects and the federal government's support for such projects on campuses. Obviously, Western is my interest, and that's your interest, but even across the country with so many campuses, I think there's utility in this. I'd love to hear the perspective of a university president.

Mr. Alan Shepard: Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

On infrastructure, we know that university campuses from coast to coast—all the coasts—need to continue to build their infrastructure over time. You can't just let the place fall apart and become run down. There are going to be moments in the history of Canada when we make extraordinary infrastructure investments, and that's happened very successfully since I've been in Canada, via at least two governments of different political stripes. It is really something that unites all Canadians.

We need to keep up the facilities and make them such that they're competitive on the world stage. We know that we're a huge sector for GDP, so those investments work well. Universities typically have shovel-ready projects, because we're constantly thinking about how we're going to compete. We're trying to compete on the global stage. We're trying to make Canada proud, and we're trying to make Canada competitive. We know that we have a central role to play in Canada's prosperity.

It's not only that we produce the next generation of graduates. We also produce the research, the innovation, the entrepreneurial ideas, projects, products and services that can be sold around the world. These are always good investments from our perspective, and they create regional work. They put people back to work, and they're very well done. They're monitored and audited and all of those things. It's a very good and efficient way for Canada to make investments in the future.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thanks very much.

Could you give us an update on some of the research that has been happening on COVID-19 at Western?

Mr. Alan Shepard: I keep thinking there's a Nobel Prize in it for whatever team either figures out the vaccine or the cocktail of drugs that neutralizes the virus, as it may be.

About a year ago—not even quite a year ago—we launched a new level three biohazard lab here at the university. Little did we suspect that only six months later it would be put to such use as it's being put to now, in terms of working on the vaccine.

We have teams of researchers who are in the vaccine race, for sure, but we also have teams of researchers working on some of the social effects of the pandemic. We know the science side is a key piece of it, but there's also the whole social science and humanist side of how you get people back to work, how you help people cope with isolation, despair, depression or the economic damage that's happening right across the country. We're very mindful of those issues. Our researchers, the ones who are not on campus and have been sent home to do their work in their living rooms and at their kitchen tables, are chomping at the bit to get back, but we continue to have the campus open for some of our research that's directly COVID-related.

• (1625)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: That's great to hear.

With the remaining time, Mr. Chair, I'm going to ask Mr. Bernhard from Friends of Canadian Broadcasting a question.

I sympathize with your perspective, Mr. Bernhard. I'm just going to play devil's advocate. I'm not sure if my friend Pierre Poilievre is in the meeting right now, but he and others have brought up this argument around the free market and free choice. It's that, yes, there is a change in the media landscape. People are turning to Facebook and Google, and that is, at least the argument goes, just the natural tendency of things. You have to recognize that evolution only moves forward. It does not move back.

What do you say to an argument like that? Again, I see where you're coming from, but with regard to just getting to first principles, I think that's one of the first counter-arguments that come up when voices such as yours bring arguments like the one that you have raised to the table.

Mr. Daniel Bernhard: Thank you.

I would say that I am in favour of competition. However, when one party has to pay employees, editors, lawyers and printers and has to pay taxes and has to collect sales taxes, and their partners are not only free of all of these encumbrances but also can then take their product for free and sell it as their own, that market is neither free nor fair nor desirable. If we want to talk about competitive practices, we can.

Actually, one of the reasons why I'm suggesting that this pay-for-news policy be adopted—the very conservative government of Australia is the most recent to suggest this—is that it does not require the government to adjudicate who is or is not eligible for how much. It is, perhaps, a policy that someone like Mr. Poilievre would find satisfying. Let's remember that people are reading this content on Facebook, which means that they like it, and if the producer of content that generates economic value is not compensated, then the market doesn't work properly. That's the first thing you learn in most economics classes.

The Chair: We are going to have to end it there.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Madam Vecchio is next and then Ms. Koutrakis.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Thank you very much.

I would like to start off with the Chicken Farmers of Canada.

Marty Morantz asked a question about supply shortage and if that was of potential concern. Could you just share with the committee the time frame for the producer from the time that a chicken is hatched to the time that it is processed?

Mr. Michael Laliberté (Executive Director, Chicken Farmers of Canada): Good afternoon. Thank you for the question.

I'm not sure if Mr. Fontaine is available. Typically.... Oh, there you go.

Mr. Fontaine, do you want to answer the question? I think you're better suited, as a farmer, than I am.

The Chair: Go ahead, whichever one of you. That's fine.

Mr. Fontaine.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Fontaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also want to thank Mr. Laliberté for starting to answer the question. Since the time frames and all the other matters involve figures, I'll give the floor to Mr. Laliberté to start, and I'll finish. We'll then address the other part of the question.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Laliberté: Typically, in terms of making it to market from when the birds get to the farmers, it's about 35 or 36 days, so in terms of planning, you are looking at six to eight weeks, depending on the size of the bird you want to bring to market. If you want to bring a heavy roaster, you need a little bit more time. A lighter bird is shorter than that.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Excellent. Thank you very much.

I know that one of the concerns I heard when I was speaking to some of our turkey farmers in the area. Have you had any situations where any of the poultry have been sent off for processing and have been denied at the actual processor? Have there been any cases like that? I know that was a concern when COVID started.

• (1630)

Mr. Michael Laliberté: That's another good question. In the chicken industry, we have not faced that yet. As our chair, Benoît

Fontaine, expressed, the risk of depopulation is high. We've seen a few plant closures in Ontario and B.C.—particularly in B.C.—where there was a risk of depopulation because the capacity to process was not there. In the chicken industry, it's not as if you can hold the birds in your barns for a long period of time. Two or three days later, those birds are out of spec, and it becomes an animal welfare issue. They actually need to be euthanized if they cannot be processed.

Thankfully, farmers and the processing industry were able to work out a process where they were able to alleviate not having to slaughter.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Prior to the COVID pandemic was there enough processing specifically for chicken and other feathered...?

Mr. Michael Laliberté: Absolutely.

I think the processing capacity in Canada pre-pandemic was adequate. Obviously, with this pandemic and the processing plants slowing down their slaughter lines, space and capacity in their plants and so forth, it has created a slowdown in processing capacity.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: We talked a bit about the TPP, but can we look at the U.S. agreement as well, the USMCA, and the impact it's going to have on Canadian producers? Have we seen a cap put on how many chickens are coming in, or has it reached that limit yet?

I know that when I spoke to turkey producers back at the end of April, they were saying that there have been more turkeys imported from the U.S. than in previous years. I'm wondering if we're seeing the same with chicken.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Fontaine: Good question.

As I said earlier, because of the free trade agreement, there will be more American chicken on the shelves, since 62.9 million kilograms have been set aside for this financial partner in the form of tariff rate quotas. Again, a total of 129.6 million kilograms of foreign chicken will enter our country, which amounts to 10.8% of Canadian production. For the sector, this means the loss of 3,100 jobs and a \$240 million drop in revenue. The turkey producers were right when they told you this.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Absolutely.

The Chair: It's your last question, Karen.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I'm going to switch it over to Western. Thank you very much.

Thank you very much for coming. I'm a proud student of Western as well, and from London and that area.

I just have a quick question. What are you going to do?

I recognize that you said that 50% of those students coming are international students. They know how much they bring to that school and how much they offer.

What are your plans for transitioning, especially when we look to September and the ability of many of them to return? Will they be able to get back to classes? If classes are only going at 30% capacity virtually, do you fear they may not come to Canada? What are some of your concerns?

Mr. Alan Shepard: Maybe I misspoke because our student body is 15% international.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Yes, it's 15%.

Mr. Alan Shepard: It's not 50%.

We've planned a couple of things. One is that we acknowledge that they may not be able to get here physically until January, and the government is working with all universities around how we might start study permits for them in September in their home countries. Keeping in mind that a lot of the embassies and consulates around the world are closed at the moment, it's very complicated.

Yes, we do have some concerns. All universities in Canada are worried about this, recognizing that international students are big business for Canada. They bring in about \$8 billion a year in GDP. It's a significant amount.

We're also planning for the fact that we might have to quarantine them when they first arrive. We have some facilities on campus where we could house people for a couple of weeks. We'll be urging them to arrive a bit early in Canada so they can get that taken care of before they enter our community to be safe.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Perfect.

Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you both.

I do want to come back to either Mr. Fontaine or Mr. Laliberté on one of Karen's questions.

On the 129 million birds that will be coming from the United States, what percentage of the Canadian market will they take up or supply? What percentage of the Canadian market will the U.S. now have?

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Fontaine: First, we're talking about 129 million kilograms, not 129 million heads. We mustn't confuse heads with kilograms.

Second, 62.9 million kilograms have been set aside out of a total of 129 million kilograms. This is roughly 50%, and it amounts to 10.8% of the Canadian volume. For every kilogram of chicken that a person consumes, 100.8 grams come from elsewhere, and half of this certainly comes from the United States. This has created a major breach in supply management, which is very harmful to it. Supply management exists in the 10 Canadian provinces and is a solution for Canada's rural economy.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are you saying it's 18% of the market in total they will have, just so I'm clear?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Fontaine: The total access is 10.8%.

[*English*]

The Chair: The Americans will hold 10.8% of our market. Thank you.

We'll turn to Ms. Koutrakis and then we'll go to Mr. Ste-Marie.

Annie.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions today will be for Doctors Without Borders. On your website there's an article and your organization mentions that initiatives launched by the United Nations, the G20 and the WHO to improve access to PPE have fallen flat without a form of regulatory power imposed on individual countries and manufacturers.

Can you describe the regulations you are proposing in more depth? How will they work to ensure the equitable distribution of PPE? Will they have an impact on Canada's production and distribution of PPE?

Mr. Joe Belliveau: Thanks for the question.

I'll defer to Dr. Nickerson on that one.

Dr. Jason Nickerson (Humanitarian Affairs Adviser, Doctors Without Borders): We, like every other medical organization around the world today, are trying to access the same variety of medical supplies and PPE: surgical masks, N95 masks, respirators, gowns, gloves, all of these things. I think where we've found ourselves collectively in the world today is with a realization that this is in fact an entirely unregulated global market.

The particularities of how we manage our supply chains require us to be able to operate independently in order to react quickly and to get medical supplies into places that, frankly, are logistically quite difficult, places like South Sudan, Central African Republic and so on. The precise mechanism that's needed at a global level is still very much to be determined. We are effectively calling for some form of regulation of this market to ensure that it is not only a small subset of wealthy countries that can afford to pay, that have access to these supplies, but that it is in fact an equitable distribution and allocation to all countries, including those where we work. We very much are struggling to make sense of these global supply chains that are under incredible amounts of stress, just in the same way that Canada is as well.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Dr. Nickerson, what can the Canadian federal government do to support the regulated global trade of PPE during the pandemic? Is there a role that multinational institutions should be playing in regulating the distribution of PPE as well?

Dr. Jason Nickerson: Yes, absolutely. The Canadian government has taken great steps to be able to increase local production of things like masks, gowns and so on. Understandably, that's being done because there is some variety of market failure. I think the important thing to recognize and certainly to avoid is that this does not descend into a nationalism where every country is only producing the supplies that are needed to meet domestic demand.

As Mr. Belliveau mentioned, the pandemic doesn't end here until it ends everywhere. As the Canadian government looks at increasing the capacity to produce these supplies that are in short demand globally, I think it's incredibly important that it does so with the view of ensuring that needs are met, certainly at home, but also that needs are being met internationally so that our teams and health care professionals around the world are able to access these supplies.

● (1640)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Thank you.

My next question is to Mr. Bernhard of Friends of Canadian Broadcasting. I was listening with interest to your comments and your responses to my colleagues on the finance committee and I'd like you to speak a little further on Facebook and Google. What structural changes do you recommend to prevent the domination of Facebook and Google over Canadian journalism, specifically?

Mr. Daniel Bernhard: The establishment of a fair playing field is incredibly important. There are a number of measures. Forcing them to pay for the content that they use is definitely a key measure and an easy one that can be enacted right now. Following the lead of Quebec and Saskatchewan in requiring them to collect sales taxes on their products is something simple that can happen right now. Corporate income tax is another matter.

A last matter that I would say is this: Facebook profits by claiming to be a neutral platform, and as a result they allow all manner of content that is actually illegal to pass through. We're talking, for example, about hundreds of thousands of images, every day, of child sexual exploitation, and those are just the ones that are reported. There's been extensive documentation of this. This is content that their competitors that are in the same business would be shut down for. I think if we are a country of laws, we should start to apply them. I think if we did apply them, we would find that Canadian journalism organizations are actually quite efficient in ensuring that the content that gets through is safe and legal. If Facebook, as a competitor in the business, were held to the same standard, I think the marketplace would look quite different.

The Chair: We'll turn now to Mr. Ste-Marie, followed by Mr. Julian. They'll have two and a half minutes each.

Is it Mr. Ste-Marie, or is it Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: It's me, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Alexis.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: My question is for Mr. Fontaine.

How has the closure of restaurants and hotels and the suspension of cruises affected the supply chain in your sector?

Mr. Benoît Fontaine: The effects have been extremely swift. Forty per cent of our market disappeared overnight—no pun intended. Consumers went to the grocery store to purchase other products. We could conduct a survey on the screen. Many of us have eaten very few chicken wings, or none at all, for example, in the past month. When we go to festive places, hockey games or other events, we eat a great deal more chicken. It's a festive food.

For example, no one bought wings for two weeks, whereas people bought whole chickens. There was a huge break, which happened very quickly. The stocks of some pieces were increasing and the stocks of other pieces were disappearing, because people were no longer consuming the same product, in the same place, for the same reason.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you for your response. It's very helpful.

There's a great deal of uncertainty with regard to COVID-19. This adds to the financial stress that producers were already facing after the ratification of the CPTPP. Producers have lost a significant market share at the national level. You said that earlier, and you even put a number on it. We've been waiting for over a year for the government to announce programs to strengthen the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the sector.

Where do things stand with regard to the negotiations on compensation for losses and the negotiations on trade agreements? Can you tell us this?

Mr. Benoît Fontaine: The negotiations have been under way for over a year. We participated in a task force. We participated in good faith, the four "feathers," the four agricultural commodities. For the dairy sector, things were done by way of a fast track. The payment was made directly to the farms.

In the poultry sector, to promote Canadian chicken, we asked for tax credit programs, support programs and promotion programs for national brands, such as the little red chicken logo that almost everyone knows. We're waiting. We haven't received anything, and now COVID-19 is compounding our issues. We have many things to address. There was also NAFTA 2.0, which will provide compensation. We should talk about this.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: So the negotiations are at a standstill. We agree on this.

Mr. Benoît Fontaine: I would say that they're stuck in neutral.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you both.

Next is Mr. Julian, who will be followed by Mr. Poilievre if he's on the line. After that it is Ms. Dzerowicz.

Peter.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to continue discussing this issue with Mr. Fontaine.

If we understand correctly, discussions have taken place. However, to date, the chicken farmers of Canada haven't received any support or compensation. They haven't received anything. Can you confirm this?

Mr. Benoît Fontaine: I can really confirm that the 2,877 chicken farmers in Canada haven't received anything at all.

Mr. Peter Julian: I find this incredible.

You're dealing with the effects of the pandemic, as you told us, along with the breaches in supply management. We don't understand why you haven't received anything. If the federal government doesn't respond quickly, if nothing is done to address the breach in supply management, if no compensation for marketing is allocated to chicken farmers, and if no support is provided during this pandemic, where will this leave us after the pandemic? In the coming years, what will be the state of Canada's chicken farmers and of supply management for the poultry sector in Canada?

Mr. Benoît Fontaine: We've been waiting for over a year, as I said. Some farms may be driven out of business as a result of a lack of support and the breach in supply management. There's also the potential free trade agreement with the Mercosur countries, which is looming over us.

I believe that Mr. Laliberté, the executive director, can elaborate on what I'm saying.

Mr. Laliberté, can you continue?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Laliberté: Mr. Julian, that's a very good question.

We haven't seen yet the impact of the CPTPP on farmers. That being said, we're already in year three of that trade agreement. We expect that when product comes in, it will have a significant impact on our industry because millions of kilograms will be coming in without farmers' having received proper investment programs to help them alleviate some of these concerns.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, all.

Is Mr. Poilievre on, or does Mr. Cumming or Mr. Morantz want to take his time?

Mr. James Cumming: I think I'm going to cover it, Wayne, if that's all right.

The Chair: Okay, go ahead Mr. Cumming.

Mr. James Cumming: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to speak to Mr. Wood.

I heard your testimony about the difficulties that the small businesses are having, and certainly I've been hearing it in spades, hoping for a little quicker reaction in some of the programs. I do appreciate some of the changes that the government has made.

In your testimony, one of the things that caught my ear was the complete shutdown of industry, particularly small businesses. With regard to these kinds of crises, you'd always think that you'd want to learn something from them. Do you think that there should have been a little bit more focus on a sectoral analysis of what should be shut and what shouldn't be shut? Your point with regard to Walmart's being able to operate.... A bunch of other small businesses really feel penalized because they've been shut down, and they think that they could have operated in a safe fashion.

Can you comment on that?

Mr. Michael Wood: Yes. Thank you so much for asking me to do so.

We've looked at different industries. I know that the government's been looking at the airline industry and how we solve that. The problem is that 98%—this huge number—of people work for small businesses. Yes, there was no playbook. I appreciate very much how we moved forward and how quickly the government has moved forward. However, I think we do.... We can't even look at it today and ask, "Should we have done this?" We have to look at it and say, "We have to continue to do this." We have to continue looking at it from a sectoral point of view, and say, "Which ones are going to suffer the most?" Right now—granted, I might be slightly biased—it's tourism, events, hospitality and restaurants. Restaurants can't open at 50%. It can't happen. They can't open at 75%. It's not going to work. Your constituents who own these types of businesses will say the same thing.

As it stands right now, we still have to start looking very specifically at industries that are on the verge of absolute collapse.

• (1650)

Mr. James Cumming: With regard to those industries, what would you say would be the best tactic to try to give them some level of support until they can open in a full fashion? I think a lot of them are delaying because they say that they can't operate at 50%, so they're going to wait until they can operate in a greater fashion. They won't make it. They won't be here a year from now.

Mr. Michael Wood: That's absolutely correct, sir. They're not going to be here. Many industries are not going to be here a year from now unless we get more support, more subsidies from the government.

The loans aren't going to cut it. The federal government put millions upon millions of dollars through the Business Development Bank of Canada and EDC. It all came with personal guarantees. I'm not sure how we as business owners are supposed to put ourselves out there even further than we already do on a daily basis.

We need to look at industry specifics. We have to come up with some sort of subsidy. As I said during my opening statement, how long was that \$40,000 supposed to last? That's my question. Some businesses could have used that for four months and continued forth. There's a big restaurant here in Ottawa. I know the owner very well. His operating costs are \$40,000 a month with no staff. Mine are \$50,000 a month with nothing going on.

How much longer are we supposed to be able to do this without proper funding and subsidies?

The Chair: Okay, we'll have to end it there, James. I'm going to hold us to four minutes on this round, because we have to start the next round shortly.

Mr. Wood, with regard to the BDC, we have the BDC before the committee next week. You said that the BDC is lending money with personal guarantees. Was that before the liquidity was provided to the BDC, or is it happening now as well with the liquidity provided by the federal government?

Mr. Michael Wood: It's still happening today, to the best of my knowledge.

The Chair: If you have any information on that, could you send us a note? I think that would be a question some of our members would want to ask BDC when it's before the committee next week.

Mr. Michael Wood: I absolutely will.

Thank you.

The Chair: We'll turn to Ms. Dzerowicz.

Julie.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Thank you so much.

Thanks for all the great presentations. I have questions for, literally, all of you, but the chair is very stingy with our time. I will have to go very quickly to a couple of you, if that's okay.

I'm going to start off with Mr. Belliveau, from Doctors Without Borders. A heartfelt thanks to you and your team for the unbelievable work you are doing around the world, particularly at this time. Our government provides around \$6 billion in support in terms of international aid. In June 2019 we announced \$1.4 billion for women's health and reproductive health services. How is COVID impacting development aid that is currently coming from our country—and maybe not just our country but also around the world—and do we need to make some adjustments?

You have only about 45 seconds before I have to go to my next round. Perhaps you could give us a quick response and any advice.

Mr. Joe Belliveau: Thanks so much for the question, and the vote of support as well.

I don't think there's an easy, really quick answer to that. The quick response is that we, like everybody else who is responding to needs around the world, are having to make really tough choices right now about what the priorities are.

Even if we look through the lens of what you just described as the feminist approach of the government, we have to recognize that there are vulnerabilities within vulnerabilities around the world. In a lot of the countries where MSF, Doctors Without Borders, is

working, there are particular layers of vulnerabilities. In almost all cases where there's a serious medical crisis, women and girls are disproportionately affected.

It's one thing that we always keep in mind as we're responding, and we support the Government of Canada's continuing to do that, as well.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you.

I want to say that we have heard very loud and clear your ask in terms of additional support around COVID and for us to ensure that our funding for a vaccine comes with safeguards to ensure accessibility and affordability for everyone moving forward. I want to make sure that you know we heard that loud and clear.

● (1655)

Mr. Joe Belliveau: Thank you.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Maybe I could start with Monsieur Grenier and then go to Mr. Wood. Perhaps you both could respond.

When we announced all of our programs initially—and we announced them very quickly—our intention was to make sure we were being generous, to keep workers at home and safe, to keep workers connected to their employers and to provide enough capital and support for businesses to get through this emergency part of the pandemic.

Now we're moving into the reopening of our economy and our rebuilding. You're both from industries that, largely, had the rug pulled from underneath their feet. What I'd love to hear from both of you is the principle that the government should be considering in supporting businesses right now. Are you saying that if you've lost 100%, you're not even coming back this summer at all? For any businesses that are like that, the principle should be that we provide them with support for about six months at 50% of what they earned last year—I don't know what it is. Perhaps you could give us some advice around a principle that you think we should be considering.

Monsieur Grenier, we will start with you.

The Chair: Be fairly concise, if you could.

[Translation]

Mr. Steven Grenier: If we could receive support in the coming months, at least for fixed costs, we could certainly survive until next year. The next revenue stream is expected to come in January.

As Mr. Shepard was saying, perhaps we could also receive financial support for infrastructure. Since we're closed, we could take the opportunity to renovate and update our facilities, which are 50, 75 or even 100 years old. I think that this would be a good way to support us as we move forward during a pandemic, so that we can run properly in the future.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Wood.

Mr. Michael Wood: Thank you very much for the question. I will be as brief as possible.

We appreciate when the government uses generosity—very much so.

I look at it as the government's having closed our industry, and rightfully so. Please don't get me wrong. I understand why the shut-down happened. My next round of proposals will be to say, okay, this is what we generated last year for the next six months, as you say, or the next year, and this is what we need to absorb our costs, either 50% or 75%. We still have costs moving forward.

The other thing I want to add quickly before I'm cut off is that we do genuinely appreciate what the government has done. We do genuinely appreciate the speed it happened at. However, now we need to relook at what we can do to make it better and to help others along the way, by industry. It's, first of all, thank you so much, but second, we also need to look at these personal guarantees. The government needs to guarantee, at least for us, 75% for up to 18 months after the pandemic.

Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you. I have a question for Mr. Neveu.

Let me start this way. I really appreciated your opening remarks, but I find it so troublesome that our innovators, our brain trusts and the experience we've had in the oil and gas industry have to move south of the 49th parallel, to the benefit of a competing nation rather than where we are in Canada.

Secondly, it's a debate in Canada between the environment and oil and gas, but I really firmly believe, and I'm thinking this more and more, that both sides are shouting over each other. At the end of the day, both are going to lose and Canada is going to be the biggest loser.

How do you see us solving that problem? Our oil and gas industry is under attack. Yes, we have to deal with climate change, but on the positive side we have a pretty good industry, especially in conventional oil and gas, which has done so many innovative things. We're throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Do you have any solutions for us? I guess that is what I'm asking you. I really see this as troublesome.

Mr. Kevin Neveu: It does go back to where the capital is being directed.

The industry is capital intensive. Creating energy, whether it's hydro power, solar power, wind power or oil and gas, is capital intensive. The fiscal regimes and the areas that attract the capital most aggressively get that capital, and those industries flourish. Al-

berta has a strong wind-power initiative in southern Alberta because we attract that capital.

I think the confusion between oil sands mining, that segment, and the large open-pit mines versus conventional oil and gas has really painted the entire industry with a negative outlook. We need to attract capital back. That's the key.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you for that, and thank you to all the witnesses who have appeared today. We appreciate both your constructive criticism and your suggestions for where we should be moving and how we should be helping your particular sector as an industry.

With that, we will suspend for a few minutes while we bring in the next panel.

Thank you again.

The meeting is suspended.

• (1700)

(Pause)

• (1705)

The Chair: I will call the meeting to order.

Welcome, witnesses, to panel two of meeting number 33 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance.

We're operating pursuant to the order of reference from the House, and we are meeting on the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the information of the witnesses, today's meeting is taking place by video conference, and the proceedings will be made available on the House of Commons website.

With that, I would like to welcome each and every one of the witnesses.

I would ask you, if you could, to try to keep your opening remarks to about five minutes or thereabouts. We don't have as many witnesses on this panel, so we could stretch it to six if you want.

We'll start with Katherine Scott, senior researcher at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Ms. Scott.

Ms. Katherine Scott (Senior Researcher, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives): Thank you so much for the invitation. It's tremendous. I've never done a presentation like this to a parliamentary committee. I'm in new territory here, as certainly the country is on new, uncharted grounds.

I'm from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. We're a research shop, with offices across the country. I'm based in the national office here in Ottawa. We've been spending a considerable amount of time and resources lately trying to wrap our collective heads around the scope of this public health crisis, which has precipitated, obviously, an economic crisis.

What I'd like to talk to you today about is the impact of the economic crisis, certainly for women and girls in Canada. We can be under no illusion; this is having a devastating and profound impact in communities across the country, and my presentation will stress the impact on women and girls.

I was able to distribute a few research slides in advance. I'm not sure whether members of the committee got those slides. I want to focus on a few key messages from our research and analysis of the labour force survey in the last couple of months and what that would suggest for, I would hope, a feminist recovery plan or when we pivot and start to think long-term. Hopefully we can take up some of that in the questions.

Certainly the first message I'd like to deliver today is that women are at the forefront of this economic crisis. Over half of all female workers currently are employed in the five Cs: caring, clerical, catering, cashiering and cleaning. These are precisely the types of jobs that are directly involved in containing the pandemic and extending needed support and care to those affected.

Again, I'm not sure whether you have the chart, but it reveals and looks at the disproportionate representation of women in many of these categories. That includes, for instance, the fact that 90% of all nurses in Canada are women, 90% of PSWs working in long-term care homes are women, and two-thirds of all those who clean and disinfect our hospitals are women. These are the same women who go home to their families to start the double shift with the worry that they're bringing the virus home with them. Of course, other women work in sectors such as food and accommodation, financial services and retail, all of which have been profoundly affected by the government-mandated shutdown of service.

As the chart shows, many of these same occupations have a high representation of racialized workers, whether that's long-term care homes populated by migrant and racialized workers, or whether it's caregivers, cleaning professions and the like. When we're thinking about the impact on workers, it's critically important to understand the diversity and certainly the concentration of racialized workers.

The other piece or the second message I'd like to stress is that many of the jobs, of course, as we said, are at high risk of exposure to the infection. These are precisely the same jobs that tend to have fewer protections in the form of paid sickness leave or other health benefits. In fact, our research at the CCPA has shown that, for instance, last year, in 2019, only 19% of workers in accommodation and food and only 30% of workers in the retail sector had access to paid leave.

As I said, these are high-risk jobs, especially for those who make the least amount of money. According to our research, 43% of all workers who earn less than \$14 per hour were in high-risk jobs, as compared to only 11% of the wealthiest workers. A majority, fully one-third, of all women workers are in these high-risk jobs. Women

are at the forefront of this crisis, both in the care and in their paid work, and they are the ones going into the labour force every day and being exposed to the pandemic.

The economic crisis that's unfolding, of course, is rolling out and impacting communities across the country, and women were significantly hit. With the first labour force survey, we saw that 70% of all job losses in the month of March were experienced by women, as retail, accommodation and the like shut down. We're expecting the next labour force survey on Friday, but the April numbers showed hugely that there were now three million Canadians out of work, and another two and a half million who had lost the majority of their hours. All in, as of April, that represented 32% of all female workers and 29% of male workers.

Obviously, generationally we've never seen this type of precipitous drop in such a short period of time, but what was most shocking about these statistics was that over half of the workers earning \$14 an hour or less were laid off or lost the majority of their hours, as compared to only 1% of jobs of the richest 10% of workers.

• (1710)

This is very much a pandemic and an economic emergency that's impacting the lowest-waged among us, and this group is overwhelmingly female and racialized. In the chart that I included in my package, you can see that well over half of all women in the lowest-earning decile lost their jobs. Fifty-eight per cent of all women earning less than \$14 an hour lost their jobs or the majority of their hours between February and April.

With that in mind, the other piece of what's unfolding, of course, is not only the scale of job loss but that the unemployment data doesn't actually capture the number of people who are leaving the labour market altogether. We now know that there has been an increase in the number of women who are now formally outside the labour market altogether, an increase of 34%. These are women who have left to take care of responsibilities or obligations—to care for people who are ill, members of their family, or to take care of their children with schools and child cares now closed—but who have no immediate prospect of return to the labour market. This is a really important number to watch. We're already seeing the drop in the employment rate. We're seeing a widening of the gap between men and women in this regard, so the number of women who are being pushed out of the labour market portends a rollback of economic security among women and certainly of gender equality for decades to come.

A good piece of this, of course, are the moms with kids under 12. Fully one-quarter of all moms with kids under 12 lost their jobs or the majority of their hours between February and April. This is critically important. The other three-quarters of them are still employed, but they are at home with children, without the support of child care, doing 24-7 child care. You know, you have to think: What about single parents? As of April, there were over 200,000 single moms who were still working—God knows with what kind of support or child care arrangement—and there were another 122,000 who were laid off and wondering if they could possibly ever go back to work, as the majority of child cares and schools are closed.

Certainly, the question is now in front of us. Will the women who've been laid off from work be able to go back or increase their hours without child care? This really is a critical dimension of the recovery, and it's one thing I can stress to you today. There's no recovery without child care. It simply and mathematically does not work. A survey that's being currently fielded by child care advocates suggests that only 60% of the centres that were surveyed are actually planning to reopen, and those that are planning to reopen, of course, will open with fewer spaces in order to accommodate physical distancing. Without child care, will women be able to go back, and what does that mean by way of setting back the project of gender equality? It will all have a devastating impact on household incomes, and we can't fool ourselves. As women withdraw from or are unable to go to work as we're seeing there—that's, on average, 40% of any household's income—we're going to see a precipitous drop in household spending, dragging the Canadian economy down in the process.

Really, the impact and positioning of women in this stress session is unique. My colleague Armine Yalnizyan has talked about the she-session, and we will not have a recovery without a she-recovery. Certainly, that's an important...

I see that my time is up. I have talked about things that we could do by way of a recovery plan, and perhaps we can take that up in the questions.

Thank you so much.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Scott. Yes, we'd like to hear about that recovery plan, too.

We'll turn then to Nina Labun, chief executive officer, Donwood Manor personal care home.

Ms. Labun.

Ms. Nina Labun (Chief Executive Officer, Donwood Manor Personal Care Home): Good afternoon and thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a privilege to speak today to the committee.

I'm a master's-prepared registered nurse by profession and currently the CEO of a faith-based, not-for-profit care provider to 460 seniors in Winnipeg.

I understand that I was invited to speak on the impact of COVID on women in Canada. As a female CEO leading a predominantly female workforce in one of the highest-risk health care environments during COVID, it's my privilege to share with you my expe-

riences during this pandemic and the disproportionate impact it has had on women working in long-term care specifically.

Long-term care is indeed dominated by women, as was already mentioned. In my home, 96% of my staff are female, and across Canada over 90% of the sector is represented by women.

Before I can tell you how women in this sector have been impacted by COVID, I'd like to paint a picture of the challenges women faced prior to the pandemic.

My staff work days, evenings, nights and every other weekend. More often than not, they are carrying the primary responsibilities of their households. Given the nature of the sector, they typically juggle more than one part-time position, equalling more than one full-time job. They are often members of minority groups, sometimes recent immigrants, and most have very limited opportunities to save for a rainy day. The majority of these absolutely courageous women are also care providers in unregulated roles, with minimal education to effectively prepare them for the complexities of caregiving in long-term care.

Added to these stressors, women working in long-term care have chosen a tough road with inadequate respect for the work they do and for the seniors in their care. Let me take a moment to share what "tough" looks like.

Tough is giving someone a bath in an 18-year-old tub, eight years older than its expected usefulness. Tough is providing care on hot summer days when the 40-year-old air conditioning doesn't work reliably, but there's no funding to replace it. Tough is moving an elderly resident into a shared room to spend their final days with a complete stranger. Tough is trying to be innovative in care while still trying to secure funding for basic Wi-Fi.

My staff and leadership team continue to personally offset the costs that are not recognized by the existing system of care. Our supporting community and staff have been propping up the system with sheer force of will to prevent it from failing. I will give some concrete examples. Staff regularly donate their own money to support fundraisers for equipment and programs. Staff work extra time, essentially volunteering, because the care needs are great. Leaders are on call 24-7 without compensation in order to be accessible and supportive to direct care staff, and our supporting community members provide 100% of the salary for full-time spiritual care, an integral part of holistic health care to seniors that receives no funding.

COVID has pushed this remarkable, women-led workforce in long-term care to a breaking point. It is harming their families, their finances and their health. My staff, who are moms, now stand in long lines to pick up groceries. They prepare meals, coordinate family schedules and now are home-schooling their school-aged kids. Financially, some of these women have lost income and are unable to find suitable child care for people working shift work. From a health and safety perspective, these women are also at a higher risk of COVID exposure merely from working in long-term care, where we know the majority of deaths in Canada have occurred. Also, very tragically, some women are experiencing an escalation in domestic violence.

COVID has had a multiplier effect on the underlying challenges in my sector, which we know disproportionately impacts women. If the Government of Canada wants to demonstrate its dedication to improving the lives of Canadian women and Canadian senior women, many of whom end up in care, it needs to start by addressing the foundational challenges in long-term care and the devastation that this pandemic has illuminated. Long-term care can no longer rely on the heroics of the informal support and funding provided by the primarily female caregivers, leaders and volunteers.

In closing, let me say that caregiving is honourable work, but we no longer have the option of cobbling together a system of seniors care that undervalues the contributions of women and fails to respond to the actual needs required for operating and capital investments.

Thank you.

• (1720)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Labun.

We now turn to the London Abused Women's Centre with Megan Walker, executive director.

Ms. Walker.

Ms. Megan Walker (Executive Director, London Abused Women's Centre): Good evening, everyone. It's really nice to be with you this evening.

The London Abused Women's Centre is a feminist agency that takes systemic action to end the oppression of women and girls while providing immediate access to service for women and girls across this country who are over the age of 12 and who are abused by their partners, trafficked and/or sexually exploited. Last year, the agency served 8,137 women and girls.

The critical gap that we see in the government's COVID response is the lack of a feminist analysis. The response does not reflect fundamental power differentials between women and men in any of the measures taken to address COVID. A feminist analysis is essential to the government's response to this life-threatening virus that disproportionately impacts women, and in particular indigenous women and girls.

The \$50-million measure to help manage or prevent outbreaks in sexual assault centres and shelters, including in indigenous communities, is woefully inadequate. According to my Liberal MP's office, this federal envelope excludes at least 600 agencies across Canada, including the London Abused Women's Centre. During this pan-

demie, when women are isolated in their homes with their abusers and their children are exposed to violence regularly, no funding is provided in the COVID response to allow women to have immediate access to potentially life-saving services.

The Canada emergency response benefit excludes eligibility for Canada's most vulnerable women and girls: those being trafficked and those trying to leave their abusers. Trafficked and sexually exploited women and girls require funding to leave their traffickers, funding that allows them to move back to their homes in other provinces and cities across this country, to re-enter the school system, to attend job training, to attend substance use services, to find housing and even to eat.

Trafficking and sexual exploitation is not a job. It is male violence against women. These women are not provided with T4 slips by their traffickers. They have no record of ever receiving money, because actually they rarely do. It is their traffickers who keep the money. Sometimes these girls experience paid rape for up to 20 times a day to satisfy their trafficker's quota.

Leaving a trafficker is extremely dangerous and difficult. This is especially the case during COVID, but the chances of being able to leave and be free are much better with comprehensive supports and funding to allow victims to live in freedom.

What of those women trapped in their homes with their abusers? Many have no work experience because many of those women are trapped in their homes, with or without COVID, and are unable to do anything without their abusive partner's permission.

There is no COVID funding available for women to help them leave their abusers in this plan, and while women abused by their partners and/or trafficked and exploited women will have no government funds, unfortunately their abusers do. Business owners in the sex trade—also known as traffickers or organized crime—are permitted access to an interest-free loan, with up to 25% of it forgiven if it's repaid before December 2020. While victims of trafficking are being raped every day, their trafficker will be taken care of through the Canada emergency business account.

We have serious concerns about the government's betrayal of Canadian women and girls. COVID has made their lives so much more dangerous.

Notwithstanding an announced \$75 million to address sex trafficking, the Government of Canada has discontinued its funding to at least 11 agencies in Canada, all working to give freedom and hope to trafficked and sexually exploited women and girls. Instead, according to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and the Minister of Justice, the government has decided that a third year—a third year in a row—of consultation on the issue is necessary. Three years of consultation is unnecessary. We know the problems and we have the solutions. Consulting around the country during COVID is costly and a waste of time.

- (1725)

The approximate cost to keep 11 agencies across this country open is \$1.5 million per year. Refusing to fund these organizations until after further consultation is not based on a feminist analysis and it is not based on logic. It's harmful and life-threatening to women and girls in need of services. That keeps my team up all night and it should keep all of you up all night as well.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Walker.

We'll go to Vicki Saunders, founder of SheEO.

Ms. Saunders.

Ms. Vicki Saunders (Founder, SheEO): Thank you very much for the invitation to be here.

Wow, that was very powerful. Thank you very much, Ms. Walker.

I'm a serial entrepreneur. I've been an entrepreneur my whole life. I'm absolutely unemployable by anyone. It's a wonder that I'm actually on a call with government at the moment, but here I am.

I have a phrase that I've been saying for a long time: "Everything's broken. What a great time to be alive." This is sort of the entrepreneurial spirit, and unfortunately we're experiencing that in such a wave right now.

On March 9-10, we had a big global summit in Toronto with SheEO, to celebrate that 2,500 Canadian women have come together and contributed \$1,100 each, each year, for the past five years to fund women-led businesses that are working on what we call the world's to-do list: the United Nations sustainable development goals. All of their businesses are focused on these. We loan out money that has been gifted by Canadian women at 0% interest, and entrepreneurs pay those loans back over five years.

Not only do these entrepreneurs get about \$100,000 each from this loan, but they get access to all of us: thousands of connected women who are well resourced. We bring our networks, our expertise, our buying power as customers and our influence to help them grow their businesses.

This extremely rich ecosystem of support has all of our ventures outperforming their peers significantly in terms of revenue, export, social impact and, most important perhaps, the creation of socially and environmentally sustainable jobs.

After five years in operation in Canada, we announced at our global summit, where the Prime Minister was actually in atten-

dance—the last big event before the pandemic—that we had reached perpetual fund status in Canada. These five-year loans are paid back with a 100% payback rate. If no one ever signed up again to contribute this capital, we would continue to fund female entrepreneurs in Canada forever with this revolving loan fund. It's a completely different way of keeping capital in flow.

We've taken this model to five different countries, and our goal is to have a million women and a billion-dollar fund that will fund 10,000 female entrepreneurs every year forever, and leave it as a legacy.

The reason we do this is that only 4% of venture capital goes to women entrepreneurs. It has been like this for decades, globally. It hasn't changed at all, despite the fact that we create business case after business case, research after research, showing the impact that women-led businesses have on the economy and how strongly they perform.

There are just so many biases built into the system, so 51% of the population gets 4% of the capital. It's statistically impossible for that to happen without massive biases being built into these systems. We know that most of the structures and systems we're living in were not designed by us or for us. Add on top of that the pandemic.

It's interesting, because I've been struggling with these systemic barriers for many, many years. I'm really a student of systems change, behaviour change, and I've been trying to redesign.... If we were starting over again, how would we redesign the system? SheEO is my response to that.

Here's what's happening in our community, which is quite unbelievable. On March 16, we gathered the 68 ventures we funded together to do a very quick triage to ask what was happening: "Are you red, yellow or green? Are you at risk, your business, based on what's going on?"

One of our ventures had lost 95% of her revenue by noon on that first day. She actually has a really innovative social hiring model where she hires people at risk of homelessness to do laundry for restaurants, and all the restaurants have shut down in Calgary. She got on this call, extremely upset, wondering how she was going to lay off these people who were already at risk of homelessness. As she struggled.... I'm a crier; everything's fine. This is normal for me.

She brought this to us and said, "What can I do?" One of the ventures in our community asked, "What do you need to keep people employed for the next month while we figure this out, and to get you to pivot?" She said her amount, and they said, "Consider it in your bank account by the end of this call."

That was the beginning of the bar just being raised in our community. Instead of helping people figure out how to lay people off, how to get government grants or how to go bankrupt, we set a bar in our community that we would not lose any jobs, and that none of our businesses would go down. We have this incredible community of people to support each other, and we've built relationships very strongly over the last five years to make that happen.

• (1730)

We are demonstrating an example of what's possible when you redesign an ecosystem in support.... It's beyond just the money—"Here's your money; off you go"—but the money and the kindness. We call this "radical generosity", to support one another.

Women are massively undercapitalized to start, and we've been hit quite hard by this pandemic. We have less runway, less support.

Honestly, just to say what another person has already said today, the one significant barrier that is really not hard to solve and that would make a fundamental difference is child care. We currently have a wage subsidy for businesses that can't be used for child care. We have an agricultural innovator in our community who can get 75% of her salary covered if she hires someone new to go out and do the work. But she wants to do the work. She doesn't want to hire somebody to go do that work; she wants to use part of the grants to pay for child care.

The fact that we're still talking about this makes me so crazy. Child care is literally the simplest policy intervention we could have that would have the biggest impact on the economy. When we made up the system.... Women weren't sitting at the table when we designed this. We're here now. Let's just change this. If one thing came out of COVID and it was this, that would be huge.

The other big thing I would say is that COVID is really giving us a chance to reboot what we value. To witness before our eyes every day the biases we've built into our systems and the impact we have by valuing jobs and growth over humans and development.... We need to rethink what we value and what matters to us and build a society that works for all.

Coming out of this pandemic, I really hope that we're only putting taxpayer money to work for the benefit of all. The investments we're currently making in AI and in our tech solutions obsession are gap-widening. It's creating more inequality in this country, and we don't seem to have any mitigating investment strategies around that.

We have a very narrow definition of innovation. We have a very narrow definition of what success is: Go big or go home. However, 98% of our economy is small and medium-sized businesses. There are only 1,200 companies in this entire country that have more than 500 employees, and half of them are foreign offices. I wonder who the people are whom you are regularly in conversation with when you're making these policies. We would like it to be more small business, because this is really a huge opportunity for all of us to rethink what we have.

Finally, I'd just like to say that at SheEO we really value diversity. We fund cis and trans women, non-binary, gender-fluid, non-conforming people from all cultural backgrounds. We're in deep re-

lationship with the indigenous community. We do calls every Sunday with 140 indigenous women entrepreneurs, getting them connected into our community, making sure they thrive so they can bring the whole next generation with them. We're building a new economic model based on radical generosity, on inclusion, centred on the critical priorities of our time that benefit all.

We're honoured to be part of this committee. I really look forward to the rest of the conversation.

I want to take a moment to thank you all very much. I know you have absolutely thankless jobs of service. I really appreciate the probably many sleepless nights you've had trying to figure this out in this unprecedented time. Thank you.

• (1735)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Saunders.

I can't help but make this point: We've been a long time getting there in child care. I was a farm leader in the eighties, and I remember in 1988 fighting with the federal government at the time for rural child care, which is very different from urban. We're still not exactly there yet.

Before I turn to the last witness, I'll lay out the questioning order for the first round of questions. We'll start with Ms. Vecchio, then Ms. Dzerowicz, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe and Ms. Mathysen. That's the starting order for questions.

We'll turn to Ms. Kamateros with the Shield of Athena family services.

Go ahead.

Ms. Melpa Kamateros (Executive Director, Shield of Athena Family Services): Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Good afternoon, members of the Standing Committee on Finance and other guests.

My name is Melpa Kamateros.

Thank you for this opportunity. I'm very honoured to be able to share some thoughts on the needs of women victims of conjugal violence during this COVID-19 pandemic.

• (1740)

[*English*]

The Chair: I wonder if I could just get you to stop for a moment, Ms. Kamateros.

We might have to get the technicians to look into this, but if you look at the bottom of your Zoom, you'll see a language circle there. To the right of "Participants" is a language symbol. If you touch that, it should say "English" or "French", and you should be on the language you're speaking.

If you're speaking French, you should have that on "French". Just try it at the bottom.

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: I'll be alternating between the French and English, but I think for the purposes of this presentation, I will keep it in English. This is fine.

The Chair: You can speak in whatever language you want, just as long as when you speak French you choose the "French" channel, and if you speak English, you have to use.... It's a real difficult problem for the translators. What happens when you're not on the same language you're speaking is that we hear the translators at the same level we hear you, and it's hard to determine.

Whatever you want to do, go ahead.

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: Okay. To make it simple, I've gone to the English.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: I'm very happy to have the presence of my colleague from London, regarding the issues of conjugal violence and the ways in which COVID has affected women.

The Shield of Athena was established in 1991. We have a network of services that include two day centres and an emergency shelter, and we are planning a second-step resource. We have, more or less, an integrated system regarding services for women and their children. We do work with vulnerable clientele and presently we give outreach and services in up to 17 languages. We see a lot of people who are in vulnerable situations, particularly women from immigrant communities, particularly women who present with severe linguistic barriers.

Forced confinement and quarantine during the pandemic may compound the issue and increase the dangers and consequences for women victims of conjugal violence. First of all, they can't access the phone in order to call for services. They can't access information. They can't access anybody to help make a protection scenario for them and their children. The pandemic limits their actions and isolates them even more.

Doubly vulnerable clientele such as the ones that we work with—women who present with severe linguistic barriers; women who do not know the system that we live in; women who do not know their rights and the laws; women who have many children or who have children with specific needs, such as autism; women who live in remote areas where there are few services—are also put in danger as their potential for accessing information and resources is even more limited.

Within this COVID pandemic, a key factor for us—and something of major importance—is the fact that women who don't speak the language have a problem accessing services.

This situation is further compounded by the difficulty women have had getting into shelters in Quebec. I don't know the solutions that are used in other provinces, but in Quebec we have quarantined

women before transferring them into the shelter system. That means another 14 days as an added step for the women before they are filtered through to the shelters. I have to say that a lot of them left the quarantine. A lot of them did go back to their abusive relationships.

A complicating factor for women who are victims of conjugal violence, who are doubly vulnerable such as immigrant women, is their economic dependency. Many women who work have had their money taken away from them. Many women who are isolated have never been allowed to work, making them totally dependent on their abuser. This is a point that has been brought up before. We have seen this situation. This is something that occurs even more now during the pandemic.

Our job as workers is to make sure that these women are finally autonomous or financially independent. I heard the other presenters speaking about trying to provide job opportunities, but a lot of the women who we're working with can't even speak their language well. Trying to access employability programs or trying to get into the system under the best of circumstances is very difficult for them. Within the context of a pandemic, you can imagine what the situation is.

Many are put on welfare. The first thing social workers do is to put the women on welfare once they get into the shelter, but how far does \$600 go?

You can say that there are child benefits, but in the case of abusive relationships and women who can't speak and can't understand the issues, the child benefits may not be given to them. They might have to sign over their child benefits if there's a joint account. In cases where the abusive partner has total custody, then he's the one who gets the benefits.

What can we do to rectify this horrible financial dependency that exists normally for all the aforementioned reasons for women who are victims of conjugal violence?

I think there has to be a financial stipend, an allocation that goes specifically to women who are victims of conjugal violence.

• (1745)

Earlier, somebody mentioned the issues surrounding single moms. Let me tell you, children are poor, but if their mom, who is a single mom, is poor, then they are very much poorer. We have to bolster the women. If the women are also victims of conjugal violence, then they need this stipend, this allocation, even more.

I just want to say a final point. Underlying issues that were important before now for victims of conjugal violence, such as the lack of social housing, are even worse now. Never mind the second-step resources. There are so few of those in Quebec. There are thousands of women who go in and out of the shelter system, and there are maybe 19 seconds to have resources. Never mind those. What about social housing?

We have women clients who are waiting for up to four years in order to access social housing. There are dire consequences for women during this period of a pandemic. We feel that we have to have a specific allocation, a specific pension, a specific fund, that goes directly to women who are victims of conjugal violence, be they single or be they single moms with their children.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much and, certainly, thank you to all the witnesses for your presentations.

We'll start with a six-minute round, starting with Ms. Vecchio and then going on to Ms. Dzerowicz.

Karen, you'll get the floor.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you very much, Wayne.

I would like to start with SheCO. If you look at the business model you have, and you were talking about that, one thing I've noticed specifically, living in Elgin—Middlesex—London and speaking to many of the businesses in my community, is that they were not eligible for many of these business supports coming out from the federal government, including the Canada emergency business account and the wage subsidy.

Did you find that? In those conversations you had with some of the women's organizations, have you found the same thing?

Ms. Vicki Saunders: Yes, and it's SheEO.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you. I'm sorry.

Ms. Vicki Saunders: That's fine: CEO, SheEO.

Yes, this has been a real challenge. I understand that it's really hard to be sitting there and go, "Okay, what should the rules be?", and try to make this up to work for everybody. I appreciate the challenge around this, but a lot of our ventures were not eligible. There was this tiny window. Your revenue had to go down by x in a certain period of time, and if it did, then you could benefit from some of this funding. That was a major challenge for a lot of them. Some of the businesses that are actually growing and could be hiring more couldn't get some of the supports that were there.

That was an issue, but the bigger issue is really the rent abatement and the challenges around rent. That didn't flow from the federal government's intention and desired outcome through the provinces. This is where we're going to see a massive ripple effect. We're going to see at least 50% of our small businesses go down and not be able to come back because of that.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Unfortunately, I totally agree with you. That's something that's.... It's great to see everybody on the finance committee today, but the one thing I'm hearing is on the delivery of that money and how we can get it directly to the tenant. I've heard from many businesses. Thank you very much.

I'm going to move over to Megan Walker, of course, and Megan, I know what great work you have done. Specifically, I want to look at the COVID-19 response and the shelter money that was given out.

Ms. Kamateros, maybe you can answer this as well.

Megan, I recognize that when the money came out, the \$50 million, your agency was one of the agencies that did not receive any of the money for shelters, although you have been providing shelter space. Can you provide me a reason why you would not have been eligible and share with us some information on what you have been dealing with during this pandemic?

• (1750)

Ms. Megan Walker: It's a great question, and I wish I had an answer for you. We've been trying to get this information for many months.

We are not a shelter. We provide emergency access to women and girls who need long-term counselling, support and advocacy.

However, during COVID, there was no shelter space. We have a great relationship with our police service in London, and we knew that if police were responding to a 911 call and a woman needed to leave that minute, that officer needed to have a place to take her. We negotiated in the city of London with various facilities, so that women could be taken with their children immediately to a safe place where they could stay until we could find them an alternative space and they could receive ongoing counselling and support.

That is not funded by the government and is not seen as providing shelter space.

With respect to sexual assault, of course, we provide many women with services to assist with being sexually assaulted. We do not have sexual assault in our name. I don't think the government understands enough about the work we do to understand the relationship between sexual assault and trafficking, for instance, childhood sexual assault in the women who come to us, and also the overlap between all of the areas of male violence against women, by the abuser at home sexually assaulting her or her children, or being sexually assaulted by a stranger or in a dating situation.

I have no understanding as to why we didn't receive any money. Originally we thought, well, we're sort of stand-alone. We're probably one of the only agencies that provide the level of advocacy that we do. However, I later found out from Peter's office that in their research, they determined that at least 600 other agencies also did not receive the funding.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you very much for that. I was speaking to a sexual assault centre in Vancouver where another 500 that are within that network also did not receive funding.

Ms. Kamateros, were you able to receive any funding from the federal government for shelters, or anything to support you that way?

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: I have to say—and I just referred to my colleague, Ms. Walker—this is the confusion that exists currently at the governmental level. We have a network of services that include two centres and a shelter. Our shelter got the emergency funding. Our centres did not. This is, I would say, an old question that relates to what kinds of services can be effective for victims of violence.

We deal with different clientele at the shelter. We deal with different clientele at the centres. Both services are extremely necessary, and they target different populations. For example, at the shelters, it's mostly women in crisis, and at the centres, it's women referred mostly from the social services. Last year, 71% of our clients at the centres were direct referrals. This is precisely because of the language factors. We have the interventions in many languages, so that's the issue there.

Although the shelter did get the money, people should rethink the types of services that are beneficial for women who are victims and perceive them as integrated.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Wraparound....

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: Yes. Thank you.

The Chair: This is the last question, Karen.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I'm going to focus on human trafficking and then go back to Ms. Walker on this.

Specifically, we know that we were expecting the money to start rolling out. What do you see as the next steps to making sure we can make these efforts so that the federal government...? I know that all members of Parliament in London are listening. I know we are all in this, because we recognize the great work that you do. How can we continue to push forward your efforts for what you do for human trafficking? For all of the organizations across Canada, how can we get this message to the government that the money needs to come out now?

• (1755)

Ms. Megan Walker: I appreciate all of the MPs in London who have worked collaboratively towards a solution. We're very grateful in London, because we have a very supportive and generous community that so far has provided us with three months of payment for service to this very marginalized and vulnerable population.

Basically, I think there are people in positions of power who don't understand this issue, who don't understand that it could be any one of these panellists, including the MPs, who could lose a daughter into the horrific world of sex trafficking. Once those daughters are lost and gone....

They fly in from all over Canada to London to ask us to help them find their daughters. Can you imagine? They're looking at videos on advertising sites to determine if their daughters are alive or dead. That's the reality. What we know is that this is not a single-city issue. The women who come to the London Abused Women's Centre later go to services in Nova Scotia. They're in Edmonton, in Montreal.

What we need is to make sure that every single woman in this situation has access to service. There is no wrong door, but right now the doors are slammed shut by the government. We can't even get them to find the right door.

The Chair: We will have to end it there. We are very substantially over.

We turn now to Ms. Dzerowicz, who will be followed by Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Go ahead, Julie.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you so much.

I just want to say what an unbelievable panel we have here today. I really want to thank you for your respective leadership and for your unbelievably hard work. I really appreciate your being here today.

I'd like to get to three different questions, and I don't have a lot of time. I'm going to start with Ms. Scott at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and move into a question around child care.

You talked—and I think all the presenters have talked—a lot about the impact of COVID on women. I think you've talked about how the vast majority of those on our front lines and essential workers are women. I think you know, Ms. Scott, that in 2005-06 the Liberal government of the day signed a number of bilateral agreements with provinces. We tried to bring in a national child care program at the time. The NDP, unfortunately, didn't support our minority government at that time, so we fell and we ended up with a Conservative government that did not follow through on that national child care program.

We are where we are here today, and I can assure you there's not one female MP in office right now who doesn't want to move immediately to a national child care plan.

What is the model that you're proposing? One of the big issues is the delivery mechanism, that it has to be delivered through the provinces, because education and day care are in their bucket. What would be the model that you would propose moving forward?

Ms. Katherine Scott: Child care is critical to any recovery. It's necessary. Simply put, women will not be able to go back to the labour force. The child care sector has been mobilizing in different provinces and putting together plans, not only provincially but federally. Certainly, the current ask of the federal government, as I understand it, is to contribute up to 75% of the full operating costs of licensed child care, conditional on provinces covering the remaining 25%.

The concern now is that monies are needed immediately to stabilize the supply of child care. Many of these municipal, non-profit, private sector centres have lost parent fees over the last number of months. They are in financially precarious situations, and many will not be able to reopen, as per the statistics I alluded to. They need an immediate infusion of cash to sustain their businesses and also to prepare for what will be coming, which is modifying their models of practice to accommodate what will be a year or two years of new methods of delivering social supports and community supports that will require physical distancing. How are the many child care centres that don't have access to those types of resources going to do that?

Certainly, the child care community is looking for the federal government to step up in a leadership role. Historically it has delivered money for child care, such as through the ECE monies back in the early 2000s. You referred to that. Under the Chrétien government, there were transfers designated for that.

There is concern about how you target that, in terms of supply in particular. We're not looking for more money for parent subsidies. The question, critically, is having supply and stable supply. Those centres need those resources to expand. I think it's really important to attach requirements around what it will mean in terms of staffing ratios and quality of care.

This is the opportunity to lay the foundation for a pan-Canadian response, the "child care for all" model that we're going to require.

• (1800)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you so much. What I hear is the 75%-25% model and then national standards.

My next question is to Ms. Saunders.

Hi, Vicki. It's really nice to see you. Thanks so much for being here. I'm just going to head right to the question around rent, because that's disturbing. I think you know the model we've taken on. We've tried to implement our programs as quickly as possible and then to make adjustments as we go along.

Is it that landlords are just not interested in providing support, or is it that it's too difficult for them to actually apply? Do you have a remedy you might want to suggest?

I will have one more question before I get to my last question.

Ms. Vicki Saunders: I think there is a mix.

Again, as with everything else, there isn't just one thing that's happening, such as all landlords doing x or all landlords doing y . I think, for various different reasons, in general a lot of landlords are just not applying for it or using it. They already are getting a benefit. We have the same issue with our own landlord. We are not being given any abatement whatsoever, despite the fact that they don't have to pay their taxes right now and they're getting a 25% cut.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: What's the solution?

Ms. Vicki Saunders: Again, if this could have gone directly to individuals, I think it would have been easier, instead of having to go through the landlord piece.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: As we're moving into the rebuilding phase, you've mentioned that 51% of the population gets 4% of the VC funding. What can our federal government do moving forward? You know that we've already put in \$2 billion for the women entrepreneurship strategy. What more do you think we need to do to be able to continue to help women entrepreneurs get far more than the 4% they get right now?

Ms. Vicki Saunders: I think the big challenge with this is that we have a very narrow definition of what innovation is. It focuses very much on tech and on "go big". There are tons of other kinds of innovation out there. There are all kinds of social innovations that aren't captured within this element.

BDC has crazy rules, with this personalized collateral and high interest rates, and most of the money has gone through.... I under-

stand that you have to put your money through institutions that can push it out, and you need someone to do that, but the rules of engagement are not good enough for women entrepreneurs in general. It's partly because of our definitions around innovation and what we're supporting and what we call innovation in Canada.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: That's helpful to us—

The Chair: I'll give you one quick question, Julie.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you.

Ms. Labun, thank you for your very passionate presentation.

There was a negotiated top-up between the federal government and the provinces. Was that helpful in any way to the workers within your home?

Ms. Nina Labun: Yes, and thank you for asking about that. The Province of Manitoba just announced today the rollout of that financial top-up. I do think that will be very helpful for the direct care staff. Some of the parameters are obviously exclusionary—it's income-tested—but hopefully.... It is something that my staff certainly are waiting for and looking for.

The Chair: Thanks, all of you.

We have Mr. Ste-Marie, followed by Ms. Mathysen.

Go ahead, Gabriel. You're on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, I want to thank you for your presentations. They're certainly some of the most moving and touching presentations that we've heard since the start of COVID-19. They were also very informative.

My first questions are for Ms. Kamateros.

Regarding conjugal violence during COVID-19, can you elaborate on what you're seeing on the ground? Are you seeing more reports, or are you concerned that there may be more unreported conjugal violence?

[*English*]

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: According to Canadian statistics, only 30% of the cases of conjugal violence are declared. The underlying majority of 70% of the cases never are, and this is for many reasons: the shame, the secrecy, the silence and the fear that still surrounds this topic, even today in the 21st century.

With women who cannot speak the language.... I always revert to this, because for this clientele, they are called doubly vulnerable clientele. You see, if I speak English and you speak French, and somebody else speaks Swahili, Kirundi or another language, then there's no equality of access. There's no choice of action.

Here in Canada, unfortunately, in the 21st century, there are women victims of conjugal violence who still do not have that equality, that choice of action that either I or somebody else might have because we speak English or French. This is what I've seen in the field.

We presume also that because we have such wonderful services in Quebec and in Canada—we've presented many times internationally on the services we have here at home—it means immediate access. It doesn't. There is a large sector of the population that does not know and cannot access. There is this inequality. This is what I've seen in the field.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you.

You spoke of the lack of housing for abused women and the lack of shelters and safe houses. You also spoke of the significance of the social housing agreement. In recent years, a significant amount of money has been announced. However, unfortunately, the agreement between Ottawa and Quebec still hasn't been signed. We hope that this will happen soon and that some money will be freed up.

You said that there was a housing shortage before the COVID-19 pandemic and that, since the current crisis, the situation is even worse. How are the instructions for physical distancing during the pandemic affecting the housing situation?

My colleague Andréanne Larouche, the member for Shefford, suggested that, since hotels are currently underused, the government could act as a facilitator to ensure that hotel rooms serve as emergency shelters for women and their families who are being abused. What do you think about this?

[*English*]

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: As I've said, the underlying issues that were there prior to COVID are still there. One of these pressing issues is social housing. In Quebec now they have established what we call alternative housing, which includes some rooms in hotels.

However, a key problem with having the rooms is that you don't have the services. A key issue that is also associated with the social housing is that if you give the money to increase the social housing and to increase the space in shelters—and our shelter and others were working at 105% occupancy rate last year—you have to also give money to provide the necessary services. A key problem with the hotels they have set up in Quebec is the lack of services. For example, if a woman is referred to the hotel and stays in quarantine, she has to stay there for 14 days. It's too long a time. If there's nobody to speak to her, she leaves. Half of the people who went there left, actually. It's an issue.

Overall, I would say that funding is the issue, funding for the social housing and funding also for the services.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you. That's very informative.

How can the federal government provide support and help reduce conjugal violence? You spoke of funding for the services that you just mentioned and for more housing. You also spoke of an allowance that would go directly to victims of conjugal violence. That's also very valuable.

Can you elaborate on what the government can do?

[*English*]

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: As I said in my presentation, the funding for the social housing and for the services is lacking. It has come now within a pandemic, so we're scrambling to make things happen. What we really need though, also, is more funding for the victims themselves. The situation of being in conjugal violence is an emergency situation. It is a situation that affects the well-being, the human rights and the civil rights of a person who is living in Canada.

Women, according to our experience, who are financially dependent and who come into our services with nothing need financing in order to be able to provide services for themselves and to be able to support their children. We believe strongly that the federal government should provide some sort of allowance or financial contribution to victims because they need this. They need this.

Given the experience that any of the hundred or so shelters in Quebec have or that the shelters all over Canada have, I think they would all say the same thing: Please give financial support to all victims of conjugal violence.

• (1810)

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I want to inform you that I'll once again be speaking as the Bloc Québécois representative in the second round.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thanks, Gabriel.

We will turn to Ms. Mathysen, who will be followed by Ms. Harder.

Go ahead, Lindsay.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, all, for joining us today and sharing what you've presented. It's really clear that this pandemic has certainly been having long-term gendered impacts, and with everything you are doing within that sector to help women, your sector is so crucial.

Ms. Scott, from the numbers you showed us today, we see that many women, obviously, work in those low-wage precarious jobs. They don't have the benefits that people with higher-paying jobs have. They don't have the sick leave benefits. You mentioned the universal paid sick leave, so as a New Democrat I'm really happy to hear that.

How would you recommend putting in place that paid sick leave to best benefit women, and has your organization gone through research and looked at how that could be best implemented in Canada?

Ms. Katherine Scott: Thanks so much for that question.

No, the whole issue of paid sick leave obviously has risen to the top of considerations. We're looking at different models now about how you would implement that. Certainly that's been an issue on our radar. My colleagues in British Columbia are looking at different models, and also in Ontario. We don't have a particular model that we would be proposing now. It remains a critical problem.

Canada, actually comparatively, has really fallen quite behind in terms of the amount of paid leave typically that's available to Canadian workers. The issue here, of course, is that such large numbers of workers don't have access either. They might have access to the EI system but many workers actually don't qualify for EI. It's estimated that only 40% of workers do.

The sick leave there isn't widely available. Labour and employment legislation and regulations at the provincial level don't provide necessary leave as well, particularly for precarious, marginalized or migrant workers, which is another critical group of workers who are hugely vulnerable right now and are being felled by the illness.

Yes, we're looking at different models. Hopefully that will be one of the lasting impacts of the model. We have to revisit all of our income security support systems. This has graphically revealed the gaps and the failure of our social security system safety net to protect upwards of a third of our workforce that is engaged in part-time, precarious, temporary contract work.

That's really something that we have to pay attention to, going forward, as we start to track the polarization between workers: those of us who can stay home and do our work and enjoy that privilege, versus the many workers in Canada who simply cannot do that. Reforming labour legislation and income security has to be a piece of what we're doing.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Yes, absolutely. That divide between those who have and those who have not was certainly evident before, but it is growing.

Just quickly, and this can be answered by whoever wishes to address it. There's been a lot of talk about child care. I do find it interesting that there was a hit, considering there was 13 years of a Liberal majority governments where they chose not to provide that child care, and another four years of a majority government just recently where choices could be made. That federal leadership is extremely necessary.

I think we've seen a bit of shifting of that lack of leadership, trying to put it onto the provinces. Would Ms. Scott or whoever else

like to discuss specifically the creation of a pan-Canadian child care network and system, so that a lot of the different provinces aren't unequal? They would ensure that we retain those high-skilled workers who aren't paid a decent amount, so that we ensure that monies are provided to increase the spaces available.

• (1815)

Ms. Katherine Scott: I can speak briefly to that since I already alluded to it. I'll leave the floor for someone else.

Obviously, child care is critical. We have a model in Canada that certainly isn't worthy of emulation. It's largely driven by private fees, the parent fees and the like. It's enormously expensive. The research that we do every year where we survey over 10,000 child care centres and whatnot to produce the child care fees report speaks to the very high level. Next to shelter, it's one of the highest expenses, certainly, for families.

With the idea of stabilizing that money, we really have to direct money. The federal government has a critical role to play in channelling those monies to centres to stabilize, so they are not directly reliant on parent fees. We really have to get into child care and understand it is an essential public service and start to fund it like that.

The Chair: Does someone else want to add to that answer?

Ms. Mathysen, do you want to go again? You have a quick question.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Absolutely.

A lot of the women who work in organizations that I've spoken to consistently struggle with that idea of project funding. I know, Ms. Walker, this was a key example of what your organization faced in terms of it being the end of one program and the fund associated with it. Obviously the services and what you provide to the community needed to continue.

I've heard consistently that project funding alone is not sufficient. It wasn't sufficient before and it certainly isn't sufficient now when we live in this pandemic world where you are facing emergencies, crises and situations you never thought of. You can't allocate any sort of core funding that you might have had before or should have to some of those services that you need.

Do you support converting the capacity-building fund grants to more of a core funding allocation? How would that help support your organization?

Again, perhaps other people want to address that, not just the London Abused Women's Centre.

Ms. Megan Walker: Lindsay, I'll say something really quickly, which is that if it is the government's priority [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] in all of its forms, then it should be the government's responsibility to ensure ongoing access to funding, because if you close a program, first of all, it's very costly, then, if you have to re-open it. Secondly, it leaves women and girls destitute, with nowhere else to go. In cases of trafficking, they return to their trafficker. In cases of intimate partner violence, they return to their abuser.

I've heard from the Liberal government many times that ending violence against women and freeing women from oppression is a priority. It can't be just spoken about. It must be backed with funding.

The Chair: We'll now go to five-minute rounds.

We'll start with Ms. Harder, followed by Mr. McLeod.

Go ahead, Ms. Harder.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you so much to all of you for joining us today.

One of the last things that the status of women committee looked at about a year ago and submitted a report on was shelters and the fact that there is in fact a lack of funding and a lack of policy from the government in terms of supporting the vulnerable women who would use such centres.

Further to that, we've once again seen a cut, actually in the midst of this pandemic, where, Ms. Walker, you've said that your centre isn't receiving funding. We know of about 600-plus centres across the country that are not receiving funding. This seems to be contrary to the report and what it called for just last spring. What a time to cut or to reduce that funding when we're in the middle of a pandemic and we're seeing a dramatic increase in domestic violence against women and girls.

Further to that, funding was also cut with regard to conquering or going after those who would victimize women and girls through sex trafficking. Ms. Walker, you talked a bit about this and the impact it has had on your organization, and about the fact that it has of course stagnated or threatened to stagnate some of the really great work that you folks are doing there in London, Ontario.

Ms. Walker, just to begin with, I wonder if you could address this misnomer that trafficking happens in other countries and perhaps, the perception is, even in developed countries, but surely not in Canada. We know that is not in fact the case, but I think it's really difficult for many people to wrap their heads around what trafficking looks like here in our own country. There was a recent report just this winter that came out from CTV news. They reported that 93% of those who are trafficked within this country are in fact Canadian citizens.

I wonder if you could shed light on what it looks like to be an individual who is trafficked within the nation of Canada. In a really practical sense, how does that work?

• (1820)

Ms. Megan Walker: It's very easy. In fact, since COVID, we see all sorts of children at home because they're no longer in school,

their parents are working from home and they're on the Internet quite a bit.

We've actually received six phone calls now from parents who, since COVID, have had their children, their underage girls, lured online by a man who pretends to be a young boy interested in the girl and who asks her to do sexual things online and remove her clothes. He then uses that against her, indicating that if she doesn't provide him with more, he will call her parents and tell them or, also, he has oftentimes seen other family members in the videos and he will lure her younger sister. This is going on every day, on an all-day basis.

London is a hub for trafficking, so I'm very familiar with what happens. It's partly because we have a college and a university and also because we have easy access off Highway 401 and a number of entry points. This is happening across our country. It used to be that traffickers would traffic guns or drugs, but that meant they always had to go back and buy more drugs or guns to traffic. Now they can lure women and girls and not pay one cent for them, traffic them and make their living. They're making approximately \$300,000 per year per woman and girl.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Wow.

Ms. Walker, the fund that was put forward in order to support the combat of human trafficking in 2009 was \$57.22 million, which is a significant amount of money. Certainly there could be more, but now there's zero due to the reduction by this government.

You've outlined a few ways that women and girls can be trafficked. Further to that, it's my understanding that women and girls can also be trafficked through their schools, in shopping malls. You mentioned colleges, universities, online, massage parlours. All of these serve as venues through which women and girls are trafficked.

You mentioned earlier in your testimony that they are not actually paid; it is the person who traffics them who is paid. These women and girls unfortunately go without a sum of money.

What I find interesting is that the current government is giving a wage subsidy to many of these organizations that are responsible for the trafficking of these women and girls, but providing zero when it comes to helping the women and girls themselves.

Can you comment on that further?

Ms. Megan Walker: Well, we always say that all girls and women are potential victims of violence for no other reason than the sex they were born with. Traffickers are searching for girls to go across the country to sell to be raped basically. The younger the girl is, the more money that trafficker will get, and if she's underage and a virgin, he's hit the jackpot.

That's the reality of the work that we do every single day. When women and girls who are trafficked walk into our office, they largely come because of referrals from police. They don't want to stay; they want to go home. They miss their moms, their dads. They don't want to be used in this way any longer.

This is a very serious issue, and if there is no funding to address it, as I said earlier, these girls will go right back to their traffickers. Trafficking is a very complicated issue, and I would love to have hours to be able to explain it.

Traffickers know that recruiting other girls is illegal, so they use other women within what they call their "stable"—like animals, their stable of women—to go out to do the recruiting. Oftentimes you'll read that it's young women who are being arrested and charged with recruitment actions, and that's because they're termed "the bottom bitch" and they're turned out to do that very job.

This is a crisis. We have a crisis. We are losing girls and women. We are working in youth detention centres where traffickers are planting girls there to recruit the girls when they come out. This is a very serious issue.

• (1825)

The Chair: Thank you, both.

Mr. McLeod.

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the presenters today. This is a very interesting discussion, for sure.

I am the member of Parliament for the Northwest Territories. I represent a large indigenous population; over half of my constituency is indigenous. When word of the pandemic started to surface, we were all very concerned. The history of epidemics and pandemics shows that indigenous people always pay the highest price. A lot of times—almost all the time—we've been left to fend for ourselves, with very little government support.

We've been quite happy, then, to see the investment made by this government. It's very significant. It's actually historic. Over 500 shelters and sexual assault centres have been funded. Money is flowing to the north. We have many people who are unemployed, and we've seen some really significant and new types of investment in the north. We've seen it across the country, for that matter.

In terms of indigenous community support, we've seen money for on the land programs, which has really helped us out. Our friendship centres got support. That really helped us out. This is the first time we're seeing that type of support. It's bringing communities together. At the same time, more people are venturing out into the wilderness and back on the land than I've ever seen. It's been a long, long time. It's allowed our communities to do different things. It's allowed our communities to restrict alcohol sales. It's allowed our communities to put more security on our highways. It's stopped a lot of the bootleggers and drug dealers. Of course, we're able to do that because we're fairly isolated. We've also been able to set up on the land counselling camps, where people who are traumatized, people who are having a difficult time, can go and talk to elders and

talk to some of the knowledge-keepers. It's working really well for us.

I don't think it's the same in the south. Different issues challenge people in urban centres versus rural. I know that there are differences when it comes to how indigenous women are dealing with the pandemic versus non-indigenous.

To SheEO, is there any information pointing to the fact that indigenous women and non-indigenous women are affected differently by the pandemic?

Ms. Vicki Saunders: Absolutely. I think part of it is access to markets and relationships with customers.

We've been working very closely with the Indigenous LIFT Collective and Teara Fraser. She's one of the activators in our network. We started doing calls a couple of months before the pandemic: How do we create the conditions for indigenous women in business to thrive? Teara is somebody you may have read about. She's the first woman to start an indigenous woman-owned airline out of B.C. Imagine having started an airline just before this happened. What a complete nightmare. She has been facing deep challenges to try to make flights up to remote communities. Women in our community across the country have been keeping her business alive and crowdfunding her flights to get resources going into other areas.

The story of that led more indigenous women to start joining our calls every Sunday for a couple of hours. Now we have up to 140 women joining these calls. All of them are indigenous women of business from across the country. They are now starting to come into these regular activator calls that we have once a week, where we practise asking and giving: What is it that you need and how can we support you? We are literally one step removed from whatever we need, whenever we come into community together.

This sort of deep relationship-building and creating trust between settlers, white women settlers, other women of colour and indigenous women is heavy lifting. It's relationship-building. We have created some significant impact and growth in these indigenous businesses, and we hope to really scale that out. We're doing that in other countries we're in as well, and are now starting to cross-pollinate with indigenous entrepreneurs.

There are so many business practices that come in indigenous culture that we need to pay attention to—

• (1830)

Mr. Michael McLeod: I just wanted to ask—

The Chair: A very quick question, Michael.

Mr. Michael McLeod: Yes.

When I got elected in 2015, I met with a lot of women's organizations, the Native Women's Association and many others in my riding, and the money was practically non-existent. I know that in every budget we've had more and more investment. In 2019, we had \$160 million over five years for women's programs, but at the same time, now that COVID has set in, I hear from our elders and some of the people in our communities that there seems to be an anxiety in the air. There seems to be a level of stress.

For example, in my little community, we've had three funerals in the last 10 days—not COVID-related—and that's unusual for us. There's something going on. I'm not sure what factors related to COVID-19 might contribute to an increase in some of the social issues, including gender-based violence and intimate partner violence.

The Chair: Does anybody want to take that on?

Ms. Megan Walker: I'll respond quickly.

In trafficking, for instance, we know that 50% of trafficked girls and women are indigenous. We work very closely with our indigenous nations around the city of London, because we're very committed to reconciliation and learning from the elders of the first nations. They continue to report to us on an ongoing basis on the trauma of the lived experiences of indigenous peoples that continues to present itself in their lives.

I think colonization has presented a lot of harm to communities across Canada. It's very difficult when we hear our first nations people telling us that they have no drinking water and that the funding has still not come to allow them that very basic right to clean drinking water.

These are issues that are very serious for indigenous communities across the country and need to be addressed.

The Chair: Thanks, all of you.

Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the incredible witnesses we have at the finance committee today. Your opening remarks were very powerful. Thank you very much for those.

My questions are for Nina Labun, the CEO of Donwood Manor Personal Care Home here in northeast Winnipeg.

Nina, thanks so much to you and to Donwood for the extraordinary care you have been giving the residents over the course of this pandemic and for the past 50 years. As we know, it's your 50-year anniversary this year.

Can you tell the committee what the experience has been for your workforce? What has the impact been on them during this pandemic? We know, as you mentioned in your opening remarks, that the nurses and the support staff are predominantly women. What has been the impact on them?

Ms. Nina Labun: Actually, the previous MP alluded to this. It's hard to put a pulse on it, but there is a really significant amount of underlying stress and anxiety that this has caused. You see it in perhaps the concrete ways of trying to juggle child care, increased sick

time and overtime. I really think that the pandemic has again illuminated what we have known about long-term care for a very long time. It works because of the resourcefulness of the staff who are in the system, and at this point that we're in right now, it's been pushed past that.

• (1835)

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you.

What would you say that the impact has been on residents? Has there been a difference in the impact on the women residents versus the male residents?

Ms. Nina Labun: For sure. Just speaking from my own care home, 85% of our resident population are females. The average age is 91 in one site, so it's a very frail senior population. Sadly, we also have seen an increased number of deaths in the last 12 weeks. They're not COVID-related, but loneliness has an impact on one's health. It's been incredibly difficult for our female seniors and also for their female caregivers and family informal caregivers who cannot come into the home. All those unmeasured impacts are really difficult.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Yes, we've been hearing that anecdotally across Kildonan—St. Paul, from folks who have very senior residents and their family in long-term care homes. Their loneliness is palpable, and it's been very challenging.

Have there been increased financial impacts on Donwood to accommodate for the health recommendations of physical distancing, PPE, extra hygiene requirements and perhaps staff shortages?

Ms. Nina Labun: Yes, it's very significant.

We're at about week 12 here in Manitoba. We're looking at about \$120,000 of cost that we've been able to track thus far. I have a purchase agreement, a service arrangement with our government, that requires us to have no deficit at fiscal year-end, which is truly not going to be possible because of circumstances out of our control.

I really think there needs to be a look at concrete funding to fill those gaps. I'm not alone. Every site has just done what's needed to protect the seniors in its care and prioritized that over the dollars.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you.

Have you had any difficulty accessing PPE for your staff and residents?

Ms. Nina Labun: We have not, amazingly, which is due in part to our incredible nursing leadership and ingenuity in making simple things. People may not be aware, but hand sanitizer only works in certain dispensers, so we get really creative to make sure that our staff have the protection they need.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: That's very good to hear. I know that not all personal care homes have had that same positive experience. That's a relief.

We know that personal care homes have been disproportionately impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic, where half of the deaths in Canada have been attributed to elderly care homes.

What role do you see the government playing for elderly care homes, moving forward?

Ms. Nina Labun: I'm a firm believer that the quality of work life impacts the quality of care that will be provided in long-term care. Although it's not currently federally funded in terms of long-term care specifically, a key area that can be looked at is the regulation of care in long-term care sites, specifically the regulation of the currently unregulated care providers. PSWs, health care aides across Canada have very minimal educational preparation, yet they are the hands and feet of care in our facilities. They constitute most of our workforce.

We all know that [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] seniors care. They're not given the skills, education and resources to be well-prepared for the roles that we're asking them to fulfill.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Nina.

The Chair: Ms. Labun, I believe you mentioned, in the beginning, the number of people working two jobs, mainly women. We've seen that a lot in the homes in Quebec and elsewhere across the country. What's the reason for that?

I've always assumed the reason for people having to work two jobs is that the business doesn't want to pay benefits. In terms of your presentation, what is the underlying reason? If a person is working in a home, why wouldn't they just be working in the one home, paid decent wages and getting the benefits? Here they are working in two homes to survive, which also puts people at a greater risk in terms of the transmission of disease.

Ms. Nina Labun: There are lots of complexities to the HR piece and the collective agreements that we have to fit within in terms of the types of positions we have and are able to create. Most of my staff will have multiple jobs, for example, a 0.4, a 0.6 and a 0.8, and they'll add up their positions across sites.

A few weeks ago, Manitoba moved to a single site employer for long-term care. As a compromise and as a way for women to not be impacted by a salary cut, they are now allowed to hold a 1.3 full-time position at one site. It is because of remuneration. It's insufficient pay to support a family.

• (1840)

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We'll turn then to Ms. Koutrakis. Given the time, we'll have to go to about four two-minute sessions after that.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all our witnesses today for your compelling comments.

I'm a new member. This is my first mandate as an MP and the first time I'm participating on a committee as important as this finance committee. I have to tell you, some of the comments that I heard here today have made me scratch my head a little bit, because I'm part of a government that, I think, has provided historic funding, and it would be a miss on my part if I did not outline for the

record some of the funding that we've already done. We haven't cut funding. We have created more than 7,000 shelter spaces since taking office. The original goal was to do that by 2027. We've already met that.

A third of the national housing strategy investments have gone to benefit women. We have funded more than 420 shelters and 90 sexual assault centres, and we have \$10 million slated to support women's organizations that fall outside of those categories. We provided new funding in response to COVID-19. We provided Quebec alone with \$6.46 million on April 22. We have provided \$4.25 million of that to 118 shelters and \$790,000 to 49 sexual assault centres. However, as this is jurisdictional and all provinces are very sensitive to this, Quebec insisted that all funding flow through that province. In the budget of 2019, we had \$160 million earmarked over five years for women's programs.

Can we do more? Can we do better? Absolutely. All governments can do more and do better, but I think that this government has stepped up and has provided, has heard and has listened. Our programs have flexibility. I'm sorry if I'm speaking so passionately, but I believe so much in what we are doing that I had to set the record straight.

My question is for Ms. Kamateros. Thank you very much for your compelling comments and for all the work that you and your team do at Shield of Athena. I've known your organization for many years and I congratulate you for all the good work, as I congratulate everybody here for the hard work and great work that they do.

Several times, you mentioned specific funding for an allowance. Can you elaborate a little bit more on what that would look like? What would an adequate amount or schedule of payments be? Have you or has an organization that you know of done a study that could come up with a figure that would make sense?

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: Whatever I've said is based on the experience we have had when women have come to us at the shelter or at the centres. A lot of women do have jobs, but if a woman doesn't have a job and has been accustomed to being financially dependent, the first thing we do is to get her onto welfare. This welfare is \$600. If she has to pay \$500 a month for rent because there is not enough affordable social housing, then that's an issue for her. If she has children, that issue is compounded.

I would say that if a study were to be done, it should be to look at a sliding scale of needs, because we don't want abuse of the system either. This is not what we're advocating for. We have to make the women autonomous. That's a basic thing in the feminist perspective as well: How can a woman become autonomous and not fall back into an abusive situation? I'm sure that a study could be done, but \$600 of welfare is not enough.

On the other side of the spectrum, what are we supposed to do with women who come to us in order to get more funding? Are we supposed to tell them how they can get money in cash and that they should not divulge money that they get? The circle of poverty that a lot of women who are also victims of conjugal violence have is a circle that should be broken at some point. Again, conjugal violence is not a poor woman's issue; it's just that women who are poor feel it so much more.

What can we do? We have received help at the level of the shelters and we have to thank the government for that, because every shelter in Quebec got, through the funding, approximately \$50,000 for the COVID situation. But let's see what we can do for the woman, the victim, herself. Is there something that we can provide her in terms of financial assistance that will help her on her road towards autonomy? This is so important and it's particularly important for women who don't have the choice, which is what I was trying to describe before.

No, I have no perspective on what this issue would be, but I'm sure that if we set up a committee, we could arrive at some logical outcome. However, there is a crying need for the women who are victims of conjugal violence to get this financial stipend or allowance. I don't know what to call it.

● (1845)

The Chair: Thank you both. Annie, I'm sorry we'll have to end it there. We're over substantially.

We will go to five two-minute rounds.

Mr. Ste-Marie, Ms. Mathysen, Ms. Sahota, Mr. Fragiskatos and Ms. May.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll start by responding to the statements made by my colleague, Ms. Koutrakis. From my perspective, the issue is that the federal government significantly withdrew from its role in health and social services, basically in the mid-1990s, to take care of the deficit. It no longer took care of social housing. It no longer took care of funding for health and social services. Since then, there has been an issue. The Liberal government has made reinvestment announcements. However, these are nothing compared to the cuts that it made a few decades earlier.

There's an excellent book on the topic entitled *Combating Poverty*. The book shows that, after this, the level of poverty soared, particularly in the case of single women, and even more so in the case of women heads of families. However, Quebec was an exception. With limited means, the government implemented a family policy, which is very effective. The policy helps women remain active in the labour market. My question for Ms. Scott is related to this issue.

Ms. Scott, your presentation was full of valuable information. In terms of this issue, you showed that, because of the current COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of women are at risk of permanently leaving the labour market. We know the long-term solution, which is the Quebec model, the comprehensive family policy. In the short term, what can be done?

I'll ask you a second question right away. In your opinion, does the \$500 million invested by the federal government in health care systems seem sufficient, or should the federal government be doing more?

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Scott.

Ms. Katherine Scott: Yes, the model in Quebec stands out. Its family policy, back 20 years, has been very successful in mobilizing and encouraging women's participation in the labour market and there's great research demonstrating the drop in child poverty and the like.

The key piece there was \$7 a day child care, in large measure. I've noticed they've got a slightly different model now and a new system of credits, but Quebec is really an outlier in Canada in putting together the pieces of a comprehensive child care policy that facilitated a rise in employment. You see that in the statistics up until recently. Quebec's done really well in this past decade.

I think more resources need to be put into that as an important piece of the recovery plan, child care as well as income security supports to assist families. The concern is about women and whether they'll be coming back to work. Without a strong public health initiative like testing and all the like, workers will not feel comfortable returning to work. I think that's a key piece.

The second piece is whether women's jobs will be there. The third piece is the care economy and what kind of infrastructure is in place to facilitate their participation.

This is an opportunity for Canada to get out ahead of this.

● (1850)

The Chair: Thank you both. We may have to tighten it up a little to get everybody in.

Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I would like to go back to Ms. Scott. She didn't have a chance to address the question about women and women's organizations dealing with the systemic barriers that they have to face and the conversion of the capacity-building fund grants to more stable, reliable funding by the federal government.

What do you have to say about that?

Ms. Katherine Scott: Absolutely, I acknowledge the previous comment that additional monies have been channelled and are flowing to the women-serving community and the women's movement in the past number of years. Those have been short-term project monies.

In terms of building capacity, core funding is a critical component. That's true in the non-profit sector generally. We've been in a crisis of unstable funding in an enormously important sector and it's not sustainable. Core funding can be a change that we look at. Transforming the capacity grant, as a proposal on the table, is a step in the right direction.

The Chair: You have time for a quick question, Lindsay.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Ms. Labun, we've put forward the idea that there have to be national standards for long-term care linked to the Canada Health Act. In terms of that equality of care and fairness, it links to a guarantee for seniors in long-term care that they will have that high quality of access, guaranteed to families, that they'll be cared for, and certainly guaranteed to workers.

In terms of reforms that you see, how do you think that can fit into what you need and what you are working with directly?

Ms. Nina Labun: Thank you for that comment and observation. I think that's critical. Foundationally investment in capital is equally critical. I included a few examples for you in my presentation, and I could include many more. Again, I would suggest that women are being incredibly resourceful in their caregiving in an environment that has been sorely neglected.

The Chair: Thank you for those remarks.

For any of you who have sent in remarks, the clerk will send them out to committee members in translated form.

Go ahead, Ms. Sahota.

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): I want to start by thanking all the witnesses. Thank you for your time, your perspective and your passion and dedication. I enjoyed your presentations and opening remarks.

We know that COVID-19 has impacted everyone greatly. I hear that in my riding from my constituents. The opposition party, the Conservative Party, got some concessions on certain programs and got the government to walk back on some failed policies, the CERB and the CEWS. Yet the government is ignoring that certain resources are not being funded, child care centres, for instance. The government is choosing not to change its program or policy to get money to those on the front lines. What is your take on that?

Ms. Walker, we'll start with you.

Ms. Megan Walker: One of the things I think is so important is that we make sure all the issues are addressed in a non-partisan way. Recently we worked with the Conservatives, the Liberals, the Green Party, the Bloc and the NDP on our issue. We always have our best outcomes when we all work together. I feel it's not a matter of not wanting to do the right thing, it's a matter of not knowing what the right thing is. The more we expand the participants in a discussion, the more likely we are to find a solution in the best interest of, in our case, women and girls.

• (1855)

Ms. Jag Sahota: Ms. Kamateros, do you have any comments on that?

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: Violence against women affects everybody, not only women. Violence against women is a matter of societal concern, and I think we have to collaborate with one another to make sure this is not repeated and that we can ameliorate situations and we can reduce the potential of violence against women.

How will that be done? I am at a loss because after 30 years of working in this domain I've seen a lot of governments come and go. I have seen an interest in violence against women, but I think there should be even more of a cohesive strategy regarding violence against women.

Does that also mean a federal law that speaks to violence against women? I don't know. Would that give the subject more impetus? I don't know. Would that necessarily give us more funding? I don't know, but it might be worth looking into.

The Chair: Okay, we have to end that round there. We'll go to Mr. Fragiskatos, and then Ms. May will wrap it up.

Peter.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Walker, thank you for your work. I'm hopeful we will get to a good outcome on the number of issues you have raised today in support of your organization.

Ms. Scott, you have raised this, as has Armine Yalnizyan whom you mentioned in your testimony. Women work in high numbers in the service sector, which has been particularly negatively impacted in this economic crisis. Do you have advice on how the federal government ought to approach the question of helping the service sector at this time as we think about an economic restart?

Ms. Katherine Scott: I think that's really important. My short answer is that old-style stimulus won't cut it or won't cut it alone. I know we're talking right now about how stimulus isn't what we're looking for. This is an opportunity, I think, to pivot and look at Canada's social infrastructure, given the scale of job loss and persistent job loss we'll see in the service sector.

We've talked about child care and long-term care. I think it behooves us to look at this as an opportunity to start flowing funds into those sectors, not only to support the labour force but also to raise the quality of employment, to raise wages in those sectors, to create opportunities and to improve the quality of women's employment. Recognizing that a clear majority of women, over 50%, continue to be represented, I think this is going to be critical going forward. As important as the jobs in the building of physical infrastructure, it's time we looked at the universal services in social infrastructure as an important theme of this recovery and move to a decarbonized economy.

The Chair: Thank you, both.

You have the last question, Ms. May.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Thank you.

I think I'll continue with you, Ms. Scott. I really appreciate the work of the CCPA.

I also have to say that this has been an extraordinary panel. I wish I had a lot of time, which the chair will tell you I don't. All of the presentations were great.

It's lovely to see you again, Megan. It's been a long time.

On my question, given your background as a senior economist at the CCPA, I wonder if you could take a crack at the question that our chair asked our wonderful witness, Ms. Labun, from Winnipeg.

Why do women in precarious work—and it's mostly women, so I think it's within the area of your studies—work in different care homes? What policy instruments would we need to bring forward so that doesn't continue to happen post-pandemic?

Ms. Katherine Scott: This is clearly our long-term care. Don't even get me started. It is broken; it is fundamentally broken. What has happened in our care sector is a tragedy for the entire country, and it's a shame for the entire country that we've neglected it.

Obviously the response and organization of long-term care is a provincial and territorial matter. The call to bring long-term care under the Canada Health Act is critically important. We desperately need to establish national standards that speak to the quality of care on offer.

Everything from staffing ratios to prohibition of contracting out and the imposition of private sector management strategies that basically put profit above people are critical as we reapproach this sector. We absolutely have to look at working conditions and why staff are paid so poorly and must cobble together income in order to make a sustainable wage. We have to look at how that is integrated into our immigration system, where we bring in women of colour from countries to do this low-wage work and exploit them here.

I think we have to take leadership. B.C. has taken some leadership. We have to look at provincially stepping up on labour standards.

There's no mystery here. We can't let the private corporations continue to proliferate and buy up these real estate assets to profit off the backs of our most vulnerable.

I can't say this strongly enough. This is our opportunity to stand up as a country and to fix this system, which will be good for all of us. It must be a national priority moving forward.

• (1900)

The Chair: Thank you, both.

Ms. Scott, I think you're quite passionate in your answer on the long-term care. The reality is, close to if not 80% of the deaths due to COVID-19 have been in long-term care facilities. There is certainly a message to all elected people across the country, both provincial and federal, in that regard.

If you have a paper or are writing a paper or anything on that, feel free to send it to the committee and we'll distribute it to the committee members.

Ms. Katherine Scott: I'd be pleased to do so.

The Chair: We are slightly over our time.

I do want to thank all our witnesses for a very moving discussion and some very valid points raised. I want to thank each and every one of you for your presentations. Your remarks will be taken into consideration within the various levels of the federal government and certainly by the members themselves.

I was going to talk to committee members a little bit about a steering committee, but some of our steering committee is not on the line. We'll do that at the next meeting, because we have to figure out, as a committee, our path forward over the next while.

With that, thank you one and all, witnesses, for taking the time, and members, for a very vivid discussion.

The meeting is adjourned.

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