



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

---

# Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 009**

Thursday, April 23, 2020

---

Chair: Mrs. Sherry Romanado





## Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology

Thursday, April 23, 2020

● (1120)

[English]

**The Chair (Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

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

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

As is customary practice, the webcast will always only show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee. To facilitate the work of our interpreters and ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few guidelines.

One, interpretation in this video conference will work very much like in a regular committee meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen for floor, English or French. Click on the globe icon to see these options.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by 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 are speaking. When you release the space bar, your mike will mute itself, very much like a walkie-talkie. I remind you that all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

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

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. 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".

When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

The use of headsets is strongly encouraged.

Should any technical challenges arise, for example, in relation to interpretation or if you are accidentally disconnected, please advise

the chair or the clerk immediately and the technical team will work to resolve this. Please note that we may need to suspend during these times as we need to ensure all members are able to participate fully.

Before we get started, I would ask everyone to click on their screens in the top right-hand corner and ensure they are on gallery view. With this view, you should be able to see all the participants in a grid view. It will ensure that all video participants can see one another.

If a member needs to leave temporarily for any reason, I would ask that they please leave their video feed on.

During this meeting, we will follow the same rules that usually apply to opening statements and the questioning of witnesses during our regular meetings.

As is my normal practice, I will hold up a yellow card when you have 30 seconds left in your intervention, and I will hold up a red card when your time for questions has expired.

Today MP Paul Manly from the Green Party is joining us and would like to have a round of questions. Does the committee agree for MP Manly to have a two and a half minute slot at the end of the second round?

Thank you.

● (1125)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** I'm sorry, Madam Chair. While I appreciate that the member might want a round of questions, there are precedents here and the Green Party does not have enough members to have a spot on committee. Anything like this should have been discussed prior to the start of this meeting as it does set a precedent, so I will object.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Rempel Garner. I understand that one of the Liberal members will share their time with Mr. Manly.

For today's meeting only Minister Ng will be providing an opening statement, and then we will follow with the usual rounds of questions from members. The department officials are here to answer your questions.

Minister Ng will need to leave this meeting at noon, but senior officials will remain to continue answering questions.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses: the Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade; and Mr. John Hannaford, deputy minister of international trade. From the Department of Industry, we have Mr. Simon Kennedy, deputy minister; Mr. Paul Thompson, associate deputy minister; and Ms. Frances McRae, assistant deputy minister, small business and marketplace services.

With that, we will now move to testimony by Minister Ng.

Minister Ng, you have 10 minutes.

Thank you.

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with this committee about some of our government's supports for Canada's small business owners and entrepreneurs.

Small businesses are at the heart of communities across the country and are truly the backbone of our national economy. They employ 8.3 million hard-working Canadians and account for nearly seven out of 10 private sector jobs in this country, so when this pandemic hit Canada and the rest of the world, we knew it was necessary to do everything possible to help them. Small businesses need our support to get through this very difficult time, and we need them to remain pillars of our towns, our cities and our neighbourhoods.

Over the past several weeks, my team and I have spoken with thousands upon thousands of small business owners and entrepreneurs in every sector and every region of the country. We heard that our response to COVID-19 needed to be flexible and balanced. It needs to be flexible because the situation we face is unprecedented. There is no template to work from. Circumstances and challenges are still evolving at a rapid pace. It needs to be balanced because we need to meet the needs of all small business owners during these challenging times and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to relief.

Small businesses, because of their size, are often more entrepreneurial, more nimble, and very much in touch with their customers and their communities. This is often their key to success, but it also makes them vulnerable during times like these. When Canadians are asked to stay home, they're not able to eat out at their favourite restaurant, go to an appointment at their therapist's or at the salon, travel, or stay at a hotel or a bed and breakfast.

If you're an entrepreneur who invested everything in a community theatre, a pub or a bakery, you're feeling the brunt of COVID-19. You've probably had to close your doors, and your sales have probably taken a huge hit or they have disappeared entirely.

When people are asked to stay at home, they're likely going to delay major purchases, so if you're a business that sells cars, technology or furniture, you've taken a huge hit too. Then there are the service providers that we normally interact with every day: drycleaners, yoga studios, day cares and hair salons. They're feeling the effects of having to temporarily close their doors.

If you're in the business of moving people or goods, like our taxi drivers or delivery service workers, your revenue has been impacted too. The harsh reality is that the majority of our entrepreneurs and small business owners are facing serious challenges and it happened almost overnight.

For small businesses to get over the challenges of this pandemic, they're likely facing at least three major threats: keeping their employees, keeping their costs low, and of course, covering their operating costs. Our government has taken serious and decisive action to address each of these threats.

I grew up in a small business, and I know that it is often a family affair. Seventy-five per cent of Canadian small businesses have fewer than 10 employees, and they often know each other's birthdays, kids' names, and spouses. From my own experience, and through conversations with many small business owners, I know that employers often think of their teams as their extended family.

We also know that in order for a business to remain resilient through difficulty and to recover more quickly after a challenging time, the team must stay together. That's why one of our most important initiatives is the Canada emergency wage subsidy. Through this wage subsidy, we will keep more Canadians employed by covering 75% of their wages. Our goal is to keep businesses together so that they have the required skills and expertise on hand to help them ramp back up when the economy restarts.

We're also helping over 3.2 million businesses and self-employed Canadians to keep their costs low by allowing them to defer the GST or the HST, and customs duty payments. Also, they can keep more money in their pockets over the next few weeks and months because we've extended the tax filing deadline to June 1, and we've allowed businesses to defer any payments they owe until August 31.

● (1130)

With the Canada emergency business account, we're also helping businesses keep up with their operating costs and their cash flow. This is an interest-free \$40,000 loan guaranteed by the Government of Canada, with up to \$10,000 forgivable if you pay it back by the end of 2022. These loans are available right now through your bank or credit union, your financial institution. When we heard that many small businesses were not able to access this support because of the requirement to have payroll of at least \$50,000, we lowered that threshold to \$20,000.

The common thread in all these initiatives is that they're going to help our small businesses retain the people they need and have the operating funds necessary to help them get through this difficult period and to succeed in the long term.

To date, over 382,000 businesses have already been approved for the small business loan, and our government's recent announcement to expand the eligibility criteria for the program will mean that even more businesses will qualify. This cash flow support means your favourite restaurant can keep the lights on while they switch over to delivery service. It means the small furniture store that usually relies on foot traffic to stay afloat can continue paying the costs and the upkeep of their warehouse space. It means a local bed and breakfast can maintain their property while they've had to temporarily close their doors.

For those businesses with larger operational needs, we have made loans of up to \$12.5 million available, which will also be available through your local financial institution, your bank or credit union.

We've also heard from businesses that they need help paying their rent and that's exactly what we intend to do. As the Prime Minister announced last week, we will introduce the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program for small businesses. This program will provide loans, including forgivable loans, to commercial property owners who will in turn lower the rent for small business owners. Rent is an issue that falls under the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories, so we're working closely in active discussions with them on this important issue and we will have more details to share soon.

Our government has acted quickly and we've introduced broad measures to help small businesses from coast to coast to coast. We have also introduced targeted measures to help businesses in the northern territories, indigenous and youth-owned businesses, and innovative businesses in the start-up stage that have yet to turn a profit.

These measures will help businesses weather the storm, but we know the introduction of measures is only a first step. We need to help businesses access these supports in order for them to benefit. That's why we have leveraged the Canada innovation portal and the Canada Business app to help steer small businesses to the right supports. It's also why we partnered with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce to create the Canadian Business Resilience Network. This is going to help small business owners have the most up-to-date information on the supports that are available to them.

I'll close by thanking the many small businesses that are providing essential services to so many of our communities across the country through this very difficult and challenging time. My colleagues and I have heard countless stories of entrepreneurs in communities across the country who are going beyond the call of duty. I'm talking about those businesses and entrepreneurs who put up their hands to offer technical skills to find new ways to produce items that are in short supply, or the restaurant owners who are offering free meals to the front-line health care workers, or the innovative businesses that are finding new ways to create medical gear for front-line health care workers. The resilience of our Canadian business owners and our entrepreneurs is second to none, and to all those hard-working business owners, I say thank you.

We're all in this together. I appreciate this committee's support of our efforts during this difficult time. Together we're going to help our small businesses survive this pandemic and pave the way for

our economy to recover. We're going to continue to work hard to save those Canadians' jobs and help Canadians save those businesses.

I thank you for the opportunity for me to speak to you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions.

• (1135)

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

Now we will move to round one—

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Chair, on a point of order, we're just learning that the minister is leaving right at noon, and I have huge concerns. I'm a standing member. I don't think the NDP should be punished for the delay in the meeting. We want to make sure we have a round. We have very important questions to ask the minister. I'm asking the government side to maybe rotate their spot, give it up to the NDP and take our spot, so that we get a chance to ask the minister really important questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Johns.

I will verify with the minister if it's possible for her to stay for the full four questions of the first round.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I believe I can. I'm just going to take a quick look at my calendar.

Yes, my calendar is okay, and I would be very pleased to do that.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Thank you.

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

With that, we will start with the four rounds of questions of six minutes each.

The first person for the Conservative Party is Madam Rempel Garner.

You have six minutes.

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

I just want to note that we had close to 45 minutes of sound checks and then 10 minutes of explanation on how to use Zoom, so I hope that can be rectified in the future just so that we have more time to question the government and scrutinize this issue.

I would like to start with a couple of housekeeping items.

I note that we invited the Minister of Industry to this committee. The Minister of Industry has not appeared before this committee at all in this Parliament, and we're quite a few months away from the election at this point in time. Even though he's been invited several times, it's always been told to this committee that he's not available or that he can't find time in his schedule. I find that completely unacceptable.

I hope that my colleagues on the government side share my concern that he has elected to not find time to be accountable to this committee at all. As such, pursuant to section 1(n) of the motion passed in the House of Commons on Saturday, April 11, I move:

That the Minister of Innovation appear before the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology at any time that accommodates his schedule before April 30th for a meeting of 2 hours on the subject of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**The Chair:** We have a motion on the floor.

Is there any debate? This is an invitation for the minister to appear before April 30 at his convenience. I understand that he was invited but, unfortunately, was not available today. Do we have any debate?

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** I have a question for the clerk.

Has the minister's office responded to provide available dates?

• (1140)

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael MacPherson):** Not yet. They just said that they were looking to do the schedule and hopefully have an appearance in the coming weeks.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Okay, so they're obviously amenable to coming and, of course, the Minister of Industry should come before this committee.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Madam Chair, if I may, "the coming weeks" is not acceptable. It's been months since the election. The minister has not appeared before us for things like estimates and his mandate letter, and he is a key member of the COVID-19 response cabinet committee. If we're talking about his coming in weeks, I can't imagine somebody sitting at home in their lockdown right now going, "Well, he can't find time for weeks." It is completely unacceptable. He needs to be before this committee before April 30.

I am willing to meet whenever he wants to meet. I don't care if it's two in the morning at this point in time. He needs to get before this committee. It is ridiculous that he has not been here. Weeks is not acceptable. Brushing this committee off is not acceptable, especially when what the government said last week was that somehow we were going to be able to do Parliament virtually, and then to have the minister just blow us off.... He needs to be here for two full hours before next Thursday. It's ridiculous. I don't want to hear any excuses from him that he can't make a certain time or that a teleconference isn't going to work. Find the time and get here. That is the nature of this motion.

**The Chair:** Is there any further debate on the motion?

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Madam Chair, I agree that the minister should attend next week. It would be ideal. We have Minister Ng here today. We should, I think, have the industry and innovation minister before us in the first few meetings that we have to set the course for our work.

I would object a little bit to the framing of this. As anyone who follows parliamentary process knows, we didn't really hit the ground running with this committee until the end of January, and we have not had all that many meetings of actual work, frankly, other than planning meetings.

I don't know that there has been any delay previously from the minister. Blowing us off, I think, is overstating the case, but I do agree with Ms. Rempel Garner that Minister Bains should attend this committee, and I agree that he should attend next week.

**The Chair:** Is there any further debate on the motion?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I'll just interject one last time and say this. The minister actually has blown us off. He has not found time to appear on the estimates. He hasn't been before this committee at all, and we have had meetings that he could have attended.

Certainly it is within the purview of our committee to say we will accommodate him whenever he wants to attend. It just needs to happen before next week. It's too much at this point.

**The Chair:** Again, is there any further debate on this?

What we can do is move to adopt the motion to invite the minister to appear.

Would all those in favour raise their hands, please.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Madam Chair, on a point of order, I believe that the motion passed in the House of Commons requires a recorded vote on motions related to the witness, so I call for a recorded vote.

Thank you.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

• (1145)

**The Chair:** We now move to the next round of six minutes.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** No, Madam Chair. On a point of order, the time of the motion does not count towards my question period. I stopped at 1:36 when I moved the motion, so I do have another four minutes.

**The Chair:** I will reset my clock, Madam Rempel.

Please go ahead.

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

I also would like to get consensus from the committee that it's my understanding the House of Commons will be having a virtual sitting next Tuesday, which is when this committee is supposed to sit.

I would like to get confirmation from you, Madam Chair, that you will find an alternate time that does not negate our meetings next week and that we will still have two meetings.

**The Chair:** We are currently scheduled to have two meetings next week, both Tuesday and Thursday. I have not heard otherwise.

I will advise the committee if there is a change, absolutely.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** The question that I asked was not that. It was, should the House of Commons proceedings bump this meeting, will you do everything in your power to ensure that we have two meetings next week, regardless of if another time needs to be found?

**The Chair:** Again, rest assured that I'm working, in the event that this normal meeting slot is moved, to make sure that we have meetings next week.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** That's a yes. We will have two meetings next week, regardless of whether the House of Commons sits.

**The Chair:** Madam Rempel Garner, I will do everything I can to make sure that we have those two meetings. Everything depends on the resources available to us, but rest assured that I will do everything in my power to make sure that we have those two meetings.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I appreciate that, but I'd like to have a yes or no answer to this question because the whole debate that we had last week in the House of Commons was whether or not the scrutiny of Parliament could happen via a virtual setting. To hear from you, "everything in my power" and "depending on resources" is not acceptable. Canadians are looking to us right now to ensure that we have these sessions.

All I want is a simple yes. If the House of Commons bumps this committee—because in a regular sitting of Parliament, committees happen at the same time as the House of Commons sits—you will ensure, even if it's not at the same time, even if it's later in the evening, even if it's early in the morning, that we will have two meetings next week.

**The Chair:** Madam Rempel Garner, I don't control the resources that are available at the House, but you have my commitment that in the event that this meeting is not able to happen between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. next week because of the virtual sitting of Parliament, I will do everything I can to find an alternative time so that we can have these meetings.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I guess that's the best the opposition is going to get: a maybe.

I have a question for the minister.

Has your government begun any kind of formally structured, federal government-led, national economic relaunch strategy that includes a safe and staged lifting of mass isolation measures?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Thank you very much, Madam Rempel Garner, for that question.

The work that we are engaged in and have been engaged in is ensuring that we are providing measures, economic measures, to help Canadian small businesses and entrepreneurs through this very difficult time so that we can flatten the curve as a country.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** My question was not that. It was, do you have a formal plan to lift mass isolation measures safely and in a staged approach so that we can restart the economy, and if not, why?

• (1150)

**Hon. Mary Ng:** You've heard from the Prime Minister that he and the Deputy Prime Minister are working closely with colleagues

at the provincial and the territorial level. The work that I am seized with and that we are focused on is making sure that business owners across the country are getting the support that they need, whether it is helping them keep their staff, whether it is getting cash—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Yes, but the best way for the businesses to get support is to get back to work and reopen. When can the Canadian economy expect to reopen safely, and when will you table a plan or tell Canadians what your plan is for that timeline?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** The work that we're doing right now, and it's a team Canada approach, is to flatten the curve so that Canadians are safe and they are healthy. The extraordinary measures that we're asking Canadians to take to flatten this curve—I would agree and I would hope everyone would agree—are job one, which is why we have the measures that we have right now to make sure that—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Why isn't it binary? Why can't we do both? We need to start talking about doing both because our economy is suffering.

When are you going to table a plan to safely reopen the economy while stopping the spread of COVID? When can we expect that?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** We're going to keep working for Canadian businesses, just as we have been doing during this time. We're listening to business owners. The measures that you see, the economic measures, are in response to what they need to manage through this difficult period. We're also listening to those business owners about what it is they are going to need so that we put them all on a good footing.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Here's what I'm hearing: We need a plan to reopen the economy.

When are you guys going to at least give some timeline or indication that you have a plan to do both: flatten the curve and reopen the economy? These businesses need to reopen. They don't need handouts for 18 months. They need a plan to get back to work. When will that plan be forthcoming?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** The measures that we have put in place are to help businesses manage through this time and to get them on a good footing, so that when it is safe to do so, when it is safe to restart the economy, we are working together—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** When will it be safe? What are you doing to make it safe? What about testing? What is that time period?

If I'm a small business owner right now, I need to know this to make plans on whether I'm going to close up shop permanently or keep trying to stay alive. That's your job. You have to start telling people when you are going to reopen the economy.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** We're working very intently with business owners, who are telling us that they need to be able to access some cash flow so that they can manage through this period. They're telling us that—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Yes, cash flow from doing their work, from actually doing business, like selling things and being open. You have to understand that businesses don't just want hand-outs from the government. They want a plan to know when they can get back to work.

When is that plan forthcoming? When are you guys going to start talking about timelines and staging and testing?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** In talking to thousands upon thousands of businesses, including the over 1,000 businesses that my department talks to every day, the questions I've heard very often from businesses, as recently as yesterday and today, are about how they can get access to support to keep their teams together during this period so they can be on that road to recovery when it's safe to do so. We're absolutely working hard—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** So you don't have any timeline. I'll phrase it differently. Do you have any timeline to reopen the economy? Is there any chat about a timeline or a staged approach or anything, any sort of timeline whatsoever, coming up in your cabinet discussions or in your department? Do you have any glimmer of hope for people in terms of a plan?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** The glimmer of hope for Canadian businesses is just how incredibly resourceful they are.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I mean on a timeline.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** They are incredibly innovative. They are stepping up to serve the needs and are helping our front-line health care workers and those essential workers.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** When are you going to reopen the economy?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I'm going to continue to listen to businesses across the country so that they are supported through this period, and we're going to listen to these businesses as we help them through the restart and a recovery.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** So there's no restart and no timeline. That is mind-blowing. God help us all.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, that is your time.

The next round of questions, for six minutes, goes to MP Longfield.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister Ng, for coming in this morning and for all the great work you're doing with all parties through this crisis we're facing.

I'll be splitting my time with Mr. Manly from the Green Party. The last two and a half minutes of my questions will be turned over to him, because this really isn't a partisan issue. It's something that we should be working on together, so I appreciate Mr. Manly being here and being able to ask questions as well.

My first question is regarding the virtual town halls that you have been involved in, Minister Ng. I know you will be doing one in Guelph on May 7 with the Chamber of Commerce at 6 p.m. We are hearing a lot from our business communities. I've heard that moving the CEBA limit down to \$20,000 to help businesses that have one part-time employee at minimum wage is helping them. You mentioned rent, and relief on rent is something that we're

working on. I think that's the biggest issue sole proprietors and small businesses are facing.

Would you be able to comment on rent and on the progress we're making there, as well as on anything you're hearing from the town halls that you weren't able to give us in the 10 minutes that you had to speak?

• (1155)

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Thank you very much. I appreciate the question.

One of the things we heard very clearly from businesses is about the help they're going to need to manage their bills every single month. Those are those operating costs, of which rent is a key part.

You heard the Prime Minister announce that we intend to support small businesses through the Canada emergency commercial rent support. We hope to announce that very soon. We are in active discussions with the provinces and territories. This is an area of their responsibility, but we all agree that we have to work together to support all of those incredible entrepreneurs and businesses across the country so that they are being helped with rent support.

Rent support is part of operating costs. It's a significant part of operating costs. I have heard from businesses all across the country that they are being helped with the \$40,000 interest-free loan, of which \$10,000 is forgivable. This is the kind of bridging cash flow work we are doing to help businesses. You heard me say earlier that over 380,000 business owners have already been approved for that loan.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Thank you. May 1 is coming, so I hope we hear about that rent support soon as it continues to be a stress point.

Another stress point has to do with other economies, in particular with the United States opening its economy. We have a lot of Canadian small businesses that are in the supply chain for the American companies that may be needing our goods and services. We have BDC and EDC providing some lines of credit to help businesses that are starting even though the rest of the country and customers in Canada aren't able to access their services.

How is that going, in particular with EDC and BDC financing lines of credit? I haven't heard much in terms of how that program's working, if there's progress being made. We have about a minute or so, and then we'll go over to Mr. Manly.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Thank you very much.

We are making progress. What we've done here as part of the business supports, the lending support to businesses—and BDC and EDC absolutely have taken on significant and important roles—is to provide significant government guarantees to financial institutions.



During this very difficult period, we want to make sure that businesses are able to access that lending support through their financial institution, whether it is a bank or a credit union that they work with. Because the banking and credit network exists all across the country and is easily available, more easily available than are the BDC or the EDC office teams, we're making it available through there. Absolutely, they can go to the financial institution, and that's where they're getting the help.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Thank you.

It's over to you, Mr. Manly.

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Thank you very much, MP Longfield, for sharing your time with me. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak and to ask questions.

Thank you, Minister Ng, for being here. I appreciate the openness of the government to respond to emails that we've sent with different issues.

Small businesses in my community are asking about the rent situation as well. There are suggestions that there be some kind of loan that covers 75% of the rent, where 75% of the rent would go to the landlord and 25% would still be covered by the tenants, and that, hopefully, the federal government would forgive part of the loan to the landlords.

There are a lot of small businesses I'm hearing from right now that are really worried about not being able to cover their rent for May. I'm just wondering if there's a plan, and whether that sounds to you like something that would be feasible in terms of a program.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Thank you so much, Mr. Manly. I really want to thank you and, indeed, all colleagues who have been so open in being able to share the issues they have in their own communities.

We're really looking forward to being able to give you that information and give businesses the information about the rent support. I do believe that support is really going to help, because we've been listening to you and colleagues, and businesses in particular, to make sure we get that support out to them.

• (1200)

**Mr. Paul Manly:** I know a lot of businesses really want to get started up again, but they also—

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, Mr. Manly, my apologies, but that's the end of your time.

We have our next round of questions.

[Translation]

Mr. Lemire, you have six minutes.

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

I'll ask the first question, and my colleague Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay will ask the subsequent questions.

First, I want to point out that, during the crisis, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business conducted a number of surveys of its members. A total of 77% of respondents said that they lacked the cash flow to pay their suppliers, rent, mortgages and fixed costs; 65% were concerned about their business debt; 35% were

worried about having to close their business permanently; and 9% said that they needed help but didn't qualify for programs.

These results were released on April 15. However, since then, there has been the April 17 announcement. I must admit that I was quite satisfied with that announcement. Minister Ng, I emailed you directly to tell you that some of the solutions, especially the funding of fixed costs, should involve the Réseau des SADC.

I'm very concerned about the fact that a number of our entrepreneurs, particularly the very small businesses and the people who pay themselves in dividends, are falling through the cracks. A good announcement was made on Friday, but unfortunately it slipped under the radar. Almost \$1 billion is being made available to people who are falling through the cracks. This assistance will be provided through CED or the Community Futures Network of Canada.

However, almost a week has passed and we still don't know the eligibility rules for this funding. How will these measures be implemented and who will actually be eligible?

In light of this situation, as members of Parliament, we have no choice but to give very vague answers to the people in our region who need help and who are in distress. When will we know the eligibility rules and the details of these assistance measures?

[English]

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Thank you, Monsieur Lemire. *Je m'excuse*. I wish I could do this in French, but I'm going to do it in English. I really want to thank you for your advocacy as well and for the work you're doing in your region in northern Quebec.

We've said right from the beginning that we are going to help businesses through this time, and helping businesses means keeping those businesses intact and helping them keep their teams together. I know there are businesses that are continuing to look forward to, particularly, the small business loan support. Know that we are listening and we are going to continue to do that work.

On the regional development agencies, particularly in Quebec.... We have just made an investment to the regional development agencies across the country of a little over \$600 million, as well as through Community Futures. This is well known in the region around the support for small enterprises and, together with the many measures we have put in place, is intended to make sure that we don't have businesses fall through the cracks and that we are helping them through this very important and very difficult time. Again, I want to thank you for your work and your advocacy for your businesses.

The last thing I would say is that Innovation Canada, or the Canada Business app, is where we made information available on all the progress. I know how difficult it could be, because there are many—

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Sorry to interrupt you, Minister Ng, but the question was simply “when.”

Since I want to get more questions in, I'll turn the floor over to my colleague Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay.

**The Chair:** I'd like to remind you to speak slower to help the interpreters. Thank you.

[English]

**Hon. Mary Ng:** We have onboarded many small institutions across the country as well, which businesses can go directly into to get financial support. Businesses can absolutely be in touch with the regional development agency in Quebec to get that support.

• (1205)

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Thank you, Minister Ng. As I was saying, the question concerned the timing of the detailed announcement of these measures.

I'll now give the floor to Mr. Savard-Tremblay.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** I had planned on asking a few questions. Instead, I'll ask the previous question again, since we didn't quite get an answer. When?

[English]

**Hon. Mary Ng:** We're working very hard, because we understand how urgent the situation is for Canadian businesses. But I would say that there are many measures that are absolutely available to Canadian small businesses. Going into your financial institution to get access to the small business loan is already there.

The Canada emergency wage subsidy calculator was launched yesterday, to help businesses calculate the wage subsidy support for their employees, and the portal will be open on Monday. For entrepreneurs or sole proprietors who are seeing their income completely decreased, if they're making just a little less than \$1,000, the Canada emergency response benefit is already open.

There are many measures that are already available to help our Canadian businesses through this very difficult time. We understand that we need to continue doing the work, and I appreciate your advocacy for them. We will continue to do this work for our Canadian small businesses.

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Do I have any time left, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** You have 10 seconds left.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** In that case, I won't have time to ask my questions and I'll save them for later.

[English]

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

The next six-minute round will go to MP Gord Johns. You have six minutes.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Thank you, Minister, for being here.

As you know, we have just heard recently that the restaurant association of Canada says that one out of two independent restaurants doesn't expect to reopen. The B.C. Chamber of Commerce has

also identified that over 50% of businesses that are closed right now don't expect to reopen.

We know how important rent is. Australia has a confederation as well, like Canada. They have worked with the provinces and have come up with an agreement. My colleague Peter Julian and I presented an agreement two weeks ago. We were happy to see the Prime Minister, five days later, commit to rent abatement. The problem is, that was nine days ago. Tomorrow is one week away from half of the businesses in this country not being able to pay their rent. We're on the verge, on the cliff right now of losing half of the small businesses in this country.

One of my constituents, Amy Hadikin, owns Kickstart Fitness and yoga studio in Parksville. She showed up and her doors were locked. She was able to negotiate paying the triple net, which is \$1,700, from zero revenue right now. She has to pay that to get the locks taken off and buy some time.

They need to know when you're going to have this agreement in place. It's a week out. Are you going to have a deal done by the end of the week with the provinces so that you can provide relief? They're not looking for loans. They're looking for subsidies to help them get through this. They can't afford more debt, or they're going to walk away.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Mr. Johns, thank you so very much. I appreciate this very much. Indeed, I need to thank you for your work, because you and I have spoken throughout this time of COVID-19, so I really do appreciate your input. This is really a team Canada approach, so I appreciate that.

As someone who grew up, as a young person, in the restaurant business, I understand how important and how valuable they are—

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I appreciate that, really, but what I need to know is when. Time is running out. We're on the cliff of losing half of the businesses in this country. They need to know tomorrow, so they can start negotiating with their landlords, Minister.

If you can give us a timeline.... Are you going to have a deal done by the weekend?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** We're working really hard at that. The Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, we're all working hard to make sure that, with the provinces and the territories, we're able to come up with that support for our Canadian businesses as fast as we can. I understand the urgency. I really do.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** We are at a historic moment, Minister Ng. We are hearing from the B.C. Chamber of Commerce that 49% of businesses with fewer than five employees can't find federal programs that suit their needs.

I know you've made amendments to the Canada emergency business account and you've lowered the threshold on payroll and upped it. The problem is that a lot of the proprietors are still falling through the gaps. They are not able to access a loan. I'll give you an example. Kristy Stroulger-Lotzien, who owns Soak Essentials in Parksville, British Columbia, has a payroll of \$18,000 and can't access the Canada emergency business account.

The NDP is going to put forward a proposal today that you consider another measurement, gross revenue, so that you're not just focused on payroll and those proprietors can demonstrate.... Let's say a business has a gross revenue of \$200,000 a year and you're collecting \$14,000 a year in GST, or a portion of the HST. Over three years, you'd collect \$42,000. The risk to the government is low by giving them the loan and the rebate versus losing that business and all of that tax collection.

Will you consider looking at another measurement so that people can get the support they need?

• (1210)

**Hon. Mary Ng:** We've said right from the beginning that we will always listen to businesses to make sure we are getting the support out to them. I really appreciate what you have shared.

I would also say that the work isn't done. We are going to continue to do this work intently to help support businesses just like the one you described.

I really want to thank you for your work.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Hours matter on this, Minister.

Lisa Benard Christensen runs a dog grooming businesses. She leases out chairs in her salon to other groomers and collects rent from them. It's a flow-through: This rent goes right to the landlord. Right now, she can't collect any CERB, even though she's pouring red ink and losing money, because of the stipulation that employment or self-employed income is the measurement. She may be collecting money from her chairs and submitting it to the landlord, but she's losing money and can't qualify for CERB. She has a diabetic son and can't buy food right now. The government needs to look at this and fix it.

Could you look at gross profit instead of employment income as a measurement so that self-employed people who aren't able to access these benefits get the support they need now?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** As I said right from the get-go, our work isn't done. We continue to hear from businesses and will continue to take input from businesses.

I am going to keep working hard, and the government is going to keep working hard, to make sure that we are supporting the incredible businesses and entrepreneurs who are contributors to—

**Mr. Gord Johns:** She's running out of money and needs help now.

Minister Ng, I talked to the Huu-ay-aht First Nations. They can't access the Canada emergency wage subsidy because they have a limited partnership. They're an indigenous-owned corporation. They're going to have to send their employees home. They've been working for years to get to this place. There should be no reason

that they're excluded. Was this an oversight, or will you be able to fix this immediately and save this indigenous-led tourism-based business?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** We have provided extraordinary support to indigenous-led businesses through the AFIs and through organizations like NACCA. My colleague Mr. Miller has been working on this, and we've been working together to make sure that support absolutely goes to these incredible indigenous-led and indigenous-owned businesses. I would be happy to follow up on that business in particular.

We have put out significant support because we want to see those businesses weather this period—

**The Chair:** Minister, I'm going to have to cut you off. The time is over for this round.

We'll now move to the five-minute rounds. The first member of Parliament will be MP Dreeshen.

You have five minutes.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC):** Is it my turn?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** I can't hear you, Madam Chair. Could I make sure that I understand what you're saying?

**The Chair:** Mr. Dreeshen, can you hear me now?

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** I can read your lips, but I can't hear you.

**The Chair:** Okay. We can suspend for one moment so we can make sure MP Dreeshen has the ability to participate.

While we are working on MP Dreeshen's technical issue, we will move now to MP Gray.

You have five minutes.

• (1215)

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister Ng, I've heard concerns from many small business owners in my community regarding the support programs that your government has established. For example, owner-operators who use their personal bank accounts to operate their businesses cannot apply through the Canada emergency business account. Is your government addressing this gap?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Thank you very much for that information, MP Gray.

I'm happy to listen to the concerns of those businesses. In particular, I have to admit that this is the first time I've heard of that particular scenario. I'm happy to do a follow-up after this.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Minister Ng, the requirement for the \$20,000 payroll that small businesses have to have to be able to access the CEBA loan doesn't work for a lot of small business owners, especially owner-operators, because they don't have traditional payroll. Is your government addressing this?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** We've provided many measures to help Canadian small businesses. As I said a little earlier, we've seen about 380,000 small business owners take advantage of the small business loan. These numbers are just coming in, and this is on the cusp of expanding the criteria to \$20,000. Many businesses are absolutely being supported through this measure.

As I said, the work isn't done. We're going to have to continue to work with many more businesses. We certainly don't want to see people fall behind.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Okay, fair enough.

The other question I have is regarding models and projections on the timeline for reopening the economy. Based on information from Health Canada and provincial testing capabilities, can you give us information on the plan? When can we expect the economy to reopen?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** As I said a little earlier, right now we are all working together to plank the curve. We are all working together to keep Canadians safe. Through the measures we are putting out, we are helping businesses keep their staff. We are helping businesses manage their cash flow through this period. We're going to keep listening to businesses. They contributed to how we are providing the solutions and these emergency measures for them. We're also going to listen to them to make sure that we get them on a good footing in preparation for a restart.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** My time is limited here, and I do want to ask a few more questions.

Some other countries, such as South Korea and Germany, are further along the curve, and they've relied on mass testing to be able to open their economy sooner. I know that a lot of people in my riding who had symptoms were begging to be tested and weren't. One family in particular finally were tested, and they tested positive.

Are you working with your international counterparts to take good practices to apply here in order to open our economy?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Absolutely. My colleague the health minister works regularly with her international partners, as does the chief medical officer of health, who was part of the World Health Organization's advisory team, and we are looking at practices. We are also making sure that, across all regions in Canada, job number one is to make sure that we are stopping the spread of COVID-19, while supporting businesses during this time so they have the best possible opportunity to restart.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Minister, is the government studying other models in order to open the economy?

• (1220)

**Hon. Mary Ng:** With respect to studying other models, I think that question is better put to my colleague the health minister and the chief medical officer of health. Of course, we are working as a whole-of-government approach, and our focus has absolutely been

on making sure that our businesses right now are supported through this very difficult time so we can help them be fine for that recovery when it is safe to do so.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** The other question I have is about working with your provincial counterparts for testing. It's really important that we move essential health equipment such as test kits inter-provincially, and that we ramp up testing with the provinces where they need it most. Is your government working with the provincial counterparts to make sure that the supply chains remain open, that the testing is happening across the country, and that the tests get to where they are needed most as quickly as possible?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I think that testing question is best suited for my colleague, the health minister.

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

Unfortunately, that's the end of your time, MP Gray.

The next five-minute round will go to MP Ehsassi.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for appearing before our committee. I want to thank you and your officials for working tirelessly over the course of the past month, and for having made changes to certain programs once you heard from various members across the country.

Allow me to start off with the first question that was put to you. There was an attempt by one of the members to perhaps imply that you like the situation we're currently in. I know, given your background and experience, that you certainly appreciate the hardship that businesses are going through, but you don't want to act in a reckless manner. You know it's important that our government collaborate with the provinces and municipalities and that we take the best advice from public health officials.

Unlike what the member was implying, would it be fair to say that you're very much concerned about all the hardships that businesses are going through at this point?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Thank you very much for that question.

Absolutely. This is an unprecedented circumstance, and it is very difficult on so many people across the country. I have personally talked to many, and my teams have talked to many—into the thousands. There is no question that this is absolutely hard. Everything we are doing is to try to help them weather this unprecedented time.

I would also reference a quote from the president of the Business Council of Canada, whose president represents many Canadian businesses. He says, "Moving too quickly risks a resurgence of the virus, setting back the health of Canadians and the economic recovery."

We're guided by science and medical advice. Job one here is to stop and slow the spread of this disease. In doing so, we need to support our businesses. We need to support the smallest of our businesses, those entrepreneurs who have spent their lives creating that opportunity. As an immigrant myself, who came to this country and grew up in exactly one of those businesses, I understand not only how hard it is but also that this hard work is your life's work.

So, what are we trying to do? We're trying to save jobs and businesses. We're trying to help Canadians through this, and we're helping. What we need to do is take the advice to make sure we're doing it in a way that keeps Canadians safe and continues to keep Canadians safe.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Obviously, we all appreciate how important entrepreneurs and start-ups are. This is really a time for innovative thinking. A lot of them are at the intersection of science and technology, and it's imperative that we provide them with the necessary tools. Could you tell me what you're doing to assist entrepreneurs and start-ups?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Absolutely. When we heard at the very beginning that the wage subsidy, for example, was not covering companies that are starting up but also have employees, we changed that. The revenue reduction threshold was not something they could show, comparing this year to last year, because they're new. They can now use January-February as the baseline for this year. That's for newer businesses, but those innovative, high-growth start-up businesses also need our support.

Just a few days ago, the Prime Minister announced that we are helping those high-growth, innovative start-up businesses to get the support they need to weather this period through the industrial research assistance program. It's a \$270-million program. A component of that also goes to young entrepreneurs, because we know that those very young entrepreneurs are also part of those innovative businesses.

• (1225)

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Minister, allow me to echo what MP Gray said. I have heard from a few businesses that would have qualified for the Canada emergency business account but for one factor. That was that they didn't have pre-existing business accounts. I would therefore be grateful if you could kindly look into that so that we could provide assistance to those businesses as well.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** You have my commitment to look into that. Thank you.

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

That is the end of your five minutes, Mr. Ehsassi.

Minister, I know you said that you could stay a little bit past 12 o'clock. Are you able to continue to stay?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I am told by my team that I must get on to the next commitment. I apologize for that.

Madam Chair, I want to thank you and all the members on the committee. How wonderful it is to be back at INDU. Before being the minister, I served on INDU. I actually served with a number of people here on the committee. It's really nice being back at INDU and talking to all of my colleagues.

Thank you so much.

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

I understand that also joining us are Emmanuel Kamarianakis, the director general for investment and innovation, and Kendal Hembroff, the director general for trade negotiations.

We will continue along. We have the departmental officials with us.

The next five-minute round goes to Mr. Dreeshen.

Mr. Dreeshen, can you hear me?

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Yes, I can hear you. That's much better.

**The Chair:** You have five minutes, sir.

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

I believe I will be speaking to the deputy minister. I have just a few points.

As to why it's so important to have a relaunch strategy, we're seeing some small businesses in the downtowns of some of these small communities where everything has been shut down. Meanwhile, if you go into a larger community, all the box stores are busy. People are in there. They are buying things that typically would have been for sale in our small communities. This is why it's so important to get a relaunch strategy sorted out.

I come from a rural part of Canada. We know that there's a difference when you have places where the density is much higher. I think that's really critical. These small businesses know how to do the social distancing. They know the isolation methods and so on. Unfortunately, they're not being given a chance. Quite frankly, some of the measures that have been put forward are so difficult for them to be able to survive through. That's one of the key points I wanted to talk about.

Again, with regard to some of the discussions that the government has had, I know that last week the government made a commitment to expand access to credit for small and medium oil and gas companies across Canada. So far, no dollar amount has been provided, nor has there been any discussion of the financial mechanisms that the government plans to use in this regard. We know how serious an issue this is for small and medium enterprises here in my home province of Alberta. Billions of dollars of investment have left because of other things that have taken place in government over the last five years, but right now the situation is even more dire and desperate.

When can this vital sector of Canada's economy expect the government to follow through on its commitment of last week to provide tangible liquidity assistance? I'm not just asking what agencies or departments will be providing the interest. Small and medium enterprises need to know when this liquidity help will come and how much help they can expect to see at that point in time.

• (1230)

**Mr. Simon Kennedy (Deputy Minister, Department of Industry):** Madam Chair, I think that question is probably best directed towards the finance minister. My understanding is that the BDC is working with financial institutions on the oil and gas package.

I don't know whether my colleagues who are with me today would wish to add more, but I'm not in a position at the moment to provide you with a specific timeline. We're not leading that. That's being done by our other colleagues. However, we all understand the urgency.

I don't know if others on the line wish to weigh in—

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** That's great, but perhaps you could let me interject for a moment. I think when everyone hears “oil and gas”, they think it's about big companies and so on. Quite frankly, it's about a lot of small companies, about service rigs and everything else associated with that. Those are the ones that are really suffering at this particular point in time. The big oil and gas companies that people like to talk about and demonize all the time have opportunities to go to other places in the world. That isn't the case with the service rigs and the service facilities we have here. Those are the small and medium businesses we're talking about.

Yes, there are some loans that you can have. You can take a look at what you might be able to do with some of your employees. I just want to make sure that the small business department understands the significance of those particular businesses and the stress they're under.

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** Madam Chair, I thank the honourable member for the intervention.

We are well aware of those issues. We are certainly working with our colleagues at BDC, the financial Crown corporations, and I would say more generally with the finance ministry and the other central agencies, to make sure that the small business perspective is brought to the table and that those issues are considered in the design of those programs.

I think the honourable member makes a good point, and we're very alive to that.

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

The second question I want to speak to you about has to do with agriculture. Sometimes people will just slough it off to the agriculture department, but quite frankly, it is small business. They are the great entrepreneurs that we have in the country.

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture called on the federal government to prioritize Canada's agri-food system to ensure that the food supply chain remains secure and reliable. The CFA also stressed that there should be an emergency fund set up to help farmers and agri-food businesses cope. Even at that, on Monday the

G20 agriculture ministers pledged to co-operate closely and to take concrete actions to safeguard global food security and supply.

**The Chair:** Mr. Dreeshen, I'm sorry, but unfortunately that's your round of five minutes.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Okay, thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Our next round of five minutes goes to MP Lambropoulos.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.):** Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank all the officials for being with us today to answer our questions, as well as the minister, who is no longer here, but that's okay.

I would like to first let you know that I have heard from a lot of the small businesses in my riding. I have very many of them. Many of them are really happy with a lot of the supports that have been put in place. I'd like to also thank you for all the hard work you've been doing behind the scenes. I'm sure that right now is a hectic period for all of you.

These small businesses obviously are going through a lot, and yes, what we've put in place has helped them until now, but they're obviously uncertain of what the future holds, as we all are. They're wondering what other supports will be available to them once the \$40,000 loan, for example, has been used up.

Are we considering giving a second loan of that amount? Are we considering other measures to put in place in order to help support these small businesses?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** Madam Chair, I might suggest, if it's okay, that my colleague Paul Thompson speak to this. He's been doing a lot of work on the small business issue, including with our financial Crown corporations, so I'll turn it over to him.

**Mr. Paul Thompson (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Industry):** Thank you very much for the question.

As my colleague Simon indicated, we're working very closely with small business owners and stakeholders to get feedback on the measures that are rolling out. We, of course, have talked about the Canada emergency business account. There are the two other loan programs through the Crown agencies, the EDC loan guarantee and the BDC co-lending program, which, combined, provide up to \$12.5 million in additional lending possibilities for small businesses.

There's also the rent relief package, which would be the closest thing to new measures coming up that I would flag.

We're continuing to monitor the situation with lots of feedback coming in from stakeholders.

• (1235)

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** You just mentioned the rent relief. Obviously, that's one of the biggest issues they have, being able to keep up with their payments.

What's the likelihood of being able to come up with an agreement with the provinces on this? What are the chances that they actually get the support they need with regard to their rent?

**Mr. Paul Thompson:** As Minister Ng indicated, this is an area of shared responsibility with the provinces, so it is dependent on landing agreements with the provinces. There are very extensive efforts under way to do that, with full appreciation of the urgency with respect to May 1 and normal rent payment deadlines. This is just to say that both orders of government are seized with this issue and are working very hard.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Okay, thank you very much.

Last but not least, I have a question about international trade. Obviously, we have a problem with getting the equipment that we need in our hospitals. We're trying to turn that inwards and make sure that our own Canadian industries are able to come up with the amount of equipment that we need, but obviously we still rely on our international partners.

What efforts have been made to make sure that we are still getting the equipment necessary from other countries that have [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]?

**Mr. Emmanuel Kamarianakis (Director General, Investment and Innovation, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** Madam Chair, it's Emmanuel Kamarianakis from Global Affairs.

We have been working closely with our trade commissioner service and we have repurposed them in a way to focus away from supporting exporters and toward finding supply chains that we can access to feed our domestic production and also acquire goods. We're working closely with our colleagues at PSPC, PHAC and Health Canada to make sure we have connections to the right suppliers and are matching what the need is with what the supply is locally.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Okay, thank you very much.

Madam Chair, I'm sorry, I haven't been checking my time. Do you know how much I have left?

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

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

In my riding, I also have one of the big companies, CAE, which is providing ventilators. It is working as part of the chain of companies that are providing ventilators to the Government of Canada.

There are many companies that have gone through the process but have not yet received a response. They are trying to provide equipment to our hospitals but have not yet received a response from the Government of Canada. What is the process to make sure that these companies are considered once they apply?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** Madam Chair, I can answer that question.

Briefly, we have had about 5,000 companies come through the ISSED process. We have been really delighted and floored with the response from industry.

We have put in place a fairly sophisticated system to screen all the folks who come in, and we have called every single company back and have had a conversation with them. We've had a couple of hundred move on to the procurement stage.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kennedy, I'm sorry, but that's the time for that round.

We will now move to our two and a half minute round.

Mr. Savard-Tremblay, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a business question for the witnesses. We're talking about small and medium-sized businesses, which often export a great deal.

To your knowledge, have several countries implemented export restrictions on essential goods?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** I think that Mr. Kamarianakis from Global Affairs is in the best position to answer this question.

Certainly some countries have implemented restrictions.

I'll leave the floor to my colleagues.

• (1240)

**Mr. Emmanuel Kamarianakis:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Kennedy.

There are cases where countries have implemented restrictions. We're working with the people in our missions, embassies and consulates to coordinate and facilitate exports of the products needed for the networks in Canada. We're also monitoring developments in this area. We're in contact with our colleagues in the political and trade sectors to ensure that we have a model for keeping the supply chains open for Canada.

We're working on this on a daily basis.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** There has been a great deal of discussion about masks. We talked about them at this meeting. Could supply chains for other essential goods be disrupted to the point where shortages occur in other areas?

[*English*]

**Ms. Kendal Hembroff (Director General, Trade Negotiations, Global Affairs Canada):** Maybe I can address that question.

We have been tracking very closely the number of trade restrictions that countries have been taking in response to COVID-19. The vast majority of those measures to date have been in terms of essential medical items, but we've also seen a growing number of export restrictions placed on agriculture and agri-food.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Perfect. Thank you.

Madam Chair, before I continue, can you tell me how much time I have left?

**The Chair:** You have 11 seconds left.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Okay.

I want to thank the witnesses for their responses.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** The next two and a half minute question period goes to MP Johns.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Thank you very much.

We keep hearing the minister talk about small businesses and micro-businesses being a priority, but as I stated earlier, a recent poll through the B.C. Chamber of Commerce cites that 49% of small businesses with a staff of less than five aren't able to qualify for the current programs, CEBA or CERB.

I have an interesting one. It's around qualifying for the Canadian emergency bank account. Right now there is this bizarre clause which says that, if you are an entity owned by an individual holding public office, you are not eligible. This applies to school trustees, municipal councillors and mayors. I have a mayor in my riding who can't access it and needs it now. Was this an oversight? Clearly the only conflict that would be is whether you would want to sit on a school district board ever again if you can't access these federal programs, because they clearly have no influence over decision-making at the federal level.

**Mr. Paul Thompson:** Perhaps I could take that question with respect to eligibility for the CEBA program, the Canada emergency business account. The eligibility exclusion you're referring to is for federal members of Parliament. It doesn't pertain to other—

**Mr. Gord Johns:** That needs to be clarified on the website, because there are people who are not able to do that. They've gone to their lawyers and accountants and they've been advised not to apply based on that clause. If you could fix that, it would be a really important thing.

**Mr. Paul Thompson:** We will certainly follow up.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Thank you very much.

Denmark and Poland have decided to not give any of their emergency rollout to any company that has offices or is set up with tax havens around the world. Is this something you're looking at? Are you going to have the same application here in Canada?

**Mr. Paul Thompson:** That's something I'd have to take under advisement and follow up.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Are you looking at that? I'm just asking. Are you currently looking at that?

**Mr. Paul Thompson:** I would have to speak with the Crown agencies that are responsible for the lending decisions on that.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** This needs to be a priority. We need to make sure they're Canadian companies and that the money stays in Canada.

Around credit cards, we know that you were able to work with credit card companies to reduce some of that interest, but they're still 10 points above prime.

Is the government continuing to work with the banks and the credit card companies so that they're reducing their rates while businesses are closed and have zero revenue? A lot of them are living off these lines of credit and credit cards.

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

We will now move to round three, with a five-minute question from MP Patzer.

You have the floor.

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

My question will be for Simon Kennedy again in regard to our supply chains.

There is an ongoing concern about maintaining our domestic supply chains, especially for food. This past week saw the temporary closure of the Cargill processing plant in High River, Alberta, and that's on top of the issues we were already having in Ontario.

Are there currently any parts of our supply chain at risk of supply disruption?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** I know that is an issue the government is certainly carefully following. For the specific answer to that question, it is probably best directed, in the case of agriculture, to the agriculture ministry.

In the case of some of the broader supply chain security issues, this is something we are working on very closely with colleagues from the public safety ministry, the finance ministry and sectoral departments such as agriculture.

Certainly I'm well aware that my colleagues in agriculture are paying very close attention to what's going on in the slaughter sector, for example, and the incident in High River which the member mentioned. That is very much on their radar screen. I can confirm that's something we're tracking closely and we want to make sure those disruptions are minimized.

● (1245)

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** For sure.

Lots of our small businesses rely on other supply chains as well to ensure that they have the products they need for their stores. Are there any other supply chain shortages or disruptions that you are aware of or that you are concerned about?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** Certainly an area of significant interest in the immediate term, and I think it's probably obvious to the committee but maybe I'll just underline it, is the issue of personal protective equipment and various supplies, medical supplies, that are needed to deal with the immediate challenges to health and safety. Everybody has seen the global demand for things such as N95 respirators, medical gowns and other protective equipment rise dramatically. That's an area where supply chains have been shown to have some real challenges. That is definitely an area that has been a central focus in the last five to six weeks, or two months.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Yes, for sure. There are lots of small manufacturing businesses that have wanted to help out. They've gone through the online portals and processes, but they've been told, "We don't have anything for you right now", or "Just wait; we'll get hold of you."

As you're saying, we do have shortages and issues, so why are we not allowing industry or our small businesses to join in?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** There are, just for simplicity's sake, a couple of different pathways for businesses that have that interest. One of them is the Buyandsell website that is being managed by Public Services and Procurement Canada. The second one is the made in Canada program which my ministry is responsible for.



I can speak to my ministry's work. In particular, as I mentioned before to one of the other honourable members, we've had about 5,000 businesses step forward. This is really fantastic. We're using the industrial research assistance program's advisers. It has technical advisers. There are about 250 of them across the country who are actually speaking with every one of those businesses that have put their hand up, in order to get a sense of their capabilities, what their interests are and what their ability is to retool quickly.

I don't have a precise number now, sir, but I can say that we have maybe 200 firms, or more, that have been able to actually retool their operations to produce sanitizer or to work on ventilators. We're certainly interested in having as many of those Canadian companies as possible participate.

As time goes on, we're going to need more and more firms to come and join the fight. Our plan is to continue to circle back to the firms that have put their hand up, and where we can find opportunities for them, we're very keen to do so.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Thank you for that; I really appreciate it. I was wondering if you could potentially table a report to this committee later about the engagement you've had with those different manufacturing companies and small businesses that were engaged and able to help out. We could then get a broad spectrum of the impact it has had on those businesses.

Moving forward, a lot of people and businesses are bringing to my attention that the financial measures and announcements have all been great; however, they're all short term. We've heard from the minister that we don't actually have a plan on how to get our economy open again. Before this week's announcements, we were already at a projected \$184-billion deficit. If we only have these short-term plans and we haven't looked long term, has the government given you any direction or indication as to what a plan might be going forward to get our businesses working?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** I don't think, Madam Chair, that I would go further than the minister's comments in this regard. Clearly the Prime Minister has indicated that some of those conversations have started. Our focus in the immediate term is on health and safety and getting the supply chain to produce medical equipment.

Am I at time?

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, you are.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Our next round of five-minute questions goes to MP Jowhari.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It looks like the conversation is now turning its focus to PPE. Both the deputy ministers, international trade as well as industry, talked about how we are trying to do our best to source PPE both internationally by partnering and through domestic markets by building capacity and optimizing distribution.

Starting with the deputy minister for international trade, can you share which countries we are partnering with and some of the challenges and the successes?

I'll then direct the question to the deputy minister for industry.

• (1250)

**Mr. Emmanuel Kamarianakis:** Madam Chair, let me just say that we have been partnering with quite a few countries, of course, globally. The largest share of PPE equipment coming into Canada would be coming from China, what we term the greater China network, so Hong Kong and Taiwan and the surrounding area. We're getting a significant amount of supply to Canada from those sources.

We have also gone out and been proactive in identifying other sources. We have built up capacity to procure from the U.S., including for supply chain procurement into Canada. We have also worked with some European partners, countries in other parts of Asia, including South Korea, Singapore and a few others and have built those relationships through supply chain channels. We've also been proactively identifying sources that we may not have identified before in trying to get ahead of the curve in a very competitive landscape.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Thank you.

My riding enjoys the benefit of having a large constituency base of Chinese Canadians. They've reached out to me, and many of them are getting involved in the export of PPE. They've shared that they are facing huge challenges, not as much in the sourcing, but in being able to get it to the proper distribution through customs to be able to get it to Canada. I understand that even our government, through its initiative, faced some challenges around getting the product on a timely basis to the airport so we wouldn't have empty flights coming back.

Can you shed some light on that one?

**Mr. Emmanuel Kamarianakis:** Madam Chair, let me just say that it's been a particularly difficult period for procuring international supplies at this point. In particular, in the case of Shanghai, where we've had some of these constraints and problems, there are contributing factors that have made it very difficult to get supplies out of China. Not only is there just huge congestion with many countries trying to do exactly the same thing that we're doing, but there's a global crisis going on.

The Chinese authorities are taking the issue very seriously and, to their credit, have been imposing regulations, I think, to make sure that the supply that is leaving is well identified, packaged and ready for international export. Combine that with the fact that we are also being careful in terms of how we're procuring by making sure that the flights that we send in are well taken care of and the crews are well taken care of. All these things contribute to some difficulties.

I have to say, to the credit of our network, Ambassador Barton in China and his team have done yeoman's work, a lot of work, to make sure that we are able to get supply into our—

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** I thank you for that.

I want to quickly go to the deputy minister for industry. I'd like to commend the department for the great work they're doing by complementing the financial program that's being tabled by the government specifically around innovation, expediting research and development and getting the product much faster.

One of the questions that's constantly coming as a lot of businesses are reaching out to my office is what criteria they will be assessed by when they reach out and say that they have this capability and they want to be able to retool. How does the department assess that? I'm sure there is an assessment.

You indicated that there are 5,000 applications and that nearly 200 have already been approved. Can you shed some light on that?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** I should clarify and say that 200 approvals is my rough guesstimate. I would have to provide more specific figures, so maybe you shouldn't hold me to that, but we've certainly had a large number that have been able to make a direct contribution.

When interested firms go on the website, there is kind of a questionnaire, a process that they go through to enrol. The questions there are indicative of the kinds of things we're looking for. For example, can they move relatively quickly? If they can only produce a result a year from now, that's obviously going to be of less interest. Do they have a secure supply chain so that they're not dependent on stuff from overseas that is hard to get? We ask those sorts of questions. Those are the kinds of criteria that are being applied.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Kennedy. That's your time.

Our next five-minute round is with MP Rempel Garner.

• (1255)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** My questions are directed to Mr. Kennedy.

Mr. Kennedy, as you are aware, over three months ago members of this committee asked your department for some undertakings related to the supplementary estimates.

I was listening to the exchange you had with MP Gray. Is it my understanding that you've now tabled all of those undertakings, including the questions that I asked? I had seven questions during that meeting three months ago.

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** My understanding is that those have been tabled. It's possible they have not been tabled, but I have seen those answers and I have approved them. My hope would be that they would have been tabled with you by now. If you haven't seen them yet, they are certainly coming very soon.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Do you find it acceptable that your department takes three months to deliver basic answers to questions from a parliamentarian?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** I think our wish would always be to respond as quickly as possible. That's my undertaking. It has been a bit of a challenge, frankly, to pull together—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I'm sorry, but the bureaucracy serves at the pleasure of Parliament. I'd like to remind you of that. I find it unacceptable that it took three months. I don't even know....

It hasn't come to me. You're sitting in front of me today, and I haven't been able to review those responses that were related to the supplementary estimates that we had to vote on. Is your service delivery standard three months to respond to undertakings of this committee?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** Our service delivery standard has clearly been affected by the crisis and by a pretty dramatic reorientation of how we work. It has been a bit of an adjustment, but typically we would want to respond rapidly to questions the committee raises. I would agree with that.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Again, these undertakings were made well before this crisis unfolded. It was over three months ago. In the future, when a member of this committee asks your department for an undertaking, how long are we supposed to wait—

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

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

Go ahead, Mr. Longfield.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Madam Chair, I think we're supposed to be addressing the COVID crisis and not supplementary estimates. I wonder if we could stay on track on that.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** This is on track, Madam Chair, because my colleague, Jeremy Patzer, just asked for some undertakings. I'm trying to establish, given that we're in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis and that the deputy minister has said his department has reduced capacity to respond to undertakings, what the service delivery standards will be for undertakings related to this committee on the COVID-19 crisis.

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** Madam Chair, maybe I should clarify. I think my undertaking is to try to respond to the committee as rapidly as possible. I certainly understand the obligation to be accountable to Parliament. I would not say our ability to respond has been diminished across the board, but depending on the kinds of questions asked or the information required, to be frank, the timeline might be affected. For example, if we have to physically pull documents, that's a very significant challenge now, because most employees don't have access to the building.

I will say we will respond as quickly as possible, but there may be some adjustments, given the current circumstances.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Kennedy.

I'm responding to the point of order. I understand that the documentation that was requested at the previous meeting was circulated to committee members this morning.

The House gave us specific instructions to discuss COVID-19. Therefore, I will ask Ms. Rempel to continue her questioning with respect to COVID-19.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Just to be clear, Madam Chair, the undertakings were actually distributed after the commencement of this meeting. So if anybody wanted to review those, it would have been impossible as we would have been on that.

With regard to COVID-19, this is an important part of this committee's undertakings. We need to understand, given that the Liberal government has said that parliamentary scrutiny can happen via virtual sittings, whether the department has the capacity to maintain undertakings and the deputy minister has just said that doing that might be very difficult. If that is the case, we have a problem here, because we don't have weeks or months to deal with responding to some of the questions that we have on privacy, on contact tracing, on expenditures. This is supposed to be Parliament's vehicle for scrutinizing departmental expenditures and the minister's decisions.

I'm asking very clearly to establish a guideline here, while the deputy minister is sitting with this committee. If this committee asks for undertakings, how long is that going to take?

• (1300)

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** Madam Chair, I believe I've already answered the question, so I'm not sure what other information the committee might wish to hear.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Kennedy, just to be clear, do you find three months an acceptable time period to respond to a committee on an undertaking?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** As a general proposition, no, but we have experienced an international crisis in the intervening period, which has created some challenges for us.

I will certainly endeavour to respond as quickly as possible to any future questions the committee asks.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** How are you going to put in place systems to respond to Parliament's inquiries during this time period so that it doesn't take three months in the future?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** Madam Chair, we have systems now to respond to parliamentary inquiries. I have been, for example, signing off on a whole range of parliamentary questions, access to information requests. As systems of government continue to move along, we will try to respond as quickly as possible.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** You can't have it both ways. You can't say you can't do it and then do it. It's one or the other.

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel Garner, that is your time.

We have time for one last five-minute round of questions.

Mr. Erskine-Smith, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Thanks very much.

I want to start quickly with Mr. Thompson on the CEBA.

I've received correspondence from constituents who have \$18,000 in payroll. I have received correspondence from constituents who poured their heart into a business that opened in November and they didn't have \$20,000 in payroll last year.

Can you explain to my constituents what the rationale is for a \$20,000 minimum threshold to access CEBA?

**Mr. Paul Thompson:** I would just indicate that there's been a lot of feedback on the whole issue of payroll, and that was what drove the decision to change the payroll parameter threshold from the \$50,000 threshold down to the \$20,000 threshold. Clearly, there's continued concern on that, which we're hearing about, and those views are registered and transmitted and shared with our colleagues at the Department of Finance. Part of the issue is the interaction with the emergency response benefit, which is also available to very small businesses, for example, without fixed costs that need more in terms of income support, but—

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Hang on a second. There's a clear difference between an individual who has lost income and who faces personal costs and who has the response benefit step in and a sole proprietor who not only also faces those same personal costs but also faces continued business costs. That's exactly what the CEBA is for. It's modest already if we're talking about a \$40,000 interest-free loan with \$10,000 forgivable. I'm just trying to understand what the rationale is for the \$20,000 threshold, because it occurs to me that of course you can have criteria that ensure automatic approval of the loan, and that makes sense to me, but surely there ought to be some discretion here.

I have another constituent who's been banking with TD for 18 years for his business, but using a personal account, and he's now unable to access the \$40,000 interest-free loan because it's not a business account. Surely the bank should have the discretion to say this has been a customer for the last 18 years and this individual should be approved.

**Mr. Paul Thompson:** Madam Chair, I can assure the member that that issue is very much on the radar. It's been identified and is certainly being discussed and shared with the Department of Finance and other colleagues across government.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Thanks, Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Kennedy, who in your office is best placed to answer questions with respect to digital contact tracing?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** I can certainly respond to some of those. I may have some senior staff here in the virtual room who may be able to provide further details, but I've had some—

Go ahead. Sorry.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** No, I appreciate that. Whether it's you or your staff on the call today, I would appreciate an update as to where we are with digital contact tracing, because we hear the health experts say, "Test, trace, test, trace", but we have yet to see a clear plan for digital contact tracing.

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** What I can say is that we're working closely with colleagues in the health ministry, and certainly there have been discussions with provincial officials on the issue of the possibility of technology facilitating people managing social distancing. There has been a lot of discussion in the press and, frankly, a lot of discussion in various meetings about the issue of contact tracing. We probably need a whole other meeting, frankly, to go into the details—

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** That's probably fair, actually. That's a good point, and I think we are going to have a meeting on that. Would you be able to provide a backgrounder as to the steps the department has taken to date on digital contact tracing so that we are best prepared in advance of that meeting to ask questions? It might be helpful.

• (1305)

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** I'd be happy to come back to the committee with a couple of pieces of paper, if that would be of use.

What I will say, and I think it's really important to lay this out, is that the government has been very clear that privacy considerations are of foremost concern, and certainly, as you know, as an official, you follow the instructions of your government. Certainly, in the work we're doing with the PTs, provinces and territories, as part of the industry response we've had a lot of technology companies approach us in terms of looking at solutions that they have and that they think could be useful.

In our assessment of those and in all those conversations, certainly uppermost in our mind are the kinds of charter rights of Canadians on those sorts of issues. I thought I should underline that.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** That's appreciated.

My last question is in relation to testing.

There was an announcement today of \$350 million for testing and modelling. When I see reports out of the United States that say it's 20 million tests per day to restore the economy, or three million tests per week or various estimates, and I translate those to the Canadian context, I'm looking at somewhere between 50,000 to two million a day, depending upon the estimates.

We're at 20,000 tests a day right now. What is our goal here for tests per day as we look to restore or reopen the economy down the road?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** Madam Chair, I'll leave this—

**The Chair:** You have five seconds, if you can answer that quickly.

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** On the specific question of what the right number is, it's really the health ministry's issue, but we are working very closely with them to try to ramp up the domestic ability to manufacture the tests and the various kinds of equipment needed for those tests so that we're able to actually hit that number. The actual specifics of what the number is would be better directed to Health Canada.

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

Unfortunately, that's all the time we have today, as we have another committee—

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** On a point of order, Madam Chair—

**An hon. member:** Madam Chair—

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** We still have two questions of two and a half minutes to go here, I believe.

The NDP and our Bloc members would appreciate having their times honoured.

**The Chair:** MP Patzer, I understand the hope was that we would be able to complete that third round. However, I'm being advised by the clerk that a sanitation crew needs to come into the room to sanitize the room prior to the next meeting, so unfortunately we do not have the time.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Madam Chair, on a point of order—

**The Chair:** I'm still speaking.

I'm dealing with this first point of order, Madam Rempel Garner, if you would please let me finish.

I've asked the clerk to make sure that we are able to have that last two and a half minutes for both rounds. I would like to be able to do so, but unfortunately we have a cleaning crew that needs to come in.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Madam Chair, we can take five minutes and the cleaning crew can wait for five minutes while my colleagues get their question rounds finished, as previously agreed to. It's a little ridiculous. The clerk can tell the cleaning crew that they can wait for five minutes.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Let me check with the room to see if we can have them hold back. One moment, please.

We are going to go with the last five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Savard-Tremblay, you have two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Thank you.

We hear a great deal about the credit programs available to businesses through Export Development Canada or the Business Development Bank of Canada.

I know that we're in a time of crisis and that the priority is to get out of the crisis. However, has any thought been given to the period after the crisis?

Each measure taken or not taken will have an impact, and the post-crisis process could be long and arduous.

With respect to these credit programs, has the bleak possibility of a business debt crisis been considered? If so, have solutions been explored?

**Mr. Simon Kennedy:** I'll let Mr. Thompson answer that question.

**Mr. Paul Thompson:** Thank you.

A number of measures have already been implemented. We're working closely with many stakeholders to monitor the implementation and impact of these measures and to see whether any gaps and needs remain. The time frame for these measures may be reconsidered. There are other measures, such as the recently launched Canada emergency wage subsidy. As you said, there are loans from Crown corporations. However, at this time, the government has been focusing on this area.

• (1310)

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** We know that, initially, there was some talk of turning these business loans into direct assistance. However, the door was closed at that time. Is this position still the same as we speak?

**Mr. Paul Thompson:** I'd say that 25% of the loan can already be written off, which is the technical term.

[English]

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

Our last round is two and a half minutes. Mr. Johns.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Thank you.

We're asking small businesses to close their doors and borrow money so they can pay their landlords and their landlords can pay their mortgages and pay the banks. What are we asking the banks to do?

**Mr. Paul Thompson:** The Department of Finance has led a number of efforts with the banks on the special measures they're extending on relief to mortgages and interest rates, measures like that. The main measure in development right now is rent relief, in conjunction with the provinces, which will provide—

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I hope that's not a bunch more debt for tenants and landlords. What are the banks going to do in eating interest and coming up with their share?

I want to go back to what the Danish and Polish governments are doing. They're making sure their government doesn't provide aid to companies that register in tax havens, pay out dividends or buy back their shares.

Is the Liberal government asking you to look into making sure that all aid stays in Canada and goes to the people in our country who need it?

**Mr. Paul Thompson:** I repeat my earlier answer that we're going to take that under advisement, and I'd have to pursue that with the Crown agencies that are more directly involved in the lending and the Department of Finance. I unfortunately don't have an answer to that question at present.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I'll go back to a question I had earlier for Minister Ng around being eligible for CERB.

The government right now is gauging employment income for proprietors as a barrier. If you have over \$1,000 of employment income, even if you're paying rent of \$2,600 a month, like a constituent of mine, who's literally losing thousands of dollars a month, she can't apply for CERB. She's closed her store, opened an online store and can't access CERB.

Are you going to fix it so it's based on profit or loss and net profit instead of gross income?

**Mr. Paul Thompson:** As we've indicated, these examples are hugely important and we're passing them on and there's continual reassessment—

**Mr. Gord Johns:** You're going to walk away.

**Mr. Paul Thompson:** —of the measures, but I would also indicate that other measures are in play—

**Mr. Gord Johns:** They can't access any of these measures. They can't access CEBA. They're going to walk away. They can't feed their families. They're going to put their hands up. You have to fix this now.

**Mr. Paul Thompson:** There are other supports.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** They're not accessing them. They can't.

**The Chair:** Mr. Johns, I'm sorry. That's all the time we have for today. We've completed the three rounds.

I thank everybody for their patience. To all the witnesses who were here today, the technicians, the clerks, the analysts and the translation services, thank you very much. I know that with practice we will get much better at this.

With that, thank you again, and I hope to see you next week.

The meeting is adjourned.





Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

---

### **SPEAKER'S PERMISSION**

---

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

---

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

---

### **PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT**

---

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :  
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>