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# Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic

EVIDENCE

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Tuesday, April 28, 2020

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Chair: The Honourable Anthony Rota





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• (1200)

[English]

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

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

Pursuant to the order of reference of Monday, April 20, the committee is meeting for the purpose of considering ministerial announcements, allowing members to present petitions, and questioning ministers of the Crown, including the Prime Minister, in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Translation]

Today's meeting is taking place by video conference, and the proceedings will be made available on the House of Commons website. So that you are aware, the webcast will always show the person speaking, rather than the entirety of the committee.

[English]

I would like to remind members that as in the House or in committee, they should not take photos of their colleagues or film the proceedings today. Before we begin, I would like to make a brief statement.

In 1972 a radio station challenged its listeners to a contest of completing the following sentence: "As Canadian as...". The winning entry, submitted by 17-year-old Heather Scott, was "As Canadian as possible under the circumstances." This strikes me as an excellent description of how we as a people have been adapting and coping with many of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic here in Canada.

[Translation]

Here, in the House of Commons, members and their staff, as well as employees of the House administration, Library of Parliament and Parliamentary Protective Service, prove every day that our parliamentary democracy continues to operate.

[English]

The House of Commons prides itself on its ability to marry tradition and innovation. It is both a careful steward of parliamentary history and precedent and a forward-looking institution. This week, thanks to the remarkable work of the people I mentioned earlier, members are coming together to carry out our parliamentary responsibilities. We will be meeting both virtually, as we are today, and in person in the chamber. While we are mindful of the proce-

dures and practices that govern the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, the meeting of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic marks a new chapter in our progression. There may be technological challenges as we learn to navigate this less familiar work environment, but I'm confident that our proceedings will be as Canadian as possible under the circumstances.

[Translation]

I will ask you to keep that in mind and, in order to facilitate the work of the interpreters and ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules to follow.

[English]

Interpretation in the video conference will work very much like in regular committee meetings and in the House. You will have the choice at the bottom of your screen of Floor, which is "off", or English or French.

[Translation]

Interpretation in this video conference will work very much like in regular committee meetings and in the House. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of either floor, English or French.

[English]

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize your name. When you are ready to speak, you can either click on the microphone icon to activate your mike or you can hold down the space bar while you're speaking. Some of us may remember walkie-talkies; some of us older folks here today will. That's how it will work. If you keep the bar down, it's taking what you're saying. The minute you let go, it comes off. I would like to remind honourable members that if you want to speak in English, you should be on the English channel.

[Translation]

If you want to speak French, you should be on the French channel. Should you wish to alternate between the two languages, you should be on the floor channel, so "off". Please try to transition slowly between languages.

• (1205)

[English]

Please direct your remarks through the chair.

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

[*Translation*]

If a member wishes to intervene on a point of order that has been raised by another member, they should use the “raise hand” function. This will signal to the chair your interest to speak. In order to do so, you should click on “participants” at the bottom of the screen. When the list pops up, you will see next to your name that you can click “raise hand”.

[*English*]

Please speak slowly and clearly at all times.

When you are not speaking, leave your mike on mute.

The use of a headset is strongly recommended.

[*Translation*]

If you do not have one, please contact someone here in Ottawa, and we can have one sent to you.

[*English*]

Should any technical challenges arise, for example, in relation to interpretation, please advise the Chair immediately by raising a point of order, and the technical team will work to resolve them. Please note that we may need to suspend during these times.

[*Translation*]

If you get accidentally disconnected, please try to rejoin the meeting with the information you used to join initially. If you are unable to rejoin, please contact our technical support team.

[*English*]

Before we get started, please note that in the top right-hand corner of your screen is a button. You can use that to change views. “Speaker View” allows you to focus on the person currently speaking. “Gallery View” allows you to see a larger number of participants. You can click through the multiple pages in the gallery to view and see more participants.

Before we begin, today is April 28, and we mark the National Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured in the workplace. It is a day on which we pause to remember those who lost their lives in their workplace and those who are left to mourn their loss.

[*Translation*]

This is also a day when we are reminded just how important workplace health and safety are, in the hope that, one day, we will no longer have to mourn the loss of workers in our country.

[*English*]

I ask members to take a moment of silence in remembrance of them.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

[*Translation*]

We will now proceed to ministerial announcements.

A minister of the Crown may make a short statement. A member from each of the recognized parties, as well as a member of the Green Party, may then comment briefly in response.

[*English*]

The honourable Minister of Health.

Ms. Hajdu, please unmute your microphone.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health):** Got it. I'm sorry.

After that somewhat ineloquent beginning, thank you so much, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to speak at this historic first sitting of virtual Parliament. It is always an honour to occupy a seat in this House, and it is a special honour to represent the residents of Thunder Bay—Superior North on this historic day in our country.

Of course, this new way of pursuing our democratic process of governing Canada is precipitated by the crisis of a global pandemic the likes of which our world has not seen in over 100 years. Despite the work Canada has done to prepare for outbreaks and epidemics, the scope of COVID-19 has left no country untouched. Sadly, this epidemic has claimed thousands of lives worldwide, and Canada has not been immune. My heart goes out to all of the loved ones of those whose lives we have lost here in our country and around the world.

To date, in Canada we have managed to protect our health care systems and avoid the kinds of surges that have led to even greater loss of life in other countries. There are many factors that have contributed to our current and, I would say, cautious progress on limiting the spread here in Canada. We have a public health care system that's accessible to all Canadians, strong local public health units and a culture of innovation and courage that has led to many Canadians and Canadian companies stepping up to fill gaps as they see them.

For more than a month, public health officials across the country have been asking Canadians to stay home and stay safe, and we're starting to see encouraging signs that our collective work and courage are indeed flattening the curve. Canadians are taking responsibility for their health and the health of others by practising physical and social distancing, by frequent handwashing and by isolating themselves if they are sick or have travelled.

I know I join all Canadians in offering a heartfelt thank you to all front-line health care workers: nurses and doctors, personal support workers, lab workers, cleaning personnel and support staff of all varieties. Our health care workers are front and centre in this pandemic. They are taking care of patients affected by COVID-19. They are taking care of senior citizens and other populations at a high risk of contracting COVID-19. It is hard and emotional work. There is a burden of trauma in work of such intensity, suffering and loneliness. I speak for all of us when I say that we owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

Together, all workers, all employers and all Canadians who are adjusting to this new and difficult way of adapting are slowing the spread of COVID-19 in Canada. We are protecting our health care systems, and we are undoubtedly saving lives together.

We are seeing hopeful evidence that Canada's COVID-19 epidemic is slowing down. For example, in late March we saw case numbers doubling every three days. More recently, the doubling time of cases has slowed to more than 16 days. At the same time, however, we continue to see a rise in cases, driven largely by outbreaks in long-term care and seniors homes, where older, medically vulnerable adults live. In fact, outbreaks in these institutions are responsible for more than three-quarters of all the deaths in Canada. This is indeed a tragedy, and it is one of the reasons we cannot let go or we could lose the progress we have made. We remain in a critical period, and we must stay focused and vigilant if we are to succeed in containing the spread of COVID-19. Our current public health measures remain essential to controlling Canada's COVID-19 epidemic.

The Government of Canada will continue to work with provincial, territorial and international partners to base our response to the epidemic on the latest science. We analyze data and clinical and epidemiological studies to determine where public health measures are working and where we may need or want to adjust our approaches. We are also collaborating with provincial and territorial governments and universities to forecast the possible future spread of COVID-19 in Canada. This will help us to continue to estimate a range of possible numbers of cases, hospitalizations and deaths that may occur in the coming weeks and months—critical information to continue to protect our health care systems and protect lives in Canada.

Today, Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's chief public health officer, is presenting an update to our national modelling. As you know, models cannot predict what will happen, but they can help us understand what might happen, and that can help us plan and take actions to achieve the best possible outcome. They also help us identify what combinations of public health measures are more likely to reinforce epidemic control.

● (1210)

I know that these are very difficult times for all Canadians. Over the past several weeks, I've been struck not only by Canadians' resilience but also by the great acts of kindness we are seeing across the country. I think of business owners who are lending RVs to front-line workers, and hotels that are opening their doors for free to health care professionals, so that they can get rest without risking infection to their families. I think of restaurant owners who are distributing meals to the elderly and to health care workers on the front line. There are so many stories and so many acts of kindness. Canadians are finding many different ways all across the country to support each other virtually and practically. My heart goes out to the people of Nova Scotia, many of whom came together virtually last Friday in a vigil to support one another in memory of the victims of the recent shootings.

There's a question on everyone's mind: How long will this last? Public health officials and experts project that the current wave of the epidemic here in Canada could last until the summer, followed

by outbreaks that we will need to rapidly control over time. However, there is still so much that we don't know about the virus.

What I do know for certain is that the duration and severity of COVID-19 here in Canada depends on all of us, on our individual actions and how rigorously we follow public health directives. Containing the spread of the virus and keeping the number of deaths as low as possible will take continued collective and determined effort. As Dr. Tam said yesterday, the effort of getting through this will be like a marathon. We have to plan carefully and we have to pace ourselves. The decisions that we make now will determine critical outcomes across the country in the weeks and months to come.

Mr. Chair, let me conclude by thanking all parliamentarians for their work and ongoing support during this time. I also thank all of the hard-working staff and experts who have allowed us to convene in this new and unique way. I am confident that we will emerge from the pandemic stronger and more united as a country.

● (1215)

**The Chair:** The honourable member for Edmonton Riverbend.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC):** Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, and thanks to you and your team for organizing the first virtual session here today. It's a historic day, and I wish you and your team much luck because, quite honestly, I think you'll need it.

I want to thank the Minister of Health for her department's work on COVID-19 over the past number of weeks and for taking the time today to address some of the concerns and questions many of us are hearing across the country.

I also want to take the time to thank the Public Health Agency of Canada for the direction and information provided to Canadians. I have no doubt that Dr. Theresa Tam and her team have been working tirelessly over the past number of weeks on the latest research into the virus in order to provide Canadians with daily up-to-date information. I know I'm not alone in extending my gratitude to the many officials working within the Public Health Agency of Canada. Quite simply, thank you.

Also, Canada's front-line workers have been working long hours and making immense personal sacrifices to help Canadians cope with COVID-19. Our doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, personal support workers and other hospital staff are showing true leadership and courage. Firefighters, law enforcement and other critical first responders continue to make sure that Canadians remain safe and secure through this crisis as we've recently witnessed during the horrific tragedy in Nova Scotia. Cashiers and fast-food workers have also continued to go to work every day to ensure that people can stock their pantries and feed their families. Our Conservative caucus has nothing but respect and gratitude for every single one of you. Thank you.

Our country has changed dramatically over the past three months. Our schools, workplaces and local businesses have all shut down to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and do our part to flatten the curve. While Canada has seen close to 50,000 cases and nearly 3,000 deaths, we know that our situation could have been much worse had Canadians not made the personal sacrifices necessary to stay at home. Although people are starting to get restless to resume their normal lives, I would urge everyone to heed the advice of our public health officials.

This virus has devastated our country. Thousands of Canadians are mourning the deaths of loved ones as a result of COVID-19. Many businesses will, unfortunately, be unable to reopen, leaving a huge hole in many communities. Many Canadian employees will not have jobs to return to when our country does reopen. The depth of this crisis cannot be understated. We are months, if not years, away from seeing our country begin to rebound to the levels we were at just a few weeks ago.

With Canadians facing so much stress and anxiety over what may be an uncertain future, I also want to highlight the critical importance of mental health. Half of Canadians are reporting increased feelings of anxiety and stress. Many are feeling financially insecure and also increasingly worried about the uncertainties around how long this virus will continue to alter their lives.

Last week I wrote to Canada's top mental health agencies to ask the federal government to ensure that these agencies have the supports to continue delivering these mental health services to Canadians. I'll be sharing my findings with the Minister of Health and our provincial colleagues so the government can prioritize these services for all Canadians. The increased demand for mental health services and the anxiety and stress that Canadians feel will continue long after the worst of COVID-19 has passed.

I'm amazed at the resiliency of Canadians and their willingness to help others. My office has received countless offers from business owners ready to reconfigure their factories to make hand sanitizers, testing equipment, PPE and other medical supplies for front-line workers. I have also heard from people in my community wanting to donate medical supplies. Some are making masks and other protective equipment to donate to local hospitals and care facilities. Others are donating to the food bank and local charities to ensure that supports are there for all Canadians who need them. It's incredible to see communities across our great country come together in times of great hardship.

However, this virus raises some serious concerns about our health care system, and Canadians are expecting us to work together to address these inadequacies. Our long-term care homes are floundering as a result of COVID-19. Staff have walked off the job because they are scared and don't have the personal protective equipment that they need. Families are not getting the communication they expect, and many are in the dark about how their loved ones are faring in the midst of some of the worst viral hot spots in the country. With so many immunocompromised residents in these homes, the virus is spreading much more rapidly, and a large number of lives that might have been saved with better precautions have been lost as a result.

• (1220)

Canada's seniors deserve much better treatment. We are hearing about residents who are left alone for hours because staff are overwhelmed. This fails to uphold the safety and dignity in our long-term care homes to say the least. We must do better for these residents. We need to do better for our seniors.

Canadians also have serious questions about the lack of preparedness. Our PPE stockpiles were not adequate. Some health care workers are saying they are forced to ration PPE at work. As well, many Canadians have questions about the slow reaction time to implement measures after first hearing about the virus. As well, the government needs to implement rigorous testing and tracing and rapidly approve new tests. Canadians are asking for these tests. We waited a very long time to receive data and modelling which was only released after significant pressure. The government needs to share the information it has with Canadians because we all want our economy to reboot as rapidly as possible.

These are good and fair questions that deserve fulsome answers and I look forward to working with the government and other opposition parties to conduct a full review of Canada's response to COVID-19. Conducting this review and learning from missteps will help us better prepare for the next potential pandemic.

This should not have come as a surprise to anyone. We were warned after our response to SARS in 2003. Canada was the hardest-hit country outside of Asia and at that time there was no public health agency and no chief public health officer. We will, in time, learn similar lessons from COVID-19 and our country will be stronger for it, but for now, we're all focused on the immediate future. When will we be able to see our loved ones again? Will our children finish the school year? When will we return to work? When will public parks open? When will life return to normal? When? How much longer? We're all wondering these things.

The first priority should be the health of Canadians. I, along with my Conservative colleagues, encourage everyone to follow the advice of the Public Health Agency of Canada and our respective provincial health authorities. Being impatient and breaking the current measures too early could result in a second wave of COVID-19 undoing all the hard work Canadians have managed over the past few weeks.

There's no doubt COVID-19 is a defining moment in all of our lives. We will all remember the time when the world came to a halt and seemingly shut down, the vacant images of Canada's greatest landmarks, the time when we were unable to run the simplest of errands, the time we had to visit our families through screen doors and windows, but over the past few weeks we have seen Canadians come together in an unprecedented way. We will prevail. We need to prevail. Together we can prevail.

This is our moment to show the rest of the world what Canadians can do when we are together. We will not let them down.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly, Mr. Blanchet, has the floor.

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

I would like to start by extending my greetings to Quebeckers and to our Canadian friends. I assume this new exercise has piqued some interest and curiosity.

This exercise is also innovative in terms of the discussions we have had. Questions were raised about the risk of technical difficulties, but it does not seem to be an issue since things are going rather well from the outset. At the bottom of my screen, I can see that there are 297 members currently online. That is proof of the success of this virtual Parliament. I commend us all for being bold enough to make it happen.

It is not the same as being in Parliament and sitting across from one another. This is not a permanent replacement for a real-life Parliament in the flesh, where the exchanges, while not always decorous, are specific to the context. This approach could even be used in other circumstances.

Our duty now is to use it as a vehicle for content. The fact of the matter is there has been enough debate about the vehicle. Let us now deal with the substance. What are we going to discuss? How are we going to use this tool to make sure people are better informed—

• (1225)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I'm not hearing any sound.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** There is a point of order.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kerry Diotte:** Now I am. It just started.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Please continue, Mr. Blanchet.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let us pick up where we left off the last time we met. I had spoken with the Prime Minister about the funding for some of the measures that had been put forward. Much to my chagrin, the whole issue of help for seniors remains, and I will not back down. Such a measure could be funded—or potentially funded—by halting certain tax avoidance practices that cost the Canadian government hundreds of millions of dollars. The exact number depends on which study or source you consult, but we can all agree that it is an enormous amount of money that is eluding the Canadian government through perfectly legal, yet entirely immoral, means. However, other rich and highly industrialized countries, including the United Kingdom, Denmark and Poland, are refusing to make their programs available to companies that engage in tax avoidance.

We will come back to the matter because it strikes me as rather fundamental, especially at a time when so many are asking whether we can really afford to provide all these measures. Personally, I am more inclined to ask whether we can afford not to provide all these measures. By taking this action, the government is, of course, protecting its own revenues in the future. Nevertheless, that is obviously no excuse to leave potentially billions of dollars in the hands of the same companies that always benefit, companies that will bountifully pass the riches on to their shareholders.

That brings me back to seniors. I invited the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister to work together, and I want to extend that invitation again. I would like to highlight the fact that working together was effective when it came to wage subsidies. Working together was effective when it came to support for students. Working together was effective when it came to additional supports for the social economy. In many ways, the government and the opposition have achieved better results by working together than if the government had gone off and decided everything on its own.

As we all know, seniors 65 and older, who make up 19% of Quebec's population, are far and away the people most vulnerable to the health risks of this crisis. They are also the people most vulnerable financially speaking, and by a wide margin. What is more, seniors are isolated, not just physically, but also socially. The places that are home to high numbers of senior residents are closed to outsiders. Not to mention, many seniors are isolated technologically, given that they are less familiar with the tools that make it possible to communicate with the rest of the world.

For some people, simply having to fill out the application for the Canada emergency response benefit is a heck of a challenge. Radio-Canada had something about it on its website this morning. I repeat my appeal to work together, because a lot of people so far have received assistance that we, too, feel is necessary. It would be an exaggeration, however, to say that everyone got something. In a very open and forthright way, we worked together to put this assistance in place.

Bear in mind that recipients of the Canada emergency response benefit will get \$2,000 a month and that eventual recipients of the Canada emergency student benefit will likely qualify for \$1,250 a month, while old age security recipients collect just \$613 a month. No doubt, people will say that seniors do not have the same needs and obligations when it comes to transportation and child care. I can appreciate that, but they do not deserve a third of what a recipient of the Canada emergency response benefit gets. By giving others two to three times more, the government clearly recognizes that \$613 is not sufficient. Obviously, the cost of groceries has gone up and a good many services are no longer available to seniors. Therefore, we need to do something to help seniors, and the Bloc is adamant about that—make no mistake.

I have lost track of how long I have been speaking, but I would like to revisit the assistance planned for students.

● (1230)

We are voting tomorrow on a piece of legislation that will bring in a measure sought by the Bloc Québécois. The NDP made a tremendous contribution as well.

It is out of the question that young people across Quebec and Canada—who will not get jobs in arts, culture or tourism, working in festivals and restaurants—have nothing to get by on immediately and no way to save money to live on during the school year. Something had to be done. A measure is in the works, and we support that.

Not surprisingly, the Bloc Québécois wants the legislation to include a provision that gives Quebec the right to opt out with no strings attached and with compensation. Since the measure is meant for students, it involves education. None of the 297 members participating in this meeting is an education minister—because education is not in the federal domain. This is a form of intrusion, then. Nevertheless, I accept it. It was not Quebec's wish, perhaps for administrative reasons or expeditiousness.

However, Quebec raised concerns, chambers of commerce raised concerns, farmers raised concerns and municipalities raised concerns. I am not convinced that the measure is a disincentive to employment, because I think young people want to work just as much today as they did back when I was young. Still, people are worried that the measure discourages young people from working.

The Bloc Québécois is therefore proposing a measure that could be added to the original motion and have the effect of strongly encouraging employment. If, as is the case in other areas, the first \$1,000 earned by a student was not deducted from their benefit, that, right there, would be a strong incentive. In addition, though, if—similar to employment insurance—for every additional dollar earned, 50¢ came off the benefit and the other 50¢ stayed in the student's pocket, the incentive to work would be very strong indeed.

We think that would alleviate the concerns of Quebeckers and demonstrate to farmers that they would have access to labour. The same goes for municipalities and chambers of commerce, which represent a large number of small and medium-sized businesses. That is what we are proposing, and it makes the measure even more beneficial.

We are all worried about the public purse. Eventually, we are going to have to pay the piper. In that regard, what we are proposing could save the government tens of millions of dollars. We also think this add-on could apply to the Canada emergency response benefit, in its current form, serving as a way to incentivize work, bolster the economy and, to a lesser extent, create potential tax revenue. We therefore encourage the government and other parties to consider the measure, which would probably serve all areas under Quebec's and Canada's jurisdiction well.

I assume I am almost out of time, but other issues that need to be addressed are research, tourism, culture, fisheries and trade. Those are all areas that require our attention, but not always with a view to committing more money. Adjustments can be made, since there is indeed a limit to just how deep into collective debt we can drive Quebeckers and Canadians. I think we will have to take that approach in terms of public finances. Soon, we will have to prohibit any spending that does not have a direct impact on economic development or the economic recovery. Those are two fundamental categories. The first obviously involves infrastructure. There is significant pressure from municipalities on that front, but there is also direct support for economic development, which, starting now, should be geared towards forward-looking sectors, more than they were before, especially oil and gas. Those who work in oil and gas should not be sitting on the bench. We can get back to where we were. Any future investment, any future development, must be geared towards renewable energy and green technology, with the huge export markets they represent.

● (1235)

**The Chair:** I have to interrupt quickly to let you know that you have been speaking for almost 10 minutes. I will let you finish.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet:** All right. I had lost track. I am very embarrassed and sorry, Mr. Chair. I was just wrapping up.

In conclusion, I encourage us all to think about what I have proposed in a spirit of vigilant collaboration, as I like to say, to arrive at solutions swiftly. If the worst of the crisis lasts four months and it takes two, three or five weeks before a measure is implemented, we are leaving people to their own devices, without any help when they need it most. Let us work together constructively so that when we do meet formally, all we have to do is approve what we have already discussed and pass the legislation to implement the measures people need.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for your patience.

[English]

**The Chair:** The honourable member for Vancouver Kingsway, Mr. Davies.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Chair, on behalf of my colleagues in the New Democratic caucus may I begin by extending our deepest sympathies to families and friends of the victims of the horrific crime recently committed in Nova Scotia and to all Nova Scotians who we know have been deeply affected by that senseless tragedy. We stand with you in your time of grief and send our most heartfelt thoughts of healing and support.

I think I speak for all Canadians when I say that we are experiencing a phenomenon of unprecedented and truly stunning proportions. Six months ago, if you had asked any citizen in any province or territory in the country whether they could conceive of a health crisis of such magnitude that it would be necessary to batten down our borders, isolate our communities, close our schools, shutter our businesses, quarantine our homes and focus our hospital resources on a single pathogen, no one could have imagined such a scenario. Yet here we are in the midst of just such a crisis.

The human and economic toll of the COVID-19 pandemic has been as devastating as it was unforeseen. Today, on behalf of the New Democratic Party of Canada, I express our deepest condolences to all Canadians who have lost a loved one to this deadly virus. We extend our heartfelt thoughts to all those living in isolation and vulnerability and send our fervent message that you are neither alone nor forgotten. We convey our most profound gratitude to all those brave Canadians working on the front lines of this epidemic and to all those toiling to keep our communities stocked and running, often at risk to their own health and safety. Today, as we mark the National Day of Mourning, we take special note of all those workers who died on the job serving in this time of emergency. You are true heroes and your sacrifices and deaths will never be forgotten.

Although public health measures have forced us apart, Canadians have come together throughout this crisis in a manner that is truly extraordinary. Compassion, generosity and solidarity have been more contagious than the virus itself.

If the COVID-19 crisis has underlined one overarching issue, it is the immeasurable value of our cherished public health care system. Indeed, it is impossible to imagine the stress that Canadians would feel for their health and that of their loved ones and the additional economic anxiety they would experience if their access to health care depended on their ability to pay. Thankfully, we are spared that awful predicament.

Fifty years ago, it was the aspiration and dedication of Tommy Douglas and those inspired by him that built our present system, which ensures every Canadian can access physician and hospital care anywhere in this country as a matter of right.

Universal health care has become a hallmark of Canada, an institution cherished from coast to coast to coast, something that binds us together and comprises an achievement of which Canadians are most proud. It is the New Democrats' hope today that we will seize this moment in history to recognize this fundamental health, social and economic accomplishment and take this unprecedented opportunity to build on it.

It has been said many times in the last weeks and months that we should not waste a good crisis. Let us heed that advice.

Never again should Canadians be vulnerable to a shortage of personal protective equipment for our vital front-line health care workers or those who must deal with the public at a time of pandemic. Never again should we be dependent upon the vagaries of other nations, be it China or Donald Trump's America, for our essential medical equipment and supplies.

Never again should we leave millions of Canadians at the mercy of precarious employment-based health benefits where folks are one layoff away from losing access to life-saving medicine. Never again should a child with a rare illness or vulnerable condition go without their medicine because their family can't afford it. Never again should we witness a single senior citizen live or die in long-term care in disgraceful conditions, squalor, neglect or indecency.

• (1240)

Let us cultivate a vibrant, made-in-Canada health industry for our national self-sufficiency and economic advancement. Let us act with haste to create pharmacare, the next phase of medicare, by adding prescription drugs and devices to our public health care system. Let us create national standards for long-term care, respected and enforced with a federal transfer to the provinces and territories contingent upon meeting high-quality standards, good wages and working conditions, and public delivery. Let us rapidly expand virtual care so that every Canadian can get access to quality services no matter where they live, especially those who live in rural or remote areas of our great country.

Let us get to work on the myriad other ways we can improve Canada's health care system, from dental care to community delivery, and smart investments in illness prevention like school nutrition programs.

As the minister said, we must remain vigilant. It is entirely possible, perhaps even a certainty, that this virus will come again until a vaccine is developed, either as an echo in the hall or in the form of another pandemic in the future.

Though I said at the outset of my remarks that this pandemic was unforeseen, that is not entirely accurate. Epidemiologists, researchers and others have been warning us since SARS 17 years ago that we must be prepared. As parliamentarians, let's respect that advice and dedicate our resources to becoming prepared. Let us learn the lessons from this crisis and use the precious time ahead of us to get ready. Let us invest in and expand our quality public health system, which has served us well to date but can and must do better in the future. We no longer can say we were not warned. As the economic shock of COVID-19 so vividly attests, illness and disease are much more costly than health and prevention.

A crisis such as what confronts us today delivers us the gift of understanding what is truly important in our lives. We know well there is nothing more important than the health of our loved ones. As parliamentarians, I think we are all united in our belief that our highest calling is the safety and security of those we serve. Let us not fail them in this duty.

Medicare was Parliament's legacy of the 20th century. Let's work together to build on that foundation by giving Canadians the best, most accessible and most comprehensive care possible. Let's make that this Parliament's legacy for the 21st century. Canadians deserve it.

As always, New Democrats are ready to get to work to help deliver it.

• (1245)

**The Chair:** The honourable member for Fredericton, Ms. Atwin.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP):** Mr. Chair, I come to you today from the beautiful traditional territory of the Wolastoqiyik.

I will start by sharing my condolences for my neighbours in Nova Scotia, and indeed all Canadians. We are in mourning. I wish to send love and peace your way. Life is fragile and we have all been reminded how much we want to protect it.

I'd like to thank the technical teams behind our virtual meeting today, and the optimism and forward thinking of my colleagues that enabled this to happen. Obviously, we will experience some growing pains as we all get used to this, but I'm thankful for the opportunity to represent my constituents while practising the same physical distancing we expect them to adhere to.

I thank the Minister of Health for her speech today and for keeping us informed throughout this process.

I wish to also thank my fellow members for their hard work for Canadians. I know our teams have all been extremely busy helping constituents navigate this new reality as we, too, face it with our loved ones.

[Translation]

Our schedules, filled with events and gatherings, have been turned upside down, but we have been creative in finding ways to preserve the strong ties with our constituents. So far, my team has set up three national webinars and one community meeting, with many more to come.

Many people have been left behind as we deal with this pandemic. We are working very hard to make sure their voices are heard. I have witnessed more co-operation amongst my fellow members than I ever have. The adjustments made to the programs introduced have yielded results. Our work is not done, though. We must keep up our efforts to make things better for every segment of the population.

[English]

I also wish to express my gratitude to those across this country who have demonstrated such excellent leadership in the face of COVID-19. I'm thinking of indigenous leadership, community governance and friendship centres; the premiers and elected provincial and territorial representatives; as well as mayors and municipal

councillors who have made tough decisions early on to keep us safe.

I'm thinking of the community leaders who have been serving Canadians. In my riding I think of the chamber of commerce that has been keeping its members up to date with accurate information on support for businesses, the teams at the Greener Village, the community kitchen and the Oromocto & Surrounding Area Food Bank who are doing incredible work, and the leadership at the Fredericton Community Foundation, which has already exceeded its goal by raising over \$200,000 towards immediate relief.

[Translation]

There are so many examples in my riding, and I have no doubt that each and every hon. member here today has experienced the same thing in their own riding.

[English]

I am particularly thankful for the provincial leadership in my home province. We are thankful for our current numbers in New Brunswick. Quick thinking on the part of our education minister to shut down schools sent a message to New Brunswickers that this was something to take very seriously.

Wise leadership at the legislative assembly saw the appointment of an all-party cabinet committee to manage the province's response to COVID-19.

[Translation]

As we know, we are not out of the woods yet. We must continue to approach health and safety in a slow and steady manner. The fact that we now have the time and opportunity to plan out a recovery that is fair for all gives me hope.

[English]

In the required rush to get relief programs off the ground, to help as quickly as possible, the unintended consequence has been to leave people behind, exaggerating the marginality of already vulnerable groups of people, particularly women.

Our recovery plans will not need to be rushed in this way. We can direct our energy now to addressing the gaps created by CERB and CEBA, or the student relief program, which must include international students. We can make these changes while addressing the longer standing inequities faced by minimum wage and underemployed workers and those living on meagre government assistance programs.

We have heard a few phrases about COVID-19 again and again. Some ring truer than others. We are all in this together in Canada, but we're not all in the same boat. Some Canadians are barely floating on a piece of broken furniture. Some are sitting on an inflatable dinghy with a slowly leaking hole. Part of the learning curve of this pandemic experience is in evaluating our systems, and not all of them are going to get a passing grade.

There will need to be many phases to the reopening of our communities, and there will need to be many phases of retooling and readapting to our new reality. We cannot go back to the way it was before.

Nursing and special care homeworkers need to be valued and respected. They should not need to have multiple part-time jobs to make ends meet. We need to start compensating labour in an ethical way, starting by increasing the federal minimum wage floor. We need to recognize the value of work traditionally done by women. We are going to need to invest in the public sector. Increasing the client services within Service Canada and the CRA will be an obvious start. Those who are working in our oil-based resource economy are going to need support to participate in the transition that is already happening. The economy has left these workers behind. We cannot.

We need to recognize that our relationship with the planet and our relationship with indigenous communities go hand in hand. We need reconciliation, and we need to pair it with a respect for the natural world. We need to build a better, stronger, cleaner Canada that promotes health and fosters well-being.

In preparing my words for today, I sat and I thought, what do Canadians want to hear from us? What do we want to hear from each other? Well, we want answers. We want solutions. We want a road map to a post COVID-19 existence that is both free from the pandemic and prepared in the event of its reoccurrence, and we want the vision of that world to bring us hope that we can rectify some of the inequity that has long plagued our communities.

Canadians will want to know that we have learned from all of this. I hope we have learned that we need to be proactive with our health. A future with precautions is necessary. Preventative medicine, and even personal protective equipment, will have to be our priority across sectors.

I know we have learned the value of human contact. That's for sure. I consider now the trust of a handshake, or the warmth of a hug, and how important that is and how much I miss it.

We learned of the need for universal financial stability, the need for a livable income for all Canadians.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

We have learned what essential work is, and we were forced to realize that we have undervalued and underfunded those jobs. We have learned that we can put partisanship aside to accomplish great things in record time.

[*English*]

I thank you all for that.

We have a choice now to turn the corner, to take these lessons and forge a new path forward, one that truly leaves no one behind, one that doesn't pit some of us against others, one that breeds love, respect and prosperity. That is the path that I choose.

I wish you all good health and the strength required to keep fighting this invisible enemy.

Go team Canada. Thank you. *Welálin*.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

I would like to remind the hon. members that this is a parliamentary committee and that taking photos is prohibited. I know this is a historic day. I have seen some members taking photos, but I hope they will not be posted on social media.

[*English*]

We will now proceed to presenting petitions for a period not exceeding 15 minutes.

[*Translation*]

I would like to remind members that petitions presented during a meeting of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic must have been certified by the Clerk of Petitions prior.

[*English*]

In addition, to ensure a petition is considered properly presented, the certificate of the petition and each page of the petition for a petition certified in a previous Parliament should be emailed to the committee no later than 6 p.m. on the day before the meeting.

I thank members for their usual collaboration.

The honourable member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Mr. Manly...?

Okay, we'll go on. There might be some technical problems. I'm sure Mr. Manly will come back to us.

We'll go to the honourable member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to be presenting a petition in support of Bill S-204. The text reads Bill S-240 because it was a petition signed during the previous Parliament, but the same bill has been put forward in this Parliament as Bill S-204. It seeks to address the scourge of forced organ harvesting and trafficking. This can happen in many different contexts, but the particular genesis of this is the targeting of Falun Gong practitioners and others in China through an aggressive policy of organ harvesting. There's concern that Uighurs are now being targeted, as well.

The petitioners hope that members of Parliament will support this bill and that this, the 43rd Parliament, will be the one that actually moves forward with action to address the terrible human rights abuse associated with forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

• (1255)

**The Chair:** The honourable member for Winnipeg North.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, it's with pleasure that I table another petition regarding a national pharmacare program. My constituents have signed numerous petitions of this nature.

They're asking that the Prime Minister and all parliamentarians get behind the idea of having a coast to coast to coast national pharmacare program, recognizing that we need to work with the provinces in order to make it possible.

It's a great pleasure through this historic moment of a virtual Parliament to present a petition of this nature on behalf of the constituents of Winnipeg North.

**The Chair:** The honourable member for Courtenay—Alberni.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Chair, before I present the petition, I wish to extend my heartfelt condolences on behalf of the people from Courtenay—Alberni and send our love and kindness to all of our brothers and sisters in Nova Scotia at this very difficult time.

Today I'm tabling a petition on behalf of independent harvesters on the west coast who are enduring an inequitable distribution of risks and benefits, difficulty in access for new entrants and a lack of availability and transparency regarding the quota licence system and socioeconomic data on the west coast fisheries.

The petitioners point out to the government that in May 2019, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans provided 20 recommendations to the government for changing its current management of commercial fisheries in British Columbia. After consultations with independent fish harvesters, community organizations, industry and academics, the report identified a need for transparent fishing licence and quota ownership, and it's currently not known where the benefits of fish resources are flowing.

Among its recommendations was a call for the set-up of a public online database to track the buyers and sellers and sale-lease prices, as well as an end to the sale of fishing quotas and licences to non-Canadian interests. Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the government to commit to a timeline and a plan that respects and addresses the 20 recommendations laid out in the report of the House

of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans entitled "West Coast Fisheries: Sharing Risks and Benefits".

**The Chair:** I see that Mr. Manly is back. We'll see if we can connect.

Mr. Manly, please proceed.

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am presenting a petition today about electoral reform. This is about the unbalanced electoral system we have in Canada. The undersigned petitioners are asking for a national citizens' assembly on electoral reform and require that the citizens' assembly would complete its work in 12 months and adopt any recommended changes to our electoral system before the next federal election.

**The Chair:** We still have over 10 minutes.

[*Translation*]

Therefore, if you wish to present a certified petition, please use the button at the bottom of the screen to signal that you would like to speak.

[*English*]

We now have Mr. Reid.

• (1300)

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My petition was submitted by some constituents on the subject of the prison farm at Joyceville Institution in Kingston. There is a plan for this to become the site of an intensive goat dairy facility for up to 1,500 goats. The petitioners request that this not be done for a variety of reasons outlined in the petition, including the costs associated with the issue of using prison labour to provide export products, in this case goat milk to China.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Would any other hon. members like to present a petition?

[*English*]

Seeing no further members who want to present a petition, we'll now proceed to questions for ministers.

I would like to remind honourable members that no member shall be recognized for more than five minutes at a time, and that members may split their time with one or more members by so indicating to the chair. Ministers responding to questions should do so by simply turning on their mike and speaking.

The first question goes to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Scheer.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to ask the Prime Minister a question about the rate at which Health Canada is providing approvals to companies who are looking to offer new testing kits. As provinces start to unveil plans to ease health restrictions, one of the key factors in allowing them to do so will be the ability to ramp up testing efforts. Once again we see an example of government reacting very, very slowly. It can't keep up with entrepreneurs and with the private sector. The latest information indicates that up to 50 companies are waiting for Health Canada approvals.

Can the Prime Minister explain why Health Canada has to this point been unable to implement a fast-track process so that provinces can get the new testing kits they so desperately need?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his question.

It is really important that we get testing up to speed and that we make sure we have reliable testing across the country, because that is an essential part of restoring some semblance of normality as we move forward, as we look to reopen. At the same time, we've seen around the world problems with test kits that have been faulty or unreliable. One of the huge challenges we might face, if tests are unreliable, is that we could have an undetected resurgence of COVID-19.

We are incredibly pleased by how many innovative Canadian companies and individuals have put forward new solutions. Health Canada is prioritizing and rapidly going through a process of evaluating these tests. At the same time, we cannot compromise on not just the safety of individual Canadians for this test but also the safety of our entire country. We have approved a number of different tests. We will be approving more, but it needs to be done in a safe way with the real recovery of our country as the core goal we're facing.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Mr. Chair, information has come out that a Canadian company called BlueDot was able to track incidents of COVID-19 in China as early as December of 2019. BlueDot has indicated that among their clients are 12 countries, including front-line health care providers here in Canada.

Can the Prime Minister indicate whether the Government of Canada had access to BlueDot's information back in December?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Chair, we were advised in early January of the possibility of what became COVID-19.

In China, we made sure that we were monitoring intelligence sources, working with our Five Eyes partners on that. As you highlight, a Canadian company was involved in tracking the spread early on, but we are glad to have that company with us now. Our infor-

mation on what was going on in China came into us through a range of intelligence services, public accounting and recording, as well as our Five Eyes and other allies around the world.

We continue to work with all those allies to understand exactly what's going on around the world and how we can best position ourselves. We are working with a range of technology companies and innovators to ensure that we're actually doing everything we can to monitor and track the spread of COVID-19 in Canada. There's lots more to do, but Canadian innovation will certainly be a part of that as we move forward.

• (1305)

**The Chair:** Mr. Scheer, you have about a minute left, with 30 seconds for a question and 30 seconds for an answer.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** I have a very quick question, then.

In that answer, the Prime Minister indicated that they had received information in January from a variety of sources. One of those sources of information was Canadian military intelligence experts, who warned that this disease was going to be more serious than the WHO had originally indicated.

We've asked this question several times before. It's a simple yes-or-no question. Did anyone in cabinet or the Prime Minister see the Canadian military intelligence report that was issued in January?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** The public health officer of Canada convened a conversation with her provincial counterparts as of January 2 to address reports of a virus or a particularly bad strain of influenza that was occurring in China. We got regular updates from our intelligence officials. I cannot share specific briefings with you here, obviously, but I can assure you that our intelligence agents and officials were very active in keeping cabinet and the government apprised of the latest developments.

**The Chair:** Before continuing, I just want to remind the honourable members to place their questions through the Chair.

Now we'll continue.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Saint-Jean has the floor.

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In 2009, the government amended the Income Tax Regulations. An amendment to section 5907, among others, exempted from taxation the income of companies that do business in certain tax havens, specifically, countries with which Canada has entered into a tax information exchange agreement.

With that simple amendment, the government opened up around 22—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We have a point of order. Please state your name so that I can see where the honourable member is from.

Mr. Kurek.

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm sorry, but there's an issue with the translation. It's at the same volume as the original audio. It's very difficult to understand.

**The Chair:** What we'll do is pause for a moment. I'll check with the technical team to make sure that everything gets adjusted here. One moment, please. We're taking care of it. Thank you for bringing that up.

• (1305) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1305)

There is a technical issue. If you are going to speak English, please keep your translation or your interpretation on the English channel.

[*Translation*]

If you speak French, please use the French channel. If you want to speak in both languages, choose the interpretation channel. The language you will hear will correspond to the channel you chose.

• (1310)

[*English*]

Therefore, make sure that you stay on the channel for the language that you want to be speaking and hearing, and that should solve the problem.

We'll try it again.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, please continue.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** If I may, I will start my question over. I think I was about 40 seconds in.

I was saying that, in 2009, the government amended the income tax regulations. The amendment of section 5907 made it possible to exempt from taxation a number of businesses that are involved with tax havens. A simple amendment to the regulations helped liberalize about 22 tax havens.

What can be done through regulations can also be undone through regulations. That is actually what our political party proposed in the previous Parliament. According to a principle, when someone can do something, but does not, it's simply because they don't want to.

So why does the government not want to benefit—

[*English*]

**Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, there's been no change.

**The Chair:** Mr. Epp has an issue with the interpretation. Are you on the English channel, Mr. Epp?

**Mr. Dave Epp:** Yes, I am.

**The Chair:** Okay.

[*Translation*]

My apologies, Ms. Normandin.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** No problem.

**The Chair:** Ms. Normandin, are you using the French channel or the English channel?

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** I turned off the interpretation.

**The Chair:** That is what the problem is.

Please choose the channel that corresponds to the language you speak.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Okay. I'm sorry.

As the saying goes, all things come in threes. My question was for the government. I was saying that, when someone can do something, but does not, it's simply because they don't want to.

Why doesn't the government want to benefit from the revenue that could be used for our seniors, for agriculture, to fight climate change, and the list goes on?

**The Chair:** The Right Honourable Prime Minister has the floor.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Since 2015, our government has taken very seriously the need to fight tax evasion and tax avoidance. That is why we have invested more than \$1 billion in the Canada Revenue Agency to fight tax evasion and tax avoidance and to ensure that everyone pays their fair share in taxes. We continue to do that. We have worked on measures with the revenue agency and internationally to prevent the practices of tax evasion and tax avoidance.

**The Chair:** Ms. Normandin, go ahead.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Mr. Chair, like many of my colleagues, I have received numerous questions from my constituents during the crisis. Some of them told me they did not file a tax return the previous year and could, therefore, not prove that they had earned more than \$5,000, which would give them access to the Canada emergency response benefit, or CERB.

Some companies are not making the tax contribution they should, but are eligible for programs, while Canadians are not. Congratulations to those businesses, but Canadians are being punished.

When I have to explain to my constituents that they will not be eligible for the CERB, as they did not file their tax return, they understand that, when we do not contribute to the social safety net, we should not benefit from it. That is a simple principle that an average bear understands.

I would like to know whether the government also understands that simple principle.

**The Chair:** The Right Honourable Prime Minister has the floor.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** We have taken unprecedented steps to help workers and unemployed people. One example is the Canada emergency response benefit and the wage subsidy. Those are measures we have implemented to help Canadian workers keep their jobs, even during this difficult time. A verification process has been implemented for extraordinary or unusual requests. I hope your constituents who need help will be able to obtain it.

At the same time, our government is continuing its fight against tax evasion. As I said, we have made unprecedented investments in the fight against tax evasion and tax avoidance. There are serious consequences for anyone looking to defraud the system.

We will continue to ensure that those who need assistance will get it and that those who are involved in tax evasion or tax avoidance do not receive assistance.

• (1315)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We will continue with the honourable member for Elmwood-Transcona, Mr. Blaikie.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, when this crisis began, I think there was a pretty clear choice ahead of the government, which was whether they would take a suite of measures to shore up the status quo, providing some income replacement to people who had lost their regular income, or whether they would recognize that there was a whole group of people being left behind by the status quo, who were also going to face increased difficulty coming through this crisis and, therefore, provide universal income support that covers everybody and makes sure there are no cracks for people to fall through.

There have been a number of different iterations of different programs, and we spent a lot of time trying to identify those cracks and negotiate with government to get them to fill them. A couple of significant groups of people who continue to fall through the cracks—and who are by no means the only ones—are seniors and people living with disabilities. Their incomes may not have been cut, but they weren't great before. They are facing increased costs like additional dispensing fees, grocery delivery fees and, in some cases, having to pay to have people do their laundry.

There have been a number of costs for vulnerable populations that haven't been met with any direct financial assistance by government.

Beyond the one-time increase in the GST rebate, what is the government's plan for seniors and for people living with disabilities so that they can get direct financial assistance to help them weather the crisis?

**The Chair:** The right honourable Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Obviously this is an unprecedented crisis that we needed to move extremely quickly on. We took a moment to reflect and to look at how we could best help people.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Mr. Chair, we can't hear him. If you're listening to English....

**The Chair:** We have another point of order. We are having a technical issue. I just want to pause for a second.

Ms. Vecchio, is the issue that you're not hearing on the English...?

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Correct. I am currently on the English version and I cannot hear the Prime Minister at this time.

**The Chair:** If you don't mind, we'll just push pause for a second and we'll see if we can fix that from this end.

• (1315)

(Pause)

• (1315)

**The Chair:** Prime Minister, I will let you continue now.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** From the beginning, we knew that we were going to have to help millions of Canadians who were asking to stop working and to stay home because of COVID-19. That's why we moved very quickly with the Canada emergency response benefit that would be an income replacement for people who lost their paycheques. The first and biggest challenge was to make sure the people who were counting on a paycheque to come in—to help them pay their rent and pay for groceries—and who were relying on that paycheque, which suddenly disappeared, would get the support they needed. That's why we moved quickly on that.

We knew that targeted measures were the best way to help people, including the most vulnerable. It was not going to be worthwhile to send cheques to people who continue to make salaries and who have paycheques coming in and don't need the help. We much preferred to focus on those people who needed help.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** If I may ask, then, what are the targeted....

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** We moved forward on targeted measures to replace those paycheques for people. We then recognized that students, for example, were expecting to be able to start work in May, in many cases, as post-secondary students. We put forward a plan for them just last week. We recognize as well that seniors, people with disabilities and other folks have been facing extra challenges that we are responding to, that we are putting forward support for. We've done a number of things for the most vulnerable seniors already and we will continue to put forward more measures as well.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Can Canadian seniors expect your government to be announcing direct financial assistance sometime in the very near future?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** We are working on getting the support for seniors that they need. There are many seniors who are particularly vulnerable because of COVID-19, not just on a health basis but because of increased costs, because of challenges around isolation and because of loss of income or portfolio because of the stock market challenges. We are going to continue to help everyone who needs help as well as we can as a government in the days and weeks to come.

• (1320)

**The Chair:** Mr. Blaikie, we have about a minute left, so 30 seconds for the question and 30 seconds for the answer.

I want to remind the honourable members that the question and the answer should be about the same length of time. That's a rule of thumb that we use in the House during committees. I just want to remind the people answering as well as the people asking the question.

Mr. Blaikie, please proceed.

**Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order. Could you remind questioners to direct the questions through you? There seems to be a lot of back and forth.

**The Chair:** Yes, that's a good point. I was going to bring it up before we started the next round. Please place your questions through the chair of the committee and not directly to the person you're speaking to.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order as well.

With respect to Mr. May's point, it's just not a requirement in committee that members pose their questions through the chair. You've suggested we do it, and that's a legitimate suggestion, but it's not the convention of parliamentary committees—and this is a committee—to require members to pose their questions through the chair.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Normally, that's the case when you're questioning witnesses, but this is a little bit different, so in order to keep some form of discipline and decorum, I would prefer that the questions be asked through the chair.

Mr. Blaikie.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I humbly submit that, at this point in the crisis, I think seniors and people living with disabilities would be more reassured by hearing a plan from the Prime Minister for how they're going to get financial assistance, rather than a simple echoing of their concerns.

When it comes to students, because the benefit proposed for students is so much lower and their needs obviously aren't any different now than anybody else's in terms of food and rent, I'm just wondering if the Prime Minister could give an example of costs that students are exempt from, compared to ordinary Canadians who need to eat and have a roof over their heads, because I'm not aware of any.

**The Chair:** The right honourable Prime Minister, in 30 seconds or less, please.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Students in post-secondary education usually plan on working through May, June, July and August so that they can pay for their tuition, so they can support themselves through the year. That is a frame that many, many students across the country face. There are students who get support from parents. There are students who don't need to work, but most of them do. That is extremely important.

In this situation, we've seen that targeting students with specific support while also creating more summer jobs for them, more opportunities for them to serve their country, is exactly the kind of thing that will give them the support they need to pay their rent and groceries, but also a chance to contribute to their country at a historic time where we need the energy, dynamism and forward-thinking approach that young people have to get this country through this.

**The Chair:** I just want to make a suggestion for people who are answering and asking questions. If they're looking at the screen and they see my picture in one of the squares and they see mute come off, that means they're out of time. How's that for a signal? We'll try that out to see if that works.

We'll move on to the honourable member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, Mrs. Vecchio.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to focus on looking at the shelters. I have been speaking with the Minister of Women and Gender Equality. We know that funds are being directed through banks to the shelters directly using Women's Shelters Canada and the Canadian Women's Foundation.

Are there lists specifically of organizations that have received this money so far?

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

*Boozoo. Aaniin.*

*As-salaam alaikum* to Muslims observing Ramadan.

Many thanks to my colleague for her collaborative efforts. We have worked with provinces and territories to validate the list, to ensure there is not duplication of efforts and that we are working to address the gaps.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Mr. Chair, I would like to know when this list will be available. We recognize that there are many groups that may not be part of these networks, so they're falling through the cracks. In order to get the contingency funding out the door, when will this list of organizations that received the funding be available? When can organizations that are not part of those networks expect to see money?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Mr. Chair, my colleague is right. We are working to ensure that groups that are outside the categories of sexual assault centres and women's shelters receive funding. So far, \$50 million has been invested. We are working to secure more. Those lists are working lists, and if my colleague would like, we can ensure that she has access to them. We are being open and transparent about all of our measures throughout the COVID crisis, and certainly her efforts and her care on this issue are appreciated.

• (1325)

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Moving on to agriculture, Mr. Chair, I'm dealing with many agricultural producers in our area. Just last Friday, I spoke to people in the Granton area who work in oilseeds, hogs, turkeys, beef and grains. Many of them shared the same concern: They are about to plant, but they do not know whether there will be processing available. Many of these people have finished hogs and would like to get them off, but right now there is no processing available in many of these areas. Processors are shutting down, and we already had a lack of capacity prior to this pandemic.

How is the government addressing this key issue, which will impact Canada and the entire world's food supply if we don't have processing available?

[Translation]

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My colleague brought up a situation I am hearing about regularly, as well. It is true that the food processing sector...

**The Chair:** We have a problem, and I have to interrupt you.

[English]

Ms. Vecchio, were you not hearing it?

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** That's correct but now I can.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Minister, please continue.

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau:** Like a number of sectors, the food processing industry is currently facing a workforce challenge. Some employees are sick, and businesses are committed to safety. So they are implementing important measure to ensure their workers' safety. For that reason, the productive capacity has decreased, and that directly impacts our producers, especially those involved in the production of beef and pork. We are working every day with them to decide what the best mechanisms to help them would be. A whole series of risk management programs is already available to them, and we are continuing with our efforts to find the best possible solution.

[English]

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Thanks very much.

You're talking about looking at these right solutions, but I'm looking at the time frames. When you have a hog that has to be finished, or if you own turkeys and they're shipped off but then sent back to your farm because they cannot be processed, what are the farmers supposed to do? They're looking at having to euthanize some of their livestock, and we know that this is the stuff that's be-

ing used to feed our Canadian families and to feed people across the world.

What are some of the immediate measures this government is going to take to make sure that our food security is safe and that we can continue supplying our food from start to finish?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Minister, go ahead.

[English]

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau:** I want to reassure my colleague that, first, our food safety in Canada is protected. We have increased the funding to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to make sure that we have all the inspectors where they have to be to protect food safety in Canada.

We have also put in place different measures to help our farmers. They have more access to financing through Farm Credit Canada. We have made some changes to the stay of default of the advance payments program. We are also helping the producers in terms of foreign temporary workers.

I understand what she's saying about the livestock timing, and I can assure her that we're working very hard on finding a better solution to support this specific sector.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** We will now go to the honourable member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, Mr. Deltell.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Chair, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

We know that the Government of Quebec is announcing economic recovery measures as we speak. However, I talk daily with business owners from my riding, and they say they are experiencing a major workforce issue.

That workforce issue is not the same as the one they had before the crisis. Their current problem is caused by government assistance. It may appear strange, but that is the reality. Many workers are saying that, by receiving \$2,000 a month, they are making more money by staying at home and doing nothing than they would be if they were earning their living.

What is the Minister of Finance's message to the Canadians who are saying that receiving government assistance is more profitable than working?

• (1330)

**The Chair:** The Honourable Minister Morneau has the floor.

**Hon. Bill Morneau (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We know that it is very important for people who cannot work right now to have enough money. We also know that some people struggle to motivate themselves to work. That is why we are collaborating with each of the provinces, including Quebec, and with each territory to provide them with the funding they need for their essential workers.

**The Chair:** Mr. Deltell, go ahead.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the minister's answer, especially because it was in French. I congratulate him on that.

If we want to stimulate the economy, people should not be paid to stay at home doing nothing. They have to work. That is what stimulating the economy involves.

The minister talked about Quebec. The Government of Quebec has announced a very positive measure for the farming sector. We know that sector is important, especially this time of the year and over the upcoming period. In fact, fields cannot be shut down on Friday at 5 p.m., as field work takes place during the summer. To encourage people to go work in the fields, the Government of Quebec will give them money: an additional \$100.

The current measures implemented by the federal government, including those for students, are making it more attractive for people to stay at home than to go work in the fields. What message does the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food have for Canadians who are saying they will make more money by staying at home than by going to work in the fields?

**The Chair:** The Honourable Minister has the floor.

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We are doing everything possible to enable students to gain work experience if they want to. I think students really want to help their community. The measures we have implemented—not only the benefit, but also the creation of 76,000 jobs—will help students and encourage them to work. We do not want to encourage them not to work.

**The Chair:** Mr. Deltell, go ahead.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the minister for her answer and I congratulate her on the quality of her French. I also want to assure you that, when she uses the English word jobs, all francophones understand what she is talking about.

I would now like to put a question about business owners to the Minister of Finance.

Some business owners do not pay themselves a salary, but receive dividends instead. The government had a bit of a problem at the beginning of its proposals to help business owners, and that problem has been corrected, but not entirely. Among other things, there is the issue of access to the \$40,000 loan. Even this morning, I met a business owner who did not have access to that contribution because he was paying himself a salary in dividends.

What does the government say to a business owner who pays himself in dividends, but does not have access to the \$40,000 loan contribution, as it is proposed for other types of business owners?

**The Chair:** The Honourable Minister has the floor.

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is indeed a different situation. In emergency benefits, dividends are included in the calculation for business owners who use dividends. Our approach concerning rent is more of an approach for

small businesses who need it. There will be a number of measures to help people in various situations. [*Technical difficulties*] consider our approach regarding loans. We will have more information on this over the coming days.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** The hon. member for Thornhill, Mr. Kent.

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thornhill's world-famous Shouldice hospital, which performed almost 7,000 hernia operations last year, has followed the Ontario government's order to suspend elective surgery and has closed its doors during the COVID lockdown, but employees of this historic institution have become unintended casualties of the emergency CERB funds, caught in the ineligibility provisions for hospitals. Shouldice hospital is covering staff salaries for now but can't continue to do that for long.

Might the finance minister correct this unintended consequence of the emergency funding?

• (1335)

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, I want to say that we recognize that different institutions and businesses are facing different challenges. Our attempt has been to come up with measures that can most adequately capture a large number of Canadians. We think our measures are doing that. More than seven million people have taken advantage of the Canada emergency response benefit now, and we've seen a very significant application process for the emergency wage subsidy approach.

We recognize that there are many situations and many organizations we need to continue to consider. Our approach will be, on a continuing basis, to make sure we're protecting people, and that we try to find a way to give employers a bridge through this time, and of course deal with any specific problems we see that need to be dealt with. We've taken the approach that we will continue to make improvements where we see they're warranted.

I appreciate the question.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Mr. Chair, with regard to the government's still imprecise plans related to the reopening of the Canadian economy, how will the expansion of vitally important testing capacity be achieved and when might Health Canada approve truly effective antibody testing?

**Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry):** With respect to vaccine development, therapeutics and countermeasures, we are engaging with different companies to look at made-in-Canada solutions.

We're also leveraging our world-class scientists—

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I can't hear the response.

**The Chair:** I want to impress something upon all the members for the next session. You'll notice that I have a headset. Please order one. I mean this especially for people who are answering questions, because it's so much clearer. You'll notice that the microphone is close to my face, and it's much clearer. It's for everyone. Maybe you don't have one yet or maybe it's just not there, but please make sure that you do have it handy. It will make the audio clearer.

I'll ask the honourable minister to continue and maybe to speak a little closer to the screen.

Thank you.

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** Mr. Chair, I'm not sure if you can hear me right now—

**Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I can't hear anything. It's just silence.

**Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.):** Minister Bains, if you can put your settings to English at the bottom of Zoom, then maybe it will translate. That's what the issue was before.

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** Can you hear me now?

**The Chair:** Everyone can hear you now. Thank you.

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** As I was saying, with respect to vaccine development and therapeutics and countermeasures, we are mobilizing Canadian scientists. We're recognizing that we need to look at ways to make sure that a lot of that development opportunity can take place here in Canada. Also, with the concept of open science, we're engaging with our international peers to look at solutions globally as well.

It's important to note that we're also focusing on building up clinical trial capacity and broad-based biomanufacturing production capabilities within Canada. These measures will enable us to make sure that we are at the forefront of engaging with other countries on vaccine development, therapeutics and other countermeasures, and also a made-in-Canada production capability in order to assist Canadians as we move forward and eventually, hopefully, find a vaccine.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Thank you, Minister.

As we wait for the development of that vaccine, when does the government expect to achieve adequate supplies of personal protective equipment to support the provinces' efforts to reopen the economy?

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** There are two components to it.

My colleague, Minister Anand, is working on the purchasing aspect of it. I'm focused on the made-in-Canada solution. We provide daily and weekly updates to Canadians on companies that are mobilizing on a regular basis. We had a call to action, and over 6,000 companies stepped up and said that they want to help with the mobilization efforts. We're very proud of the fact that we have a strong domestic manufacturing capability that enables us to do that.

In some of the initiatives that we've announced on ventilators, we were able to engage Thornhill Medical, CAE, Starfish Medical, Art McDonald's initiative and Ventilators for Canadians for over 30,000 ventilators, which should meet the expectations we have in Canada.

With respect to face shields, we've engaged companies such as Ford, Mitchell Plastics and Honda to enable us to produce millions of face shields within Canada.

Gowns are another incredible success story. We not only mobilized companies in the apparel industry, such as Stanfield's, but we also found Canadian raw material and inputs, construction house wrap, that will enable us to build a made-in-Canada solution with raw materials from within Canada and deal with some of those international supply chain challenges that we've had.

• (1340)

**The Chair:** We will go to the honourable member for Lakeland, Mrs. Stubbs.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

More than a month ago, the finance minister said help for the oil and gas sector was coming in hours or days. Canadian companies have been forced to cut about \$9 billion in planned spending since the beginning of March, while active rigs dropped from 214 to 24, and up to 50% of workers employed by drillers have been laid off and thousands more have lost their jobs.

On April 17, the government announced loans between \$15 million and \$60 million. The natural resources minister said that day that the most urgent priority for energy operators is "liquidity, liquidity, liquidity."

Last Friday, April 24, the BDC said details on how companies can apply are weeks away.

On what exact date can energy producers and service companies apply?

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources):** Mr. Chair, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this meeting, and thank you to everybody for putting it together.

We'll be working with the Department of Finance to make sure that—

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** A point of order, Mr. Chair. We cannot hear.

**The Chair:** We seem to have a point of order. The sound is giving us a hard time.

Now the honourable minister—

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan:** Can you hear me now?

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Yes, we can.

**The Chair:** Okay, we can hear you now. Very good.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Thank you.

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan:** Thanks, Kevin.

I just wanted to thank the chair and thank all the staff for putting this together. It's miraculous and marvellous.

To take the honourable member's question, Mr. Chair, we'll be working with the BDC to make sure this is rolled out as quickly as possible. She is right in pointing out that when we asked several groups, including the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, what the top priorities were, they all named liquidity. We have measures for small to medium-sized businesses, and we hope to hit larger ones soon. Those small to medium-sized initiatives will cover about 85% of the workforce.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

[English]

**The Chair:** Just a moment, we have a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Rayes and Mrs. DeBellefeuille want to raise on a point of order.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** The interpreter is really struggling to do his work because the minister's mouth is not close enough to the microphone.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay, we're having a problem.

[Translation]

Mr. Rayes, does your point of order concern the same issue?

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Yes. A number of ministers have spoken, and many of them did not have a microphone or headphones. Given the situation, they should be the first to have the best possible equipment, so that we can do our work properly. I want to emphasize that.

**The Chair:** Okay. That is exactly the reminder I was going to make at the end of the meeting.

Thank you very much, Mr. Rayes.

[English]

Mr. O'Regan, could I get you to be closer to the microphone? There seems to be a problem with sound. We'll continue from there. How is that?

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan:** Fine.

**The Chair:** We'll see if that helps. Thank you.

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan:** Okay. I'll speak more loudly, and I'll be sure to have a headset microphone for the next session, Mr. Chair.

To finish off what I said to the honourable member's question, we'll be working with the Department of Finance and with BDC to make sure that those liquidity measures are rolled out as quickly as possible.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** Okay, Minister, but the commitment was made more than 34 days ago. The uncertainty about whether or not assistance is coming is exactly what is causing companies to go bankrupt and lay off workers. They can't actually access liquidity, which, I agree with you, is the top priority, and it's not available yet. By your answer so far, I guess there's no date on which companies can actually apply for the loans. I'm assuming, from that, that

you can't answer the question of what date money will actually get to businesses.

The survival of the gas sector is going to be crucial for Canada's recovery and future growth. That's the reality, not just for one or two provinces, but for all of Canada. As you know, in 2018 oil and gas provided just over 500,000 jobs and contributed \$108 billion to Canada's GDP. That's six times higher than auto and 10 times higher than aero, and that was even after losing hundreds of billions of dollars in projects and hundreds of thousands of Canadians had already lost their jobs.

Maybe you can answer this for the clarity of companies. The BDC says that companies "must have been financially viable...prior to the current economic environment" to qualify. On what date did the "current economic environment" start?

● (1345)

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan:** Mr. Chair, first of all, let me say that I am keenly aware of the repercussions of the dual crises on the oil and gas industry. It's not only the crisis of demand and destruction, caused by the fact that we didn't fly for this meeting—none of us took planes—and that people obviously aren't driving nearly as much. Plus, we have a crisis that was initiated by the price war with Saudi Arabia and Russia, and we are dealing with that on an international level.

I live in Newfoundland and Labrador, a province that is even more exposed to oil and gas royalty reductions and price instability.

[*Technical difficulty—Editor*] that we will be working with the Department of Finance to make sure liquidity measures are rolled out as quickly as possible.

**The Chair:** [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** I can't hear the chair.

**The Chair:** Sorry, that was me. I pushed it off instead. We all make mistakes.

We have about a minute left: 30 seconds for the question, 30 seconds for the answer.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** Okay, well, this is what I hope, in a future session, the minister can answer immediately, then. What defines the "current economic environment"? What criteria define "financial viability"? These are the details that need to be known in order for companies to be able to stay afloat and survive right now, and then to grow in the future and get people back to work.

Minister, the finance minister had said that oil and gas businesses could access the wage subsidy while they were waiting for this additional support, but I've been told that Canadian energy companies of all sizes that are based in Canada, employ Canadian workers, contractors, consultants and suppliers, and pay Canadian taxes but generate the revenue from outside of Canada currently don't qualify even for the wage subsidy. That's why so many oil and gas companies can't actually access the supports already announced. Will you commit to working on fixing that problem?

**The Chair:** The honourable minister has 15 seconds or less. I'll be lenient.

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan:** Most certainly, Mr. Chair, I'm committed to making sure that the wage subsidy affects those workers most deeply affected by these dual crises. There's no question. I will report back later to this House.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The honourable member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Mr. Vis.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Chair, yesterday the member for Brampton Centre tweeted and then deleted an announcement of \$3 billion for bee farms. Everyone knows that bees are crucial for our ecosystem and our agricultural sector, especially in my riding with its large concentration of Canada's blueberry farms. However, it is inappropriate, and certainly not a team Canada approach, for a Liberal MP—

**The Chair:** We have a point of order.

Mrs. Jansen.

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC):** I can't hear Mr. Vis. I am on the English channel.

**The Chair:** Mr. Vis, are you on the English channel?

**Mr. Brad Vis:** I believe I am now, yes.

**The Chair:** Very good.

It seems to be a selective problem. It doesn't happen to everyone. Our technical team will be working on it.

Mr. Vis, I'll let you continue.

Thank you.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** However, it is inappropriate, and certainly not a team Canada approach, for a Liberal MP to have access to information that has been denied to me and other members of Parliament.

Can the Prime Minister please confirm if there is indeed a \$3-billion bee farm fund?

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau:** Mr. Chair, we know how important the bee sector is for our agriculture. I can assure you that we are working closely with them, but there is no announcement to make.

**The Chair:** Mr. Vis, I want to remind honourable members that holding up a prop is not something that is allowed.

I'll let the honourable member continue.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** I guess the member for Brampton Centre was wrong.

In B.C. it's fire season and flood season. Volunteer firefighters are having to choose between feeding their families and protecting our communities. Like millions of others, many have lost their regular employment and are collecting the Canada emergency response benefit.

Will the government make an exception so that volunteer firefighters who earn more than \$1,000 while on duty will not have their CERB benefit taken away for the month? In my riding, several calls have already gone unanswered because volunteer firefighters have been worried about losing their CERB if they take a call.

• (1350)

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough:** I thank the member for the very important question. We did a lot of work with the firefighter associations and individuals who had raised the issue of ensuring that they could still accept a honorarium and they wouldn't have to choose between working hours and getting the CERB. When we set the \$1,000 threshold, we were under the understanding that it would allow firefighters to continue with their work fighting fires.

I will definitely commit to the member to look into that, to make sure that we do not in any way disincentivize our first responders in their efforts.

Thank you.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** I'd like to thank the minister for that. It is especially pertinent in the community of Cache Creek in the Fraser Canyon, where we are under a severe flood warning right now.

In my riding, there are dozens of organizations that qualified for Canada summer jobs, yet they likely will be denied a placement because of limited funding. It is of note that the government has only reallocated existing resources for this program. I believe that Canada and our students would be better served through an enhanced Canada summer jobs program versus a direct wage subsidy, where and if possible.

Can we expand the program, and some of the other positive initiatives announced, to provide funds to all organizations and additional essential services that can still operate? We're spending \$9 billion on students. Surely creating more work experience is better than a direct cheque. As the Minister of Health noted at the very beginning of this session, Canada does have "a culture of innovation and courage". I'd like to see that happen as it relates to students this summer.

Thank you.

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough:** I thank the member for his question. Canada summer jobs is a program that is near and dear to all our hearts as members of Parliament.

We are funding 70,000 jobs at 100% this summer. I'm very keen to see the uptake, now that we will have a better understanding of what employers need jobs and where those jobs can be redistributed around the country. In addition, we created an extra 76,000 jobs last week or this week. I can't remember the dates. I apologize. Everything is a bit of a blur these days.

The message is that of course we want our students to work. Our students want to work. We will look very closely, if this program is oversubscribed, at potentially investing more in these jobs.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Vis, you have about a minute. You have time for a 30-second question and 30-second answer, please.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Approximately three weeks ago, on the daily MP call, I asked ESDC officials what steps were being taken to redeploy workers to assist with the benefit rollouts for Canadians who have lost their jobs. Second, I asked what steps were being taken to assist workers in the federal public service to connect from home. Officials acknowledged that both were taking place but could not provide any details.

Can the minister commit to letting Parliament know what percentage of her workforce is not completing their regular hours and duties because of network and technological challenges? As well, of the total workforce at ESDC, what percentage or how many employees have been redeployed to assist directly with Canadians suffering from a loss of jobs?

Thank you.

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough:** Mr. Chair, we should be very proud of our public servants and their Herculean effort to provide Canadians with both the Canada emergency response benefit and the access to services and programs that are so vital for our citizens.

Mr. Chair, I can definitely commit to get the member that information and to get it to everybody who would like that information, but I can tell you that we worked very hard in the early days of this crisis to ensure that we could redeploy our public servants. For example, we moved about 1,500 people from Passport Canada over to process EI applications, and we also handed out, I believe, 3,000 laptops so that employees could work from home, but I can get him those further details, absolutely.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** The honourable member for Joliette, Mr. Ste-Marie, has the floor.

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

We have adopted a number of measures to support the economy. Concerning assistance to large businesses and banks, business reporter Michel Girard suggests setting 10 conditions for receiving assistance.

Here is the first. The company benefiting from government assistance should in no way use tax havens in its commercial activities, be it directly through local branches in those territories with a more favourable tax system or indirectly through commercial allies implanted in those tax havens.

Does the Minister of Finance agree with that condition?

• (1355)

**The Chair:** The Honourable Minister of Finance has the floor.

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his question.

I think it is very important to have measures that will enable companies to establish a bridge by the end of the crisis. At the same time, we know that it is important to take our laws and our situation into account. We will consider....

[*English*]

**Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Chiu.

**Mr. Kenny Chiu:** Mr. Chair, if you could ask the minister to speak in the English channel or the French channel, that would be great. Right now, the English translation is overlapping with his French.

**The Chair:** We'll ask the honourable minister to switch channels and see if that works. We'll see if we can get that technical issue cleared up for future meetings.

Honourable Minister, please proceed.

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, I was on the English channel. I think that's where I should be. Let me continue in case I should be on the other channel.

What I was saying was that we recognize that we need to provide support for businesses through this era, and of course we expect businesses to follow all appropriate rules. As we consider financing for large enterprises, we will be looking specifically at their approach to doing business, to make sure that we're comfortable that they are not only following rules but using the funds that potentially can be provided in a way that serves the intended purpose.

**The Chair:** Before we go to Monsieur Ste-Marie, I just want to point out that my technical folks here are saying that if you're speaking French on the English channel, that's where the problem comes up. We're all learning together here.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ste-Marie, you can ask another question.

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

I want to remind you that the problem is not the illegal use of tax havens, but rather the legal use that is allowed for large businesses and major Canadian banks. That is called tax avoidance. We know that Denmark and other countries have implemented such measures to counter that. My understanding is that Canada does not want to do this right now and will continue to lag behind in the fight against tax avoidance.

The second condition the reporter, Mr. Girard, suggests is the following. If the government assistance came in the form of a subsidy, in return, the company should give the government an equity stake—in other words, a block of shares proportional to the amount injected. That way, once the crisis is over and the beneficiary company recovers on the stock markets, we, the taxpayers, will also be able to benefit from a return on our collective investment.

Is the Minister of Finance considering that condition?

**The Chair:** The Honourable Minister has the floor.

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue):** Mr. Chair, good afternoon.

I want to take the time to answer my colleague properly because his question is really important.

Our government has invested unprecedented amounts of money—nearly \$1 billion—to fight tax evasion. Over the past few years, we have worked on tightening the rules, including through the voluntary disclosures program. We have worked in tandem with the OECD. Every year, we have ensured to conclude agreements with every country to exchange information. Our government's priority is to continue to work on everyone paying their fair share.

**The Chair:** Mr. Ste-Marie, go ahead.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Mr. Chair, I thank you from the Joliette riding.

I thank the minister for her answer. I want to remind you a second time that our intervention aims to denounce the legal use of tax havens—so tax avoidance, and not tax evasion. In that respect, Canada is lagging behind other countries and could do a great deal by making regulatory amendments, which it is not doing.

My question was for the Minister of Finance and concerned the idea that companies would give the government an equity stake, or a block of shares proportional to the amount injected. I would like the minister to answer me.

• (1400)

**The Chair:** The Honourable Minister has the floor.

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier:** Mr. Chair, as I was explaining to my colleague, at my request, an expert panel has been created at the Canada Revenue Agency to advise us on the measures to take to avoid people getting involved in tax evasion or in abusive tax avoidance.

As I was saying, this is a key issue for us and for taxpayers. Our government has invested the most money—nearly \$1 billion—to give the agency the tools to fight tax avoidance and tax evasion. We will continue to do everything we possibly can for everyone to pay their fair share.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** The honourable member for Surrey Centre, Mr. Sarai.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I'll be sharing my time with the member of Parliament for Miramichi—Grand Lake.

First of all, on behalf of the constituents of Surrey Centre, I want to express my heartfelt condolences to the people of Nova Scotia. We all pray for you during this very difficult time.

It's an honour to speak and ask a question in Canada's first virtual Parliament in a time that is unprecedented in our history.

My riding of Surrey Centre had many constituents travelling abroad when the COVID-19 pandemic began to escalate globally. Specifically, we had many individuals stuck in Peru, India, Pakistan and the Philippines. My office has dealt with requests from hundreds of concerned constituents who were trying to get home or trying to help their loved ones get home after the country they were in or travelling to limited internal movement, closed its borders and restricted airspace to commercial flights.

The federal government has taken unprecedented action in this time to negotiate access to locked-down countries and reach Canadians and bring them home. I want to thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, their team and consular staff around the world for undertaking the largest repatriation effort in Canada's history.

My team and I are so appreciative of your quick replies to our inquiries and the inquiries of my constituents. You have been working around the clock, and we are so grateful for your efforts.

Can the minister please update us on how many Canadians have been repatriated over the last few weeks?

**The Chair:** The honourable minister.

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs):** Mr. Chair, I'm very pleased to report to colleagues and to Parliament that we have repatriated more than 20,000 Canadians so far, on more than 182 flights coming from about 81 countries. We have also been able to repatriate about 5,000 people from more than 180 ships. I'm pleased to report to colleagues and to Parliament that the last passengers now have made it to Canada over the weekend.

This has been, as the member for Surrey Centre said, the largest and most complex repatriation effort in our nation's history in peacetime, and I want to thank every member. From probably just about everyone in this House, I got an email, a text message or a voice message asking about the well-being of their constituents.

I am very pleased that this has been a team Canada effort. I want to thank the consular officials here in Ottawa and around the world. We have answered more than 82,000 calls and 150,000 emails. Our operation is largely complete. I think we're about 80% complete, and we will continue to assist Canadian travellers abroad wherever they might be during this crisis.

**The Chair:** The honourable member for Miramichi—Grand Lake.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In my constituency, Miramichi—Grand Lake, the inshore fishing industry is very important to the area's economy. It employs several thousand people. The fishing sector isn't spared and is also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most fishing activity takes place in small coastal villages, where almost the entire population depends on the industry to make a living. COVID-19 is a source of major concern for plant workers and fishers, who are worried about their safety.

Another concern relates to the transportation of seafood products to markets and processing plants, since the plants have very limited storage capacity in the event of a surplus.

Lastly, although this isn't necessarily [*Technical difficulty—Editor*], our seasonal workers are very worried because they may not have accumulated enough hours to qualify for employment insurance after the season ends.

What measures have been implemented to help our plant workers and our fishers?

• (1405)

**The Chair:** The honourable minister has the floor.

[*English*]

**Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard):** Mr. Chair, before I answer the question, as the minister from Nova Scotia, I would just like to say thank you to Canadians from coast to coast to coast for their heartfelt condolences and good wishes to us here in the province.

I want to thank my colleague for the question, as well as for his continually reaching out to my office to bring forward the concerns he hears from constituents in his riding with regard to our fish and seafood sector.

We recognize how important that sector is to our rural coastal communities, and we're doing everything we can to support it. Right now we know that they are extremely challenged because of the loss of export markets. We're looking at a number of different measures we can put in place to help harvesters, as well as processors. This past weekend, we announced a \$62.5-million package for processors to allow them to diversify their products, to do value-added, as well as to increase their freezer capacity. This, in turn, will help harvesters by making sure they have somewhere to sell.

We also recognized the challenges some of them were facing with regard to accessing the CERB. We've made it available to seasonal workers, which was extremely important to the sector. We've also made sure that people who are on fishers' EI and have now run out are also going to be able to access the CERB.

These are all measures we're taking into account, but we're not finished. We know there is still a lot more that needs to be done. We know that some harvesters are not able to access some of the programs that we've put forward. We're making sure that we have those available to them, and we will continue to work with them.

I want to thank the member for his input into these programs. It's been extremely beneficial.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** I'll give the floor to the honourable member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Mr. Blaney, is your microphone off?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Yes, Mr. Chair. I apologize. All this still needs a bit of getting used to.

Mr. Chair, you're doing an excellent job.

Unfortunately, we learned today that 15 regional media outlets, weekly newspapers in Manitoba and Ontario, will be publishing their final editions next week. Yet they play an important role, particularly in a pandemic situation.

On March 25, the Minister of Heritage announced \$30 million in funding to support regional and ethnic media.

When will this money be invested in the St. Albert Gazette, in Alberta, or in La Voix du Sud, in Lac-Etchemin?

**The Chair:** The honourable minister has the floor.

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

I also want to thank my honourable colleague for his question.

I want to acknowledge all the residents of Laurier—Sainte-Marie and all Canadians. We're going through this crisis together.

Since the announcement, our COVID-19 crisis education and awareness campaign has been rolled out in over 900 newspapers and radio stations, in 12 different languages, including Inuktitut. The campaign was published in some newspapers in the member's constituency, including Lac-Etchemin, Lévis and Saint Romuald.

This campaign is ongoing. It will continue as long as we need to raise awareness regarding the important issue of the COVID-19 crisis.

**The Chair:** Mr. Blaney, you have the floor.

**Hon. Steven Blaney:** I want to thank the minister for his response.

The special funding makes it possible not only to inform people about the pandemic, but also about all the government spending on advertising. The advertising must first be allocated to Canadian businesses that pay taxes rather than to the web giants, which don't pay taxes.

My second question is for the minister. It concerns the cancellation of the Calgary Stampede, the Festival d'été de Québec and the Festival Jazz etcetera Lévis, for example. Some organizations have submitted an eligibility application for Canadian Heritage programs and other organizations haven't done so.

The minister announced a budget of \$500 million. How will this money be used to cover fixed costs related to organizations, celebrations and festivals? These organizations must survive this year, even though the cancellation of planned events means that they won't have any revenue.

**The Chair:** The honourable minister has the floor.

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

We've done a number of things over the past few weeks to help organizers of social, cultural or artistic events who are feeling the full impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

One of the Department of Canadian Heritage's first initiatives was to announce that we would honour all our financial commitments with our partners, even though their events wouldn't be taking place. They were instructed to use the money to offset some of the losses. We also asked them to compensate the craftspeople and technicians who would have participated in these events.

The \$500 million that the Prime Minister and I announced a week and a half ago builds on other measures that the government implemented, such as the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency response benefit.

We're well aware that not everyone who works in the arts, culture and events sectors can access these measures. We're working out the details. In the interest of transparency, I hope that these details will be released to the public in the next few days.

• (1410)

**The Chair:** Mr. Blaney, you have 30 seconds to ask your question, which will be followed by a 30-second response.

**Hon. Steven Blaney:** My question is for the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

I want to know what's happening at the borders. The entire country is locked down. Here in Quebec, we can't travel from region to region. Why is the border still open when we're in the middle of a pandemic, a pandemic that we know came across the border?

[English]

**The Chair:** The honourable minister.

**Hon. Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, we have essentially closed the border. In fact, we've seen a 99% reduction in air travellers arriving in Canada from any international jurisdiction, including the United States, and equally, a very significant reduction in the number of people crossing our borders. It is also terribly important that we maintain essential supply lines and the movement of essential workers back and forth across our border. We have imposed very strict restrictions to eliminate all non-essential travel, but we also recognize the importance of the essential movement of trades and goods and essential workers back and forth across that border. We've worked very collaboratively with the United States to ensure that happens, to keep our economy moving and to serve all Canadians.

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

We'll now move to the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

**Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC):** Mr. Chair, my first question, through you, is for the Minister of Finance.

There are many businesses in northern Saskatchewan that operate as limited partnerships. Des Nedhe Development, Meadow Lake Tribal Council Industrial Investments, and Athabasca Basin Development are just three examples. There are many more indigenous businesses structured the same way across Canada. Unfortunately, these businesses have been left out of the Canadian emergency wage subsidy program.

Can the minister confirm that he will change eligibility so that first nations limited partnerships are included?

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

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, I want to acknowledge the question from the member.

We recognize there are some indigenous businesses that are looking to be included in the wage subsidy and that their structure has prevented them from being included thus far. I'd like to confirm that we are looking at this.

The goal around this wage subsidy is to make sure that as many businesses as possible that meet the criteria are included. We recognize there are some legitimate businesses that have experienced the decline in revenue that are not included, so that's continuing work.

The good news is that we've now seen applications for the Canada emergency wage subsidy in the 40,000 range. It's a very significant take-up. As we expected, it is going to be an important program for businesses to help them get through this time.

I will definitely be following up on that question to make sure the appropriate applicability is there for indigenous-owned businesses.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Thank you.

We'll go back to Mr. Vidal.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** Mr. Chair, these businesses provide essential funding for services and employment on and off reserves across Canada. I, along with many indigenous business leaders, have been advocating for a month now on this. I just hope this comes soon. I hope this is something that is taken very seriously.

My next question is for the Minister of Indigenous Services.

Currently in northern Saskatchewan, the communities of La Loche, Clearwater River Dene Nation and English River First Nation are experiencing a bad outbreak of COVID-19. These outbreaks in northern and remote places require unique responses due to the lack of health resources and the geographical challenge.

Mr. Chair, through you to Minister Miller, I ask what action ISC has taken to address this particular outbreak in northern Saskatchewan. Does that action include providing these communities with additional health personnel?

• (1415)

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I'm going to ask the honourable minister to go ahead.

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the member for his questions.

First and foremost, our hearts go out to the family of Elder Sylvester—

**An hon. member:** Point of order, Mr. Chair. I can't hear the response.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** We have a point of order on the response.

I'll just ask Minister Miller to—

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I don't know if anyone else is having this problem, but I'm having trouble hearing you.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Okay, I'm not sure why that would be, but let me just flip over to the English channel and see if that works. Please stand by.

I don't know if that's any better, but we'll have to go back to Minister Miller for his response. We'll try that again. I couldn't see whether he's wearing a headset, but if he's responding in English, I would ask him to just make sure he's on the English channel.

Go ahead, Minister Miller.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can confirm that I've moved over from interpretation to the English feed. I hope that's better for people listening.

First and foremost, on behalf of the Government of Canada, our hearts go out to the close family and relatives of Elder Sylvester, who passed away in the long-term care home. This is something, obviously, that is devastating our nation. I would like members to know that we are working with the Government of Saskatchewan, and in the case of Indigenous Services Canada, we are ensuring first and foremost that the members of Clearwater River Dene Nation have the resources, not only in personal protective equipment, but in surge capacity for one of these outbreaks.

In the case of the Government of Canada, we are engaging with the community, Clearwater River Dene Nation, to ensure that they have the equipment necessary to deal with and stamp out any outbreak of COVID-19. Again, working in tight communication with the Government of Saskatchewan, we are ensuring that La Loche and nearby indigenous communities do have the resources they need.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** We have time for one short question, perhaps 30 seconds.

We'll go to Mr. Vidal for a wrap-up question.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** Mr. Chair, my question is for Minister Miller again.

Minister, you and your government talk about using science, but data on the rates of infection among indigenous Canadians remains very unreliable. In order to ensure that indigenous people are adequately supported, and that those supports are scaled correctly, what specific steps is the government taking in order to gather accurate data and make informed decisions?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Mr. Chair, this is an exceedingly important question. The data that Indigenous Services carries and has directly deals principally with indigenous peoples on reserve and the data that is given to us through the territories as they administer the test-

ing. This is a question that goes across the government in terms of coordinating our response, whether it's with the territories or the provinces, to ensure that those testing, as they identify people, are able to identify what background these people have.

Currently, given the urgency of this situation, that ethnocultural testing has not been done. As a government, we're looking forward to moving forward and getting disaggregated data to ensure that we do have a specific response for indigenous peoples or for people who are, for that matter, more vulnerable to COVID-19, and we—

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Unfortunately, we're out of time now. We'll continue on.

We'll go back to the chair, Mr. Rota.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Acting Chair. Well done.

We'll move on to the honourable member for Calgary Nose Hill, Ms. Rempel Garner.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Chair, my questions are directed to the Minister of Industry. What are the specific quantities of critical PPE—masks, gowns, face shields, gloves and hand sanitizer—that Canadian industry is currently producing on a daily basis?

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** Mr. Chair, can you hear me now? Wonderful.

As I highlighted before, with regard to face shields, we are seeing Canadian companies produce them in the millions. With regard to masks, we've engaged Medicom, which will produce millions of masks, both N95 and surgical masks—

• (1420)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** How many today, Mr. Chair? How many are being produced today by Canadian companies?

**The Chair:** We'll let the minister finish and then we'll come back to the second question.

Minister Bains.

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** Mr. Chair, as I was saying, with regard to ventilators, over 30,000 have been built by companies like CAE, StarFish, and Ventilators for Canadians. For gowns, more than 18 million were purchased through seven significant contracts, by Canada Goose, Calko Group, Stanfield's, and Mustang Survival. For hand sanitizers, domestic capacity is now at 15 million litres per month, which is the equivalent of six Olympic-sized swimming pools. All are produced in Canadian—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Chair, on Friday the minister of industry was unwilling to answer a question put to him by a CBC reporter on the number of imported masks from China that were actually defective. Instead, he talked about strong domestic capacity. I'm interested in his quantifying what exactly that means, because the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, my colleague Brad Redekopp and others have stated that domestic PPE supply will be needed in order for workers to be protected and the economy to safely reopen.

How much is Canadian industry producing right now? I notice that the minister didn't talk about masks. I'm just wondering what that delta is between importation and domestic supply, and whether Canadian businesses are going to have to be reliant on potentially defective masks from China to reopen their businesses.

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** Mr. Chair, again, I would like to thank the member for her very thoughtful question.

We are trying to complement our efforts by continuing to purchase at a significant level but also mobilizing domestic industry. We had a call to action, and as I indicated before, 6,000 Canadian companies have stepped up. Each and every single day we are seeing more and more Canadian capacity build up in a range of areas, from gowns to masks, hand sanitizers and ventilators, all the essential personal protective equipment that Canadian front-line health care workers need in the short term.

As the member raised, with regard to reopening the economy and for broader use, we want to make sure that we have strong domestic capacity as well. It's great to see these made-in-Canada solutions—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Chair—

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** —and that's going to help many Canadians in the future.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** That wasn't a response to my question. I asked how many masks were being produced in Canada versus what the total demand was. What's the delta in terms of numbers, in terms of what we're being required to import that might be potentially defective, both today and then projected under the terms of provincial reopening efforts?

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** With respect to the demand, that demand is going to continue to increase. That number is going to continue to go up. We're leaving no stone unturned. We are mobilizing a strong industrial base to build up a domestic capacity. Of course, it's in the millions. The company that I would like to highlight is Medicom, for example, in Montreal. They are building up local capacity that will provide us with 44 million—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** How many masks are they producing today on a daily basis?

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** If I can just complete my thought, as I said they're—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** It's my time, so how many masks are they producing on a daily basis?

**The Chair:** I just want to remind the honourable member that the questions come through the chair. This is what we are trying to avoid, a back and forth.

We still have about 30 seconds. I'll let the honourable minister continue.

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** As I have indicated with Medicom, for example, this is a company that we have engaged. It's a Canadian company that is building up Canadian production capability. They are looking to produce 40-plus million masks on an annual basis for the next 10 years. This is a significant commitment, and it is going to be complemented by other made-in-Canada solutions as well.

**The Chair:** The honourable member for West—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Chair, I just want to use my last—

**The Chair:** I just want to remind the honourable members that I do have the ability to mute individual members. I don't want to go there, so I'll just leave it at that.

The honourable member for West Nova.

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I would like to take this first opportunity to offer my sincere condolences to the families that have lost loved ones during the Nova Scotia murders. I would also like to thank my colleagues for their words of comfort during this difficult time.

[*Translation*]

I want to thank all the parliamentarians for their support.

• (1425)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We seem to be having some feedback. I'm not sure what the issue is. Let me just check with our technical people, and we'll pause for a second.

I'll let you continue, and we'll see how it works.

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** I had a French line in here. I just want to make sure I get through that, and then I'll switch to English.

[*Translation*]

I want to thank all the parliamentarians for their support during this difficult time for Canadians.

[*English*]

My first question is for the Minister of Finance, even though it's fisheries-related.

In many instances in the lobster industry, and I suppose in many other fisheries, buyers and processors will settle in various different ways with the fishermen. Simply, some buy the product by weight, some provide wage and wage benefits, and some use a combination of both. The last two methods do not effectively—

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Rayes, are you raising a point of order?

[*English*]

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** I'll switch to the English channel and I'll stay there instead of on the floor channel.

**The Chair:** I will interrupt for a second.

I believe Monsieur Rayes is frozen. This is one of our technological challenges.

We'll let you continue, and hopefully he can reconnect.

Mr. d'Entremont.

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** The last two methods do not effectively represent the true wages of the business. In one case that I am aware of, the T4 summary, box 14, shows about \$2.6 million in total employment, but the actual wages to people working directly for the company are only about \$242,000.

How can these companies qualify for the CEBA and the wage subsidy?

**Hon. Bernadette Jordan:** Mr. Chair, we recognize that, within the fishing sector, there are definitely some challenges with regard to how businesses are structured. We're looking at all those measures that have been put in place and how we can best address the concerns we're hearing from the industry. We know that there have been some shortfalls with regard to harvesters and processors in being able to access the wage subsidy, as well as some of the people who are trying to access the CERB.

Those are all measures that we're working on right now to try to make sure that we address these concerns as quickly as we possibly can.

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** Fishers are asking, of course, "What about us?" Many of their markets are closed, or at least purchasing minimal amounts of seafood. Some seasons have been postponed. Blaine Higgs, the Premier of New Brunswick, is now calling for the cancellation of the lobster fishery in New Brunswick.

When will the government come up with a rescue plan for the fishing industry, which has been severely affected since the beginning of this crisis? Processors were promised \$62.5 million, but nothing yet for fishers.

**Hon. Bernadette Jordan:** Mr. Chair, we know that the fish and seafood sector has been extremely impacted since the very start of COVID-19. It was one of the first sectors to feel the impacts, because of the decline in the export market.

We're making investments for processors to make sure that they can retool their facilities and provide the health and safety measures and protocols that have been put in place, and also to make sure they can build capacity through freezer and storage space. These are all things that we heard from processors were extremely important to them.

We also know that harvesters who are being impacted need supports. We are now looking at sector-specific areas, so that we can make sure that we address those issues. We have already made sure that seasonal workers are eligible for the CERB, as well as made sure that people who have run out of fishers' EI are also eligible.

We will continue to work with our harvesters, industry partners and organizations right across the fishing and seafood sector to make sure we get those measures in place as quickly as possible. We know that this is a very difficult time in this industry. I am working extremely hard and actively around the clock to try to make sure that we address these concerns as soon as we can.

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** Beyond the troubled fishery and agriculture sector, West Nova also has a vibrant tourist industry, but most of it revolves around the international ferry that connects us to the state of Maine.

Border restrictions will be going on for some time in the future. How does the government see the border with our neighbours to the south opening up again?

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I think it's a very important question, and we're monitoring it very carefully. I can tell you that the circumstances currently in the United States and Canada do not indicate to us that

it's the appropriate time to consider opening those borders. We have achieved a very significant level of success in reducing non-essential travel back and forth, and for ferry traffic that has meant a 100% reduction.

We'll continue to monitor the situation, and when we believe it is safe to do so, there can be a discussion about easing those restrictions, but at the present time I am firmly of the opinion that they need to remain in place to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

• (1430)

**The Chair:** The honourable member for Fredericton, Mrs. Atwin.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Mr. Chair, I'm going to reiterate some of the questions asked by my colleagues in the Bloc. This is a very important issue, and I really want clarity around this answer. The amount reported of \$11.4 billion—

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. We cannot hear her.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. We have a point of order from Mr. Waugh. We can't hear what's being said.

Mrs. Atwin, are you on the English channel?

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** I am on the "off" channel, the regular channel.

**The Chair:** Could you go to the English channel? We seem to be having some issues with the "off" channel when it's off campus here. Maybe I'll let you continue with English. If you do go to French, maybe switch over. It takes some coordination, but we're working on it at this end. This was one of our concerns when we started. It's holding out not badly, but we are having a few hiccups.

I'll let you continue. Thank you, Mrs. Atwin.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Okay, thank you. You might also hear my son. He doesn't sound very happy in the background.

I'm reiterating a question in a tighter frame than the one asked by my colleagues in the Bloc, because this is a very critical issue in Canada and I want a very clear answer.

I'm directing this to the Minister of Finance through you, Mr. Chair. Canadian corporations avoided paying a reported \$11.4 billion in tax in 2019 by using tax havens. The COVID pandemic brings to light the issues that were left in the shadows, things like the chronic underfunding of long-term care homes that led to terrible conditions for their residents and workers, and the lack of services for victims of domestic violence as another example. These are things that we need to fund with the public purse that our taxpayers contribute to.

Can the Minister of Finance confirm today that no taxpayer dollars will go to helping corporations that are avoiding doing their part to strengthen our social fabric?

[Translation]

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank my colleague for her important question.

I want to reiterate that the fight against tax evasion in Canada and abroad is a priority for our government. With respect to tax evasion abroad, under our leadership, the agency has conducted twice as many audits in three years as it conducted in 10 years under the Conservatives. The agency is currently conducting over 50 criminal investigations related to international tax evasion. As we said, we've made unprecedented investments of almost \$1 billion. We've given the agency the tools that it needs to fight tax evasion and tax avoidance.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Thank you.

I am reassured by the fact that we are putting in place measures to help students, the ones who will rebuild our future in our country. However, we are forgetting or leaving some of them behind. International students in Canada contribute an estimated \$21.6 billion to Canada's GDP and support almost 170,000 jobs for Canada's middle class.

Can the minister confirm that measures will be put in place to support international students, who will also play an important role in relaunching our economy?

**The Chair:** The honourable Minister.

[*Translation*]

Sorry, but Mr. Rayes is raising a point of order.

**Mr. Alain Rayes:** Mr. Chair, at 2:23 p.m., I lost the audio connection. I tried to let you know. However, at 2:26 p.m., I was completely cut off from the virtual meeting. I've just been reconnected by the people from technical services. They quickly helped me, and I want to commend them for their prompt action.

I want to know the plan for this type of situation to ensure access to the discussions, in particular to the answers to questions. I and the other 276 members are here because we're interested in this matter. We want to take part in this experience and to access all the information, particularly the ministers' answers to the relevant questions asked by my colleagues from all the opposition parties.

**The Chair:** Good question. Thank you for asking it.

The meeting will be posted online once we're finished. You could go online and find out what was said starting from the exact time that you lost the connection. All the members can do so, along with all Canadians who are interested in what happened during this meeting.

• (1435)

[*English*]

I'm sorry, Mr. Epp. You have a point of order.

**Mr. Dave Epp:** Yes, I am hearing both you and the French translation at equal volume, and I am not able to understand either.

**The Chair:** That was one of the issues that came up when we were starting; the translation was going to be an issue with an overlay like that. We're still working on it. We got most of it cleared up, but it's something that is coming back.

Basically, I was explaining to Mr. Rayes that if you've missed anything along the way, what Canadians can do, including all mem-

bers of Parliament, is to go online and see exactly where you were cut out and what you missed and listen to hear what was said and how it was said then. It is a feature that I'm sure all MPs, and certainly all Canadians across the country, will appreciate. Hopefully we'll get this interpretation issue cleared up as we progress.

So we'll continue.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel, one moment. We're going to Mr. Rayes, and then we'll come back to you.

Monsieur Rayes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Rayes:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to ask you to pass on a message.

I've already lost my Internet connection. Even though I'm in one of Canada's Parliament buildings right now, I lost my connection. We could ask technical services to ensure that the Wellington Building is properly connected so that we can do our work, especially if these virtual meetings continue.

**The Chair:** Noted. Thank you, Mr. Rayes.

[*English*]

Ms. Rempel, you had a point of order.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I did. I just wanted to say thank you to all of the House of Commons IT staff who have been working very hard, including Joshua Lind, who helped me with my technical difficulties. I think we should give them a virtual round of applause.

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order, but I'm sure it's very much appreciated by all staff at this end.

We'll continue. We have two minutes and 25 seconds left.

Ms. Atwin, we'll let you continue with your line of questioning.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Can I hear the answer to my question about international students?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry.

The hon. minister.

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough:** Mr. Chair, through you to the member, I can assure you that we're looking at a number of different ways to support international students. We value the contributions they make to our country in a number of different ways.

International students, if they meet the criteria, are eligible for the CERB. We have actually taken steps to relax the restriction put on international students in terms of how many hours they can work among classes a week, when classes are in session. This is particularly important for international students who work in the health care sector and can now contribute as essential workers in this crisis.

**The Chair:** Ms. Atwin.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Mr. Chair, my next question is about the oil and gas industry.

We see that the cost of a barrel of oil is at less than a dollar. We've talked about this transition to move from fossil fuels potentially to renewable energy or what's next for Canada. Well, it's time for that plan.

I really would like to know of some concrete steps going forward on how we're supporting a just transition for workers in the oil and gas industry. How are we moving Canada forward to the future? The time for that transition should have been quite some time ago, but here we are now, and the transition has been made for us. What's the plan moving forward for the oil and gas industry in Canada?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan:** Mr. Chair, we're working with the industry and with workers. Indeed, a transition has been occurring because the investment climate has changed demonstrably in the oil and gas industry.

Right now, our focus continues to be on the workers themselves and indeed on the companies that will provide those workers with the jobs they'll need as we come out of COVID-19. Those are the small and medium-sized enterprises, with 85% of the jobs being there. We're working with labour, particularly, as was pointed out, on liquidity for these companies.

**The Chair:** Now we'll move to the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Gazan.

• (1440)

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, through you, I would like to ask the Minister for Women and Gender Equality a question.

On April 27, the Minister for Women and Gender Equality acknowledged that since COVID-19, calls for help to respond to domestic violence have gone up 400% in some places. I also want to point out that the Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network recently placed urgent calls for the government to support barrier-free, 24-7 safe spaces for women 2SLGBTQ+ in response to COVID.

In light of a clear recognition of a growing crisis of domestic violence, does the government support 24-7, barrier-free spaces for women and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals who often do not fit into traditional shelter systems, yes or no?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Mr. Chair, to my hon. colleague, we have invested, pre-pandemic, in over 7,000 shelter spaces and we recognize that more needs to be done. We are working with our provincial and territorial counterparts to fill the gaps.

**The Chair:** Ms. Gazan.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Mr. Chair, although the minister has acknowledged a massive increase in violence and clear calls to action from the Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network, just

last week the government categorically refused to fund a 24-7 safe space for women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals in Winnipeg with the knowledge that we are one of the only urban centres without one.

I'd like to know if the government feels their decision is in the best safety interests of women, children and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals who do not fit into regular shelter spaces, especially in places like Winnipeg where we often experience twice the national average of domestic violence cases for women and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Mr. Chair, I appreciate my colleague's advocacy, though I reject the premise of her question, and there was no categorical denial of any such request. We have put forward over \$150 million to support community entities through the reaching home initiative. These entities are in communities and make decisions to support organizations on the ground. That's in addition to the \$50 million we have been—

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order in respect of time, I have many more questions and would like to ask a further question. Just in respect for some of the agreements that we've made on process, I'd like her to wrap up her response so I can continue with questions.

**The Chair:** We'll let the honourable minister finish. Normally, we try to make the answer as long as the question was, so the honourable minister could answer in that timeline. I appreciate your wanting an answer to the question.

I'll let the honourable minister finish very quickly and I will then come back to Ms. Gazan.

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I was responding to my colleague, we are working to support organizations on the ground. We recognize that more work needs to be done. We are working with our provincial and territorial colleagues to fill the gaps. If my colleague would like to continue the conversation offline, just as my team and I have been in touch, we are happy to do so.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Mr. Chair, the minister has not acknowledged her government's failure to respond to the calls for justice of the national inquiry. Her placing the onus of funding on the reaching home initiative, which is geared solely to funding indigenous peoples, makes the assumption that domestic violence only occurs in indigenous communities. That is both racist and misinformed. We need a safe space for women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals who do not fit into the regular shelter system.

I want to ask my respected colleague if she is willing to work with me to fund a 24-7 safe space in Winnipeg, or whether the government will continually turn a wilful blind eye to violence without taking real action.

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Mr. Chair, my team has been in touch with my honourable colleague. We have indicated that we are happy to work with her on the challenges faced in her community. Domestic violence and gender-based violence, particularly in times of a pandemic, are issues that were problems before the pandemic and are heightened now. As always, we are happy to work with her and others across the country to address the gaps and the violence.

• (1445)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** The honourable member for La Prairie has the floor.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Good afternoon, everyone. Mr. Chair, as you can see, I wore my tie, as promised.

Canada has spent a great deal of money to help businesses affected by the pandemic. Everyone agrees on this. We're talking about \$73 billion in wage subsidies alone. A number of countries have done the same thing, including Denmark. Denmark helps businesses, but the businesses that have put money in tax havens don't qualify for help from the government.

My question is very straightforward. Why aren't we doing the same thing as Denmark? Why aren't we telling businesses that use tax havens that they don't qualify for help from the government?

**The Chair:** The honourable Minister of National Revenue has the floor.

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to answer my colleague's important question.

We expect to receive almost one million applications from businesses for the Canada emergency wage subsidy. Of that number, 100,000 businesses generate annual revenues of over \$5 million. Each application from these 100,000 businesses will be checked manually by auditors.

We'll take all the necessary measures to maintain the integrity of the tax system and to ensure that everyone pays their fair share of taxes. It should also be noted that the wage subsidy implemented by our government is really designed to protect employees, not businesses.

**The Chair:** Mr. Therrien, you have the floor.

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That's a fairly long response, but it doesn't answer my question. I'll start again.

You said that you spent \$1 billion on this. You should be able to identify them. Can you say that, if a company has money in tax havens, it won't receive any help from the government? Can you tell me that? I'd like a straightforward answer, Minister Lebouthillier.

**The Chair:** You're on mute, Minister Lebouthillier. Please turn your microphone on.

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll give a straightforward answer to my colleague so that he understands the response. Tax evasion and tax avoidance are really a priority for our government. Since 2015, we've invested almost \$1 billion to fight these issues.

With respect to tax evasion abroad, as a result of our leadership, the agency has conducted twice as many audits in three years as it conducted in 10 years under the Conservative government.

Currently, there are over 50 criminal investigations related to international tax evasion. We've given the agency the tools that it needs to do its job effectively. We'll continue to work to maintain the integrity of the tax system, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Therrien, you have the floor.

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** My questions are straightforward, and I'd like equally straightforward answers.

She's comparing herself to the Conservatives, but they're at the back of the pack when it comes to fighting Canadian tax evasion. She likes to compare herself to the worst and she's satisfied with this.

I'll repeat my question. Will the minister ensure that people who have put money in tax havens won't receive any help from the government, from taxpayers' money? The question is straightforward, and I want a straightforward answer.

Mr. Chair, I'd like her to have 10 seconds to answer the question.

**The Chair:** The honourable minister has the floor.

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we said, tax evasion and tax avoidance are a priority for our government. We made historic investments of \$1 billion to fight these issues. We have agreements with countries and we conduct country-by-country audits each year. We tightened the rules of the voluntary disclosures program and we're working with the OECD. We're implementing measures. We've given the agency the tools that it needs to fight tax evasion. We'll continue working along exactly the same lines, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** You have about 20 seconds to ask a brief question.

• (1450)

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** This is nonsense. We're asking her to take action to prevent businesses from sending money provided by the government to tax havens. This is easy to do, and she's saying no.

We're asking her whether she's ready for the Government of Quebec to collect the GST from foreign businesses that don't pay taxes. Can you at least answer this question? The QST will be charged to foreign businesses that don't pay taxes. Could you at least say that the GST should be charged to these businesses? The mere fact that you're failing to do so proves how much you aren't taking this seriously, Minister Lebouthillier.

**The Chair:** Before getting back to the honourable minister, I want to remind the members to ask their questions through the chair and to not put their questions directly to the person they're addressing.

Minister Lebouthillier, you have less than 15 seconds to respond.

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

The fight against tax evasion is a priority for our government.

[English]

**The Chair:** The honourable member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Mr. Morantz.

**Mr. Marty Morantz:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm delighted to be part of this meeting. It has been a very interesting conversation.

My question, through you, is for the Minister of Finance.

I would like to circle back to something my colleague Mr. Deltell raised with the minister earlier in the meeting. It has to do with the eligibility of dividends as payroll to be eligible for the \$40,000 CEBA loan. My understanding is that they are not currently.

I thought I heard the Minister of Finance say, though, that they were. I would like a simple answer. Can business people who pay themselves solely in dividends be eligible? Are they eligible for the CEBA or are they not? It's a yes or no question.

**The Chair:** The honourable minister.

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, as I said earlier, the programs we've put in place really need to be looked at in total. For the Canada emergency response benefit, the answer is yes. The dividends that someone would have paid in over the course of the last year would make them eligible for the emergency response benefit if they were getting them to an income above \$5,000.

For the Canada emergency business account, the criteria right now is that you have to have \$20,000 in payroll up to \$1.5 million in payroll to be eligible for that \$40,000. For the rent approach that we have come out with, and with more details coming out currently, for anybody who has rent that's payable in a commercial business up to \$50,000—

**Mr. Marty Morantz:** Mr. Chair, I have a few more questions on—

**Hon. Bill Morneau:**—they will be eligible.

**The Chair:** Mr. Morantz.

**Mr. Marty Morantz:** Mr. Chair, through you to the minister, I want to stick to the CEBA right now, if we could.

I take it that if an employer pays themselves with dividends, the answer to my question is no, they are not eligible for the CEBA. I'll leave it to you to correct me if I'm wrong, but that sounds like what you said.

I have talked to business people in my riding who are very, very worried about qualifying for these programs. There are so many holes in these programs, gaping holes you could drive a truck through. Another one of them is, for example, that the CEBA loan is based on 2019 payroll. Many businesses are newer businesses.

They don't have a 2019 payroll or they had only a small 2019 payroll. Many businesses are family-owned businesses that don't pay themselves and don't qualify.

Why are these businesses being excluded? On what date will the minister correct this injustice in the program, this unfairness in the program?

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** Mr. Chair, I think it's always important to talk about what we're trying to achieve. We're trying to make sure businesses have access to capital to get through this period. There have been 452,000 loans approved, representing over \$16 billion that has been disbursed under the Canada emergency business account. Clearly, these 452,000 businesses have found a way to get into this program.

We recognize that we need to constantly be looking at these programs to make sure they're having the desired impact. That is what we're doing with this program, as with other programs, on a continuing basis. We will continue to do that. Our goal is to work with businesses to make sure we can find a bridge for them. That is also what the other programs, such as the rent program, are trying to achieve, which will be applicable for so many businesses.

**The Chair:** Mr. Morantz.

**Mr. Marty Morantz:** Mr. Chair, it seems completely unfair that a new business doesn't qualify simply because they don't have a 2019 payroll, but I'll leave it to the minister to sort that one out.

I want to turn to the hospitality sector for a minute. We had them at the finance committee last week. There are very, very serious problems in that sector. When it comes to the wage subsidy, if public health protocols have said that you can't open your business, the wage subsidy is not going to help you.

I'm wondering if the minister can answer as to whether there is going to be an industry-specific assistance program to help the restaurant and hospitality industry, which has been so adversely affected by this crisis.

● (1455)

**The Chair:** The honourable minister can answer in 30 seconds or less, please.

**Hon. Bill Morneau:** We recognize that the hospitality industry and many industries have been extremely impacted through COVID-19, so we are working to make sure we help across all sectors. The credit approaches have been cross-sector. I mentioned the 452,000 loans for the smallest of businesses. Similarly, we're looking at how we can provide credit for small and medium-sized business and larger businesses to get through this time. That will be across all sectors since we know there are many sectors that find themselves in extremely difficult positions right now.

**Mr. Marty Morantz:** Do I have time for one more question?

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, those are all the questions we have for today, and we'll proceed.

I want to thank all of you. I just want to remind all of you, as well, about the headsets. If you don't have one, please contact your IT ambassador. He or she will have contacted you by email, so you will probably find his or her name in your personal email. I was going to give out a website or a phone number, but this is a publicly transmitted meeting and I didn't want people from all across Canada asking for headsets, but you do have access to those people.

[*Translation*]

I encourage everyone who doesn't have a headset to contact their IT ambassador at Parliament. The person will send you your headset and you can benefit from good sound quality.

[*English*]

The big thing I want to clarify is that it's both so that you can hear and so the people who are listening can hear, because the microphone picks up your voice and it's closer. Much like wearing a mask for COVID, you're protecting yourself, but you're also thinking of others. It's something that I want any of you who do not have a headset to do.

I would like to thank everyone, the members, their staff, the IT staff and all our staff here, who were very helpful in getting this going, and then continuing to make sure that it all worked relatively well. We did have a few hitches, but nobody's perfect. We're working on perfection. I guess we're as Canadian as possible under the circumstances, if we go back to the original quote.

I want to again thank everyone, and thank our Deputy Speaker, Mr. Stanton, here on standby, who is always there and always helpful.

To all of you, I wish you a good day.

[*Translation*]

The meeting is adjourned. We'll meet again tomorrow at noon.

Have a good day, everyone.

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